UNIT10 CONTEXTUALIZING LEARNING PROCESSES FOR DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS

STRUCTURE

10.0 INTRODUCTION

As a teacher while teaching in any class, you must have noticed that at any time all students in the class are not equally attentive and responsive to the interactions going on in the class. Some students take active participation in classroom

interactions while some other students remain shy and quiet and unless continually persuaded they rarely participate in classroom activities nor do they respond willingly. Why is this?

Well there are individual differences and every student is unique in his/her personality and dispositions. That is why their attention span, their learning styles and the response patterns are different. But who are these students who prefer to remain silent and aloof in the classroom activities? Are they the ones who have a feeling of inferiority, of being neglected, or of being discriminated?

There are of two categories of students who come with some disadvantages – children of socially disadvantaged groups and children with special needs. Generally children belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Groups are considered as socially disadvantaged while children with some physical and learning difficulties are the children with special needs (CWSN). Besides these two categories of children, the girls in general are also victims of social discrimination and neglect. The children from these categories come to school with a disadvantaged tag with them and as a result they become easy prey to differential treatments by the teacher and the classmates.

It is noticed that children coming from tribal communities do not feel comfortable in the classroom environment because the socio-cultural climate in which they are born and brought up is totally different from that of the classroom/ school. Such mismatch between the home and school environment puts these children in utter disadvantaged conditions and those who cannot overcome the disparities very often become victim of drop-out of the school.

In this unit let us understand the socio-cultural context of learning and its importance for facilitating learning of different categories of disadvantaged learners in the classroom. However education of tribal children has been focussed because of two prominent reasons. Scheduled tribes constitute a substantial portion of country's population and inhabit in most remote and inaccessible terrains having least awareness for schooling. Secondly, these children have different cultural and linguistic traditions which are distinctly different from other social groups. Their problems need to be given proper attention by properly understanding the unique nature of their educational needs conforming to their socio-economic-cultural and linguistic conditions. As a teacher you need to be aware of the problems of such categories of children in your classroom and be well equipped to address their difficulties in learning. In this unit such issues are discussed with specific methods so that these children like others can participate actively in all classroom transactions.

 For completing this unit you shall need at least *07(seven) study hours*.

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify different local specific socio-cultural contexts of learning.

- Identify and deal with different categories of disadvantaged children in the classroom situation.

- Specify the issues related to the education of children of tribal communities.

- Use different strategies of learning conducive to the socio-cultural-linguistic conditions of tribal students.

10.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

In learner-centred pedagogy importance is given to children's experiences, their voices, and their active participation in the learning and teaching processes. Therefore what do you think of the following:

- Should we treat the child in the classroom like an object devoid of any prior experience or treat him/her like any other human being with a lot of experience and a frame of mind shaped by the socio-economic-cultural conditions of the family and community?

- Should we just pour in the contents without considering the relevance and meaningfulness for the child learner or should we facilitate the children to shape their own learning by constructing and reconstructing their vast experiences already acquired against the constraints they faced in their real life situations like the socio-economic adversities, cultural taboos etc.?

The answer to these questions will determine the course of action that you would take as a teacher in the classroom transactions.

We know learning is active and social in character…. it must hence be based on children's local context and experiences. The teaching- learning process must respond to physical, social, and cultural preferences of the children.

Consider the following two classroom situations:

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Situation1:*Mr. Raghu Mahanta, a teacher in a Primary School has to teach about "food" to the students of class IV. He entered the class room, quite well prepared with notes made in consultation with the textbook and other reference materials. He was very serious and without any fuss started teaching. He told about the need of food for living, gave several examples of different types of food, and using adequate TLMs elaborated how different food materials are procured, stored and used. In between he supervised the class notes of the students and also gave some home tasks. At the end he asked some questions and directed a few who raised their hands to respond. As a whole he engaged the class with a lot of dictation, elaboration and explanation but focusing his attention on a few students who seemed to be active.*

Situation 2: *Anita, the teacher in another primary school also has to teach the same topic "food" to the same class. She entered the class, talked with the students informally like 'How do you feel today?', 'What have you taken in your lunch?', 'What are the materials used to prepare your food items?', 'Where were the food materials procured from?', 'Who prepares lunch for you?'... etc. Then she asked the students to make a list of food they take every day. When the students gave the names of food one by one, she wrote these down on the blackboard. Then she asked "Why do you take food? The students sat silently for a while and started talking…'We take food to live.' 'We get energy from food'…..so many answers came from the students. What Ms. Anita did was that she inspired each child to participate. Then she wrote a question on the blackboard…'What will happen if we do not take food?' Everybody wrote their own answer in their notebook. At that timeMs. Anita supervised the students' work, gave clues for answer, and corrected the answer where needed. She also asked the students to state their answers and wrote the same on the blackboard*

Comparing the above two situations which one you think is a better learning situation? Why?

Well in the first situation Mr Mohanta focused on teaching the concept without considering the student's experience related to the concepts. He tried to discharge the knowledge of the concept into the mind of the children. He was concentrating on a few active students and did not seem to take care of other students who remained mostly inactive. It is rather teacher-centric. On the other hand, in the second situation,Ms.Anita tried to involve the students by consistently considering the experiences of the student while facilitating their learning. It is evident from the questions she posed before students that she was always conscious of the local contexts of students and did not try to impose any knowledge on the students.

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When the learning is related to experiences of students and the context in which they are placed, when it is a product of student's thinking, when it is self-directed, when the student does something with his/her learning experience, it becomes meaningful.

10.2.1 Socio-Cultural Context for Meaningful Learning

According to NCF (2005):

"The child's community and local environment form the primary context in which learning takes place and in which knowledge acquires its significance. It is in interaction with the environment that the child constructs knowledge and derives meaning." (p.30)
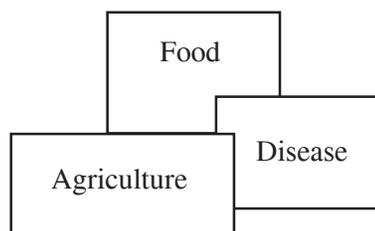
We cannot afford to neglect the conditions of family, locality and community in which the child is born and brought up for the following two essential reasons:

(i) the local environment provides facilitating conditions to the child to acquire immense experience, and (ii) constraints for education are created due to the socio-economic and cultural practices and beliefs of the family and the community.

Facilitating Conditions:

Children gather variety of experiences from the interactions with their socio-cultural environment. They learn from the trees around them, from the animals and birds they have seen, friends they have played with, family members with whom they live etc. That means their mind is not a clean slate when they enter the school. Basing on these experiences, we have to enhance their learning by linking their existing experiences with new knowledge given in the textbook.

Let us understand how meaningful learning takes place. See the diagram given below and think.

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        ┌──────────┐
        │   Food   │
        │          ┌──────────┐
        │          │ Disease  │
    ┌───┴──────┐   │          │
    │Agriculture│   │          │
    │          │   │          │
    └──────────┘───┴──────────┘
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When a child learns about food, he/she links the concept "food" with his experiences on types of food he/she eats every day, process of food preparation. He/she also links with agriculture, health, diseases etc. Here the brain stores those experiences together. When one concept is recalled, the other concepts are

recalled simultaneously with his experiences. In other words, recalling the concept of 'food' activates the child's brain for other concepts to be linked. In this case learning is meaningful because child gets a chance to use all his/her experiences acquired through the continuous interaction with the immediate environment. In that sense, the local environment provides facilitating contexts for learning.

Constraining Conditions:

The social, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in a community also create hindrances for the education of children. There are communities with affluent conditions who have extreme conservative notions for education of the girl child. Extreme form of poverty forces families to engage their children in earning livelihood rather than sending them to schools. Similarly, due to social and religious taboos, some communities do not like to send their girl children to co-education schools to study along with boys. In some societies where caste system is still rigidly followed, the families of the so called upper castes do not prefer their children to sit or interact with those from the Dalit families who are still considered untouchables in several regions of our country. Tribal children, notwithstanding their rich and diverse cultural heritage, are looked down upon for their abysmal poverty and difficulty in communication because of language. Such a list of constraints is endless.

