Research Review Article

Social Science Education in Indian Schools: Review of Research and Public Discourse

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ABSTRACT

School social science curriculum includes the study of history, geography, economics, political science and sociology. This review attempts to bring together the review of research as well as the major debates that took place in the curricular history of school social sciences during 2000–2015. Social science education is in a paradoxical situation today. People, media and the government find teaching social sciences in schools as very important. But only a small section of the society gives importance to study social science as a curricular choice. Social science curriculum development process is now well documented. In the past, researchers examined social science and curricular materials only from structural aspects. Today, many social science concepts and tools, advanced research methods have begun to be applied to explore Indian school social science classrooms.

This period has witnessed serious public discourse on school social science. Both social and educational philosophical battles drove social science curriculum formulation. Model children-friendly social science curricular materials and information communication technologies are available for learners but social science teachers are not yet ready. This is due to prevalence of wide gap between the expectations of curricular policies and the capacity, and acceptance level of social science teachers. Today, the civil society organisations and media are vigilant with regard to what goes into social science textbooks. This is a welcome development.

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सार

विद्यालय स्तर पर सामाजिक विज्ञान पाठ्यक्रम में इतिहास, भूगोल, राजनीति विज्ञान और समाजशास्त्र का अध्ययन सम्मिलित है। यह शोधपत्र 2000–2015 की अवधि में विद्यालयों स्तर के सामाजिक विज्ञान के संदर्भ में किए गए शोध की समीक्षा के साथ-साथ उत्पन्न प्रमुख मतभेदों को भी सामने लाने का प्रयास करती है। सामाजिक विज्ञान शिक्षा आज एक विरोधाभास की स्थिति में है। जनता, मीडिया और सरकारें स्कूलों में सामाजिक विज्ञान शिक्षण को बहुत महत्वपूर्ण मानते हैं। लेकिन समाज का केवल एक छोटा वर्ग, एक विकल्प के रूप में सामाजिक विज्ञान के पाठ्यक्रम का अध्ययन करता है। आज के समय में सामाजिक विज्ञान पाठ्यक्रम विकास प्रक्रिया अच्छी तरह से प्रलेखित है। अतीत में, शोधकर्ताओं ने केवल संरचनात्मक पहलुओं से सामाजिक विज्ञान पाठ्यक्रम और पाठयक्रम सामग्री की जाँच की थी। आज कई सामाजिक अवधारणाओं और उपकरणों तथा उन्नत अनुसंधान विधियों को भारत में स्कूल सामाजिक विज्ञान कक्षाओं का अन्वेषण करने के लिए प्रयुक्त किया जा रहा है।

इस अवधि को स्कूल सामाजिक विज्ञान पर गंभीर सार्वजनिक विवेचना के साथ देखा गया है। सामाजिक और शैक्षिक दार्शनिक के मतभेदों को ध्यान में रखते हुए सामाजिक विज्ञान का पाठ्यक्रम तैयार किया गया है। माडॅल सामाजिक विज्ञान पाठ्यक्रम सामग्री और सूचना संचार तकनीकें शिक्षार्थियों के लिए उपलब्ध है, लेकिन सामाजिक विज्ञान शिक्षक अभी भी इसके लिए तैयार नहीं है। यह पाठ्यक्रम नीतियों की अपेक्षाओं और सामाजिक विज्ञान शिक्षकों की क्षमता और स्वीकृति स्तर के बीच व्यापक अंतर के कारण है। आज सामाजिक विज्ञान की पाठ्य-पुस्तकों में क्या सम्मिलित किया जाना चाहिए, इसके लिए नागरिक संगठन तथा मीडिया पुरी तरह से सतर्क है। एक स्वागत योग्य कदम है।

Introduction

Social Science is a category of academic disciplines that include the study of history, geography, economics, political science and sociology. When compared with other disciplines such as languages and mathematics, etc., it is one of the young disciplines taught in formal education system. This makes the social science an evolutionary discipline and continues to get its share of controversies. Social science produces new concepts and methods of investigation continuously making it a vibrant one. According to Max Weber, as analytical tools, social science concepts help to understand the 'meaning of and causal relations between elements of social and cultural life' (Root, 1994, p.47). In school systems, children are expected to understand basic social science concepts. This helps them, later as citizens and as members of the society,

to comprehend socio-economic and political issues and events that shaped the world. Also, social science as a school discipline carries the responsibility to help children develop national identity.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section deals with the scope of the present review, an introduction to school social science curriculum in India and the difference between social science and social studies. Three aspects of social science education in India: (a) curriculum development process; (b) understanding social science textbooks and (c) methods, materials and social science teachers have been discussed in the second section. The third section provides an account of assessment of social science learning. The fourth section gives a brief introduction to organisations working in India to promote social science beyond the walls of classrooms. The summary of research studies and public discourse in social science education in India and hints at the gaps that are required to be researched in future are given in the last section.

Scope of the Present Review

This review includes major published works in and outside India, books and unpublished dissertations submitted to Indian universities during 2000–2015 in social science education. This period also witnessed a good amount of public discourse on school social science. Hence, the review contains two types of materials: (a) issues emerged in the public discourse—scholars' reflections and reactions particularly in print media, and (b) research responses to the issues emerged in the public discourse. In this review, emphasis is laid on (b) though important arguments of (a) will also be discussed.

A brief account about the processes followed by researchers of studies included in this paper would help in understanding the quality of what they attempted to convey. Some went to schools, collected data from students and teachers. A few researched in-house (did not go to the 'field'—schools and classrooms), but studied the textbooks, question papers and examined them with reference to a particular issue at stake. They collected the materials used in schools and classrooms. A number of researchers suggested alternative curricular topics, pedagogies and reflected on what should be taught as social science in schools and why. Concerns have also been raised over the usefulness of a particular

educational philosophy followed to develop policy documents and social science curriculum. Efforts have been made to incorporate all the findings, views and suggestions that caught the attention of the present reviewer.

