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POSITION PAPER

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP

ON

TEACHING OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES



First Edition

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teaching of Social Sciences

The social sciences encompass diverse concerns of society and include a wide a range of content, drawn from the disciplines of history, geography, political science, economics and sociology. The selection and organisation of material into a meaningful social science curriculum, enabling students to develop a critical understanding of society, is therefore a challenging task. The possibilities of including new dimensions and concerns are immense especially in view of the student's own life experiences.

It is important to reinstate the significance of the social sciences by not only highlighting its increasing relevance for a job in the rapidly expanding service sector, but by pointing to its indispensability in laying the foundations for an analytical and creative mindset.

It is often presumed that only natural and physical phenomena lend themselves to scientific inquiry, and that knowledge areas pertaining to the human sciences (history, geography, economics, political science etc.) cannot be, by their very nature "scientific". But it is necessary to recognise that the social sciences lend themselves to scientific inquiry just as much as the natural and physical sciences do, as well as to articulate the ways in which the methods employed by social sciences are distinct (but in no way inferior) to those of the natural and physical sciences.

The social sciences carry a normative responsibility to create and widen the popular base for human values, namely freedom, trust, mutual respect, respect for diversity, etc. Thus, social science teaching basically should be aimed at investing in a child a moral and mental energy so as to provide her with the ability to think independently and deal with the social forces that threaten these values, without losing her individuality. Social Science teaching can achieve this by promoting children's ability to take initiative to critically reflect on social issues that have a bearing on the creative coexistence between individual good and collective good. Critical reflection pre-supposes a comprehensive curriculum in which learners – both teachers and children – participate in generating knowledge without any latent and manifest forces of coercion. It is through this non-coercive and participatory mode that children and teachers stand the best chance of making teaching and learning interesting as well as enjoyable.

The disciplines that make up the social sciences, namely history, geography, political science and economics, have distinct methodologies that often justify the preservation of boundaries. The boundaries of disciplines need to be opened up and a plurality of approaches may be applied to understand a given phenomenon. For an enabling curriculum, certain themes that facilitate interdisciplinary thinking are required.

The Proposed Epistemological Frame

Based on certain considerations of dominant perceptions as well as issues to be addressed the following points serve as the foundational logic in the drafting of new syllabi:

- The curriculum must be able to show, how the nation and national unity figures in local perceptions of the people. Local perceptions, therefore, have to be articulated through reorienting curriculum
- The notion of textbook be changed from being merely instructive to more suggestive. It is argued that this would offer enough scope for the learner even to go beyond the very textbook, creating more appetite for further reading that is necessary to enrich the understanding of a given social phenomenon.
- The major thrust of the social science curriculum, has remained utilitarian in nature. That is to say, it puts more emphasis on developmental issues that are important but not sufficient to understand the normative dimension – issues of equality, justice and dignity of society polity. Teaching of social sciences, has thus been linked up to the role of an individual in contributing to this ‘development’. In view of this gap, there is a need to achieve a shift in focus from utilitarianism to egalitarianism that would address the normative concerns as mentioned above.
- It is suggested to bring a change in nomenclature from civics to political science. Civics as a subject had appeared in the Indian school curriculum in the colonial period in the background of increasing ‘disloyalty’ among Indians towards the Raj. Emphasis on the obedience and loyalty of the citizens and creation of civil society according to the universal values of progress were the key features of the colonial civics. Whereas, political science suggests dynamism that involves the process that produces structure of dominations and their contestations by social forces. Political science imagines civil society as the sphere where more informed, receptive and responsible citizens could be produced.
- Gender concerns need to be addressed in terms of making the perspectives of women integral to the discussion of any historical event and contemporary concern. This shift from highlighting individuals to forefronting women’s struggles both historically as well as on a daily basis, requires an epistemic shift from the patriarchal nationalist frame.

