

## INTRODUCTION

Learning Social Science in schools begins at class 3 and comprises of themes mainly from history, geography, political science and economics. In classes 11 and 12, besides these subjects, students learn sociology, psychology, business studies, accountancy, human ecology and family sciences, entrepreneurship, media studies, legal studies and many subjects as optional courses. This cluster of subjects occupies an important place in school curriculum and forms the core of India's liberal education. Nevertheless teaching social sciences faces a number of challenges –curricular load, relatively low career motivation, conventional teaching and learner assessment practices.

Social science curricular materials receive wide attention in many democratic countries including India. It is not infrequent to see in media critical views on social science curricular materials. Only a few of these are based on research or critical reading of curricular materials. This seminar is an opportunity for researchers, teachers, teacher educators and social scientists to share their research evidences for better understanding of India's school social science curriculum. The NCERT develops model school curricular materials. The proceedings of the seminar would help NCERT to relook at the existing social science syllabus and curricular materials.

## SUGGESTIVE THEMES OF THE SEMINAR

### 1. Social Science Curriculum

Each social science has its own knowledge, information, skills, perspectives and methods of investigation. Selecting, organising and presenting social science content in textbooks is a major challenge for curriculum developers. Curricular load is another major concern. Whether the social sciences can be taught using thematic, integrated, subject-wise, student-centric or teacher-centric approach needs research evidences. While several policy statements have recommended an integrated or interdisciplinary syllabus, breaking the disciplinary framework is yet another challenge confronting curriculum developers. This has been tried out with varying degree of success in some states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh. It is important to discuss these experiences and learn lessons for curriculum development in future.

An important question as to when disciplinary knowledge begins to make sense and contribute meaningfully to children. This needs to be addressed by developmental psychologists, sociologists and social scientists.

Social scientists can reflect and revisit some assumptions within the frameworks of social science disciplines leading to learning challenge for young learners studying social science in schools. For example, historians can reflect on the question of whether there is a need to present history primarily through chronological approach and cover all epochs and regions with equal emphasis. Geographers can ask themselves the need to lay stress on physical geography in the initial stages of learning geography. The same can be said of other social sciences taught in schools.

Indian social science curriculum developers need to study how other countries introduce social sciences to young children and compare with Indian social science curriculum.

### 2. Role of Textbooks and other curricular materials in the larger scheme of teaching social sciences

Both central and state government agencies develop social science textbooks. These textbooks account for only a small share of the total textbook market in India. A large share of textbooks, workbooks and guidebooks are published by private publishers. The post-1990s has witnessed an explosion of multimedia resources,

both hardware and software for most curricular areas including social sciences. What are the differences and similarities between social science curricular materials published by private and government agencies? What challenges social science curricular material developers / publishers face while developing the materials? How traditional and modern curricular materials/gadgets impact the classroom practices and social science learning? How are social science textbooks and other print and non-print materials used in schools? To what extent do these materials meet the expectations of the goals of social science education as suggested in curricular policy documents? What research evidence is available from Indian schools that provide indications on the improvements in social science learning due to use of ICT materials? How national and state level policy documents guide development of social science syllabus and textbooks?

A growing concern has been the substitution of textbooks and other such materials by 'guide books'. How do we understand the proliferation of guide books etc and what role do they play in children's learning and understanding?

Social science is expected to help in inculcating constitutional values in students. Does such an emphasis enable or hinder social science learning and should they be given primacy over the latter? It is also important to examine whether or not curricular concerns are incorporated in textbooks and other materials and how. A few studies assessed the social science textbooks brought out by a few state and central government agencies. Such studies are scarce in the case of textbooks published by private publishers.

### 3. Social Science Classroom Practices and Processes

Studying what social science teachers do in their classrooms is important. How and to what extent teachers “transact” on a mass of information given in textbooks? To what extent classroom practices promote active participation of students? How dialogues with community help social science teachers and students in improving the concept formation and social science learning? Whether or not social science classrooms encourage students to develop (a) critical thinking and questioning attitudes and (b) to get engaged with social reality around them?