School Social Science Curriculum in India

Before discussing school social science curriculum, a brief introduction to the terms, 'curriculum' and 'syllabus' is necessary. The term, 'curriculum' refers to a "set of planned activities which are designed to implement particular educational aim—a set of such aims–in terms of the content of what is to be taught and the knowledge, skills and attitudes which are to be deliberately fostered together with statements of criteria for selection of content, and choices in methods, materials and evaluation" (NCERT 2006, p.12.). In other words, curriculum is a 'plan of facilitating learning for the child' (NCERT, 2006, p.vi) and includes syllabus and textbooks, plans formulated for effective use of syllabus and textbooks and carrying out assessment for certification by curriculum developers, school administration, teachers, parents, publishers, examination boards and others. School social science curriculum mainly includes teaching learning of social sciences syllabus, topics and textbooks used in schools for Classes I to XII, utilisation of support materials available for students and teachers, classroom policies of schools, classroom practices by social science teachers, school administrators, examination plan of schools and boards.

Syllabus, according to the *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) 2005, refers to a list of 'what is to be taught and the knowledge, skills and attitudes which are to be deliberately fostered and stage specific objectives' (NCF, 2006c). Each social science has its own epistemology, information, skills, perspectives and methods of investigation. Due to this, developing one common syllabus under the title of 'social science' or 'social studies' course is a major challenge for curriculum developers.

In India, Committees and Commissions set up by the governments spell out the reasons to introduce social sciences in schools (Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1938, p.22; Government of India, 1962, p.76; NCERT, 1970, p.349). Indian schools teach social science to promote the idea of national development, and India's physical and political structures—social, economic, geographical and cultural aspects. Schools also expect learners to help India to overcome its socio-economic challenges, appreciate its past and

develop patriotism and strive for national integration. Learners are also expected to be aware of how democratic polity based on India's Constitution is used for self-rule in India. Nirantar (2010) examined how these perspectives were incorporated in social science textbooks used in some select Indian states.

The central and state governments have established curriculum development organisations such as National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and State Institutes of Education (SIEs) to develop syllabi and model curricular materials such as textbooks. Since India's independence and up to 1960s, state level curriculum developers used the policy documents (Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1938; Government of India, 1962 and NCERT, 1970) to identify topics, and develop or revise the social science syllabi for different classes. Since 1970s, they used curriculum framework documents published by the NCERT in 1976, 1988, 2000, 2005 and by the SCERTs. This has taken place particularly after 1976 when education was included in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution. The States and Union Territories also adopt or adapt the NCERT syllabi (NCERT, 2000, p.37). This may be due to many reasons including willingness of the state government, lack of professional capacity, etc.

The school social science curriculum for Classes I to X includes topics from history, economics, geography and political science. In Classes XI and XII, social sciences are introduced as elective subjects. In Classes I and II, social science concepts are included as part of language or mathematics courses; in Classes III to V they are introduced along with natural science concepts as part of environmental studies. Social science concepts are introduced from Class VI onwards as part of a separate course, Social Science.

While NCERT and SCERTs and State Institutes of Education develop syllabi for Classes I to XII, examination boards adopt or adapt these syllabi for Classes IX to XII and conduct examinations.

Traditionally, topics from history and geography formed a major share of school social science syllabus in India. Over the last six decades, school-going children are increasingly introduced to India's polity and economy. In 1988, Indian Constitution was amended to reduce the age for voting in Indian public elections from 21 to 18 years. This means, Indian citizens exercise democratic rights just after their schooling—just after the completion of 12 years of schooling. Due to this and the arrival of information

and communication technologies, there has been an increased awareness of political and economic issues in India. This has led the curriculum developers to increase the curricular space available for political science and economics. For example, two national level boards, namely the National Institute of Open Schooling and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ICSE), offer Economics as a separate course in Class X. Yet there are a few exceptions as the West Bengal Secondary Education Board offer History as a separate course in Classes IX and X and the ICSE offers History, Civics and Geography as one course with two papers and economics and commerce as optional papers.

To conclude, social science concepts, topics and social issues are introduced from Class VI onwards. The opening up of disciplinary boundaries begins from Class IX onwards. In Class X, students are assessed for certification by the Boards as part of one composite course—social science or social studies. The curricular space of social science education was traditionally occupied by history and geography, and over the last six decades, other subjects such as economics and political science also have begun to be considered in schools.

Social Science versus Social Studies

Another term used to denote the course of study of social science concepts in Indian schools is 'Social Studies.' Many Indian secondary level boards and curriculum development organisations use this as a course title. There is a subtle difference between these two terms. While the term 'social studies' emphasises on the study of socio-economic and political issues through thematic (Levstik & Tyson, 2008) and inter-disciplinary approaches, the term 'social sciences' emphasises the study of issues, events and concepts using one disciplinary approach—be it economics, history, sociology or political science. Thematic approach is also used within the disciplinary approach.