Planning the Curriculum

At the **primary stage**, the natural and social environment should be taught as an integral part of language and mathematics (with gender sensitivity). Children should be engaged in activities that would help them in promoting an understanding about the natural and social environment. Understanding at this level should be based on observation and illustration rather than abstractions. Illustrations need to be drawn from the physical, biological, social and cultural aspects of life. It is important for the child to develop the skill of observation, identification and classification.

For classes III to V, the subject Environment Studies will be introduced. A child may be initiated to locate and comprehend the relationships between the natural and social environment, and introduced to analogies between natural diversity and socio-cultural diversity. That is to say, social science teaching based on observation and experience can create cognitive capacity within the child. It is this aspect of social science teaching that is so frequently missing in our curriculum.

At the **upper primary stage**, the subject-area of Social Science drawing its content from history, geography, political science and economics will be introduced. Simultaneously, the child may be introduced to contemporary issues and problems. Contemporary issues may be looked at from multiple perspectives introducing the child to social and economic problems of society. Emphasis needs to be given to issues like poverty, illiteracy, child and bonded labour, class, caste, gender and environment. Geography and Economics may together help in developing a proper perspective related to the issue concerning environment, resources and development at different levels from local to global. Similarly, Indian history will be taught emphasizing the concepts of plurality and change. The child will be introduced to the formation and functioning of governments at the local, state and central level and the democratic processes of participation.

At the **secondary stage**, social sciences comprise elements of history, geography, political science and economics. The main focus will be on contemporary India and the learner will be initiated into a deeper understanding of the social and economic challenges facing the nation. In keeping with the epistemic shift proposed, contemporary India will be discussed from the perspectives of the adivasi, dalit and other disenfranchised populations and effort should be to relate the content much as possible to the children's everyday lives.

India's freedom struggle and the contributions of various sections/regions shall be studied. India's nationalist movement and its developments as an independent nation will be taught in the context of developments in the modern world. Issues relating to geography should be taught keeping in mind the need to inculcate in the child a critical appreciation for conservation and environmental concerns. In political science the focus should be on discussing the philosophical foundations that underlie the value framework of the Indian Constitution, i.e. an in-depth discussion of equality, liberty, justice, fraternity, dignity, plurality and freedom from exploitation. As the disciplinary area of economics is being introduced to the child at this level, it is important that the topics discussed are from the perspective of the masses. For example, poverty and unemployment may be derived from an understanding of the functioning of economic institutions and the inequalities sustained by economic relations.

The **higher secondary stage** is considered important as it offers diverse choice of streams to the students according to their need, interest and aptitude. For some of the students, this stage may be the end of their formal education leading to the world of work, for others, a foundation for higher education. They may choose either specialized academic courses or job oriented vocational courses depending upon their preferences. The foundation laid at this stage should be able to

equip them with basic knowledge, skill and attitude to make meaningful contribution in any field, they choose.

A variety of courses from Social Sciences and Commerce may be offered to students and they may exercise their choice keeping in view their inclinations and preferences. Subjects and courses need not be grouped into separate streams but students may be given the choice of subjects or courses from any group according to their needs, interests and aptitude. At this stage, social sciences may include disciplines like Political Science, Geography, History, Economics, Sociology and Psychology. Commerce may include Business Studies and Accountancy.

Approaches to Teaching – Pedagogy and Resources

Social science teaching needs to be revitalized towards helping the learner acquire knowledge and skills in an interactive environment. The teaching of social sciences must adopt methods that promote creativity, aesthetics, and critical perspectives, and enable children to draw relationships between past and present, to understand changes taking place in society. Problem solving, dramatization and role play are some hither-to under explored strategies that could be employed. Teaching should utilize greater resources of audio-visual materials, including photographs, charts and maps, and replicas of archaeological and material cultures.

In order to make the process of learning participative there is a need to shift from mere imparting of information to debate and discussion. This approach to learning will keep both the learner and teacher alive to social realities.