Social science classrooms are neither static nor uniform. They change with the topics being taught. Indian classrooms are also seasonal – change with months. In the initial months of the academic year, social science teachers spend more time to explain concepts and provide scope for discussion and explore knowledge outside the classroom. As the academic year ends, teachers and students grapple with examinations. They spend more time on revision and reinforcement of concepts. Is this same in all schools?

Research is also required to understand the organisation of social science classrooms and learners' perspectives on the use of textbooks and other curricular materials in the classroom. This is pertinent in the examination-driven scenario in India.

The nature of classroom becomes complex when different teachers teach one course - Social Science / Social Studies. Every teacher brings in different perspective of their subjects. Other questions which deserve exploration are: How students cope with different teachers teaching one course? How much time teachers and students talk in the social science classes? What is the nature of questioning by students and teachers and why? What kinds of materials are available to students and teachers for use in the social science classroom? How are they different from other subjects? Why are social sciences sought after in some school systems and marginalised in a few others. Does this affect the way social science teachers and students get engaged in schools?

Social science classrooms are not far removed from political, social and educational ideologies. Research is required to understand how teachers and students deal with various theoretical perspectives and ideologies inbuilt in social science syllabus and textbooks.

### 4. Understanding Children and their Social World

Indian children represent one of the most diversified, hierarchical, multicultural and multilingual societies in the world. Indian students' learning styles, needs and pace vary. For developing appropriate teaching approaches, students' learning of social sciences, their learning styles need to be researched and documented. It is also essential for developing different kind of social science curricular materials addressed to diverse kinds of students. Educational Researches suggest that children already possess knowledge of society in which they live and teachers can help children to make connections between what is taught as social science concepts and the life outside the school. Is this happening in the Indian social science classrooms? How children learn social science concepts? What kind of knowledge do children bring to social science classroom from their social life which would be helpful to understand social science curricular contents? How do children perceive of social sciences today? How do children from diverse social and personal backgrounds respond to and receive the social science textbooks?

### 5. Understanding Social Science Teachers and their Social World

Social science teachers enter school from diverse social backgrounds and with varied educational qualifications. To what extent these impact their teaching of the subject especially sensitive social themes? To what extent service conditions (a large number of them being temporary, contract or 'guest' teachers) affect their teaching? Students learn social sciences from teachers who come with different designations. It is also common to find language, science, mathematics or physical education teachers teaching social sciences. It is alleged that social science teachers lack the competency to teach topics from four subjects (history, geography, economics and political science) effectively due to their lack of subject knowledge. How social science teachers cope with these issues? How teachers teaching social sciences cope with the changing nature of learners, social science syllabus and textbooks.

Indian teacher education institutions (TEIs) offer bachelor and diploma programmes based on the guidelines provided by National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE). Research is needed to analyse social science courses offered by these institutions and to look into their classrooms. Analysing textbooks used in these institutions would help in understanding the ways through which social science teachers are prepared in India. Are there any differences in social science classroom practices in teacher education institutions run by private and government institutions? The profile of teacher educators teaching social science pedagogy courses needs to be documented. What are the learning experiences available to student teachers who are going to be social science teachers? How are they different from learning experiences available for students of mathematics, languages and science?

Developing teachers' professional capacity in a regular manner is a recent phenomenon. – beginning from District Primary Education Programme. While many government school teachers participate in the in-service education programmes as part of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), only a few private schools offer capacity building programmes on their own. Studies looking into the nature and impact of these programmes using unconventional and modern research methods can unveil the professional development opportunities available to social science teachers. This is required for both secondary and higher secondary level teachers.

Effectiveness research – how specific pedagogical approaches used by social science teachers help students learn social science better is also the least researched area in education.

### 6. Learning and Assessment

During the last decade, considerable change took place in the arena of school examination system. The RTE Act has mandated CCE and an overall atmosphere

that is not intimidating or traumatising for students at least up to class VIII. The nature of assessment flows from the objectives of education and also from the overall social perspective as implicit in the principle of universal and compulsory elementary education. Barring a few studies which analysed the question papers, there is a lot to be studied about how students studying social sciences are assessed. Issues that require educational researchers' attention are: the nature and impact of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) on social science education; how are students studying in state, national and international boards assessed; classroom assessment practices; performance of students in social science in comparison to other subjects; social science questions and question papers, projects, models and power point slides prepared by students and teachers; activities conducted in social science classrooms; social science answer scripts, teachers and students' questions in social science classrooms; use of ICT in social science assessment and perception of students, parents and teachers on social science examinations.

