

CURRICULAR IMPACT
&
THE ROLE OF PEDAGOGY

A comparative study across various
social science curricula

Nivedita Dwivedi



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ABSTRACT

Post the optional course that I took in the Pedagogy of Social Studies in my second semester of the MAEE program at TISS, I got an insight into how the curriculum and pedagogy of social studies had traditionally been and how actually it could and should have been. We were also given a chance to have a look at various textbooks and compare them. The thought of this field study was born therein, the idea being to understand the impact of these various curricula on the students. When I suggested this idea to my faculty mentor, she also suggested to me that a desk study to compare and contrast these various curricula could also be undertaken as a part of this project, as this aspect had not been dealt with earlier. Additionally, while doing a literature review, I also felt that it was important to understand the effect of pedagogy on the chances of a curricular content to succeed or to fail. I felt there was not enough work done in this regard. Most of the times, it had been assumed that though teachers had an important role to play in the success or failure of a curriculum to achieve its goals, yet good/excellent curricula could somehow take care of these aspects, and these differences could be ignored in the overall scheme of things.

As the domain of social sciences is extremely vast, my focus throughout this field research was on the teaching-learning of 'Civics' in schools, in upper-primary classes. The desk study that I undertook in terms of comparing the various curricula was centred around a comparison of Civics curricula.

Keeping the above aspects in mind, the goals of this field study were envisaged as the following:

1. A comparison of various existing curricula, namely, Eklavya Social Science curriculum, NCERT (CBSE Board), Maharashtra State Board and Avehi Abacus (Sangati) – Desk study
2. To understand the impact of these various curricula (NCERT – CBSE Board, Maharashtra State Board and Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum) on the students – Field study on upper-primary students (Classes VI-VIII), through their understanding of what 'patriotism' or nationalism' means to them
3. Analyze the role of teachers/pedagogy in relative success or

failure of a curricular content. This was done by comparing the understanding of 'patriotism' among students being transacted Sangati course material, by separate teachers, in separate schools. The choice of schools was based on the suggestions made by the Avehi Abacus representative.

I have done my field study with the Avehi Abacus Project. One of the curriculum that I have analyzed as a part of the study is the Sangati curriculum brought out by them. I am hoping that my field study is helpful to Avehi Abacus in terms of providing some inputs on the Sangati curriculum and its implementation in the schools. It may also be helpful in terms of providing some inputs for the "Manthan" program of the Project, which is a supplementary pre-service teacher training program.

INTRODUCTION

From an analysis of the Indigenous Education system prevailing in India before the colonial take-over of the education system, Brahminical hegemony emerges as the dominant theme. This was characterized by an emphasis on oral learning, memorization, a limited curriculum, absence of women education and education for the lower castes, especially Harijans, lack of teacher training, Brahminical dominance among teachers and a dominance of higher castes among students (Naik & Nurullah, 1974/2004).

The British presence in India began with the coming of the East India Company in 1600, as a trading company. After an initial period of familiarization with the Indian setting, 'the policy of accommodation pursued under Hastings gave way to British cultural arrogance that led the administrators to impose their language, law and ideas onto the subject population' (Roy, 1993, p. 40). The culmination of this policy was the adoption of 'Macaulay's Minute', by the then Governor General William Bentinck, in 1835. "The Bentinck educational policy, which remained the essential educational policy of the British Raj, called not only for the study of the English language by Indian students but required that instruction in all courses of study at the college level should be given through the medium of the English language." (Cutts, July 1953, p. 824).

The analysis of colonial discourse reveals many similarities with the indigenous Brahminical tradition in terms of perpetuation of the theme of moral uplift of the masses, perpetuation of rote memorization and absence of a spirit of enquiry, lack of encouragement to alternative teaching methodologies, standardized and centrally imposed curriculum and a perpetuation of a class divide based on the educational attainments. Mass education could still not become a reality and women's education also lagged behind.

Indian education system, post-independence, has been modelled on the education system proposed by Macaulay in his 'Macaulay's Minute' (Macaulay, 1835). It has thus promoted rote learning and memorization rather than conceptual thinking, holistic understanding and logical reasoning.

The teaching-learning of social science in schools is one such area, among others, that has focused on memorization of facts (in history), of phenomena (in Geography) and of structures and systems (in Civics), rather than developing a holistic understanding of the world and the people that inhabit that world, and their inter-relationship.