Concepts should be clarified to the students through the lived experiences of individuals and communities. It has often been observed that cultural, social and class differences generate their own biases, prejudices and attitudes in classroom contexts. The approach to teaching therefore needs to be open-ended. Teachers should discuss different dimensions of social reality in the class, and work towards creating increasing self-awareness amongst themselves and in the learners.

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1. BACKGROUND

The social sciences encompass diverse concerns of society and include a wide range of content drawn from the disciplines of history, geography, political science, economics, and sociology. The selection and organisation of material into a meaningful social science curriculum, one that will enable students to develop a critical understanding of society, is therefore a challenging task. The possibilities of including new dimensions and concerns are immense, especially in view of the students' own life experiences.

Different curricula have differed on the organisation of material in the social sciences. Although the 1975 curriculum argued for "identifying essential units in each of the subjects and then unifying them into an integrated syllabus", the social sciences were taught as separate subjects, and the NCERT prepared three separate textbooks (for history, geography, and civics) for Classes VI–X (*The Curriculum for the Ten-Year School: A Framework*, 1975, p. 20). However, for examination purposes the three subjects were combined under one paper called social science. The 1988 curricular review introduced no major changes in the syllabi for the upper primary stage, although it did explicitly state, "Special care should, hence, be taken in designing the curriculum in [the] social sciences so as not to overlook any of the core components." (*National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework*, 1988, p. 27). At the secondary stage it had four books, adding economics to the other three subjects. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, 2000 discussed the need for the social science curriculum to be comprehensive but not loaded with information. In addition, it detailed the need for ideas to be interrelated through the selection of particular themes or issues, stating, "These themes may be drawn from geography, history, civics,

economics and sociology in a balanced manner and suitably graded simple to complex and immediate to remote." (NCFSE, 2000, p. 63). The current social science textbooks have made an attempt to establish the interrelatedness among subject areas wherever possible. Accordingly, there is only one textbook for social science for each class (Classes VI–X).

2. CONCEPTUALISING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK, 2005

The present National Focus Group (NFG) recognises the efforts made in the past to create an ideal social studies curriculum. However, a lot of work remains to be done, particularly since in today's neo-liberal India the subjects that comprise the social sciences are considered inadequate for securing employment. They felt the need to first discuss existing perceptions of the social sciences amongst the larger community, and then factor this into the proposed curricular framework. To ensure that the curricular recommendations are adequately translated into textbooks, the NFG has also highlighted the main issues to be addressed in order to make the social sciences an intellectually and professionally valuable subject of study.

2.1 Prevailing Perceptions of the Social Sciences

2.1.1 The popular perception of social science is that it is a non-utility subject. As a result, low self-esteem governs the classroom-transaction process, with both teachers and students feeling uninterested in comprehending its contents. From the initial stages of schooling, it is often suggested to students that the natural sciences are superior to the social sciences, and are the domain of 'bright' students. Therefore, there is need to emphasise that the social sciences are essential to provide social, cultural, and analytical skills required to adjust to an increasingly interdependent world, and to deal with political and economic realities.

2.1.2 There is a widespread belief that social science merely transmits information and is too centred, on the text, which is required to be memorised for examinations. The content of these textbooks is considered to be unconnected to daily realities. In addition, social science is viewed as providing unnecessary details about the past. It is also felt that the examination paper rewards the memorisation of these superfluous ‘facts’, with the children’s conceptual understanding being largely ignored. Any effort to address the information overload in the social sciences will simultaneously have to review the current examination system.

2.1.3 There is a perception that not many desirable job options are open to students specialising in the social sciences. In addition, it is felt that the social sciences are bereft of the ‘skills’ required to function in the real world. This produces the impression that the subject is redundant. It is important to reinstate the importance of the social sciences by not only highlighting their increasing relevance for jobs in the rapidly expanding service sector, but also by pointing to their indispensability in laying the foundations of an analytical and creative mind.