However, here are some suggestions for facilitating meaningful learning taking into consideration the socio-cultural contexts of the child:

- **Use of child's knowledge as the base for learning:** Suppose you have to teach 'sources of water'. The text book tells that dug wells, tube wells, rivers are the different sources of water. In your area the pupils have not seen any of these sources of water. They have seen pond, stream, jheel, and/ or canal etc. So you have to start your lesson with these sources of water.

- **Make your classroom situation contextual:** Whenever you are in the classroom and whatever you are teaching, take examples from local environment, tells local stories, collect the TLMs from locality, gather student's knowledge and share with them in their local language/dialect. If you do this, your classroom activities will be meaningful for the students.

- **Use materials available in your locality:** While teaching, normally you use the pictures given in the text book. Perhaps, you forget that these pictures are given as examples. So when you are facilitating learning collect and prepare local specific materials. If you are teaching vegetation in Geography, collect the plants and names of trees from the locality and start your teaching from local vegetation.

- **Ensure students' active participation:** Students become active when they are involved in learning and teaching processes, which means they get scope to ask questions, argue, discuss, share their ideas, give examples of their

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own, explain and elaborate and also use TLM during learning. So as a facilitator you have to create scope for students' participation without giving long lecture, loud elaboration and much dictation.

- **Cite examples by going beyond the text book:** Suppose you have to teach 'addition' to class II students. See the examples given in the text book and try to understand the purpose. While facilitating learning, do not cite these examples. Give examples on how they add different things in their day to day life and link them with the learning of the concept. Through this approach you can use children's experiences going beyond the textbook.

- **Encourage students to ask question and argue:** Giving scope to ask question means you are activating the students. If they ask questions, they will think on and about the concept to be taught and will argue. When they argue they get scope to understand what they are telling. If this happens in your classroom, it can be concluded that students are learning meaningfully.

- **Focus on 'learning as a process' not on 'learning outcomes':** While facilitating learning, do not focus much on 'what they learn' rather focus on 'how they are learning' As there is no absolute right or wrong knowledge in this world, so do not give or dictate answers to the students.

Whether formal or informal, use of children's experiences brings out meaningful learning. Unless children localise their day to day experiences while learning a concept, knowledge is reduced to mere information. We know that learning from the text is pointless unless it is connected with the context. We have to focus on children's active participation in our learning teaching process so that they share their own experiences and sharpen their concepts introduced through curriculum.

E1. What are the major characteristics of meaningful learning?

10.2.2 Local Knowledge and Text Book Knowledge

The knowledge, information, examples about different concepts given in the textbook is called textbook knowledge. But child's community and local environment forms the primary context in which learning takes place. He/she interact with the environment, derive meaning and construct knowledge which becomes the base for further learning. This is what we call local knowledge for the children. This is not usually taken care of in preparation of text books and in learning –teaching process. When a textbook is prepared for the whole state, it is difficult to bring the local knowledge of each area and community into the text book. It is also not possible to take into account the varieties in our socio-cultural life. But children need to find examples of their own socio-cultural environment. Here the teacher plays an important role. Let's see how a teacher can contextualize the text book knowledge.

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- *Detailed reading of the Text Book.*

    Many a time teachers enter the class and start teaching. Hardly have they referred to the text book beforehand. As a result they face problem to interpret the text book knowledge in the context of children's learning. To contextualize the text book knowledge for the students, the teachers have to read the text book again and again so as to identify plug points to cite local examples.

- *Finding the learning indicators from the text book*

    If a teacher picks up the learning indicators from the text book, he/she will be able to design meaningful activities for the children. The activities given in the textbook serve as examples only and can help the teacher to find the learning indicators. When a teacher understands the purpose of these activities, he/she will get the learning indicators. For example, in an English text book of Class V, some speeches in direct and indirect forms are given in a topic. Here, the purpose is to make the child speak. A teacher can arrange conversation between/among the students to develop this indicator. An indicator refers to what the child does after learning a concept.

- *Gathering the students' knowledge on different learning points*

    When the teacher finds the learning indicators, he/she has to gather related local knowledge to fit in. He / She can get this knowledge from the students, other teachers, community people etc.

- *Linking children's knowledge / experiences with text book knowledge*

    When a teacher knows students' experiences related to a concept, he/she has to establish a link between student's experiences and text book knowledge. For the purpose the teacher has to make note of student's experiences for each learning indicators. For example the concept of food preparation may be different in rural and tribal areas.

- *Preparing own text if needed (alternative text).*

    Many a times a text may not be appropriate for the student. So to make it meaningful for the students, a teacher has to prepare alternative text taking students' socio cultural context into account. For example, 'Road accident' is an urban phenomenon. We cannot ask students from rural areas to write an essay on 'Road accident'.

By relying only on textbook and underestimating the experiences of children acquired from local sources, you as a teacher are creating two mistakes. First, you are encouraging rote learning, because most of the textbook experiences are not to the context and not easily comprehensible for the children. Second, you are discriminating children strong in rote memory and getting the texts by heart

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in no time from those who rely heavily on their local experiences. Usually the former are given favourable recognition and the latter are labelled as slow learners. Thus disadvantaged conditions and disadvantaged learners are sometimes created within the confines of the classroom.

10.3 EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

As mentioned earlier, girls, children of minority groups, SC children and children with special needs (CWSN) are considered as disadvantaged children. Let us understand them:

10.3.1 Education of the Girls

All of us know about the neglect of girl child in general and the undesirable attitude that many have towards their education in particular. Both in the family and community and at the school, the education of the girls is usually not taken very seriously. Such endemic neglect can be found in any part of our country irrespective of the financial status of the family. Nearly half of the child population and potential future mothers are given casual treatment so far as the basic and foundation education is concerned.

Why Girls' Education is Important?

"By educating a boy, an individual is educated. But, when a girl is educated, a generation is educated" ….so goes a proverb which captures the importance of girls' education. Besides educating half of the child population, girls' education has more return in real terms as pointed below:

- *Towards women empowerment*: In recent times, women, throughout the world, have attained excellence in every human endeavour. Having access to proper education, women have achieved at par with men and even have excelled in many fields. To aim at such women empowerment, education is the key and early education of the girls provides the base for it.

- *Education and efficiency in working place*: It has been observed female education influences in increasing the amount of time that women work. But in case of men, education has little influence on their quantity of work. This phenomenon is also visible in schools where the girls, in average, like to spend more time on study and given a little encouragement they outperform the boys.

- *Removal of gender inequality:* Education of girls leads to empowerment and thus reduces iniquitous status of girls and women otherwise given a lower position in the family and in the workplaces.

- *Family health and education:* Health of family members is better taken care of by an educated mother so also is the education of children in the family. Even girls in primary schools can bring about transformation in the maintaining a cleaner home environment and developing healthy habits of the family members.

- *Improved child care:* When a girl is educated, she not only becomes a good mother in future, but can take better care of children in the family.

- *Fertility rate and economic growth:* Research studies have shown that the decline in fertility rates is directly associated with the level of girls' education. That means the higher is the level of education of girls the lower is the rate of child birth. And the society with lower fertility rate has higher economic growth. On the other hand, boys' education levels have no direct association with fertility level in general.

Issues of girls' education in schools:

While the apathy towards girl child's education begins in the family, it also continues in different forms in the school and classroom.

- *Access and Enrolment:* Opportunity of having a school nearer to the habitation of a child is still lacking in remote rural areas and in hilly terrains. Families do not like to send the girls to a school situated at a distant place or if the approach to the school is considered unsafe either due to difficult geographical conditions (like hilly track, water bodies, forest, uneven land forms etc) or due to presence of unsocial elements on the way to school. Establishment of a neighbourhood school within one kilometre of child's habitation, as per the provision of the Right to Education Act 2009, might solve the problem to a large extent. But, in spite of it, there are quite a large number of scattered and small habitations, particularly in tribal and hilly areas, where the access would continue to be problematic. To meet this challenge, the idea of residential schools for such children is being proposed.

  Enrolment of girls in the primary schools has improved considerably during the last decade due to the persistent efforts made through the SSA in all states of the country. But, the enrolment of girls across the states lags behind those of the boys. The reasons for this phenomenon are many like, engaging girls in domestic chores, taking care of younger siblings, or because of lack of awareness of the utility of education of girls. All these can be attributed to the general apathy towards girls' education.

