

A Study on the Practical Pathways of Multicultural Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in China's Border Ethnic Areas: A Case Study of Jingzu School in Dongxing City, Guangxi

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of globalization, as China's modernization process continues to advance, globalization and cultural diversity have increasingly become core characteristics of social development, thereby driving widespread attention and discussion of multicultural education within the field of pedagogy. Multicultural education not only responds to the practical need for global cultural integration but also provides a theoretical foundation for cultivating citizens with a global perspective, cross-cultural understanding, and a sense of social responsibility. This is especially significant at the primary and secondary school stage, as students are in a critical period of cultural identity formation, value development, and social behavior shaping. Therefore, implementing multicultural education at this stage holds important social and educational value. Based on fieldwork conducted at Jingzu School in Dongxing City, Guangxi, and combined with theoretical analysis, this study summarizes three practical pathways for multicultural education in primary and secondary schools in border ethnic regions, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical reference for educational practices in relevant fields.

1. The Problem Statement

China has been a multi-ethnic country since ancient times, with the cultures, languages, customs, and traditions of various ethnic groups intertwining, forming a rich cultural diversity that profoundly influences the historical development and social evolution of each ethnic group. With the continuous progress of China's modernization and the increasing prominence of globalization and cultural diversity, multicultural education in border ethnic regions has gradually become one of the most pressing and important issues in the field of education in China. Particularly in China's border ethnic regions, these areas are not only geographically remote, but also have a complex and diverse ethnic cultural background. Due to historical, economic, and other factors, social development is relatively lagging, and there are significant disparities in education resources and educational levels. Moreover, the primary and secondary school stages are critical periods for the formation of students' cognitive structures, values, and social behaviors. The content and form of education have a profound impact on students' cultural awareness and social adaptability. Therefore,

how to effectively implement multicultural education in these regions has become an urgent task to improve educational quality, promote social harmony, and foster national unity. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the complex interactions in the educational process. He suggests that individual growth and development unfold through bidirectional interactions between the individual and the various layers of their environment. As these interactions increase and become more complex, individual development is realized.^[1] Education, at its core, is a dynamic bidirectional process that involves not only interactions between students and teachers but also the collective influence of factors from students, families, schools, and the broader social environment. In border ethnic regions, the educational environment is particularly complex, with various ethnic cultural traditions, language differences, and diverse value systems shaping the unique characteristics of educational interactions. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes the impact of interactions between environmental layers on individual development, offering a new perspective for the study of multicultural education. This theory is especially relevant in border ethnic regions, where designing multicultural education programs that align with local cultural contexts and promote cultural understanding and recognition between ethnic groups is particularly important.

Multicultural Education, as an educational philosophy, emphasizes equality and respect for different cultural groups within the educational system. It advocates for students from diverse cultural backgrounds to enhance mutual understanding and tolerance through learning and communication. As American multicultural education scholar Banks once said, Multicultural education is a transformative educational action and a curriculum aimed at changing the inertial structures of education.^[2] In a society where multiple ethnic groups and cultures coexist, it seeks to reform the educational environment to ensure the equal development of the cultures of all ethnic groups, allowing students from various ethnic backgrounds to enjoy equal educational opportunities and academic fairness.^[3] By integrating multicultural education as a core component of the curriculum, it not only fosters students' identification with their own ethnic culture but also enhances their cross-cultural communication and cooperation skills, promoting the blending and coexistence of different ethnic cultures. There has been considerable academic discussion on multicultural education, but research on the specific implementation paths and unique challenges of multicultural education in primary and secondary schools in China's border ethnic regions remains underdeveloped. In particular, further exploration is needed on how to reconcile the local and universal aspects of educational practices.

This study examines the implementation of multicultural education in primary and secondary schools in China's border ethnic regions, using the case of Dongxing Jingzu School in Guangxi. It analyzes the current situation, challenges, and strategies for promoting multicultural education, offering both theoretical and empirical insights. The research highlights how multicultural education can foster ethnic cultural exchange, enhance national identity, and strengthen national cohesion, all while respecting cultural diversity in these regions.

2. Overview of Dongxing Jingzu School in Guangxi, China, and Its Lively Practice of Multicultural Education

2.1. Overview of Dongxing Jingzu School in Guangxi, China

Dongxing Jingzu School (hereinafter referred to as Jingzu School) is a comprehensive school that includes both primary and secondary education, it is located at No. 45, Group 12, Wanei Village, Jiangping Town, Dongxing City, Fangchenggang, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The school is situated near the Jin Beach on Wanei Island in Jiangping Town, which is part of the Jingzu ethnic enclave, a scenic and culturally rich area. It faces the Mong Cai City in Vietnam across the

sea. Established in 1952, Dongxing Jingzu School has adhered to an educational philosophy focused on ethnic education. Leveraging the advantage of being located in the only settlement area of the Jingzu people, the school has continuously improved its routine management while actively carrying out educational activities that reflect the unique culture of the Jingzu people. The school also actively engages in cultural exchanges and educational activities with domestic and international primary and secondary schools, universities, and educational organizations, making it an important base for the preservation and transmission of Jingzu culture. As it moves forward into a new era, Jingzu School will continue to keep pace with the times and embrace innovation, establish modern educational concepts, and serve the border region. The school strives to provide an education that satisfies the people, working to build a brand school rich in ethnic characteristics. It is dedicated to becoming a symbol of multicultural education in the border ethnic regions of Guangxi, China.