2.2 Issues to be Addressed

2.2.1. Content Load: The NFG endorsed the point made by the Yash Pal Committee, as well as by NCFSE 2000, that we should try to minimise the emphasis on retention of information without comprehension. Given that syllabus framers and textbook writers need to choose what to include from a mass of relevant information, the effort should not be to convey as many facts as possible. Instead, a focus on concepts and the ability to analyse socio-political realities should be stressed.

Plurality and Local Content: In a plural society like ours, it is important that all regions and social groups be able to relate to the textbooks. This is often impossible given the centralised nature of textbook production. Therefore, it is necessary to work towards institutionalising an alternate, more decentralised mechanism of knowledge-generation in which teachers, students, and the local community feel empowered to bring in their own realities to the content of social studies. Relevant local content should be part of the teaching-learning process, ideally transacted through activities drawing on local teaching-learning resources.

2.2.3 Scientific Rigour: It is often presumed that only natural and physical phenomena lend themselves to scientific inquiry, and that human sciences (history, geography, economics, political science, etc.) cannot be, by their very nature, ‘scientific’. In view of the ‘higher status’ and legitimacy enjoyed by the natural sciences, some practitioners of the social sciences seek to imitate the methods of the physical and natural sciences. In light of the above, it is necessary to recognise that the social sciences lend themselves to scientific inquiry just as much as the natural and physical sciences do, as well as to indicate ways in which the methods employed by the social sciences are distinct (but in no way inferior) to those of the natural and physical sciences.

2.2.4 Normative Concerns: The social sciences carry a normative responsibility to create and widen the popular base for human values, namely freedom, trust, mutual respect, and respect for diversity. Given this, social science teaching should aim at investing in children a critical moral and mental energy to make them alert to the social forces that threaten these values. Through the discussion of concerns such as threats to the environment, caste/class inequality, state repression, through an

interdisciplinary approach, the textbook should stimulate the child's thought process and creativity.

2.2.5 Interrelationship among Disciplines:

The disciplines that make up the social sciences, namely history, geography, political science, and economics, have distinct methodologies that often justify the preservation of boundaries. The boundaries of disciplines need to be opened up, and a plurality of approaches applied to understand a given phenomenon. For an enabling curriculum, certain themes that facilitate interdisciplinary thinking are required. These themes should be culturally relevant, and concepts introduced bearing in mind the age of the child. There is a need to select themes where different disciplinary approaches can facilitate an in-depth and multiple understanding. However, not all themes can be discussed in an interdisciplinary manner. A careful selection of a few themes needs to be made, as well as having separate chapters relating to different disciplines..

The interdisciplinary approach can be adopted to study one particular theme per year/semester. For example, the institution of the 'mandi' can be used as one theme, to make connections between various disciplines.

3. THE PROPOSED EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAME

Based on the above considerations - of popular perceptions, and the issues to be addressed in the study of the social sciences, the NFG proposes that the following four points be treated as basic for the new syllabi.

3.1.1 As Kothari Commission has emphasised that India should not be seen simply in terms of developmentalist approach. The problem with this approach has been that it treated poverty, illiteracy, and casteism as obstacles to national progress, and also ignored gender issues. This mode of thinking may suggest that the common 'illiterate' masses have failed the nation. The Committee suggests an epistemological shift in reorienting/redesigning the curriculum so as to accommodate the multiple ways of imagining the Indian nation. Alongwith the national perspective, the local also needs to be creatively balanced. In order to achieve balancing between national and local, it is necessary to incorporate the local perceptions through which the people can relate themselves to the nation. Doing this will also ensure a much deeper and richer understanding of the nation.

3.1.2 Textbooks were seen as the major source of knowledge. This foreclosed any possibility of innovation by an active participation of the learners, both teachers and students. The textbook should be seen as opening up avenues for further enquiry. This would encourage the learner to go beyond the textbook, to further reading and observation.