- *Unfavourable School Climate:* While several infrastructure inadequacies like lack of required number of classrooms, small and crowded classrooms, rooms without adequate light, and absence of toilet and drinking water facilities create uncomfortable situation for all learners, both boys and girls, lack of separate toilet and water facilities are considered most unfavourable

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conditions for girl students in the school. It has been observed that the schools without these facilities have poor retention rates of girls.

Usually the girls feel freer to interact with female teachers than with male teachers. Shortage of female teachers in the school curbs the free interaction of the girl students. As a result the girl students feel constrained to clarify their doubts and solve their problems in the school.

- *Discriminatory Practices:* Try to reflect upon the treatment that we give to the girl students in the classroom and school. The following may sound familiar..

  - Knowingly or unknowingly we usually give less attention to the girls' education and other problems they face in the school and classroom. In the class room, the girls sit separately away from the boys. In group work, girls sit in separate groups; girls are not engaged to perform learning activities as frequently as boys in the classroom; the girls are asked less number of questions than boys during the classroom interaction.

  - It is a general practice in the schools to assign gender stereotype roles to girls and boys which are gender discriminatory. For example, the boys are given to play football, cricket whereas girls play games like ludo, skipping etc. Girls are engaged in less physically difficult activities and more in indoor activities and games like cleaning the floors, decorating the classroom, knitting, stitching and preparing toys etc. whereas boys are engaged in more physically challenging and outdoor tasks like doing errands, carrying heavier things, working in the garden etc.

  - While we do not take seriously to a boy talking in a loud voice, we caution a girl not to speak loudly. The smartness of a boy is praised whereas a girl showing similar smartness is not appreciated.

- *Discriminatory provisions in textbooks:* The language, pictures and examples used in the textbooks very often depict a lower status of women which can instil a sense of inferiority among the girls from the beginning of the school education. Let us look at some samples of such discriminating materials:

  - In textbooks, you often find that not much attention is given on the issues of girls/women, or on the achievements of prominent women in different public or professional fields.

  - In the EVS textbook the topic on 'Family' highlights contrasting role of father and mother. The father is the earning member and the mother's role is confined to housekeeping.

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- The picture in the same topic shows father relaxing with a newspaper and the mother is cooking.

- In the topic 'Time and Work' in class V Mathematics textbook, we come across statements like, *"Two women can perform same amount of work on a single day what one man can do on the same day"*, *"A man earns Rs. 100.00 per day whereas a woman earns Rs.60.00 per day for the same amount of work"*. Similar statements underestimating women's status can be found in many problems in Mathematics text books. Although such statements are neither connected with mathematical concepts nor have been given with any ulterior intention, they reflect our gender biases which are transmitted to the young learners inadvertently.

- In Language, and Social Studies also you come across such discriminatory materials very often.

Recognizing such adverse depiction of women's roles in the textbooks, several corrective measures are now being taken to remove them.

- *Myths about learning performances:* There are several common beliefs about girls' learning achievements. Some such beliefs are:

  - Girls are poor achievers than the boys at any age or grade level.

  - Girls are poor performers in Mathematics at any level than boys.

  - Girls perform better in Language, Literature and Poetry than boys.

  - Girls are better in verbal fluency, and artistic/aesthetic sensibilities, whereas boys are better in mathematical reasoning, and physical-motor abilities.

✂ ACTIVITY 1.

As observed by you, write down the points of gender discrimination in the textual materials and classroom transaction made by a teacher.

If we start teaching with such conceptions in our mind, then we would be discriminating the girls in the classroom and school activities. Research studies on these issues conducted throughout the world have not confirmed such beliefs. On the contrary, it has been observed that girls who regularly attend the school (with more than 95% of attendance) perform better than boys in every subject. This is noticeable in recent times from the numbers of top positions in nearly all common examinations occupied by the girls.

What can you do to promote girls' education in your school?

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You have two fold duty in this respect:

- Firstly, bringing all girls of school going age (i.e. in the 6-14 age group) in the schools and ensuring regular attending of the classes till the completion of elementary education;

- Secondly, making provisions in the classroom and school for improving quality of girls' education. The main aim of such efforts would be to provide adequate girl-friendly environment in the school, enhance their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-reliance, removing any social stigma and gender stereotype roles, removing any gender bias from the textbooks and learning materials, making classroom interactions and activities free from any sort of gender bias.

You can take several steps in this regard in your schools. Given below are some suggested action points for attaining the above mentioned objectives:

- *Community Mobilization:* Continuous interaction with parents, especially mothers, is to be made for the enrolment, regular attendance and performance of girl children. The members of the school managing committee, mother-teacher association, self-help groups and other opinion makers should be sensitized for mobilizing communities in favour of girls' education in their respective schools. In this direction you should take the initiative first.

- *Ensuring separate toilets for girls:* Using available funds from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), separate toilets need to be constructed. You must see that the girls use it properly following all sanitary habits. This not only helps in regular attendance of the girl children, it also develops sound sanitation habits in them which they also carry to their families.

- *Availability of incentives in time:* Girls in schools are being provided with several incentives like free school uniforms, free textbooks and free reading and writing materials from the SSA funds. You need to ensure that these incentives reach them on time.

- *Involving girls in all activities*: You need to specifically ensure the participation of girls in all types of activities conducted in schools. No activity should be specifically marked only for boys or only for girls.

- *More group learning*: You must create more scopes for group and peer learning in which girls can participate without any restriction. Such free and purposeful group interactions help in minimizing gender discrimination in the classroom.

- *Bias-free classroom interactions:* During classroom transactions you must distribute your questions nearly in equal manner among boys and girls, consciously avoid giving any discriminatory remarks to girls, and encourage them for better performance.

- *Bias-free learning assessment*: You need not attach any bias or discrimination while assessing the learning progress of girls. The girls should not have any feeling of unfairness in assessment of their performance. You may encourage peer assessment as a part of formative assessment in which every child including the girl child feels free to assess others and herself simultaneously thus getting motivated to improve her performance.

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E2. State the two main obstacles for girls' education in your area. Suggest methods to overcome these obstacles.

Girls' Education in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Girls' education is one of the major interventions of SSA. It recognizes that reaching out to the girl child is central to the efforts to universalize elementary education. SSA's focus on gender parity is rooted in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986/92 and the Programme of Action (POA), which brought in centre-stage the issue of gender and girls' education. More importantly, it linked education of women and girls to their empowerment. NPE states that education should be a transformative force, build women's self-confidence, and improve their position in society and challenge inequalities.

SSA envisages bringing all children including the girls within the age group of 6 -14 years into the folds of schools and ensuring their completion of elementary education. It further aims at bridging all gaps due to gender considerations in enrolment, retention and achievement. The efforts included several strategies such as mobilization of community, strengthening mothers' involvement in school activities, provision of free incentives to girl students in terms of school uniform, textbooks, reading and writing materials and residential schooling facilities in selected areas. In order to increase access to education, there are some special programmes for Girls under SSA as given below.

Special Schemes for Girls under SSA

a) *National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)*

NPEGEL is a separate, gender-distinct but integral component of SS A meant for "most difficult to reach" girls , which provides additional support for enhancing girls' education over and above the investments for girls' education through normal SSA interventions.

NPEGEL is implemented in:

- Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) where the level of rural female literacy is less than the national average and the gender gap in literacy is above the national average;

- Blocks of districts which are not covered under EBBs but have at least 5% SC/ST population and where SC/ST female literacy is below 10%; and

- Selected urban slums.

NPEGEL aims at enrolment of all girls in the area, reducing dropout rates among girl students, providing life skills to the girl students and an intensive community mobilization for girls' enrolment, and retention.

b) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)

KGBV provides for setting up residential schools at the upper primary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minority communities. KGBVs are set up in:

- educationally backward blocks, where the female rural literacy is below 30%,

- urban areas with female literacy less than the national female literacy (urban)

- minority dominated areas.

Such residential schools are set   up only in those educationally backward blocks which do not have residential schools at the upper primary level for girls under any other scheme.