2.2. The Lively Practice of Multicultural Education at Dongxing Jingzu School in Guangxi, China

2.2.1. Jingzu School takes the promotion and popularization of the national common language as the primary goal in the implementation of multicultural education

As an essential bridge for communication between different ethnic groups, the national common language plays an irreplaceable role in the effective implementation of multicultural education. Jingzu School continues to uphold the philosophy of "using language as a bridge to serve the faculty and students, gathering ethnic unity; using language as a chain to tell the stories of the Chinese nation well; using activities as a platform to unite the hearts and minds of students from various ethnic groups; and creating a campus service platform to promote the popularization of the national common language, reinforcing the awareness of the Chinese national community." The school is committed to fostering understanding and integration among different ethnic groups through language and writing. The school strictly adheres to the requirements of higher authorities, actively organizing the National Common Language Promotion Week, and enriches the content of the event by conducting a variety of activities to raise awareness among both teachers and students about the importance of using the national common language. Based on its unique ethnic characteristics, Jingzu School organizes students from various ethnic groups to participate in class-based activities such as the hand-drawn poster competition themed "Speaking good Mandarin makes it easier for all of us," creating an atmosphere where everyone speaks Mandarin and uses standardized characters. Through these activities, students express themselves and communicate in Mandarin, which not only enhances their language skills but also further promotes cultural identity.

In addition, the school organizes teachers and students to participate in Chinese character dictation competitions. This not only stimulates students' interest in learning the national common language but also enriches their experiences and helps them develop the ability to remain calm in challenging situations. By integrating the Chinese character writing competition into daily educational practices, the school not only improves students' writing abilities but also helps them deeply appreciate the charm of traditional Chinese culture. Each National Common Language Promotion Week injects new vitality into the school, creating a harmonious atmosphere where teachers and students communicate seamlessly in Mandarin, without barriers. These activities not only enhance interaction between teachers and students but also lay a solid foundation for the successful implementation of multicultural education, promoting the blending of ethnic cultures and enhancing national cohesion.

2.2.2. The Jingzu School uses the establishment of a platform for multicultural interaction, communication, and integration as the educational carrier

Jingzu School has always prioritized respect as its foundation, actively promoting the integration of different ethnic groups through mixed classes. The school encourages the implementation of mixed teaching and combined accommodation, and organizes multi-level, multi-field, and diverse ethnic unity and exchange activities to foster communication and mutual progress among students from various ethnic groups. In addition to offering the nationally mandated basic courses, Jingzu School also offers classes in the Jing language, organizes interest groups such as the solo stringed instrument (duoxianqin), Jingzu song and dance, and bamboo pole dance, all aimed at showcasing the ethnic culture of the Jing people and promoting cultural exchange and integration among different ethnicities. The school respects the cultural customs of students from different ethnic backgrounds and allows students to wear their traditional ethnic clothing, except on special holidays. For instance, every Jingzu student has a set of Jingzu clothing. However, to maintain campus order, the school has a rule that ethnic clothing is not to be worn randomly, except during special cultural holidays. Jingzu School also organizes “Four Festivals and One Exchange” (Art Festival, Sports Festival, Reading Festival, Science and Technology Festival, and exchanges with schools along the China-Vietnam border). Among these, the Art Festival is particularly rich and diverse, with a focus on the “Ha Festival,” the most important traditional festival for the Jing people, also known as the “Singing Ha Festival,” where singing plays a central role. In 2006, the State Council approved the Ha Festival as part of the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage. Originally, the Ha Festival was a folk event held to pray for good weather and well-being. Over time, it has evolved into a comprehensive festival that integrates folk customs, culture, tourism, and trade, promoting the inheritance and preservation of Jingzu culture.

In addition, Jingzu School attaches great importance to traditional ethnic sports. Each fall semester, the school organizes a week-long Sports Festival, providing students with the opportunity to relax their bodies and relieve stress, allowing them to unwind after intense studies while also promoting physical health. Through these multicultural activities, Jingzu School not only promotes the exchange and integration of ethnic cultures but also contributes to the implementation of multicultural education, fostering a harmonious atmosphere where all faculty and students coexist peacefully.

