

## Teaching of Social Science: Its Challenges and revitalising its learning

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### Abstract

Nation's development is directly related to the level of education of a society. Education is not only centric to knowledge development but it has the responsibility to spread human values, develop compassion among the people of a society. To cater the needs of social prosperity and environmental consciousness among students, Social Science as a subject, has been introduced in the education system. Social Science is the study of wide spectrum of the society through its different subjects History, Geography, Political Science and Economics. Social science as a subject is vast in its nature that demands lots of creativity, preparedness, current knowledge and confidence on the part of the teachers. Additionally covering this vast syllabus of Social Science in an academic year along with binding student's interest with the subject is a great challenge. Therefore, it becomes important to understand and analyse the challenges of teaching Social Science as a subject and plan judiciously the development of this subject.

**KEYWORDS:** multi-cultural dimension, environment, historical sense, geographical awareness, economic, political knowledge

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is very important for an individual's success in life. Education provides individual the skills that prepare them physically, mentally and socially for the world of work in later life. It is generally seen as the foundation of society which brings economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability. It is the adhesive which can help to recover the damage from the core. It plays an important role in the overall development of human being. It encultures the harmony of life through the process of socialization. The Education Commission (1964-66), the 1<sup>st</sup> commission in India examined all aspects of education, began its report with these words, "the destiny of India is now being shaped in the classroom".

Education is linked to the national development, therefore it needs to strengthen social and national integration, consolidate democracy, spread secularism and respect and care for nature. It should be such which not only generates a productive humanity but also inculcates a deep concern to our cultural heritage. To meet these requirements, social science is introduced in the school curriculum. Social science is the subject which brings the world into the classroom. It touches all aspects of life. Therefore it is required to handle this subject carefully by adopting analyzed methodology of teaching. But the subject of social science has suffered from inappropriate teaching that has been taken for granted. It is believed that anybody can teach social science. Though it is related to practicality of life but the teaching approach for this subject is mostly theoretical in nature. Therefore the author would like to reflect on the problem in teaching of social science.

## **2. CONCEPT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE:**

Society grows with individual and individual grows with the environment of the society. They are interdependent and their growth is simultaneous and continuous, which means that the study of society should be in relation to its individuals and vice-versa. Social science deals with these factors. The social science is concerned with the study of society (in general or specific terms). The word 'science' may be confusing but here it simply means a branch of knowledge studied in a scholarly and systematic way by observation. It studies the human culture and how human relate to each other in those culture. The purpose of social science is to help us learn how to relate to one another and how to improve our world culture. NCSS (1992) defines social science as "the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social science provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social science is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world"

### **2.1 Components of Social Science as the subject:**

The field of social science is almost limitless; it is as wide as the world as long as the history of man. Within the school program, it provides coordinated study of the following disciplines-History, Civics, Geography, and Economics. These all subjects are interconnected, systematically developed in order to have the hierarchical development of the knowledge in the pupils.

### **2.2 Objectives of teaching Social Science:**

The objective behind teaching social science at school level is to make a good citizen who has the consciousness of his past, his environment and has the understanding to plan for the future accordingly. According to NCF (2005), objectives of teaching social science are:

1. To develop national understanding.
2. To develop social and economic challenges facing the nation.
3. To relate the content as much as possible to students lives.
4. To develop the respect for the past freedom fighters and great personalities of India.

### **2.3 Importance of Social Science:**

Pace(2007) "Depth of historical, political and cultural understanding is essential if this democracy is to survive and thrive. Powerful social science teaching help students enduring understandings in the core content areas of civics, economics geography and history, and assure their readiness and willingness to assume their citizenship responsibility. Powerful social science learning leads to well informed and civic minded citizenry that can sustain on and build democratic traditions". Therefore in order to achieve the national goals and to build strong citizenry social science development is indeed important. Could be more elaborative

## **3. PROBLEMS IN TEACHING SOCIAL SCIENCE:**

Lullaet. al.(1966) studied the academic causes of backwardness in social science and found the following as causes of backwardness in social science subject. They pertained to defect in curriculum, teaching learning materials [TLM], teachers and teaching methods, administration in schools and examinations, syllabus of subject was too heavy, divorced from real life situations and sometimes even beyond the

grasp of a teacher. Information in textbook was outdated, lack of teaching aids and classes were overcrowded. Teachers were overburdened with non academic work. Other reason for the low achievement in the social science was lack of motivational and aptitude of students and community towards the subject.