KGBV scheme is intended to bring about all round development of the girls belonging to the most deprived sections of society. It also integrates vocational elements to the prescribed curricular provisions.All the costs of the students in these residential schools are borne by SSA. There is close convergence between different agencies and government departments for sound implementation of the programme.

✖ ACTIVITY 2

Prepare a report of progress of NPEGEL   programmes in your district in respect of the objectives of the programmes.

10.3.2 Education of Children of Minority Groups

Several children come from minority communities in the school. These minority communities may be broadly of three types - *(i) Linguistic Minority, (ii) Religious Minority, and (iii) Ethnic/Racial Minority.* Given below are some examples.

- Nilanjana is studying in a primary school in Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Although her mother tongue is Bengali, she has to interact in Tamil medium of

instruction in her school. She is from a Bengali speaking community in Madurai where this community can be termed as a *linguistic minority* community.

- Salman is a student of class III in a school in Puri. He hails from the Muslim community which is considered as *religious minority* group in Puri where Hindus constitute the dominant population.

- Soren from Santhali tribe in Mayurbhanj in Odisha studies in a Government Primary School in Baripada Town. Although, Soren is a native of Odisha, he belongs to a racial/ethnic minority group like other tribal groups having distinct socio-cultural identity.

What are the problems of these three children in their respective classrooms?

- Due to the gap in her home and school language, Nilanjana has difficulty in understanding the classroom interaction and the textbook language. She also has problems in expressing her feelings in Tamil which is not her mother tongue. Not only in the classroom and school but also everywhere in the locality she faces difficulty in interacting in the local language. She feels herself to be an outcast in the locality and feels to be discriminated in the classroom.

- Salman, does not problem with the language of interaction. Although he speaks in Urdu in his home and his Muslim community, he is also equally fluent in Odia, the language of the majority in Puri. He is a bilingual. But his problem lies in the religious practices and his identity linked with his religion. During festivities, celebrations and performing several co-curricular activities he feels isolated from his classmates and thus feels discriminated. This feeling of being discriminated is carried over to other situations in daily life and even to the classroom interactions.

- Being a child of a tribal community, Soren has distinct ethnic identification which sets him apart from others in the classroom. The problems and prospects of tribal children will be discussed in the next section of this unit.

Why education of the minority group is so important?

This is important from the following point of view:

- *Equality of opportunity:* Every child need to have equal opportunity for education especially for elementary education which has been accorded as a fundamental right in our Constitution (see the box below) and further emphasized in the Right to Education Act, 2009. Equality of opportunity usually stresses the opportunity for access to schooling provision. Every child, irrespective of his/her caste, race, religion or any other disabling factors, should have opportunity of access to schooling without any form of discrimination failing which we shall be depriving these children their fundamental right for education.

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- *Non-discriminatory treatment:* Except in specific areas, children of the minority groups are much less in number in the normal schools/classrooms. Because of their minority tags like language, religion, and physical handicaps, they feel isolated because of being subjected to discriminatory practices by the teacher or the peer groups. The discriminatory practices include different forms of treatment like making separate seating arrangements, restricting participation in several activities, giving derogatory remarks, not using their home language etc. Therefore, it is imperative for the teachers to ensure that these children are not subjected to any form of discrimination in the classroom activities or school activities.

- *Respect for the composite culture*: India is a nation where various cultures have coexisted and have developed through mutual interaction and respect for each other. The respect for different culture and tolerance for others' viewpoints have to be cultivated in the school in the early training of children.

- *Diversity in the social system*: Each society in our country is characterized by diversity. Even the habitations nearby the school are inhabited by several communities marked by diversity in income, vocations, customs and rituals. This diversity is also reflected in our classrooms where children from different communities participate and interact in equal terms in course of various activities. Activities conducted in classrooms and schools need to incorporate the identity of these typical elements of each community so that children from very early stage regard the diversity as an asset.

- *Inclusive learning environment*: As a teacher you need to create an inclusive learning environment by considering all equally. Note what the Constitution has to say.

What does the Constitution say about the Rights of the Minority Groups?

- Article 15 and 19 dealing with Fundamental Rights speak of prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them and guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment.

- Article 29 and 30 focus on protection of rights of the minorities as regards language, script, culture and establishment and administration of educational institution.

- Article 350 (A) seeks to provide facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.

Now let us discuss the measures to be taken for minority education.

Notes

Education of Children of Linguistic Minority Groups

Some of the steps that can be taken at the school level for facilitating education of children belonging to linguistic minority groups are:

- *Schools for children of linguistic minority groups:* Separate schools in the areas where linguistic minority groups are concentrated or residential schools for such children where more such children could be available.

- *Provisions of textbooks and reading materials*: The primary requirement of the children of linguistic minority groups is the textbooks and other reading materials. Timely supply of these materials has always been a problem as in some states textbooks in languages other than the main language of the state are not developed because of several constraints.

  Another problem regarding the textbooks in some schools is the non-availability of textbooks in subjects other than the language textbooks in the home language of such children. That means such a child has to read the textbooks in mathematics, social science and science written in the major language of the state. This can be managed by making arrangements with other states where the textbooks and other reading materials are available in the concerned language.

- *Engagement of language teachers*: Presence of a teacher interacting in the home language of the children removes the feeling of isolation of such children to a large extent. Engaging teacher specifically in the minority language would be a positive step for facilitating the learning of such children. If any qualified persons are not available, then at least one teacher of the school may be trained in the minority language and culture for dealing with these children in the school.

- *Participation in multi-lingual activities*: Several occasions can be arranged in the school in which the children can be encouraged to present activities in different languages. For example, singing patriotic songs in different languages on important days like Independence Day, Republic Day, and National Integration Day. All the children in the school can be encouraged to enact plays, sing songs, participate in riddles and puzzles in both languages. Participation in such multilingual activities by all children in the class/school shall develop friendship among the children and reduce the sense of isolation of the children belonging to language minority groups.

- *Scope for Assessment in minority language*: In an informal way the teacher can use both the languages of majority and minority in asking questions/tasks during classroom transactions. In the formal assessment situations, questions and tasks in the minority languages should be used so that minority children do not feel difficulty in performing because of language difficulties.

Notes

Education of Children of Religious Minority Groups

Ours is a secular country where every religious practices are given utmost respect and our Constitution provides that *'all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion' (Article 25).* In spite of it, due to several reasons like blind beliefs, communal rivalry, extreme poverty of the minority groups, the children belonging to the religious minority groups continue to be the backward groups as far as school education is concerned. Therefore, they need special attention for improving their educational status in schools. Following aspects need to be taken care of by the state, school and the teachers:

- *Provision of access:* According to the constitutional provision (Article29(2)), no educational institution sustained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds can deny admission to anyone on grounds of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. The RTE Act also highlights this.

- *Modernizing religious educational institutions:* Educational institutions for children of religious groups stress on religious texts and teachings. Without sufficient exposure to the scientific and technological advances, students in these schools are likely to become more dogmatic and lack a holistic view of life. Moreover, they are deprived of several experiences that would help them to pursue higher learning and enabling them for wider choice in professions. It is now widely felt that these institutions need to be modernized so as to provide all possible opportunities to these children besides the religious education.

- *Integration in school activities:* In a normal school, different aspects of the minority culture can be integrated in different school activities so as to bring these children to the mainstream of the school education. Some such action points are:

  - *Respecting religious practices:* It is now a normal practice in all schools to close on the occasions of the important days of different religions in our country. This could be supplemented with discussion of the importance of such days and celebrations which would instil a sense of respect of each student toward the religion other than his/her own.

  - *Ensuring equal participation in school activities:* The sense of isolation within the children of the religious minority groups would be minimized by ensuring their equal participation in all forms of school activities.

  - *Provision of special coaching for backward children:* Since most of such children come from extremely poor background, provision may be made for special coaching of such backward children of minority communities.

- *Facilitating classroom activities:* Removing all possible sources of discriminating these children during classroom transactions is needed and for that the following few action points may be kept in mind.

  - *Ensuring participation in group activities:* Involvement in group activities in the class enhance peer interaction and strengthen group cohesion thus decreasing discrimination and stops others in giving derogatory remarks.

  - *Removing discrimination in learning materials:* Pictures, models, some text materials that create ill feelings among children of religious minority community should be removed from display and use. Nothing that causes disharmony should be allowed in the classroom transaction.

