

A Study on the Status of Social Sciences in the National Curriculum Framework

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Abstract: *This paper is titled A Study on the Status of Social Sciences in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and is meant to examine the position, scope, and pedagogical orientation of Social Sciences and the National Curriculum Frameworks in India and specifically the National Curriculum Frameworks 2005 and the recently proposed National Curriculum Frameworks 2023. The study approaches the issue of Social Sciences reflection or representation in terms of goals, unitization, teaching-learning methods and evaluation patterns. The research employs a qualitative approach of analytical procedure, which is grounded on the review of documents, analysis of the policies, and comparison of the previous and the current framework. The discovery indicates that the NCF 2005 gave priority to social sciences learning that was constructivist, critical and democratic in nature. Nevertheless, the NCF 2023 aims at shifting the curriculum to competence-based learning, experiential education, and knowledge systems of the Indians whilst preserving the aim of nurturing citizenship and societal comprehension. In spite of these developments, there are still issues concerning interdisciplinary incorporation of the content, the elements of regional characterization as well as the question of balance between national identity and worldwide visions. This research finds that Social Sciences are an important part of shaping up informed, reflective and responsible citizens. Therefore, the planners and teachers in curriculum should make sure that the subject does not lose its critical and transformative intent due to the change in priorities in education. Effective implementation is suggested through strengthening teacher preparation, renewing textbooks, and matching the assessment with the skills of higher-order thinking*

Keywords: Social Sciences, National Curriculum Framework, NCF 2005, NCF 2023, Curriculum Reform, Pedagogy, Indian Knowledge System, Citizenship Education, Constructivism, Competency-based Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important aspects in determining the values, attitudes and knowledge required in the making of an informed and responsible citizenry. In the given case, the Social Sciences would take a center stage since they allow the learners to know about human society, culture, economic systems, political institutions and the relation between the environment and the learner. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is a reference document to design school curriculum in India to describe the goals, principles and pedagogical strategies that make the classroom learning. The changing attitudes of the NCF are an indication of the changing socio-political, economic and educational requirements of the country.

The NCF 2005 focused more on constructivist learning, critical inquiry and democratic citizenship that argues that History, Geography, Political Science and Economics should be integrated under a general term, which is the Social Sciences. It considered education as a social change process and was determined to create critical awareness of social issues, social justice, and equity to the students. Conversely, the NCF 2023 that is in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents competency-based and multidisciplinary approaches. It emphasizes practical education, the combination of Indian systems of knowledge and an international perspective in order to equip students with 21 st century challenges.



Nevertheless, despite these policy developments, a number of questions about the real situation in the present curriculum of Social Sciences still persist. Do they accord the subjects the appropriate level of importance as compared to science and technology? Does it have an interdisciplinary and inquiry based approach that is effectively executed? The research aims at answering these questions through exploring the treating, scope, and pedagogy of Social Sciences in the National Curriculum Framework. This knowledge of this status is crucial not only to helping the curriculum to be designed better but to also to make sure education performs its wider role of making socially aware, critical, and sensitive citizens in a democratic society.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the status and position of Social Sciences in the National Curriculum Frameworks from 2005 and 2023.
2. To look at the teaching and assessment methods recommended for Social Sciences.
3. To compare the philosophical views and curriculum priorities of NCF 2005 and NCF 2023 regarding Social Science education.
4. To identify challenges and suggest ways to improve the teaching and learning of Social Sciences in schools.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative and analytical research design based mainly on documentary and policy analysis. The main sources of data include the official documents of NCF 2005, NCF 2023, and related policy texts like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Secondary data were collected from research papers, curriculum reports, NCERT position papers, and academic commentaries. A comparative analysis helped understand how the conceptual framework, learning goals, and teaching recommendations for Social Sciences have changed. The interpretation is descriptive, analytical, and critical.

Social Sciences in Indian Curriculum:

This section deals with the historical background of the social sciences taught within the school curriculum systems in India. Since the post-independence era the Social Sciences have remained a component of Indian education. Education Commission (1964) pointed out the necessity to encourage social knowledge and civic duty by use of Social Studies. The previous National Curriculum Frameworks (1975, 1988 and 2000) helped build the frame and aim of teaching Social Science as learning became more child-centered than rote-based learning.

The NCF 2005 became the turning point because it redefined Social Sciences as a field developing a critical insight in the society as opposed to simply conveying knowledge. It was an endeavor to bridge knowledge to the life beyond school, to discourage memorization, and encourage questioning, contemplation and argument. This development is furthered in NCF 2023, which is built in the spirit of NEP 2020 that proposes competency-based, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning, incorporating local knowledge, and focusing on ethical and cultural origins.