George & Madan (2009),“The study of social science are often seen easy probably because they deal with issues and processes that surround us all the time and on which we have ideas and positions. They are about people, our wealth, our problems and our values. Yet, this apparent simplicity is deceptive. Teaching the complexity of human being is not an easy task”.

On the basis of reviews and discussions the common obstacles that are found in social science as a subject are as follows:

- Problem faced by students and teachers at school level is of relevancy that is to how history, government, economics, geography, etc. affects the student and his /her understanding of the world.
- There is a lack of trained teachers who can teach all the disciplines of social science i.e. history, civics, geography, economics. Our training colleges have so long produced teachers of history and geography but not of social science in totality.
- There is no ‘Why’ most of social science teachers due mainly to the volume of material to be covered, do not get into the` Why?’‘Students need to know’ Why Henry had eight wives?
- Evaluation is widely on the basis of linguistic expressions because of which students with poor linguistic suffers badly.
- Another problem is itself the scope of social science. As it covers history of different nations, landforms, climate of the world, governmental systems, study of goods and services, customs, and this all demands the teacher to come up with viable solutions.
- Its part is related to historical investigation and to multi-cultural dimension it sometimes becomes difficult to transact it in a favorable way to each pupil in the class.
- Excursions and extracurricular activities like exhibitions in connections with social science are not common in the schools.
- Students have the fixed mindset that it is a boring and good for parrots.
- High expectations of parents, lack of innovations and justification to teaching are some of the other dimensions of the problems related to social science.

#### **4. SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEM OF TEACHING SOCIAL SCIENCE:**

George & Madan(2009)“Social science is after all most practical, dealing with affairs that everybody participates in, and best learnt by doing the fact. The decline of the social science can only spell danger for the quality of public life in our country. Yet quality of social science textbooks and classroom teaching has not risen to expectations. In Indian classroom climate, it is the most common complain that social science meant only for rote learning, for cramming and cruelest cut of all is student saying that there is nothing to understand in social science” To frame the suggestions author has divided the problems into two sectors: teachers and teaching point of view and school’s point of view.

##### **4.1 Teachers and teaching point of view**

According to American Commission of teacher’s education “high quality teaching staff is the cornerstone of a successful educational system and the nation. The quality

of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of citizens depends more than on any other single factors, upon the quality of their teachers”. Indian culture has never been static, monolithic. It should not be taught in isolation and can be taught only with broad perceptiveness. Teacher of social science should have historical sense, geographical awareness, economic and political knowledge, nationalist and internationalist values. For development of proper understanding it is necessary for the teachers to guard against some common wrong assumptions in order to appreciate the true cultural heritage of India .Ediger & Rao(2001)“Social science teachers need to have appropriate guidelines to use in developing and implementing thematicof study”. Ediger & Rao (2001), each unit’s guideline followed needs to stress what educational psychologists recommend in the instructional endeavour:

- Teachers need to teach in a manner which captures learner’s interest
- Teachers need to provide meaningful learning experiences for all pupils
- Teachers need to guide pupils to perceive reasons for learning
- Pupils need to experience success in social science
- Pupil application on of what has been learned
- Balance among objectives(knowledge , skills and attitudinal goals)

From above stated points social science teaching needs to be revitalized towards helping the learner acquire knowledge and skills in an interactive environment. The teaching of social sciences must adopt methods that promote creativity, aesthetics and critical perspectives and enable children to draw relationships between past and present, to understand changes taking place in a society. Problem solving, dramatization and role play are some hitherto under explored strategies that could be employed. Teaching should utilize greater resources of audio-visual materials, including photographs, charts, globe and maps, and replicas of archaeological and material cultures. In order to make the process of learning participative there is a need to shift from mere imparting of information to debate and discussion. This approach to learning will keep both the learner and teacher alive to social realities.

Though there are number of methodologies of teaching of social science like lecture, lecture with discussion, brainstorming, explanation, etc. here author would like to highlight on some particular methods of teaching social science. Correlation technique which can be implemented in teaching of social science believes that the facts and ideas have a real and useful influence over the mind, only when the mind systematizes and coordinates them with other facts and ideas as they are produced. Correlation technique in teaching of social science tries to establish a reciprocal relationship among the various subjects of social science and the life in all community. Aggarwal (1983)“The primary objective of correlation is a better integration of knowledge and experience and an economy of time and energy. Social science is not a subject at all but a house in which all subjects dwell. It gives birth or nourishes, develops and cultivates all arts. Thus, reciprocal relationship that exists among the diversity of subjects of social science needs to be established. This relationship with correlation technique makes the study of social science easier, inspirational, interesting and natural”. It tries to solve the problem of relevancy by integrating the knowledge and experience of the learner. As the other methods this approach also demands the vigilance of the teacher. She should have the vast bank of examples and good and simple vocabulary to translate the concept in its easiest way to the learner.