These limitations though have been recognized and certain organizations like Eklavya in Madhya Pradesh and Avehi Abacus in Maharashtra, have made efforts in order to bridge the perceived gaps in the existing curricula. Post NCF, the NCERT curriculum has also been radically revised to address these gaps. My field research was aimed at the following three areas of interest:

1. A comparison of various existing curricula, namely, Eklavya Social Science curriculum, NCERT (CBSE Board), Maharashtra State Board and Avehi Abacus (Sangati) – Desk study
2. To understand the impact of these various curricula (NCERT – CBSE Board, Maharashtra State Board and Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum) on the students – Field study on upper-primary students (Classes VI-VIII), through their understanding of what ‘patriotism’ or nationalism’ means for them
3. Analyze the role of teachers/pedagogy in relative success or failure of a curricular content. This was done by comparing the understanding of ‘patriotism’ among students being transacted Sangati course material, by separate teachers, in separate schools. The choice of schools was based on the suggestions made by the Avehi Abacus representative.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Post the optional course that I took in the Pedagogy of Social Studies in my second semester of the MAEE program at TISS, I got an insight into how the curriculum and pedagogy of social studies had traditionally been and how actually it could and should have been. We were also given a chance to have a look at various textbooks and compare them. The thought of this field study was born therein, the idea is to understand the impact of these various curricula on the students. When I suggested this idea to my faculty mentor, she also suggested me that a desk study to compare and contrast these various curricula could also be undertaken as a part of this project, as this aspect had not been dealt with earlier. Additionally, while doing a literature review, I also felt that it was important to understand the effect of pedagogy on the chances of a curricular content to succeed or to fail. I felt there was not enough work done in this regard. Most of the times, it had been assumed that though teachers had an important role to play in the success or failure of a curricula to achieve their goals, yet good/excellent curriculum could somehow take care of these aspects, and these differences could be ignored in the overall scheme of things.

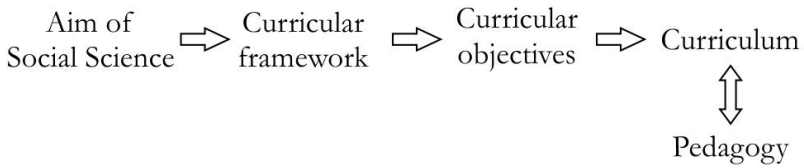
As the domain of social sciences is extremely vast, my focus throughout this field research was on the teaching-learning of 'Civics' in schools, in upper-primary classes. The desk study that I undertook in terms of comparing the various curricula was centred around a comparison of Civics curricula.

The subject of Civics, as the name suggests (Jain, 2005), has been interested in 'civilizing' and ensuring the production of 'civil' and dutiful citizens. Manish Jain talks about the subject of Civics having its colonial roots and the vocabulary in previous NCERT Curriculum textbooks (prior to NCF, 2005), being 'based on the belief that Indian citizens lack the qualities of a good citizen' (Jain, 2005). "In India, the Secondary Education Commission (1953) that had American members, established the subject in the school curriculum" (Jain, 2005). Though the country

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had gained independence, yet the nationalist discourse borrowed the colonial interpretations and ‘accepted its parameters of progress, development and rationality’ (Jain, 2005). Thus the entire discourse came to be formulated again from the dominant perspective, with the newly educated middle class taking on the ‘responsibility of constructing the new nation-state’ (Jain, 2005).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The entire desk study and field study is based on the above conceptual framework. Talking in terms of social science education, the curricular framework documents spell out the broad aims that social science education should target to achieve. What I have argued and presented through this research is that the process of selection of these broad aims is, to a good extent, impacted by the political atmosphere and ideology of the day. The more concrete curricular objectives are then born out of the broader aims, which in turn reflect (or are expected to reflect) in the curriculum and pedagogy. Curriculum and pedagogy, essentially, can be said to be two inseparable sides of the same coin and thus need to complement and complete each-other for any meaningful teaching-learning to take place.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Desk study: A comparative analysis of the following social science curricula:
 - i. NCERT Civics (Social and Political Life) textbooks for Classes VI to VIII
 - ii. Sangati kits (Classes V to VII, with special focus on Kits IV and V)
 - iii. Eklavya Social Science textbooks for Classes VI to VIII with special focus on Civics textbooks
 - iv. Maharashtra State Board Civics textbooks for Classes VI to VIII

Field Study Part I

1. Analysis of impact of the various curricula on students:
 - i. Sites of field study:
 - a. BMC school(s) following Maharashtra State Board syllabus
 - b. A Private school following CBSE syllabus
 - c. BMC school(s) following Maharashtra State Board syllabus, with Aveshi Abacus Sangati curriculum also transacted additionally for classes V to VII
 - ii. Sample: Upper primary classes (Classes VI-VIII). A couple of focus group discussions have also been carried out with students of Class IX due to unavailability of students of Classes VII or VIII (explained in detail later)
 - iii. The curricula:

NCERT curriculum:

National Curricular Framework, 2005 redefined and radicalized the aims of Education and placed tremendous emphasis on “Education for Peace”

(Position Paper by National Focus Group on Education for Peace, 2006). The National Focus Group on 'Education for Peace' proposes the concept of peace as the all-powerful aim towards which the education system should be geared. It explains 'Education for Peace' as, "Education for peace is holistic. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework of human values. Recognizing peace as holistic carries two major implications for education for peace. (a) Peace involves all aspects and dimensions of human existence in an inter-dependent way. Only those who are at peace with themselves can be at peace with others and develop the sensitivity it takes to be just and caring towards nature. Spiritual and psychological peace is neither stable nor viable without social, economic, and ecological peace. (b) Peace implies reciprocity. Values like love, freedom, and peace can be had only by giving them to others. Peace for oneself that excludes peace for others is a dangerous illusion. Education for Peace, hence, has a two-fold purpose: (a) to empower individuals to choose the path of peace rather than the path of violence; and (b) to enabling them to be peacemakers rather than the consumers of peace. Education for peace is, in this sense, an essential component of holistic basic education that aims at the comprehensive development of persons" (Position Paper by National Focus Group on Education for Peace, 2006).