3.1.3 The social science curriculum has hitherto emphasised developmental issues. These are important but not sufficient to understand the normative dimension, like issues of equality, justice, and dignity in society and polity. Teaching of the social sciences, has thus been linked up to the role of an individual in contributing to this 'development'. In view of this gap, there is a need to achieve a shift in focus from utilitarianism to egalitarianism that would address the normative concerns as mentioned above. There is urgent need to restore self-esteem to the social sciences by having them address social and

political issues in such a way as to awaken in the students a real concern for social justice.

History courses have often ignored many sections of society and many regions of India, and this needs to be corrected.

3.1.4 The NFG suggests a change in nomenclature, from Civics to Political Science. ‘Civics’ appeared in the Indian school curriculum during the colonial period against the background of increasing ‘disloyalty’ among Indians towards the Raj. An analysis of the first textbook of civics, *The Citizen of India*, authored by Lee-Warner, shows that civics was linked to the colonial project of cultural hegemony (Jain, 1999). Emphasis on the obedience and loyalty of citizens; the colonial ethos of order, improvement, and rationality; the discourse of the shortcomings of personality in the Indian;—these were the key features of colonial civics. By contrast, ‘political science’ suggests the dynamism of a process that produces structures of dominance and their contestations by social forces.

The epistemic shift proposed above can be summarised as follows:

- from the textbook as the only source of information to the textbook as suggestive of a particular way of understanding issues.
- from the ‘mainstream’ account of the past and its past to one where more groups and more regions are taken into account.
- from utilitarianism to egalitarianism.
- from the textbook being perceived as a closed box to the textbook as a dynamic document.

Political science treats civil society as the sphere that produces sensitive, interrogative, deliberative, and transformative citizens.

3.1.5 Gender concerns have been addressed within the social sciences by including women as ‘examples’. For instance, in history the discussion on women is often limited to including Rani Lakshmibai, Sarojini Naidu, and some others in the chapters on India’s freedom struggle. But ‘gendering’ the curriculum is not limited to increasing the number of references to individual women. Rather, what is crucial is the need to make the perspectives of women integral to the discussion of any historical event and contemporary concerns. This shift requires an epistemic shift from the patriarchal frame within which social studies is currently conceptualised.

4. TEACHING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Studying the social sciences is vital for many reasons. It enables children

- to understand the society in which they live - to learn how society is structured, managed, and governed, and also about the forces seeking to transform and redirect society in various ways.
- to appreciate the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution such as justice, liberty, equality and fraternity and the unity and integrity of the nation and the building of a socialist, secular and democratic society.
- to grow up as active, responsible, and reflective members of society.
- to learn to respect differences of opinion, lifestyle, and cultural practices.
- to question and examine received ideas, institutions, and practices.

- to acquire pleasure in reading, by providing them with enjoyable reading material.
- to undertake activities that will help them develop social and life skills and make them understand that these skills are important for social interaction.

In textbooks and in the classroom, the content, language, and images should be comprehensible, gender-sensitive, and critical of social hierarchies and inequalities of all kinds.

4.1 Primary Stage

The objectives of teaching social studies at the primary stage are:

- To develop in the child skills of observation, identification, and classification.
- To develop in the child a holistic understanding of the environment with emphasis on the interrelationship of the natural and the social environments.
- To sensitise the child to social issues and develop in him/her a respect for difference and diversity.

4.1.1 Classes I and II

For these primary grades, the natural and the social environments will be explained as integral parts of languages and mathematics. Children should be engaged in activities to understand the natural and social environments through illustrations from the physical, biological, social, and cultural spheres. The language used should be gender-sensitive. Teaching methods should be in a participative and discussion-oriented mode. For example, story telling, painting, dance, song, and music can all be part of the teaching-learning process. A Teachers' Handbook should be prepared with examples of activities that promote the development of concepts and teach sensitivity towards environmental concerns.

