

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Introduction

The revised syllabus for the Social Sciences in Classes VI-XII attempts to advance an on-going process of assisting children and young people to understand that a healthy engagement with the world must come as much from the way society takes shape and functions as from a proper sense of its material and physical foundations. From this, it is expected, a vision will evolve that the Social Sciences provide both essential skills of comprehension that are fundamental to any activity, and a means of self-understanding and fulfilment that can be diverting, exciting and challenging. The syllabus assumes that the knowledge apparatus of the child and the young person is itself complex — both given the wide range of materials that the visual and print media have drawn into country and urban life and the nature of the problems of everyday life. To negotiate the diversity and confusion and excitement the world throws up itself requires activity and insight that the Social Sciences can substantially provide. To have a firm and flexible perspective on India's past and the world from which, and in which, the country develops, sensitivity to crucial social problems is essential. The syllabus attempts to encourage such sensitivity and provide it with the ground on which it may deepen — stressing that attention should be paid to the means through which sensitivity and curiosity are aroused as much as the specific information that stimulates it.

The Social Sciences have been a part of the school curriculum before Class VI as part of the teaching of Environmental Studies. The revised EVS syllabus has attempted to draw the child's attention in Classes III-V to the broad span of time, space and the life in society, integrating this with the way in which she or he has come to see and understand the world around them.

In Classes VI-X, this process continues, but with a greater attention to specific themes and with an eye to the disciplines through which Social Science perspectives have evolved. Up to a point, the subjects that are the focus of college-level teaching — History, Geography, Political Science, and Economics — are meant to take shape in the child's imagination during these years but only in a manner where their boundaries are open to dispute, and their disciplinary quality is understated. With such intentions, syllabus-makers have been more concerned with theme and involvement rather than information. Textbook writers will be concerned to ensure that understanding does not suffer through suffocation by obsession with detail. Equally, the themes and details that are brought before the child for attention and discussion are also meant to clarify doubts and disputes that take shape in contemporary society — through an involvement of the classroom in discussions and debates via the medium of the syllabus.





With such a focus in mind, syllabus-makers for the Upper Primary and Secondary stages have sought to ensure that their course content overlaps at various levels, to strengthen understanding, and provide a foundation in detail from which natural curiosity and the capacity for investigation may evolve and develop. It is also anticipated that, in keeping with the spirit of the National Curriculum Framework the syllabus itself will promote project work that encourages the child to take stock of the overlap, to see a problem as existing at different and interconnected levels. Guides to this as well as specific instances will be provided in textbooks.

Throughout, India's own experiences over time, and the solutions advocated by national governments, as well as the problems they have encountered, are expected to give the child a firm sense of locality, region and nation in an interconnected and complex manner. Both the intentions that have stimulated policy, the ideals and compulsions that have guided them as well as the diversity of experience of what has taken place finds attention and enquiry in the syllabus. Equally, comparisons between India's experience and global experiences are encouraged and India's interactions with the world find attention. Social, cultural and political issues are the focus of comparison.

It is within such a framework that the deeper engagement with disciplines are expected to evolve in Classes XI and XII — allowing the young person either to prepare for higher education or a broad range of professions that require more specific skills. While anticipating some of the concerns of higher education, the syllabus of this time must and does focus on foundation rather than information — stimulating an awareness of essential categories, and a broad sense of disciplinary areas.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES' SYLLABUS FOR SECONDARY STAGE

Introduction

Social Sciences is an integral component of general education up to the secondary stage of school education. Its study is crucial as it helps young learners to understand the society and the world in which they live, and view the socio-economic developments and changes in the context of time and space and also in relation to each other. Social Sciences has been part of the school curriculum at the elementary stage (Classes I-VIII) comprising primary stage (Classes I-V) and upper primary stage (Classes VI-VIII).

The revised syllabus for the Social Sciences in Classes I-X attempts to advance an on-going process to assist children and young people to understand that a healthy engagement with the world must come from knowledge of how society takes shape and functions. From this, it is expected, a vision will evolve that the Social Sciences provide skills of comprehension that are fundamental to any activity — and a path to self-understanding and fulfilment that can be diverting, exciting and challenging. The syllabus has acquired unusual dimensions given the range of material that the visual and print media have drawn into rural and urban life and the nature of the problems of everyday life. Social Sciences can provide an insight into the world's diversity and help resolve many conflicting issues. To have a firm, yet flexible perspective on India's past and the world from which, and in which, the country develops, sensitivity to crucial



social problems is essential. The syllabus attempts to encourage such sensitivity and provide it with the ground on which it may deepen — stressing that attention should be paid to the means through which sensitivity and curiosity are aroused as much as the specific information that stimulates it. The syllabus encourages an understanding of the human condition in terms that show the value of initiatives that take their cue from notions of democracy, equality and social justice defined in the broadest sense — but it seeks to do so through intelligent discussion and proper knowledge of alternatives.

At the secondary stage, Social Sciences help the learners in understanding the environment in its totality and developing a broader perspective and an empirical, reasonable and humane outlook. At this stage greater attention to specific themes is given with an eye to the disciplines through which Social Science perspectives have evolved. Up to a point, the subjects that are the focus of higher secondary teaching — History, Geography, Political Science, Economics — are meant to take shape in the child's imagination during these years. With such intentions, the syllabus has focused on theme and involvement rather than information. Textbooks will be written to ensure that understanding does not suffer by burdening the child with too much information and detail. Equally, the themes and details that are brought before the child for attention and discussion are also meant to clarify doubts and disputes that take shape in contemporary society — through an involvement of the classroom in discussions and debates via the medium of the syllabus.

In Classes IX-X, political scientists, historians and economists draw on the relationship between India and the world — already evident in the varying geography perspectives of earlier classes — through comparisons of various themes. Geography provides a sound focus on India's physical forms and resources in a manner that interacts with the work of geographers, historians, economists and the political scientists' discussion of democratic practice the world over.

With such a focus in mind, the syllabus for the Upper Primary and Secondary stages has sought to ensure that their course content overlaps at various levels, to strengthen understanding, and provide a foundation in detail from which natural curiosity and the capacity for investigation may evolve and develop. The approach to the syllabus has varied, but it has been consistent in these pedagogic priorities.

It is anticipated that, in keeping with the spirit of the National Curriculum Framework, the syllabus itself will promote project work that encourages the child to take stock of the overlap, to see a problem as existing at different and interconnected levels. Guides to this, as well as specific instances, will be provided in textbooks.

It is within such a framework that the deeper engagement with disciplines are expected to evolve in Classes XI and XII — allowing the young person either to prepare for higher education or a broad range of professions that require more specific skills. While anticipating some of the concerns of higher education, the syllabus of this time must and does focus on foundation rather than information — stimulating an awareness of essential categories, and a broad sense of disciplinary areas.