2.2.3. The Jingzu School ensures the implementation of its educational goals by strengthening the construction of a campus culture with diverse ethnic features

In the multicultural education practice of Jingzu School, cultural construction is always based on the respect and inclusion of all ethnic cultures. The school is dedicated to creating a dynamic and diverse learning environment for students through the exchange and integration of multiculturalism. The school’s multicultural education not only focuses on the practice of ethnic unity and cultural inheritance but also aims to promote the sustainable development of ethnic cultures through multidimensional cultural interaction and transmission, further enhancing the cohesion and cultural confidence of the Chinese nation. As a key aspect of its multicultural education, Jingzu School actively organizes various ethnic unity and progress demonstration activities. Drawing on local ethnic characteristics, the school carefully designs and implements a series of activities aimed at promoting ethnic unity, such as ethnic cultural festivals, collective activities, and interactive exchanges. These activities provide platforms for students from different ethnic backgrounds to communicate and interact, fostering mutual understanding and collective progress, and cultivating a spirit of collectivism and national identity among students.

In order to further optimize the campus environment for education, Jingzu School, with its rich

historical background and unique campus landscape, has thoughtfully created a cultural corridor. This corridor aims to highlight the cultural symbols and spirit of the Chinese nation, conveying the school's unique educational philosophy and campus mission. The various cultural signs and display boards within the cultural corridor not only reflect the school's efforts in preserving ethnic cultures but also deeply showcase the school's historical development, the achievements of teachers and students, and behavioral norms. As students walk through the corridor, they not only feel the profound influence of Chinese culture but also enhance their sense of national pride and cultural identity through cultural immersion. Additionally, the school has established a "School History and Honor Room" as an important facility to further strengthen cultural inheritance and educational functions. The School History and Honor Room serves as both a museum and an important moral education base. By displaying the development history and glorious achievements of Jingzu School, it allows students to better understand the school's historical origins and cultural accumulation. The room showcases historical photos, documents, the struggles and achievements of past principals, and the honors the school has received in various educational fields. This space not only helps students understand the school's development but also provides a source of cultural identity, inspiring a sense of responsibility and mission.

3. The Practical Pathways of Multicultural Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in China's Border Ethnic Areas

The implementation of multicultural education serves, on one hand, to help members of ethnic minorities improve their ability to adapt to modern mainstream society, aiming for the maximum personal development. On the other hand, it aims to inherit and promote the outstanding cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, enrich the human cultural treasury, and contribute to humanity as a whole.^[4]The primary and secondary school stage is a critical period for students to gradually form their cultural awareness, values, and social behaviors, making education during this stage particularly important. The study finds that the multicultural education model of Guangxi Dongxing City Jingzu School is highly replicable. Based on this, three practical pathways for multicultural education in primary and secondary schools in border ethnic areas are summarized for reference and guidance.

3.1. The widespread promotion of the national common language (Mandarin) in primary and secondary schools in border ethnic regions

With the advancement of social modernization in China, Mandarin plays an indispensable role in the education system of ethnic regions as a bridge connecting ethnic, regional, and cultural differences. In the multicultural education of primary and secondary schools in China's border ethnic regions, the popularization of the national common language (Mandarin) is an important means of promoting ethnic cultural exchange, enhancing national identity, and fostering ethnic unity.

Firstly, the popularization of the national common language (Mandarin) can break down language barriers and promote communication and understanding among ethnic groups. In border ethnic regions, there is linguistic diversity, with various ethnic groups such as the Zhuang, Han, and Dong having different native languages. These language differences often create obstacles to communication. As the official language of the country, Mandarin serves as a fundamental tool for communication and exchange. Its promotion can help students from various ethnic backgrounds reduce the difficulties caused by dialect differences, thereby improving their learning efficiency and overall competence. In the educational process, Mandarin is not only a tool for transmitting academic knowledge but also serves as a platform for sharing educational resources and social information, ensuring that students from all ethnic groups can equally access knowledge and

opportunities, thus achieving educational equity. Secondly, the popularization of Mandarin helps to strengthen ethnic unity and social cohesion among primary and secondary school students. In border ethnic regions, due to historical and cultural differences, there may be certain barriers between ethnic groups. By promoting Mandarin, students from different ethnic backgrounds can learn together in the same classroom, reducing communication obstacles caused by language differences. This common linguistic foundation fosters mutual understanding and respect between ethnic groups and provides a basis for enhancing their recognition of Chinese culture. Through learning Mandarin, students not only acquire the essential language skills needed in modern society but also develop shared cultural values, strengthening their sense of identification with national culture. This, in turn, provides strong support for building the consciousness of the Chinese national community. The widespread use of Mandarin has, to some extent, become a bridge between "diversity" and "unity," promoting the better integration of various ethnic groups in border regions into Chinese culture. However, in the process of promoting Mandarin, it is essential to respect and protect the linguistic and cultural diversity of ethnic regions. Educators should balance the preservation of ethnic languages with the popularization of Mandarin in their curriculum, promoting the harmonious development of multicultural education. Through a bilingual education model, students can master Mandarin while maintaining their identification with and pride in their own ethnic language and culture. This dual approach not only enhances students' language skills but also strengthens their sense of belonging and confidence in their ethnic culture, laying a solid foundation for better integration into national culture and societal development.