Next method that can be implemented in social science teaching is Socialized recitation. It is an educational programme of the school which directly aims at the socialization of the children by developing in them the traits of initiative and responsibility within a group. The activities that come under the socialized recitation

are mentioned by Aggarwal (1983), that are “children are discussing, questioning, reporting, planning, working in natural ways. In which the teacher is a guide, counselor, advisor, contributor and the director in the best sense of the word, trying to get children to discover things for themselves rather than have them merely listening to them. Training children for democracy by giving them training in democracy is focusing on the need of socialized class procedures”. The traditional type of teaching social science does not provide for the active participation of the child in the teaching learning process. It considers the child as a passive being and does not provide incentive for exercising initiative and independent thinking. It has been seen in social science that the child recites correctly and yet fails to comprehend the real meaning of what he has committed temporarily to memory. Therefore education for democracy should get its space in teaching of social science.

Apart from methodology the evaluation system also affects the level of participation of the children. Teacher’s manual on formative assessment (Central Board of Secondary Education, 2010) has stated the following points on social science assessment:

- Written assignments involving inference, interpretation and evaluation
- Commentaries
- Simple projects (group and individuals)
- Presentations (group and individuals)
- Quiz and MCQ’s
- Models and charts
- Debates
- Symposium/seminar
- Conducting interviews of historical figures
- Role plays
- Dramatization of historical events

Thus merely depending upon the performance in written test, the overall presentation throughout the academic year can help to reach the broad perspective of assessment. After reading the views of different scholars and organizations it can be comprehended that there is a strong need in changing both the methodology and factors of evaluating the teaching learning of social science.

#### **4.2 School’s point of view**

To bring any change in teaching-learning process the school’s cooperation and permission is indeed essential. Therefore the school also owes an important responsibility for the development of teaching learning of social science. As mentioned by National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT-2006), “In order to make the learning of social science more enjoyable and effective, there is a need for innovations in teaching methods. Social science learning should involve visits to museums at local, state, and national levels. Students may be asked to explore the local surroundings and observe the activities of artisan communities engaged in different crafts using local skills and materials. These handicrafts may be displayed in a small corner of the school and developed into a museum. The schools could have their own social science museums. During the summer break, students may be asked to make models of historical monuments, charts indicating the effects of volcanoes or earthquakes, crossword games or puzzles. The children may paint phenomena related to the natural environment. Newspaper or magazine cuttings related to topics in the syllabus, or related information downloaded from the internet, can be displayed. This

museum could be laid out in different ways from time to time so that it does not become dated. Students may also be involved in other activities:

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

After considering the obstacles of social science, author would also like to suggest some points that can be incorporated by the school for the development of social science as a subject (apart from mentioned by NCERT )that are:

- School must recruit professionally well qualified teachers.
- School should provide opportunities for extracurricular activities like visits, exhibitions, etc. Celebrations of national days and important international days like Human Rights Day(10 December), World day of Peace(1<sup>st</sup> January),World Health Day(7<sup>th</sup> April), Earth Day (22<sup>nd</sup> April) etc projects must be included in school’s academic calendar.
- Though practically it’s not possible to take children to regular educational trips due to number of limitations like funds, time, parent’s approval, schedule rigidity, etc. In such conditions school/teachers can go with the option of e-field trips which is easily accessible with a small infrastructure demand and different topics are just a click away from the class.
- Like clubs of other subject’s social science club can also be maintained where the projects, models, charts, pictures, photograph, articles or even costumes, etc (collected by or through student’s cooperation) can be displayed for anytime’s demonstration to the students. Students would be the active members of this club taking care of the execution of different activities of the house like exhibitions, celebrations of Social science week, preparation for competitions like inter house, inter school, state level, etc.
- As child is the pivotal point both for parents and the school, there is a need of regular give and take of feedback both from parents and teachers for planned development of the child.

## **5. CONCLUSION:**

According to NCSS(2008)“the last decade of twentieth century and the first decade of twenty- first century have seen the marginalization of social science curriculum, instruction and assessment at all grade levels .In many state houses, in department of education and school districts across this great nation, education for citizenship has taken a back seat for education for career and college.” Thus we are in danger of losing a generation of citizens schooled in the foundations of democracy—and of producing high school graduates who are not broadly educated human beings. Therefore this is the high time to focus equally to all aspects of social science in order to achieve the national goal.

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