  - *Addressing language issue:* Children from Muslim families use Urdu language as their mother tongue. If there is an Urdu knowing teacher in the school, Muslim children would be benefited. If such teachers are not available, then some teachers of the school may be trained to at least speak working Urdu to instil confidence among the children. Such children may be encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities like singing songs and enacting with dialogues in Urdu.

- *Orientation of teachers, head teachers and educational administrators:* Short term orientations on how to facilitate the learning of children of religious minority groups and to protect them from any discriminatory treatments need to be given to the teachers and administrators.

As a teacher you can play a major role in the education of the children of minority community. If you don't belong to such a community you may have difficulty in understanding and motivating such children. Once you try to understand their dialect, language, cultural and religious background you can communicate effectively with these students and you can adapt the curriculum and instruction to their needs.

E3. What is the method of removing the sense of isolation of the children of minority groups in the classroom?

10.3.3 Education of the Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

A group that forms a very important part of equity issue at the elementary level is the Children with Special Needs (CWSN). You may have encountered in your classroom children with mild disabilities like loco-motor disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, lower level of intellectual functioning and deficits in adaptive behaviour. As a teacher, you have to deal with these children to improve their learning and performance along with other children in the

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classroom. Given below in Table 1 are the categories and identifying features of CWSE.

Table 1: Category and Identifying features of CWSN

Category of CWSN	Identifying Features
Loco-motor Impaired	Observable deformity in several limbs like hands, legs, neck, waist, and fingers. They may find difficulty in sitting, moving around, carrying or moving objects.
Visually Impaired	Observable deformity in the eye(s), Rubs eyes frequently, Frequent reddening of eyes, Covers one eye and tilts the head forward, Holds objects including the book close to his eyes, Asks other children for help when taking notes from the blackboard, Blinks frequently, Watery eyes, Complains about headache following close eye work, Bumps into people or objects.
Hearing and Speech Impaired	Has observable deformity of the ear(s), Frequent discharge from the ear(s),Complains of pain in ears frequently, Scratches ear(s) frequently, Turns head on one side to hear better, Frequently requests teachers to repeat directions/ instructions/questions, Makes many errors in taking dictation, While listening to the teacher watches his face carefully, Displays speech difficulty.
Learning Disabled	Displays poor academic achievement, Forgets learning after a short time, Is inattentive and distracted, Shows too much reliance on presentation of concrete objects, Has poor self-image, Lacks in self-confidence, Seeks repetition and practice, When the child is asked to do something, h/she seems to have a problem in understanding what he/she has been asked, Appears dull or slow in mannerisms, Difficulty in learning to do things, Difficulty in understanding abstract things, Overdependence on concrete examples/ objects.

> ⚒ **ACTIVITY 3**
>
> *Considering the identifying features of CWSN, list the actions to be taken for improving the learning and performance of the CWSN.*

The first step in dealing with the CWSN is to identify them properly along with the degree of disability. The teacher has to probe the problems of such children through proper medical check-up, testing and through observation of their behavioural characteristics. Once these children are identified, they are referred to appropriate persons/agencies to undergo a cure for their disability. For example, children with hearing problem may require medical treatment and may require correction (hearing aid) in order to overcome the disability. A child with visual problem may require lens or a magnifying glass. A child with loco-motor disability may require crutches or a wheel-chair to move around or some mechanism for adjustment of hands for writing.

The curative and corrective measures are accompanied by adjustment in curriculum and classroom transaction with the objective of making the curriculum accessible to such children as to the other children. The provisions that can be made in the classroom/school to promote learning of such children are as follows.

*   *Children with Loco-motor Impairment:* They have learning capability like other children. However, they may have difficulties in some learning activities. These children also develop adjustment problems because of non-acceptance or ridicule by their peers. In cooperation with the parents of the child, you may arrange to provide relevant aid for mobility of the limbs and functioning of the extremities. These services are available with the District Rehabilitation Centres. These can also be obtained from hospitals and primary health centres. You need to take care of such children on the following points during the classroom transaction:

    -   It is essential that you accept such children in your class ensuring that no critical comment on their disabilities is given by anybody in the class.

    -   He/she should be involved in all learning activities as an equal partner with his/her peers. It may be ensured that, they have adequate opportunities to participate in games, physical activities and recreational activities at their level of functioning.

    -   In classroom, suitable adjustments in view of the disability may be made in seating arrangements. The arrangement need to be such as not to create any physical hindrance to the child.

    -   In the assessment of performance of these children, particularly for grading or marking, their disability needs to be given due consideration.

For example, if they have difficulty in writing, they may be provided with extra time and, if necessary, oral testing may be used. In some areas they can record their answers on an audio cassette.

- *Children with Visual Impairment:* These children are identified easily. There are also partially sighted children. The vision of some of these children can be corrected through lens. But some can read only large print outs. Some may require magnifying glasses to read. Some children may have a restricted field of vision. It is necessary to identify such children, refer them to the hospital for an eye check-up, inform the parents and provide special help as mentioned below towards their education.

  - You need to adjust such children in front rows so that they can read from the blackboard with ease.

  - You need to write in bold letters which are legible and read aloud what you are writing on the blackboard.

  - In order to reduce the reading load on the child with visual problems, such children may be given training in listening with comprehension. They may be provided in the time schedule for a radio broadcast and encouraged to listen. Wherever facilities are available, audio cassettes may be used.

  - Opportunities need to be provided to them for participation in physical education programmes. A bookstand may be arranged for the partially sighted children.

- *Children with Hearing and Speech Impairment:* Some children have hearing difficulties and some have difficulty in speaking. Children with hearing problems may also develop speech problems. It is, therefore, desirable to identify such children and take steps to meet their educational needs.

  - Children with hearing problems should be seated in the front row so that they can listen what you speak with ease.

  - You need to use a reasonable level of pitch while speaking. Avoid mumbling and speaking too fast.

  - While you are demonstrating model or reading from the textbook, ensure that your lip movements are visible to such children so that they may be able to supplement listening by lip-reading.

  - Similarly when speaking while writing on the blackboard, you should face the students rather than speak with face towards the blackboard. For the same reason, you may avoid moving while speaking.

  - Peers may be encouraged to interact with these children and help one another in listening.

- Additional visuals, individually or in groups, may be used to supplement general teaching input.

- If speech disorder is due to an organic defect in the speech mechanism, medical help is required. Speech defects arising out of hearing problems can be corrected through speech training, using reinforced drill and practice.

- *Children with Learning Disability:* Identification of specific learning disabilities requires extensive training and educational provisions can be made appropriate to the type and level of learning difficulty. However, some common and practical steps you can take to help such children in your class are as follows.

  - You have to provide more concrete experiences for these children. These experiences can be provided by available standard or improvised materials. Direct experiences from the local environment may be provided through field trips.

  - These children require repetition and practice more than other normal children.

  - The learning task has to be presented in small steps and their attention needs to be drawn to important points of the learning task because they have comparatively very small attention span.

  - While they are engaged in learning, simple questions may be asked to give them a feeling of success.

  - Immediate reward in terms of verbal or material reinforcements should be the watchword for these children.

  - These children need to be provided with training on communication skills through practice in social situations.

  - Curriculum for these children has to be transacted through simple and interesting learning experiences.

- **Inclusive Education in the perspective of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RCFCE)**

  One of the major thrusts of SSA is to provide inclusive education to all children with special needs in general schools. SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided quality inclusive education in the general schools along with the normal children. It also supports a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education of children with special needs. This includes special training, in the form of school readiness programmes for CWSN, education

through special schools, home schooling and community based rehabilitation (CBR). The ultimate aim would be to mainstream all CWSN in neighbourhood schools.

E4. State any two reasons in favour of providing inclusive education for CWSN.

E5. State any two common actions that you can take in the classroom for facilitating learning of partially hearing and visually impaired children.

10.4   EDUCATION OF TRIBAL CHILDREN IN THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Among the disadvantaged learners, children of Scheduled Tribes often face difficulties because of their social, ethnic, economic and cultural differences. There are many the issues relating to their education which is discussed in this section.