In conclusion, the popularization of Mandarin in border ethnic regions is not only a tool for linguistic communication but also a key force in promoting ethnic unity, social integration, and cultural identity. Through well-designed language education policies, primary and secondary schools in these regions can provide equal educational opportunities for students, while respecting cultural diversity, and fostering mutual understanding and collaborative development among various ethnic groups.

3.2. Primary and secondary schools in border ethnic regions actively carry out multicultural activities

In the border ethnic regions of China, actively promoting multicultural activities in primary and secondary schools is a crucial approach to fostering ethnic unity and enhancing cultural identity. To effectively advance this initiative, education authorities and schools must adopt a series of targeted strategies.

Firstly, schools should strengthen the development of multicultural curricula, integrating the histories, languages, religions, customs, and traditions of various ethnic groups into teaching. This will help deepen students' understanding of and respect for different cultures. For instance, ethnic culture-specific courses can be introduced, wherein experts, scholars, or community members from diverse ethnic backgrounds are invited to engage with students, providing in-depth insights into the traditional festivals, folk arts, and cultural practices of different groups. Such initiatives contribute to cultivating an attitude of inclusivity and respect among students. Secondly, schools should encourage and organize a wide array of extracurricular cultural activities, such as ethnic dance, singing, and handicraft making. By holding cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and folk competitions, schools can not only showcase the traditional cultures of various ethnic groups but also offer students the opportunity to experience and participate in the transmission of these cultures in practice. These activities serve to spark students' interest, foster their recognition of multiculturalism, and promote mutual understanding and communication among students from different ethnic backgrounds. In addition, teachers play a pivotal role in multicultural education. They must possess cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, using effective teaching designs and classroom management techniques to create a learning environment that respects diversity and fosters equal exchange. Schools should provide teachers with relevant training to enhance their

understanding of multicultural education and their ability to implement it effectively.

In conclusion, the promotion of multicultural activities in primary and secondary schools in border ethnic regions is not only an essential means of reinforcing cultural identity and ethnic unity but also a vital strategy for improving students' comprehensive capabilities and promoting social harmony.

3.3. Strengthening the construction of a multicultural and distinctive cultural environment in primary and secondary schools in border ethnic regions

In the border ethnic regions of China, strengthening the construction of a multicultural and distinctive cultural environment in primary and secondary schools is an important measure to promote multicultural education and enhance cultural identity. To effectively achieve this goal, education authorities and schools should adopt a series of strategies to create an inclusive and diverse cultural atmosphere.

Firstly, schools should prioritize campus cultural construction and make full use of school spaces to display ethnic cultural characteristics. For example, schools can set up cultural walls in classrooms, corridors, and public areas to showcase the history, art, traditional festivals, and other cultural elements of different ethnic groups, thus forming a culturally rich and regionally distinctive environment. Additionally, schools should organize regular cultural exchange activities, such as ethnic cultural lectures and handicraft exhibitions, allowing students to experience multicultural influences in their daily lives, enhancing their cultural confidence and respect for other ethnic cultures. Secondly, schools should enhance the immersive experience of the cultural atmosphere through environmental design and the construction of cultural facilities. For instance, they can establish dedicated ethnic culture display areas or activity rooms, offering opportunities to learn about and experience the traditions of various ethnic groups. Moreover, schools can collaborate with local communities and cultural institutions to carry out cultural interactive projects, such as organizing ethnic music, dance, and other artistic activities, and inviting cultural inheritors to conduct live performances and workshops. This approach allows students to not only perceive and understand the uniqueness of ethnic cultures but also to increase their recognition and interest in different cultures. Lastly, schools should strengthen collaboration with families and communities to jointly create a multicultural atmosphere. By regularly holding parent meetings and community cultural activities, schools can work with parents and community members to discuss how to better pass on and promote ethnic culture, encourage parents to provide cultural learning resources for their children, and involve them in the organization and planning of school cultural activities. This type of school-family-community collaboration helps form a collective effort across society to promote cultural identity.

In conclusion, strengthening the construction of a multicultural and distinctive cultural environment in primary and secondary schools in border ethnic regions not only improves students' cultural literacy but also lays a solid foundation for promoting ethnic unity and enhancing social harmony.

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