### THEMES FOR PRE-SEMINAR WORKSHOPS

There will be two pre-seminar workshops led by two scholars to strengthen the research capacity in the area of social science education. Topics are (a) *Objectives of Social Science Teaching and Research*, (b) *Researching the Social Science Classroom*, (c) *Qualitative Research in Education*, (d) *Analysing Educational Data*, (d) *Conducting Focus Group Discussion* (e) *Developing Questions in Social Sciences*. Participation to these workshops is voluntary but prior registration is essential.

### About the Department of Education in Social Sciences (DESS)

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an organisation established by the Government of India under the Registration of Societies Act 1860 to assist and advise central and state governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education. The Department of Education in Social Sciences is a constituent of NCERT at the National Institute of Education, New Delhi. We develop model syllabi, textbooks and other curricular materials in history, geography, political science, economics, sociology, accountancy and business studies for schools. Off late we began working in a few new areas such as health and physical education, yoga, human ecology and family sciences, undergraduate level pre-service teacher education courses and dictionaries. The department also undertakes studies investigating different dimensions of social science education in schools. During the last few years we began developing curricular materials for differently abled school students promoting inclusive education and e-contents – computer based learning materials as a support material. We promote activities to help India attain its demographic goal by housing National Population Education Project (NPEP) and disseminate knowledge and awareness on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) in the school system.

### MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. Prof. Pritish Acharya, DESSH, Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
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15. Dr. Tannu Malik, Assistant Professor, DESS, NCERT

### GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING THE PAPER

- The last date for accepting the full paper along with a 200-word Abstract is **20 February 2017, 12:00 PM (IST)**.
- The paper may be submitted in MS Word format and the number of words can go upto 5000 words. Paper presenters are advised to follow prescribed word limits. APA style should be followed for citation and referencing.
- The details of author name, affiliation, email id and phone number can be given in a separate page.
- Papers will be accepted **only through email address: [nrsrse2016@gmail.com](mailto:nrsrse2016@gmail.com) / [mvshrinivasan.ncert@nic.in](mailto:mvshrinivasan.ncert@nic.in).**
- The papers selected for presentation will be intimated through E-MAIL/ SMS by **27 February 2017**.
- Paper presenters are requested to send the papers as early as possible rather than waiting for the last date.

### ORGANISATION OF THE SEMINAR

The seminar will start at 10.00 am on the first day and will be over by 5.30 pm on the third day. There will be two pre-seminar workshops during 9.30 am to 11.30 am on days 2 and 3. On each day, papers on two themes will be presented during 11.30 am to 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm. About 15-20 minutes will be given for each presentation and 10 minutes for question- answer sessions. Participation in all sessions is essential for getting participation certificates and travel reimbursement.

**In case of any enquiry with regard to submission, acknowledgement of papers sent, please contact: MV Srinivasan, Seminar Coordinator, Telephone - 011-26592251 / 9560952497 (9.30 am to 7.00 pm) / Prof. Neeraja Rashmi, Head and Professor, DESS – 011-26562582 (9.30 am to 5.30 pm).**

### ACCOMMODATION

Reimbursement of travel expenses and shared accommodation along with breakfast and dinner will be provided at NCERT – NIE Guest House only for paper presenters, Advisory Committee members and theme-specific Keynote Speakers. This will be done as per NCERT norms. March will be a pleasant weather ending the winter (temperature during the March 2017 varies between 30 and 35°C). At times, trains and flights reach late due to climatic conditions in Delhi. Participants are suggested to reach the venue one day before the seminar and leave the city on the next day of the seminar.

## NATIONAL SEMINAR ON RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION IN INDIAN SCHOOLS

### March 15-17, 2017

### Organised By



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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