10.4.1 The Issues

Since Independence, several efforts have been made for the overall development leading to the mainstreaming of tribal people. Still the problems of tribal people continue to be a matter of concern. Let's see some facts about the education of the tribal children in India.

- *Low literacy rate:* The Indian census 2001 reveals that the tribal literacy rate is low and in case of tribal girls it is still worse.

- *Low intake and high drop outs:* In schools enrolment of tribal children is low in comparison to other group and even before completion of elementary education, more than half of the enrolled tribal children drop out of the school without completing the elementary school education.

- *Low levels of comprehension:* Generally the school language is completely different from the home language of the tribal children due to which they find difficulty in understanding the classroom transaction and the language of the textbooks. As a result they exhibit very low levels of listening- and reading comprehension and their ability to communicate with others is also not very well developed.

- *Low achievement level:* Nearly all the achievement surveys conducted so far indicates extremely low level of achievement of tribal children and in particular the tribal girls. Tribal children not only score less marks in subject areas but also fail to gain life skills during schooling.

- *Experience of failure, and low self- esteem:* Continuously demonstrating poor performance, the tribal children lose their self-confidence and develop low self-esteem.

- *More disadvantages for the girls:* Tribal girls are more disadvantaged. They have to do household works as well as take care of their younger brothers and sisters in their home.

✖ ACTIVITY 4

List the possible causes of low literacy, high dropout, and low self-esteem among tribal children in your State.

Some of the major causes for such poor status of education of tribal children are as follows:

- *Lack of family awareness and support:* Most of the tribal children coming to school are *first generation learners.* That means none of the elders in the family has ever gone to school. As a result they are illiterate and living in far distant and remote areas. They are totally unaware of the necessity of school education and cannot provide any support to the child in the school/ Iin most cases they do not show any interest in their child's education. Even those who are now showing interest in their child's education, they do not have adequate educational experience to provide assistance and guidance to their children.

- *Extreme poverty of the family:* Extreme poverty of the tribal families is one of the major causes of children not attending school. Although they are being supported with textbooks, school uniforms, reading and writing materials free of cost, hostel facilities in selected areas without any payment and some stipends, the families still cannot afford to send their children to schools regularly as some of them are engaged in supplementing the meagre income of the family. Further most of the girls, as stated earlier, are engaged in the care of their younger ones and in domestic chores.

- *Inaccessibility to schooling facilities:* Usually the tribal habitations are small and scattered separated by adverse geographical conditions. It is difficult for any child to cross natural barriers to come to the neighbourhood school situated within 1km distance from the habitation as per Govt. norms.Establishing schools in all such small habitations with hardly 4 to 6 children is also not a viable proposition.

- *Inadequate and irregular teachers:* Poor communication facilities, presence of natural barriers and without minimum residential facilities make it even more difficult for any outside teachers to attend the schools regularly. Most

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of the teachers of these schools working in most adverse conditions in the remote tribal areas are quite demotivated and are quite disinterested in doing their job with proper enthusiasm.

- *Less/No use of Mother Tongue (Home Language) as Medium of Instruction:* Mother tongue as a medium of instruction plays a vital role to bridge the gap of language learning. A child who has mastery over mother tongue develops other languages easily. The picture given in Fig 1 below depicts this very well. If you compare the two bridges you will notice that one is strong and another is weak. This difference occurs due to no or less use of mother tongue in learning teaching process as well as in text book. But why do we need a strong foundation in mother tongue for beginners?

We know very well that if early education of the children is based on their mother tongue, the foundation in both language learning and concept learning will be strong. It has been observed that:

- Children learn better from a familiar starting point.

- Children learn better through a language they speak and understand well.

- Learning to read and write is easier in a familiar language.

- Concepts are best understood through mother tongue.

- Second language learning is more successful with a good foundation in mother tongue.

- Indigenous knowledge is best learned through indigenous language.

- Children with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in other languages.

- Knowledge and skills learnt through mother tongue are transferred efficiently while learning the second language.
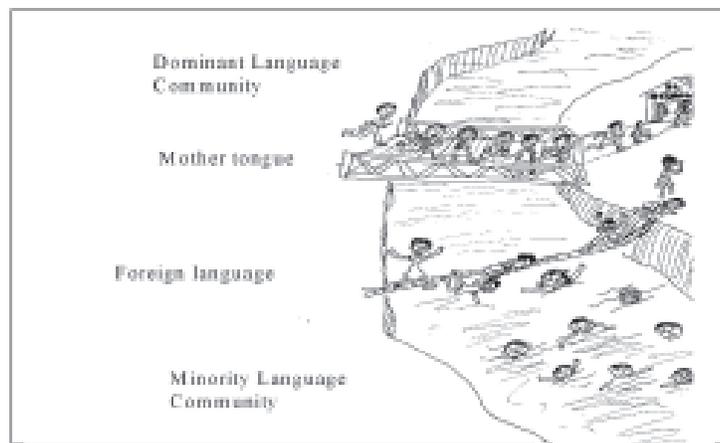

Fig 10.1: Language and Children

So what happens when children are taught only in second language?

Just imagine you are attending a class on any topic in history as a student and you are taught in a foreign language say Chinese which is totally unfamiliar to you. What would be your condition in such a situation? Could you properly grasp what are being taught? If your teacher cannot understand your language properly, could you interact with him? Almost similar is the condition of a tribal child attending a class in a primary school and taught by the teacher in a language not clearly understood by the child. In such a situation the children seem to be totally disinterested in what the teacher is saying. They stare vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some alphabets had been written. The children are afraid of asking any question as they are totally confused. At one point, tired of speaking and realizing that that the young children are completely lost, the teacher may ask them to copy the text from the black board. The only option then left for the children is to rote learn the text without understanding and those children who cannot bear the burden of rote learning leave the school. That is why it is recommended that second language should be introduced as a subject of instruction until the children are sufficiently familiar with it.

- ***Less or No use of local knowledge and socio-cultural context in learning-teaching process***: A tribal child lives in an active environment with a very wide scope to interact with rich natural and cultural resources available in and around his/her habitation. His/her experiences are gathered from his/her interactions with the socio-cultural and natural elements that exist in the environment. These elements can help the child to go beyond in acquiring the textbook knowledge. Experiences say that if children find their own festival, song and dance, picture, local fair etc. in their textbook as well as in learning teaching process, they find pleasure to learn. It creates a meaningful environment for children. But unfortunately tribal children do not get such scope in our school system. They have to read the textbooks which may not have content, concept, and example of their locality and culture.

E6. State *any* four reasons as to why mother tongue is important for beginners in the school?

10.4.2 Strategies for Resolving Pedagogic Issues

Given below some strategies to handle pedagogic issues we discussed above.

- ***Using mother tongue as medium of instruction:*** As mentioned earlier, if you teach a child having 5-6 years of exposure to his/her mother tongue in a language unknown to him/her, he/she may not understand anything that you say. For example: a Santali child in class I can understand *'alah'* but not 'house', *'merom'* but not 'goat', *'daka'* but not rice. Though he/she can

elaborate 5-10 sentences about his/her house (alah) in his/her mother tongue but may not understand one sentence about house in a language foreign to him/her.

So use of mother tongue (home language) as a medium of instruction not only makes the child understand the concept but also brings self confidence in him/her.

- *Integrating local knowledge in learning teaching process:* No textbook can incorporate all the local knowledge from different areas of a state or a country. Here a teacher has to start with local knowledge to teach each concept and link them with the textbook knowledge. For example: If a teacher has to teach 'unit of measurement' in mathematics he/she has to start with the non-standard units that are used in day to day life such as *sero, mana, pana, kahana* etc. After that he/she can teach the standard units of measurement like Kg, Km, Litre etc.

- *Using socio-cultural components in learning-teaching process:* A community has its own life style, own social values, socio-political organization and religious beliefs. They have their own food habits, dress and ornaments, agriculture and industry. They have knowledge on every aspect of life and this base knowledge need to be taken into account to facilitate learning. Further knowledge can be imparted based on their cultural elements,

- *Using folk materials in classroom learning:* Every community has its folk stories, songs, riddles, drawing and painting, puzzles etc. While facilitating learning, these materials may be used in their full potentials because these materials not only facilitate for easy and meaningful acquisition of learning outcomes but also make the learning process pleasurable.