4.1.2 Classes III to V

For these grades, the subject Environment Studies (EVS) will be introduced and will be constituted by a discussion of the natural and the social environments. In the study of the natural environment, emphasis will be on its preservation and the importance of saving it from degradation. The fact that the social environment is constructed by human beings will be emphasised. Children will begin to be sensitised to social issues like poverty, child labour, illiteracy, caste and class inequalities, in rural and urban areas. The content should reflect the day-to-day experiences of children and their life worlds.

At this stage, all concepts taught should be activity-based. Activities and textual material should complement each other. Activities should be related to examples from local surroundings. A Teachers' Handbook should be prepared that gives clear directions on how to handle different topics.

4.2. Upper Primary Stage

The objectives of teaching the social sciences at the upper primary stage are:

- To develop an understanding about the earth as the habitat of humankind and other forms of life.
- To initiate the learner into a study of her/his own region, state, and country in the global context.
- To initiate the learner into a study of India's past, with references to contemporary developments in other parts of the world.
- To introduce the learner to the functioning and dynamics of social and political institutions and processes of the country.

At this stage, the subject areas of the social

Eklavya's Textbook

The Class VII Civics textbook which was prepared by Eklavya was a serious attempt to introduce sociological discourse into the social science curriculum. It enables reflection on the judicial structure in the country. The case-studies and events described in the chapter 'Alag-Alag Samaj mein Nyaya ke Tareekay' ensure that it is received well by the children. However, it does throw up a significant problem. A strong sense of romanticism about caste-based panchayats emerged among teachers. Responses varied from teacher to teacher, but the dominant effect was one of undermining the modern system of justice in favour of caste-based panchayats. The modern form of the judiciary is likely to be taken less seriously by teachers in their discussions with children, and it is likely that the caste panchayats will be regarded as more fair and speedy in dispensing justice.

sciences—drawing their content from history, geography, political science, and economics—will be introduced. The child may be introduced simultaneously to contemporary issues and problems. Emphasis needs to be given to issues like poverty, illiteracy, child and bonded labour, class, caste, gender, and environment. Geography and Economics may together help in developing a proper perspective related to issues concerning environment, resources and development at different levels, from local to global. Similarly, History will be taught emphasising the concepts of plurality. The child will be introduced to the formation and functioning of governments at the local, state, and central levels, and the democratic processes of participation.

4.3 Secondary Stage

The objectives of teaching the social sciences at the secondary stage are to develop among the learner analytical and conceptual skills to enable him/her to:

- understand the processes of economic and social change and development with examples

from modern and contemporary India and other parts of the world.

- critically examine social and economic issues and challenges like poverty, child labour, destitution, illiteracy, and various other dimensions of inequality.
- understand the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic and secular society.
- understand the roles and responsibilities of the state in the fulfilment of constitutional obligations.
- understand the processes of change and development in India in relation to the world economy and polity.
- appreciate the rights of local communities in relation to their environment, the judicious utilisation of resources, as well as the need for the conservation of the natural environment.

At the secondary stage, the social sciences comprise elements of history, geography, political science, and economics. The main focus will be on contemporary

India and the learner will be initiated into a deeper understanding of the social and economic challenges facing the nation. In keeping with the epistemic shift proposed, contemporary India will be discussed from the multiple perspective including the perspectives of the adivasi, dalit, and other disenfranchised populations, and efforts should be made to relate the content as much as possible to the children's everyday lives.

In History, the contributions of various sections/regions to India's freedom struggle can be studied, as well as other aspects of recent history, in the context of developments in the modern world. Aspects of Geography should be taught keeping in mind the need to inculcate in the child a critical appreciation for conservation and environmental concerns. In Political Science, the focus should be on discussing the philosophical foundations that underlie the value framework of the Indian Constitution, i.e. an in-depth discussion of equality, liberty, justice, fraternity, dignity, plurality, and freedom from exploitation. As the discipline of Economics is being introduced to the child at this level, and it is important that the topics discussed should be from the perspective of the masses. For example, the discussion of poverty and unemployment should no longer be undertaken in terms of statistics, but instead should derive from an understanding of the elitist functioning of many economic institutions and the inequality sustained by economic relations.