In India, the two terms are used interchangeably. Social sciences are introduced to learners as a prior training to the scholarly pursuit of disciplines in their latter part of life. Though the NCF 2005 recommends softening of subject boundaries (NCERT, 2006a), learning through disciplinary framework is also considered as an 'appropriate' way to learn social sciences (Batra, 2010; NCERT, 2006d). The social studies curriculum is supposed to draw contents from each social science discipline and organised

for instructional purposes in accordance with the objectives envisaged in the policy documents. The topics are to be selected, organised and presented keeping in view the established principles of the learning theories and socio-cultural context of the learners. It mainly attempts to improve the understanding of socio-economic and political issues. However, social studies curriculum in India is not conceptualised in its true sense, rather social scientists belonging to different subjects identify topics from their areas and develop syllabi and textbooks contents and name according to their convenience as social studies or social science. Otherwise, there is little difference between the contents of social science and social studies syllabi and textbooks brought out in India. Such nuanced distinction between 'social science' and 'social studies' is found in higher education institutions where social science has been associated with explanation and social studies with understanding. This is also connected with opposition between positivism and hermaneutics as the epistemological approach to study these curricular areas (Mahajan, 1992). For the present study, we will consider research works conducted in the area of both school social science and social studies education together as one and the same.

Issues in School Social Science Education

The 15 years period covered in the present review met with many events in the curricular life in India and social science education in particular. At the national level, the NCERT brought out *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* (NCFSE) 2000 and *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) 2005 and revised syllabi and textbooks twice; first during 2000–2002 and second during 2005–2008. This led SCERTs and SIEs of most States revising their syllabi and curricular materials. During 2009, the Indian Parliament passed a law—The *Right of Children to Free* and *Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009*. This led examination boards and state education departments to come out with Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) for students studying in Classes I to VIII.

Curriculum Development Process

Curriculum development process encompasses the systematic organisation of determining what will be taught, who will be taught and how will be taught in the institutional system. These may be

schools, colleges, universities, formal and non-formal institutions. At the school level, to put in simple terms, it mainly involves formulation of syllabi and preparation of textbooks.

Although the rationale to introduce social science in schools is available in various documents reported earlier, one may ask – how these are translated into social science syllabi and textbooks for use in schools? What administrative mechanisms are formulated to carry out this exercise? Social science curriculum development is a continuous process and various factors trigger for change. Until 2000, no sufficient details were available in India. Today, one can confidently claim that some aspects—the administrative and academic dimensions of curriculum development process—are available in the public domain (Pathak, 2002; Government of India, 2005; Agnihotri et al, 2008; Srinivasan, 2008, 2015; Batra, 2010).

As pointed out earlier, SCERTs and NCERT bring out textbooks. During 2004, for example, under the programme, *Indradhanush*, the SCERT at Delhi developed syllabi and textbooks for Classes I to VIII which also included the development of history, geography and civics textbooks for Classes VI, VII and VIII (Agnihotri et al 2008). These textbooks were used in the schools run and funded by the Delhi state government. During 2005-08, NCERT came out with revised syllabi and textbooks for Classes I to XII (Srinivasan, 2008, 2015; Haydock, 2015). Prior to these initiatives, Eklavya, a voluntary organisation, worked with Madhya Pradesh Government to bring out social studies textbooks for Classes VI to VIII (Batra, 2010).

Social science syllabi and textbooks are usually developed by involving academicians specialised in subjects such as history, geography, economics and political science and working in colleges and universities as well as the school teachers. The common administrative structure was that SCERT and NCERT faculty members with social science background worked as coordinators and all others worked as part of the committees set up to develop specific syllabus or textbook.

There has been a considerable change in the textbook contents today. One distinct feature of social science textbooks prepared by Delhi SCERT and NCERT is the use of a number of visual materials —a variety of primary sources in history chapters, photographs and textual materials. Delhi SCERT Social Studies textbooks were published in black and white whereas the NCERT textbooks are published in four colours. Many of these are copyrighted material, However, most of the materials' proprietors gave permission to use

these materials freely (Agnihotri, 2008; Srinivasan, 2008). One may wonder whether this is possible in the private sector, and this also explains why there is a wide gap in the quality of textbook contents brought out by the private and public sector publishers.

Social science textbooks try to help learners to develop concrete images of the past, contemporary issues and abstract natural and social phenomenon through stories, case studies, illustrations, travelogues and other primary sources (Batra, 2010). Thematic approach has been used to develop the new social science course syllabus which led to changes in the social science textbook contents (Srinivasan, 2015). Questions traditionally included at the end of each chapter have undergone considerable change. Their quality has improved and they are placed differently now. They are now reframed to provide teachers and students, opportunity to (a) identify and organise evidence and (b) analyse and synthesise arguments. Teachers can now stop in the middle of teaching a chapter, ask questions and make students think, discuss and debate with them (Batra, 2010, p.289).

Today, a considerable number of textual and multimedia materials are available in the internet promoting school social science education. Khan (2014) reports an account of how economics multimedia support materials are developed in a government initiated portal—National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) in India.

The curriculum development process is a dynamic one in which the topics to be included in the syllabus and textbooks continue to be debated. Also discussed is the answer to the question—how much importance could be given to each subject within the social studies and social science course and new topics within each subject? The Geographic Information System (GIS) is an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tool which helps to capture, store, manipulate, analyse, manage, and present spatial or geographic data and hence it was suggested to introduce GIS in schools as part of social science curriculum (Pandey, 2011). Some topics suggested in recent times to the curriculum developers are media studies (Yadav, 2011) and migration (Singh, 2003), terrorism and fundamental duties, consumer protection, disaster management, tsunami, road safety, income tax, financial literacy, hygiene and food safety, legal education, human rights education and environmental education. Such suggestions come through media and from civil society organisations and from all the forms of

state— judiciary, bureaucracy and legislature (Srinivasan, 2015). School curriculum is not and cannot be a fixed one, and new issues and ideas which help to develop formation of social science concepts in the minds of learners should be welcomed. However, the topics and ideas which are meant for advocacy, do not gel well with the rest of curricular contents (Bhattacharya, 2009). Textbooks have also incorporated contents on topics such as consumer rights, insurgency and terrorism (NCERT, 2003), media (NCERT, 2006) in NCERT textbooks and migration in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana social science textbooks (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2014).