- *Adapting textbook with socio-cultural knowledge:* Adapting the text book means, bringing the socio-cultural elements it the text of the text books and preparing alternative text wherever necessary for children's experiential learning.

- *Learning of children's mother tongue by the teacher:* If a teacher knows children's mother tongue, his/her job will be easier even though it is difficult to learn language of each child. But when a teacher has commitment, he/she can learn languages to talk with the children and community in their language.

- *Learning cultural knowledge from the community:* The teacher has to learn the knowledge of the child's community first. This can be possible when the teacher has interest to learn, and identifies himself /herself with students' community. He/she has to talk with the community people, discuss with them on different socio-cultural milieus and attend festivals in the community.

- *Involving communities in school activities:* A good teacher always uses the community resources. Community involvement in school management and classroom activities brings a positive change in   the performance of children in the school. A community member can be involved to teach students local art and craft, songs and music, fables and stories, and other good practices of   the community.

Thus we can say that use of mother tongue (home language) as medium of instruction in our learning-teaching process will facilitate learning better now and in future.

E7. Write four major strategies to solve problems of tribal learners in your school.

10.4.3 Understanding the Socio-Cultural Components

If you can interact with tribal children in their mother tongue and have adequate knowledge of the socio-cultural elements of their environment, then you are in a better position to facilitate their learning particularly during early period of their schooling. Undoubtedly, a teacher from the local community (mother tongue teacher) will easily bring socio-cultural elements of the local community into the classroom. But when a teacher neither knows children's mother tongue nor have any acquaintance with their socio cultural components, there is a communication gap between the students and the teacher. In that case the teacher will not be able to understand his/her students and students will not be able to follow their teacher.

Figure 10.2 below summarizes the different socio-cultural components of a society.

Fig 10.2:   Socio-Cultural Components of a Society

Notes

First of all the teacher has to understand the socio-cultural process and identify culturally available resources in tribal area for contextualizing the learning teaching process without facing difficulties. For this the teacher has to be a part of the community life.

Let us consider an example. If, a teacher has to discuss the 'Type of food' from the textbook, he/she can start with the food type and food habits of tribal people as the types of food explained in text book may not match the food the tribal children take every day. So to link their experience on types of food, the teacher has to go beyond the textbook. In other words, he/she must use children's experience on types of food, food and health etc. as the base for initiating the textbook knowledge.

✖ ACTIVITY 5

Tribal people have their own Feasts and Festivals, Food habits, Dress and Ornaments, Religious belief and practices and Health and hygiene. Choose any four of these components and state examples of how they can be utilized in the teaching learning process of the tribal children

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Folk Materials for facilitating learning: Folk materials like folk stories and songs are very useful socio-cultural elements that can be effectively used for facilitating learning of all children and particularly the children from tribal communities where these materials are available in plenty and children are extremely fond of them. The folk materials are varied as shown in the figure 10.3 below and have multiple uses in different contexts facilitating classroom learning

Fig.10.3: Different Types of Folk Materials

10.4.4 Planning and Managing Multi-Lingual Classroom

Every classroom in the schools in tribal dominated areas is a multi-lingual classroom. Either children from different tribal groups with their respective

mother tongues are in one class reading in the standard state language (typical multi-lingual situation) or all children in a class are from one tribal group with the same mother tongue reading in the standard state language (typically bilingual). Although the situation prevailing in the classroom is bilingual or multi-lingual, the classroom teaching-learning transactions are conducted in the standard state language ignoring the mother tongues of the children. In order to make learning more meaningful at the early stage of schooling using mother tongue and gradually learning more languages, a programme of Multi-lingual Education has been initiated in some selected schools in the tribal areas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

Multilingual Education (MLE) is a programme of language learning and cognitive development providing:

- a strong educational foundation in the first language,

- successful bridging to one or more additional languages,

- enabling the use of both/all languages for effective learning of different subjects.

Since language is the vehicle of culture and traditions, no sensible language curriculum can afford to miss the cultural context while learning the language or learning other subjects through the mother tongue. In the MLE programme, the curriculum is based on the cultural context of the local community, using local knowledge and customs through which a child can develop common concepts of all areas of learning. So the purpose of a multilingual education programme is to develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills enabling children to operate equally in their native, state, and national languages. It should be started with *mother tongue (home language) with transition to second language and other languages in a phased/graded manner*.

A multi-lingual classroom situation reveals that children with different mother tongue learn together in a class. Although they live in the same locality, their life style, food habit, religious belief, dress and ornaments are different. In other words their socio-cultural back ground is different. This is a peculiar class room situation where a teacher has to play an innovative role to facilitate learning of each child. Observe the following picture.

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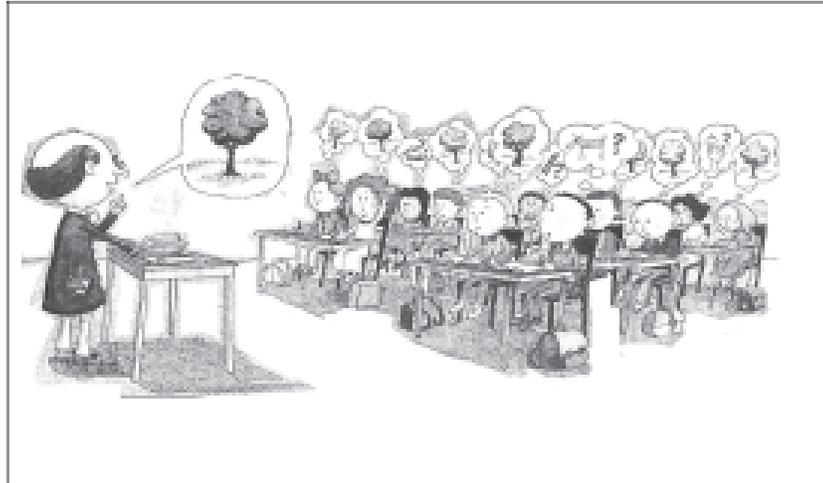
The teacher asked "What do you see in this picture?" in a multi-lingual classroom situation. Find the students' responses from the picture. Have you experienced such a situation?

Managing a multi-lingual classroom is a real challenge for the teacher as this type of classroom management:

• requires the teacher to be a speaker of the child's language and preferably a member of the child's community,

• expects close rapport among the students and teacher,

• emphasizes the values of the child's culture,

• provides a safe and developmentally sensible bridge to other cultures and other languages that the child will encounter,

• learning begins with known and moves to unknown,

• uses cultural concepts to teach basic academic concept,

• builds on the vocabulary that the child possesses and adds the second language vocabulary from what the child has learnt,

• requires involvement of local community in the development of curriculum, learning materials and learning teaching process, and

• utilizes thematic approach to integrate child's cultural knowledge with academic learning.

E8. State the characteristics of an ideal multi-lingual classroom.

E9. What are the two important characteristics a teacher should possess to manage the MLE classes effectively?

In Unit-9, you have learnt how subjects are integrated. In a multi-lingual class, several socio-cultural knowledge of the locality/community to which the children belong are integrated under one theme combining concepts of different subjects. Such a mapping of the integrated concepts and socio-cultural knowledge is called a '*Theme Web*'.

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For example, let us take the theme '**Water**':

Subject	Concept(s)	Socio-cultural Knowledge of the community (in home language)
Geography	Natural source of water	Springs, stream, river, rain
Science	Purification of water	Sedimentation in pots, filtering with fine cloth, using powdered seeds of drum sticks
Mathematics	Measurement of volume of water	Non-standard measures, counting
Language	Composition, Recitation	Local/folk songs,

When presented diagrammatically this arrangement looks like a web and hence called a 'theme web'.

Materials to manage multi-lingual classroom

To manage multilingual class a teacher has to prepare theme webs and some contextual teaching learning material, such as: picture story book in mother tongue, alphabet chart in mother tongue, Word Web, Multilingual dictionary, Total Physical Response (TPR) in second language etc.

Picture Story Book: Picture story book is a reading material in which left hand side of the page contains a picture and right hand side has text. The text elaborates the picture in the mother-tongue. The sentences are simple and short. It is one type of picture reading which promotes reading with guessing. An example of a picture story book on Santali language is given below.