Also, given that this is the stage at which choices are made about which disciplines to pursue for further study, it is important that students be introduced to the nature, scope, and methods of each of these disciplines. Needless to say, the latter should not overload students with additional information, but instead should explain to them what the future study of the discipline might

hold in store and link these points to the creation of desirable skills.

4.4 Higher Secondary Stage

Ten years of general schooling offer a common scheme of studies for all students. The higher secondary stage is considered important as it offers a choice of streams to the students according to their need, interest, and aptitude. For some students, this stage may be the end of their formal education, leading to the world of work and employment; for others, this stage may be the foundation for pursuing higher education. They may choose either specialised academic courses or job-oriented vocational courses depending upon their preferences. The foundation laid at this stage should be able to equip them with basic knowledge and the necessary skill and attitude to make a meaningful contribution to any field they choose. The courses need to be designed and planned carefully, keeping in view the students' wide variety of preferences in order to make this a less stressful experience.

Teachers can involve children in various activities so that they can learn certain concepts through lived experiences. For example, children can learn about the cooperative movement by running a cooperative themselves (as was done in Jamia School) Schools should be flexible in their hours of opening. For example, learning about the moon should include the possibility of being able to watch the moon from the school premises; therefore the need for the school to be open on occasion after dark.

Local Crafts and Museums

In order to make the learning of social science more enjoyable and effective, there is a need for innovations in teaching methods. Social science learning should involve visits to museums at local, state, and national levels. Students may be asked to explore the local surroundings and observe the activities of artisan communities engaged in different crafts using local skills and materials. These handicrafts may be displayed in a small corner of the school and developed into a museum.

The schools could have their own social science museums. During the summer break, students may be asked to make models of historical monuments, charts indicating the effects of volcanoes or earthquakes, crossword games or puzzles. The children may paint phenomena related to the natural environment. Newspaper or magazine cuttings related to topics in the syllabus, or related information downloaded from the Internet, can be displayed. This museum could be laid out in different ways from time to time so that it does not become dated. Students may also be involved in other activities

- Social Science week can be celebrated in the school.
- Students may be taken out to visit a nearby museum or centre of arts and crafts.
- Students can be encouraged to watch the night sky, observe the phases of the moon, note the timings of sunrise and sunset, describe the duration of day and night, and record their experiences and observations in a journal.
- Students can be taken to visit historical monuments and sketch these monuments and write about them. The sketches can be displayed in the school.

The foundations of education should be strengthened at this stage by making it flexible and diverse with the aim of not only equipping students to join the world of work but also providing appropriate linkages with higher education. While accepting the goals of diversification and flexibility, the basic parameters of equity and excellence cannot be ignored. The needs of students belonging to different regional, cultural, and social backgrounds should also be taken into consideration in a proper and careful manner.

It is important that our national standards today should also be able to meet the challenges of global competition by designing a variety of courses of studies; preparing detailed curricular outlines; identifying learning outcomes; producing a variety of

instructional materials—audio and visual—and multimedia packages; and innovating improved evaluation tools.

A variety of courses from the social sciences and commerce may be offered to students, and they may exercise their choice keeping in view their inclinations and preferences. Subjects and courses need not be grouped into separate streams, but students may be given the choice of opting for subjects or courses from any group according to their need, interest, and aptitude. At this stage, the social sciences will include the disciplines of political science, geography, history, economics, sociology, and psychology. Commerce may include business studies and accountancy.

The objectives of the social science courses at this stage may be:

- to assist students to explore their interests and aptitudes in order to choose appropriate university courses and/or careers.
- to encourage them to explore higher levels of knowledge in different disciplines.
- to promote problem-solving abilities and creative thinking in the citizens of tomorrow.
- to introduce students to different ways of collecting and processing data and information in specific disciplines, and help them arrive at conclusions, and to generate new insights and knowledge in the process.