Challenges in curriculum revision and renewal to incorporate new issues also suggest the struggle between different points of view and different ways of incorporating the issues into the textbooks by curriculum developers and the stakeholders of education. Srinivasan (2015) argues that as perceptions by the different organs of the government and civil society organisations may be at conflict, the curriculum development process is not a consensual, smooth affair.

Understanding Social Science Textbooks

Social science curriculum is expected to help students, to acquire knowledge and skills, understand and imbibe constitutional values, learn to behave as an Indian citizen and meet the society's expectations. However, it may be interesting to know how social science education is perceived by the stakeholders— particularly by the students and teachers. Among all the curricular materials, textbooks are the important ones about which they wish to express their views. What is their view on social science textbooks, syllabi and examination system? Understanding these has implications for improving the quality of curricular materials.

Though many internal mechanisms were built in government textbook publishers, as of today, there is no statutory body in India to look into textbooks and other curricular materials published by private publishers in schools and other educational institutions. One of the CABE Committees also reported the lack of institutional mechanism to look into what goes into textbooks and suggested the need to critically look at the textbooks published by the private sector (Government of India, 2005). Arunima (2012) suggested that there is a need to have a critical debate on what is being taught, materials used, and agencies producing school textbooks. Though

social scientists and educational researchers examine textbooks and particularly those published by government agencies, media is an important source through which people give their opinion about social science syllabus, textbooks and board level question papers.

The traditional textbook research studies examined the content selection, organisation and its presentation. Guidelines to evaluate textbooks were brought out by government agencies (Singh, et al, 1972; Khanna et al, 1978). They provided suggestions to review textbooks as a whole for their appropriateness in meeting the curricular objectives. At times, guidelines were also brought out to look into a specific issue, for example, national integration and fundamental duties (NCERT, 1986) or gender (NCERT 1982; Kulshreshtha & Kumari, 1984).

Typically social science textbooks were evaluated from two dimensions—academic and physical. Academic dimensions include the rationale and criteria to select, organise and present texts, illustrations, exercises, integration of constitutional values, aims of education and so on. The physical aspects include appropriateness of font, font size, quality, appropriateness and placement of illustrations and their quality, binding, quality of paper and so on.

In recent times, textbooks are evaluated by focusing on a particular aspect be it values, ethics, and dimension (such as gender, caste, etc.). Researchers identify a particular concept, event and process and examine how it is integrated in the textbooks. According to Nawani (2010), an ideal way to review a social science textbook is to analyse the textbook with a set of criteria and research the social science classes in which the textbook is used. Such studies are rare in India. The nature of the investigation are also of two types: (a) researchers collected views from a group of teachers, students and parents, and (b) researchers developed criteria and evaluated textbooks on their own. Descriptive and qualitative approaches were followed in most of these studies. While developing civics textbooks by Eklavya, children's perception of government was examined. The textbook which Eklavya used for research was used by the teachers in the class. This led Eklavya to revise civics part of Social Studies textbooks (George, 2010).

Each social science textbook comprises concepts, events, and issues. Textbooks are expected to provide appropriate account of all the aspects included as part of the syllabi for which the textbook is developed. Here follows the review into two categories: Subject-specific and Thematic reviews.

Subject Specific Review

History: School history is a subject which has been examined critically even prior to India's independence (Powell, 1999). Indian historians are apprehensive of curriculum development agencies whenever there was a change or revision of syllabus and textbooks. Changes in history textbooks are seen as a willful agenda to gain political mileage. Joshi (2010) alleged that the Indian Social Science textbooks promote their political agenda and polarising people with potentially disastrous consequences. They were not only limited to what the students learnt about the past, but also made students' to believe that they were inheritors of different pasts and belonged to different worlds. In 2003, when the NCERT began revising the school syllabus and textbooks based on the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000*, a number of historians, educationists and textbook writers debated the rationale to rewrite social science and particularly history.

In a study of the use of NCERT textbooks in two Indian states (Haryana and Uttrakhand), students reported liking for the social science textbooks in general and history textbooks in particular (Yadav et al, 2016). Though the perception of parents of students' studying in Classes VI to VIII in Delhi and a section of social science teachers were relatively not enthusiastic, the students liked the social studies textbooks (Agnihotri, 2008). Batra (2010) reported that many teachers in Madhya Pradesh supported the Social studies textbooks of Classes VI to VIII and their intentions when Eklavya worked with them for a longer period as part of the textbook development and training. In a M.Phil. level research in Delhi, while students liked the history textbooks, teachers raised apprehensions that the new history textbooks might not help in promoting historical thinking among students (Kumari, 2008). These studies indicate that even if the details from different states are available, it may be difficult to arrive at a conclusion on 'likeness' of social science textbooks.

Geography: This is an important subject within the social science course at the school level, particularly for Classes VI to X. Scholars have raised concerns about negligence of geography as a social science curricular area in other classes and in the higher education system. Geography education in India started within the colonial framework. It underwent changes with the progress of education over different points in time before and after independence

(Banerjee, 2006). Though geography is a subject which gives scope to develop creativity (Singh, 2000), studies show that syllabus based textbooks geography syllabus and textbooks brought out by both national level organisations such as NCERT and by the state agencies have limitations (Sunny, 2006; Nirantar, 2010). Even today, due to various reasons geography is given less importance as compared to other subjects (Kapur, 2004). One possible reason is the absence of geographers researching and contributing to the knowledge in the field of geography education in India. The curricular materials not containing the links between geographical concepts with real life problems could be another reason. However, some efforts are being taken in recent times to write geography using alternative conceptual framework, particularly for young children. The book, *Sprout: A Social Geography of Rajasthan*, is an example. In this book, Sunny (2014) attempted to help young people to understand how social formations occurs due to the process of production and distribution, and opened up the scope to newer ways of approaching and understanding geography. This book has also been recommended internationally to promote education for sustainable development (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017).