Meram neherkate tarub metadeyay hape inj

hatam aalah khanah jam mota hej lenge

ada jaminjame. (The goat requested the tiger

to take him and to leave his child.)

Taking the community's folk tales, the picture story books can be prepared in children's mother tongue where children can develop reading skills as well as

develop power of comprehension. If a teacher has 20/30 picture stories for a class, the children will get a scope to enhance their language skills specially reading skill.

Word Web: Word web is a strategy to move from Mother Tongue (MT) to second language. As children know their mother tongue better, word web will help them to go from MT to second language. Look at Fig 10.4 given below. The middle circle represents the topic. The first box represents picture and the last box represents the meaning in 2nd language.

If a teacher has word web for each topic of the text book (class I and class II), the language transition will undoubtedly be easier.
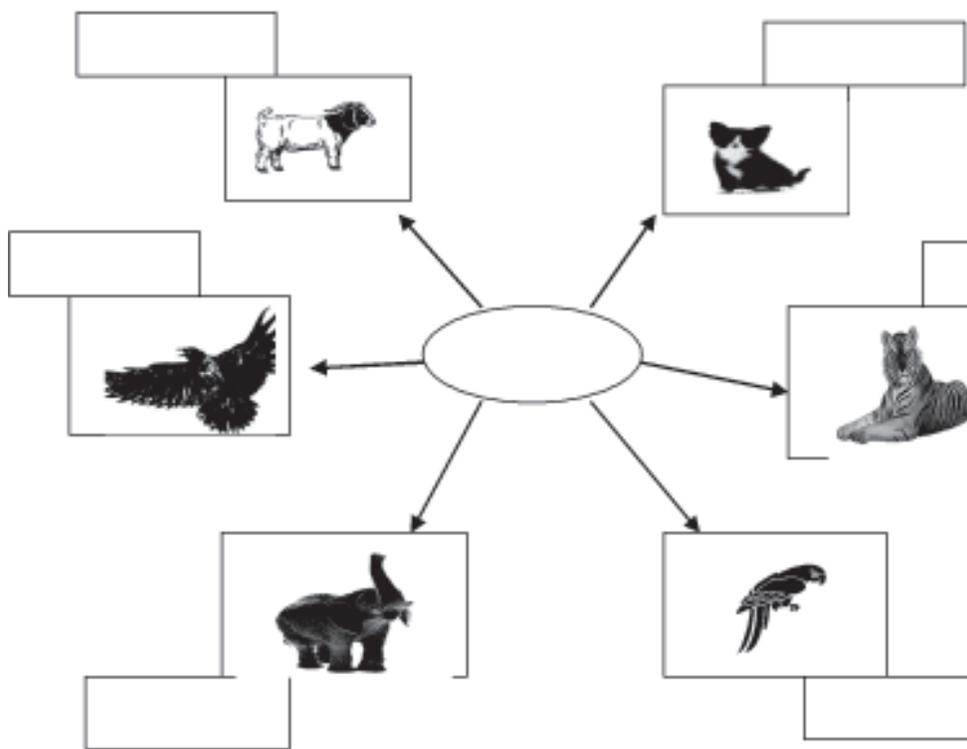

Fig 10.4: Illustration of Word web

Multilingual Dictionary: A teacher can prepare a multilingual dictionary by taking words from the mother tongue of each child in his/her class. He/she can take the help of a local mother tongue teacher and children for building words as shown in Fig 10.5. Multilingual dictionary is hence a device for easy language transition. It not only increases vocabulary of the children but also enhances the power of comprehension.

Fig 10.5: Illustration of Multilingual dictionary

Letter Recognition Card: Compare the two charts shown in Fig 10.6. Which chart you think will be beneficial for Santali children?

Surely Chart No-2 because it is contextual for the Santali children.

This kind of material helps the teacher to teach letters of alphabet meaningfully.

Fig 10.6: Illustration of Letter Recognition Chart

Total Physical Response (TPR): Usually children not well versed in a particular language can respond to some commands that instruct the student to give some very common physical responses. These are commonly in the following forms:

'Stand up', 'Sit down', 'Touch your head', 'Turn around', 'Hold your pen', 'Touch your nose'

and are called 'Total Physical Response' (TPR). This is a type of 'listen and do' activity. In early classes (especially in class I) the teacher can develop second language through these TPRs. Here the children can do these activities in response to teacher's action combined with the verbal command. In course of doing the activity the children will gradually acquire the meaning in second language.

Notes

Experience says that if a non-MT teacher uses about 200 TPRs in class I, he/she can manage a multilingual class well.

E10. Write 10 TPRs which can be used for beginners in your school.

Multi-lingual Education Programme holds a lot of promise for several innovative ideas for using the language and cultural contexts of the community for encouraging meaningful and sustainable effective learning of very high quality. Although, it is highly suitable for the schools in the tribal areas, it is also equally effective for other schools where a child has to learn and interact in more than one language.

10.5 LET US SUM UP

- Some children are disadvantaged in the normal classroom conditions because of their socio-economic –cultural conditions. Some children are also disadvantaged as they have some special needs to make up for their physical and learning disabilities. Girls, children of minority groups, children with special needs are some major groups of disadvantaged children in the classroom.

- The mismatch between the socio-cultural contexts of home and school environments is the main reason of disadvantage for such children.

- For facilitating meaningful learning for the disadvantaged students, the local socio-cultural contexts and knowledge have to be incorporated with the textbook knowledge.

- Community mobilization, creating favourable infrastructure, removal of discriminatory elements and practices in the school and classroom, providing timely incentives would reduce the problems that girls are facing in schools.

- Provision of text materials in home language, engagement of language teacher are two major supporting factors for facilitating learning of children of language minority groups.

- Modernization of schools managed by religious bodies, encouraging participation in all group activities in the school and classroom, removing all factors causing isolation, and providing supportive learning materials and incentives would considerably reduce the problems of children from the religious minority families.

- Children with special needs like children with loco-motor disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, lower level of intellectual functioning and deficits in adaptive behaviour require specific methods for their identification and specific ways to facilitate their learning in the normal classroom.

- Apart from socio-cultural specificity, the tribal children's greatest factor of disadvantage is the mismatch between their home language and the school language.

- Multilingual education has a lot of promise for tribal children in meaningful learning of all school subjects initially through the mother tongue and gradually through other languages along with the use of culturally contextual materials and experiences.

10.6 UNIT END EXERCISES

1. What is the importance of the local specific contexts for effective classroom learning?

2. What are the difficulties faced by a CWSN in a normal classroom? How can you take care of such children in the classroom for facilitating their learning?

3. Suppose you are teaching in a tribal dominated school. You do not know the mother tongue of those children. How can you organize activities that children will learn better?

4. You are to teach about 'Health' in class III. Design activities for the topic based on children's local language.

10.8 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

E1. Use of children's experiences, Use of local contextual examples, focusing learning as a process, ensuring children's liberty to ask questions, and focus on thinking of children.

E2. Schools at a distance, unfavourable school environment, discriminatory school/classroom practices, materials with adverse gender bias (any two).

E3. Ensuring participation in group work.

E4. Scope for peer support in learning, Enhancement of self-respect.

E5. Sitting in the front row (for clear vision of the black board vision impaired and for better hearing the teacher's voice) and participation in group work.

E6. Any four of the following:
   - Children learn better through a language they speak and understand well.
   - Learning to read and write is easier in a familiar language.

- Concepts are best understood through mother tongue.
- Second language learning is more successful with a good foundation in mother tongue.
- Indigenous knowledge is best learned through indigenous language.
- Children with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in other languages.

E7. Any four like the following:

• Using mother tongue as the medium of instruction

• Using socio-cultural context and folk materials

• Adapting the existing text book with local knowledge

• Using local contextual TLM in learning teaching process

E8. Free use of more than one language including the students' home language, use of locally available folk materials, more group learning, free interaction among students and teacher, presence of support from the local community,

E9. Fluent in students' home language and also in other languages, Rapport with the students.

E10. Stand up, Sit down, Come here, Clap your hands, Nod your head, Raise your hands, Touch your nose, Show me your teeth,…..(basically imperative sentences)

10.7 SUGGESTED READING & REFERENCES

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