5. APPROACHES TO TEACHING

It is necessary to revitalize social science teaching, to help the learner acquire knowledge and skills in an interactive environment. It has often been noticed that there is an increasing gap between the promises made in the curriculum and what is happening at the level of the child's perception. It is important that the process of learning should promote the spirit of inquiry and creativity among both children and teachers.

The teacher is an important medium of transacting the curriculum and simplifying concepts in a language comprehensible to students. Therefore, teaching should be seen as an opportunity for teachers and students to learn together, thus developing a democratic culture within institutions. In order to make the process of learning participatory, there is a need to shift from the mere imparting of information to involvement in debate and discussion. This approach to learning will keep both learners and teachers alive to social realities.

Concepts should be clarified to the students through the lived experiences of individuals and communities. For example, the concept of social equality can be

understood better through citing the lived experiences of communities that make up the social and cultural milieu of the child. It has also often been observed that cultural, social, and class differences generate their own biases, prejudices, and attitudes in classroom contexts. The approach to teaching, therefore, needs to be open-ended. Teachers should discuss different dimensions of social reality in the class, and work towards creating increasing self-awareness both amongst themselves as well as among the learners.

The provision of supplementary material in the classroom will increase the autonomy of the teacher vis-à-vis the textbook and also provide a level of confidence in planning activities and projects. The need for a finite syllabus to incorporate infinite cultural and local contexts can be taken care of through the generation of these materials.

The NFG also discussed the adverse effects that the minimal provision of infrastructure and poorly qualified para-teachers have on the learning of the discipline. The linkages between adequate infrastructure and the teaching of social studies is not often commented upon because instruction in the subject requires no obvious space like the way in which a laboratory is required for the teaching of science. However, the effective teaching of social science is crucially linked to the efficient functioning of the school library and of teachers who are trained to use the resources that the library provides towards the creation of challenging projects and activities. This shift away from rote learning to comprehension through the implementation of projects can only take place if the teacher is able to assess the child's understanding through other means rather than just the completion of the project. A more nuanced assessment of whether the child is learning through project work might help mitigate the present 'manufacturing' of these

projects in the market as ready-made objects that parents can buy. It will also help to modify the prevailing belief that increased marks on project work translates into 'easy marks' to be gained with the least effort.

5.1 Teacher-Training

The teaching of social science has not been very effective partly due to the lack of an adequate emphasis on teacher's training programmes. While the pre-service training syllabus needs a thorough review, the in-service training should also be given attention. The state has to provide the necessary logistical and financial support for effective and frequent in-service training so that the teachers' understanding of the subject is updated. The use of Teachers' Handbooks in the different disciplines of the social sciences should be made mandatory. The textbooks, instead of being treated as the 'only source', should be seen as 'one of the sources' for developing one's understanding. Indeed, many problems like low self-esteem, curricular load, cramming, and rote learning can be addressed more effectively by an empowered teacher whose capabilities have been enhanced through teacher training. The outcome of social science research studies could be made accessible to the vast numbers of teachers through serious and effective training both at the pre-service and the in-service levels.

5.2 Teaching-learning materials

The following issues may also be taken into account while developing teaching-learning materials.

- Equal teaching time and marks should be allocated to the various components in the social sciences.
- A right balance should be maintained in the distribution of themes among the different disciplines, and wherever possible interrelationships should be indicated.
- Topics should be logically arranged in the right sequence, maintaining consistency throughout the syllabus.
- In textbook production, it should be ensured that all sections of the book have an equal numbers of chapters.
- A glossary of technical terms after each chapter and an index at the end of the book should be provided.
- Before publication, the textbooks should be vetted to check inadvertent gender and social bias.
- Before publication, the textbooks should be examined to avoid duplication and ensure uniformity of style.

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