Economics: Economics was introduced as school subject at the elementary and secondary levels only in the late 1980s in India.

Earlier it was taught as an optional subject at the higher secondary/pre-university level. Economist's in many countries question teaching economics in schools. This is because no economic theory is universally accepted and they inherently contain ideological bias (Srinivasan, 2011; Haydock, 2015). Since late 1990s, economics has become an important curricular area within social sciences and taught in Indian schools without receiving little attention from professional economists (Srinivasan 2008b). What is taught in Indian schools at the higher secondary stage as economics is regarded as a watered down syllabus of undergraduate courses in India (Bose & Sardana, 2008). Though the economics courses evolved for schools are supposed to propagate the idea of egalitarianism, neither the textbooks nor the classroom processes reflect these perspectives. Economics textbooks and teachers still propagate the idea of positivist development agenda (Bose, 2012, 2013).

Political Science: Traditionally, political science topics were taught in schools as 'civics' part of social science curriculum. This was

due to the colonial legacy. The school political science curriculum in India mainly introduces government, Indian Constitution and functioning of the governments. This curriculum promotes citizenship education and schools are expected to promote citizenship values. From middle school level onwards, students are exposed to Indian Constitution. The political science topics taught in schools during 1980–2000 encouraged learners to work for the nation building. They contained materials producing 'binary opposites' and considered being illiterate bad, and portrayed the nature of life in rural areas negatively (Jain, 2004). It was also seen as an, "attempt by the dominant culture to project all the qualities and characteristics it most fears and hates within itself onto the dominated" (Jain, 2004, p. 181).

During 2005, one major policy change took place at the national level. This was also due to research done in this area (Madan, 2003; Jain 2004, 2005; George, 2010). The *National Curriculum Framework* 2005 called for using the term 'political science' and doing away with the term 'civics' in body and spirit in the school curricular materials. As a consequence, modern curricular materials formulated by NCERT for Classes VI–VIII for promoting political science education changed to 'Social and Political Life', and in Classes IX and X, 'Democratic Politics' came into being. Sharan (2015), while working with students and teachers in a centrally funded school, reported difficulties teachers and students' faced in working with political science topics. Similar issues were raised in another study in Haryana and Uttarakhand schools (Yadav et al, 2016). As in the case of history, students' and teachers views were uniform but mixed and varied according to the context.

Reflection of Educational Theories in School Social Science Curriculum

Curriculum development process is influenced by learning theories and educational philosophies. For a long time, development of social science curriculum was mainly driven by behaviourist school of thought. Due to this, the social science textbooks were information loaded and hence were used by government job aspirants in India and lacked sufficient pedagogical approach (Bhattacharya, 2009). It can also be argued that these textbooks were brought out by the government organisations and hence all the information given in textbooks were authentic and were used as learning materials by students and teachers (Srinivasan, 2008).

The *NCF 2005* advocated constructivist perspective to organise school curriculum and in the development of syllabi and textbooks. According to the constructivist perspective, student is considered as an active learner and he or she learns better by actively constructing knowledge and reconciling prior knowledge. This was followed by NCERT and other state agencies bringing out revised social science textbooks. Ohja (2011), while examining the history syllabus and textbooks, records that constructivist approach, though needs to be used for organising history curriculum, requires to be supplemented with other schools of thought to make history teaching meaningful. In contrast to this, Krishnaiah (2015), based on a study in Telangana state, argued that teachers preferred to teach social science using constructivist approach as it helped them to develop congenial and democratic classroom environment as well as children-friendly learning activities. Mahesha (2014) prepared lesson plans in geography based on the social constructivist philosophy and used in a school in Karnataka. When compared with the students taught using traditional lesson plans and teaching methods, the social constructivist approach did not only enhance the learning achievement but also helped in developing group cohesiveness, group success, group leadership, communication skills among students.

Identity Concerns in School Social Science Curricular Materials

It was pointed out earlier that school social science learning materials contain social science theories and concepts, important events and processes that shaped the world. Social science texts also include ideal aspects such as the expectations of Indian Constitution. Curriculum developers choose illustrative examples from within the local context to teach theories and concepts and how people shaped India's Constitution through struggles. India's long history and diversity of culture and living provide potential to include many examples. The real life examples included in social science textbooks relate not only to individual kings, queens, freedom fighters, social reformers, political personalities but also about groups belonging to specific sex, caste, class, religion, region and etc.

The social science textbooks in India suffer from identity concerns (Gottlab, 2007). According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the issue of identity starts from "analysis of oppression to recommend, variously, the reclaiming, re-description,

or transformation of previously stigmatised accounts of group membership. Rather than accepting the negative scripts offered by a dominant culture about one's own inferiority, one transforms one's own sense of self and community, often through consciousness-raising". The stakeholders of identity concerns demand 'respect for oneself as different' and not just 'inclusion' in the mainstream.

The textbooks developed after NCFSE 2000 met with diverse views (Thapar, 2002). Two divergent views that drew attention were (a) creation of an open, democratic, secular, and civil libertarian state whose role was to promote a modern scientific outlook in civil society, and (b) creation of a state to promote narrow and sectarian vision (Mukherjee & Mukherjee, 2001). However, as Lal et al. (2003, p. ix) pointed out, it was mainly to five 'fresh relook at India's heritage in the light of new discoveries and path breaking research'. One study compared the history textbooks used in faith-based schools in Chennai city and reported that though there is no explicit references suiting their faith, yet the language used in the textbooks imply subtle interpretation of historical events (Levknecht & Ramanathan, 2006).