In NCF 2005, status of Social Sciences:

The NCF 2005 provided a good intellectual and pedagogical groundwork to Social Science education. Its key features include:

holistic and interdisciplinary approach:

Social Science was considered to be a complex subject, which includes History, Geography, Political Science and Economics, that would train critical thought and interpretation of social processes.

Constructivist Pedagogy:

The students were also urged to build knowledge by observing, discussing and thinking instead of memorizing.

Democratic citizenship and Social Justice:

The structure underlined the place of education in advancing principles of equality, liberty and fraternity which are compatible with the Indian Constitution.

Content Relevance:



It demanded that local, regional and national contexts should be reflected in the textbooks in order to make learning meaningful.

Assessment Reform:

NCF 2005 suggested an ongoing and holistic assessment (CCE) based on formative assessment and qualitative feedback as opposed to marks-based evaluation.

These reforms made NCF 2005 an effective means to revamp the Social Science curriculum by changing it into a dynamic and participatory process, as opposed to the previous information-driven and stagnant model of a curriculum. It however was not brought uniformly across states because of the differences in the teacher preparation, design of textbooks and classroom practices.

Status of Social Sciences in NCF 2023:

The NCF 2023, based on the National Education Policy 2020, offers a fresh vision for Social Science education within the School Education Framework (SEF). Its main highlights include:

Competency-Based Learning:

The framework focuses on building specific skills like critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving, rather than just memorizing content.

Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):

NCF 2023 introduces aspects of Indian philosophy, traditions, and heritage into Social Science learning. This aims to create citizens who are both culturally rooted and globally aware.

Experiential and Multidisciplinary Approach:

The framework encourages project-based, hands-on, and field-based learning that links classroom lessons with real-life experiences.

Flexibility and Foundational Stages:

The 5+3+3+4 schooling structure allows for a gradual introduction of Social Sciences, which helps develop curiosity and civic awareness from an early age.

Global and Local Perspectives:

Students are urged to understand both their local social environments and the global context. This approach fosters interconnected and inclusive worldviews.

Despite these innovations, some concerns remain. The strong focus on skills and competencies might undermine the reflective and critical nature of Social Sciences. Additionally, integrating traditional knowledge needs careful academic balance to ensure objectivity and inclusivity.

Comparative Analysis: NCF 2005 and NCF 2023

Aspect	NCF 2005	NCF 2023
Philosophy	Constructivist and democratic	Competency-based and experiential
Focus	Critical inquiry and social justice	Skill development and cultural integration
Knowledge Base	Modern disciplines (History, Geography, etc.)	Indian Knowledge Systems and multidisciplinary learning
Pedagogy	Inquiry-based and dialogic	Experiential, project-based, and technology-driven
Assessment	Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)	Competency-based and performance-oriented evaluation
Goal	Democratic citizenship and critical understanding	Holistic, ethical, and global citizenship

Both frameworks share the aim of developing informed citizens, but their means and emphasis differ according to contemporary educational needs. NCF 2005 was rooted in social reconstructionism, while NCF 2023 aligns more with global competency frameworks and the 21st-century skills paradigm.

Challenges in Implementation:



- 1. Teacher Preparedness:** Many teachers lack proper training to effectively apply constructivist or competency-based approaches.
- 2. Resource Gaps:** Unequal access to teaching and learning materials across states makes uniform implementation difficult.
- 3. Assessment Overload:** Competency-based evaluation is complex and may lead to inconsistent assessment practices.
- 4. Curricular Overcrowding:** Combining multiple subjects and themes may overwhelm students.
- 5. Balancing Objectivity and Cultural Integration:** Including Indian knowledge systems needs a careful approach to avoid ideological bias.

Recommendations:

- 1. Strengthen Teacher Education:** Add Social Science teaching methods and research-based practices in B.Ed. and in-service programs.
- 2. Curriculum Integration:** Promote interdisciplinary projects that connect Social Sciences with arts, languages, and environmental studies.
- 3. Assessment Reform:** Create clear rubrics and guidelines for competency-based evaluation.
- 4. Textbook Revision:** Revise textbooks with modern examples, regional relevance, and diverse viewpoints.
- 5. Technology Integration:** Use digital tools for interactive learning, simulations, and virtual field trips.

III. CONCLUSION

Social Sciences play a vital role in education by nurturing reflective, empathetic, and socially responsible citizens. The National Curriculum Frameworks from 2005 and 2023 both acknowledge this importance but differ in their approaches. While NCF 2005 emphasized critical understanding and democratic involvement, NCF 2023 aims to connect Social Science education with skill development, hands-on learning, and Indian cultural values. The future of Social Science education in India depends on finding a balance between these views, merging intellectual inquiry with cultural depth, and connecting critical thinking with practical abilities. An effective and inclusive Social Science curriculum can contribute to creating a fair, democratic, and sustainable society.

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