The Indian Constitution guarantees equality for all regardless of sex, caste and class and other differences and equal treatment to all before the law. School social science textbooks are expected to promote gender equality. Until 1990s, mostly men were found in the textbooks reflecting the sexist bias (Bhog, 2002). Women were absent in visuals included in the social science textbook contents, in the discussion of important events— be it India's freedom struggle, ruling a territory or in other contexts. Some social science textbooks published in 1990s addressed these issues— 'visuals showing or writing about men making tea while women read the paper' or fighting great battles like men'. Feminist scholars and activists reported that such portrayal was 'mere transference: penning highly masculinised, militaristic accounts of women's lives' or depicting 'woman-as-victim.' (Nirantar, 2010). Textbook developers are expected to develop texts containing not the artificial 'role reversals' but in real ways — the way gender is construed in daily lives. It is suggested to contextualise gender — women could be portrayed as part of the context, women belonging to different socio-economic group could form major discussion point; depicting the complexity with which women make their ends meet in daily lives and how women even as victims raise voices in

different aspects of their lives. Chaturvedi (2015) while studying social studies and social science textbooks published by NCERT, Tamil Nadu SCERT (TNSCERT) and textbooks published by state government authorised private publishers in Uttar Pradesh, found that different approaches were followed in the textbooks. The UP textbooks merely described gender discrimination and did not directly engage the issue and "do not provide sensitising perspective" as attempted well in NCERT textbooks.

Including the details of people and culture from different regions in the social science textbooks has also received attention. Some states voice their disappointment about the region not properly reflected in the school textbooks. Nawani (2014), while comparing the textbooks at the elementary level (Classes I to VIII), reported that those published by private agencies, "present the social and political lives of people in a rather simplistic, uncomplicated and uniform manner and do not substantially address the social diversities or challenges and conflicts confronting people". In contrast, the NCERT textbooks based on the *NCF 2005*, according to her, "besides being pedagogically superior and attempted to grapple with the real lives of people and sensitise and help children critically engage with the issues of diversity, inequality and discrimination". The school textbooks, in general and social science textbooks, in particular are expected to contain the sanitised version of what civil society organisations want to introduce.

The social science curriculum, as envisaged in the *National Curriculum Framework* 2005, expects students to develop empathy with the poor and marginalised sections of the Indian society. The *NCF 2005* also suggested to see the developmentalism critically and promoted egalitarian perspective. Bose's (2013) study attempted to understand children's perception about the poor. It recorded that the economics textbook contents on poverty allegedly showed "persistent preoccupation with the measurement questions at the cost of ethical and egalitarian aspects of poverty". The students in classrooms looked at poverty "only within utilitarian framework" and that it was acceptable for students to study poverty as a topic in economics course without "any reference to the key ideas of dignity, social justice and equality" (Bose, 2013, p.378.).

To sum up, the above discussion clearly suggests the need to conduct more researches on different aspects of social science education and that should form the basis of developing social

science curriculum and materials. In the absence of a scientific base, the discipline will continue to attract public criticism.

Methods, Materials and Social Science Teachers

The social science teachers teaching Classes VI to X in India are different from others. In school syllabus, topics from history, geography, political science and economics are found whereas most teachers come to teach this course with one or two subject background while doing under-graduation. The number of higher education institutions offering geography and political science are far less when compared with institutions offering history or economics (Srinivasan, 2015). In states such as Tamil Nadu, economics graduates are not eligible to become social science teachers. In a few other states, only those who have studied history are eligible to get recruited as social science teachers. There are hardly any institution offering all the three subjects at the under-graduation level. This has implications on the nature of teaching social science in the school.

The one and a half decades (2000–2015) are important in many dimensions in the area of social science education. The number of schools and children studying in Indian schools increased manifold. The variety of learning resources available to teach social sciences got expanded from textbooks, atlas, maps, globe, newspapers, and blackboard to many others. Two schemes were introduced by the Union Government, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)* and *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)* during 2001 and 2009, respectively to improve the quality of schooling in India. These schemes encouraged innovations in teaching-learning methods, development and supply of teaching–learning materials and also supported States to build school infrastructure and teacher recruitment. Teachers were also encouraged to develop teaching aids and were provided financial support through schools to procure teaching aids.

During 2000–2015, the ICT entered Indian schools in a big way. Due to this, expectations of schools system from students and teachers also changed dramatically. Social science students and teachers' are expected to explore digital resources–use computers, access internet, multimedia materials published by private and public curricular materials. The *NCF 2005* also recommended using ICT 'to enrich curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks'. Social science students in some Indian schools today prepare projects

using materials collected from internet and submit digitally. The open educational resources, provided by government agencies, have the potential to work as a platform for teachers and students to participate in online courses and would in future possibly bridge the digital divide (Khan, 2014). The availability of newer teaching aids also supposedly encourages teachers to go beyond lectures as a teaching method in social science classrooms. In some schools, particularly in the private sector, social science teachers use worksheets, liquid crystal display (popularly known as LCD) projectors, smart boards, i-pads and multimedia materials.

The above developments led researchers to examine— (a) teachers' perceptions about curricular materials, (b) compare different methods in improving teaching and (c) the use of teaching aids or teaching learning materials (popularly known as TLMs) in improving the social science learning levels.

Teachers believe that social science in schools widens the horizon of students and prepare them for life (Dinesh, 2010). A study of geography teachers in Manipur found the need to train teachers to develop understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the subject, curricular objectives of geography, right attitude and necessary skills in geography (Singh, 2015).

While teaching democratic values to Class VIII students, the modular approach was found more effective than the conventional method (Singh & Rathore, 2013). To Menzes (2002), inductive method was more appropriate to teach history for Class IX students. The inquiry approach to teach history was 'equally' good in improving the learning achievement of students belonging to different levels of intelligence and socio-economic status (Hemalatha, 2002). Ranganathan (2011) found three methods, namely, interactive method, teacher interactive method, and self-learning, which made a significant effect on the learning levels of high school students in history in Chennai and Tamil Nadu. Newspapers help teaching economics to school students and some of the activities could be devised by the teachers for developing newspaper reading habit among the students, such as preparing a project file on various forms of graphical presentation of economic data, news reading on current economic affairs, conducting essay competition on economic issues etc (Meena, 2007).

Though a variety of teaching aids are available in markets, they need to be selected and used cautiously. Ojha (2008), while

recommending the use of spider diagram, time line, time graphs in history classes to develop time sense in history suggested teachers to recognise their limitations.

Social science students' found ICT enhanced learning 'interesting, motivating as compared to the traditional method of teaching' (Patel, 2015; Yadav, 2013). Singh (2013) and Quasmi (2013) reports the use of ICT in social science teaching as effective in developing creativity and concept attainment in Geography as compared to the conventional method of teaching. However, the number of studies showing ICT potential in improving the understanding of the social science concepts are limited.

Assessing Social Science Learning

Assessment helps to identify and certify learners about their mastery over knowledge, skills and perceptible changes in behaviour and belief as given in the curricular goals and Indian Constitution. In some ways, assessment in social science is different from other subjects. Students are assessed on the basis of marks scored in paper-pencil tests—unit tests, other regular periodic tests and annual examinations. Traditionally, students studying science were assessed on the basis of written tests and practical experiments conducted in school laboratories. In all other subjects including social sciences, students were certified, particularly in Class X and XII, on the basis of written tests conducted at the end of the academic year. During 2000–2015, a few reforms were mooted in Indian schools.

The Central Board of Secondary Education, one important Board in India, introduced project work for social science course in Class X and optional social science subjects in Class XII. The RTE Act 2009 mandated to introduce Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) for Classes I to VIII and not to detain students in the same Class. This led the CBSE and states introducing CCE in which students were assessed on the basis of a variety of tests and projects. The CBSE also made Class X Board Examination optional for some time and introduced modified version of CCE for Classes IX and X.

Though not directly relevant to social science education, since 2005, one voluntary organisation, Pratham through its Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), began reporting the learning levels among primary students as 'low' compared to the expectation particularly in the rural government schools (ASER, 2005). This

was based on a large scale assessment conducted among lakhs of primary level students in rural India. Due to this, students learning levels in curricular areas such as Mathematics and English have become a major source of contention in the policy debate.

Studies to understand the assessment dimensions of social science subjects at the national level are scarce in India. NCERT conducted a survey of Class VIII students studying in government and government aided schools in all the states and union territories. Students' learning levels in social science were estimated based on the national level tests among nearly two lakh students. The Class VIII students reported difficulty in studying social sciences taught in the schools. The average achievement of students in social science varied across states and Union Territories of India and there were no differences in the learning levels between male and female students or rural and urban students. This study also attempted to find the impact of variables associated with home and school (Singh et al, 2013). However, the contribution of intervening variables to the social science learning achievement was very low.

Board question papers form an important component of assessment system. These are used as a model for other classes in the school system. For example, the question papers of Class X set example for Classes VI to IX and Class XII question papers are used as a model for Class XI. Sreekanth (2007) reports wide variations in the social science question paper setting in Indian examination boards and most of them are traditional in nature (Kumari, 2008).

When students are introduced to interactive learning approaches, rather than traditional lectures, economics students of Class XII reported higher levels of achievement in Delhi schools (Singh, 2011). Raveendran (2013) found that the CCE model (NCERT, 2013) when tried out with Class VI students in a rural schools in Haryana helped students to perform better. The various teaching strategies integrating assessment models raised students' interest in classroom participation, involvement and sharpening of their social science skills. The CBSE model of CCE received criticism and created debate (Nawani, 2013; Roy, 2011). Students and teachers reported increase in the curricular burden (Srinivasan, 2015).

The quality of questions given in the textbooks and those asked in Board examinations has also received some attention. While examining Classes IX and X geography textbooks, it was found that the textbook questions covered only spatial concepts (Mishra, 2014).

The position paper of NFG on Examination Reforms reported that social science questions in Board examinations suffer from various deficiencies. There is a difference in the quality of questions asked by different Boards. The CBSE question papers are better than the state board question papers. Many questions asked in CBSE Board Examinations encourage students to use their curricular knowledge for problem solving and application (Agarwal et al, 2006). Similar observations were also made by Chandrashekar (2007), while examining the Punjab Board question papers.

A few researchers looked into the performance of students belonging to different social, economic and other categories in social science school based examinations—rural students or urban students, boys or girls, Indian students and students in other countries, and factors determining the level of learning achievement. Rajadhurai (2014) studied the status of social science teaching and learning in secondary schools in Chennai city in Tamil Nadu. The study indicated that the students from high income families performed better in academic achievement than the students from low income families. Students studying in the private unaided (locally known as matriculation) schools showed higher level of learning achievement than their government school counterparts, and the male students had registered better academic achievement than the female students. Also, the students of semi-urban areas scored better in learning, study organisation, study habit, attitude towards teaching than the students of urban areas. Within urban areas, students of semi-urban areas did better than other urban areas particularly in geography. There was, however, no discussion on why some children performed better than others.

Mete (2006) conducted a study to find out the relationship between the higher secondary students' attitude towards study of Geography and achievement level found that urban students' learning levels were better in Geography. In another study, Indian students were found doing better than Seychelles students in social science skills such as observation, classification, inferring, and map skills while the Seychelles students were better only in inference skills (Felix, 2013).

Many factors such as intelligence, study habit, self-concept, examination anxiety, family income, family education, socio-economic status contribute to students' achievement in social science (Mathew, 2014). Also, students performed well when teachers were directly involved in the classroom and school decision

making process (Basu, 2014).To be specific, the leadership qualities of teachers tends to influence the academic performance of students in social science. Specific methods and teaching learning materials have a bearing on the learning levels. Gowdhaman (2014) found that the use of photographs in the higher secondary history class improved the learning levels.

A few studies analysed students' marks in Board examinations and how they influence the students' selection of courses at the higher secondary level and in higher education. Srinivasan and Karpagam (2012) reported that in Tamil Nadu girls outnumbered boys in overall enrolment and were way ahead of boys in pass percentage in higher secondary Board examinations. Majority of the boys from 'General' and 'Backward Class' in urban areas studied in self-financing English medium schools and opted for Science and Commerce groups. In contrast to this, a substantial portion of government and private aided school girls from rural areas and belonging to distressed communities opted either Economics or Vocational groups. The pass percentage of these students was also low and the percentage of students with distinction in higher secondary examination for getting into professional courses and premier institutions was very low. The absence of Science and Commerce streams in the government schools in rural areas further depresses the future prospects of the students. Thus, rural girls suffer from double disadvantage of social and economic backwardness of their communities and the inadequacies of the schools.

To sum up, students' scores in tests conducted by government and non-government agencies on a large scale are matter of concern. Their data is still being researched. So also the marks scored by students in state and national level Board examinations. The implementation of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) through RTE Act 2009 and reforms introduced by the CBSE has become part of the public discourse. A number of studies have examined role of teaching methods and teaching aids in improving the learning achievement. Barring a few, Board question papers and questions asked in the question papers of state level boards are yet to receive the attention. The assessment framework suggested in many NCERT social science textbooks including the questions and activities neither received the required attention by the educational researchers nor by examination Boards.

Taking Social Sciences beyond Schools

Some new institutions and organisations emerged in India to take social science education outside the syllabus and textbooks and from the four walls of the school. Included among them are curriculum development agencies such as SCERTs and NCERT. This is a major change witnessed during this period. Some of them were established long ago and many others are emerging. This review essay will not get completed if a brief account of their details is not mentioned.

It was already pointed out that, since the early 1980s, Eklavya is one organisation in the non-governmental sector engaged in researching social science curriculum. Voluntary organisations such as The Institute of Geographical Studies (TIGS) (http://www.tigs.in/), Bangalore promotes geography education through informal ways. The Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA) (http://www.cmcaindia.org), Bangalore working with school going children and volunteers promotes citizenship education. They conducted national level survey (called Yuva Nagarik Meter – YNM) on children and adolescents' understanding of citizenship issues and work through schools with the help of volunteers. The study reports that the Indian youth are not able to understand democracy as a principle to be followed in our lives. Youth reproduce stereotypes pertaining to culture reflecting the nature of Indian society and failure of educational system in making any change in this area. They are indifferent towards the working class and possess stereotypical views on women's rights and attitude towards violence. The undemocratic, hierarchical and discriminatory tendencies prevalent in the public life and in educational institutions perpetuate this tendency in youth. Home and parents are also party to this attitudinal aspect of youth equally.

We The People (http://www.wethepeople.ooo/) is yet another organisation of volunteers attempting to create awareness about Indian Constitution and citizenship values and is located in Pune and Gurugram. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Securities and Exchange Bureau of India (SEBI) spread awareness of being literate in financial world. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Dehradun works with the NCERT to develop map reading skills. The Azim Premji Foundation, Bangaluru works with many states helping them in curriculum development using research. They bring out a newsletter, *Learning Curve,* and a magazine, *Teacher*

Plus. They are the major source of information and academic aids for social science teachers. The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) in New Delhi promotes economic education and particularly on taxes, and brings out materials on India's state and central budget. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi is another organisation promoting environmental education through various advocacy and publications.

Summary and Conclusions

Today the society, media and the state find teaching social sciences in schools as quite important and useful to impart nationalistic and citizenship values at least up to secondary level. Schooling is nothing but reflection of the society. What is taught and learnt in schools depends on what is expected by the society. A considerable section of society does not wish to study science curriculum, at the higher secondary stage and in higher studies. This may be due to changing aspirations despite the availability of high paid information technology jobs in Indian labour market. During the years 2000 to 2015, among all the curricular areas, school social science curriculum made a significant impact on people's lives—drawing the attention of media, political parties, and civil society organisation on the importance of social sciences.

Today, social science curriculum development process is well documented. We know how social science curricular materials, mainly textbooks, are developed in government organisations in India. This review records that researchers have started looking at syllabus, textbooks, question papers and questions from dimensions entirely different from the way they were researched in the past. Advanced social science research methods have begun to be applied today in Indian school social science classrooms.

Behaviourism has given way to constructivism, particularly in policy formulations and in curriculum development. Yet, social science is still dominated by core disciplines and their proponents. Social science textbooks became children-friendly and yet they pose pressure and challenges to social science teachers due to wide gap between the textbook expectations and the knowledge and competency levels of social science teachers. Today, the civil society organisations and media are vigilant with regard to curriculum revision and what goes into social science textbooks. Though this is a welcome development in the world's largest democracy, it causes

serious challenge in changing anything in social science curriculum even to bring in innovations and incorporate latest developments in the social science knowledge domains. All the changes that have happened in the present-day curricular materials occurred due to curricular research conducted in India and other parts of the world.

It is also true that not all the issues which were in the public discourse were taken for detailed investigation by curriculum researchers. For example, authentic research evidences on the impact of ICT on the social science learning is still required. On the whole, this was the period of reflections and reactions on what to teach as social science to school children and this debate is going to continue in the coming decades as well.

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