The National Focus Group on teaching of Social Sciences explains in detail the expectations from social science curriculum and pedagogy (National Focus Group, 2005). The NCF, 2005 has shifted the aim of social science teaching and learning from a utilitarian perspective to enabling education for social justice. It divests the social sciences with a

huge responsibility, that of ‘creating and widening the base for human values, namely freedom, trust, mutual respect, respect for diversity etc.’ (National Focus Group, 2005). All this is possible only if curricular and pedagogical aims of social science education are to develop a critical thinking ability in the learners, who are able to appreciate the inherent and natural diversity in society. The learners need to be able to look at varied perspectives, critically think and reflect on the same, form their individual opinions and also respect the existence of a variety of opinions. They should be able to generate ideas and also put them to rigorous test through debates, discussions etc., in the process, leading to the growth and development of the entire society through the churning of ideas.

To achieve these aims, the curricular content has to talk about ‘conflict and change’ rather than only ‘stability and continuity’ (NCERT). It needs to present a true picture of the society that the learners are a part of, with all its fault lines. The learners need to be firstly aware of the issues confronting the society, to be then able to think about them and try to confront them. With this aim in mind, the National Focus Group on Teaching of Social Sciences proposed to change the name of ‘Civics’ to ‘Political Science’. Another of its major proposal was to address ‘gender concerns in terms of making the perspectives of women integral to the discussion of any historical event and contemporary concern’ (National Focus Group, 2005).

In terms of child development theories, the age group of 11-13 years is roughly an appropriate age group for the introduction of social and political discussions. According to Piaget, when formal operational thought of cognitive development is attained (adolescence to adulthood), thinking in abstractions, formulation of hypotheses, understanding complex inter-relationships, etc., is possible. After this, no new structures are needed. According to this model, a child, after reaching the stage of upper-primary in school education, would thus be capable of formal operational thinking, hence the appropriateness of this age-group for the introduction of political science in schools, integrated with other social-science disciplines. The Position Paper by the National Focus Group on Teaching of Social Sciences, 2006, also seems to concur with the above inference.

Keeping in line with the broader thinking of the National Focus Group

on Teaching of Social Sciences, the NCERT 'Civics' syllabus for Classes VI to VIII was designed. The nomenclature of the course was decided to be kept as 'Social and Political Life'. The idea was 'to introduce students to various aspects of political, social and economic life' (NCERT). The major objectives were to help children establish a link between their everyday life and the issues discussed in the textbook, to understand the meaning of democracy and democratic functioning, to understand diversity and discrimination, to be able to see things from the perspective of the marginalized and 'to recognize the gendered nature of all issues raised' (NCERT).

SCERT curriculum

The SCERTs have also ostensibly designed their curricula and textbooks based on the NCERT curricula, post NCF, 2005. These textbooks and their impact were analysed through the field study.

Sangati curriculum

"Sangati means togetherness, relevance, harmony. Sangati aims to provide links between different subjects taught at school, help children integrate all that they learn in school and outside, build children's self-confidence and develop skills of observation, analysis, articulation and decision-making, and provide a perspective based on values that emphasize interdependence and the need to live together in harmony. Equality, sensitivity, celebration of diversity, concern for the environment, and respect for work and the dignity of labour are some of the fundamental values that are emphasized throughout the Sangati series" (Avehi Abacus Project). The Avehi Abacus Project has been working with municipal schools and non-formal education centres in Mumbai and outside since 1990 (Avehi Abacus Team, Acknowledgements, 2001). The Project has deliberately chosen to work through the regular teachers rather than their own volunteers taking classes as a parallel process to the regular teaching-learning. This is based on the firm reasoning and belief that any change, howsoever gradual, needs to be through the system rather than bypassing it. They are also, thus, engaged in teacher education through their program "Manthan".

- iv. Methodology: Through my field study, I am trying to understand whether these envisaged aims of these various curricula (NCERT,

Maharashtra SCERT and Aveshi Abacus – Sangati) are actually being met at the ground level.

The impact of these curricula has been analyzed primarily through the means of students' understanding of the concept of patriotism. The hypothesis that I am trying to test here is based on the assumption that patriotism is not merely national-anthem singing or slogan chanting or celebrating Republic and Independence Days or glorifying the Indian security forces etc., but much more deeply, trying to put in one's best in whatever one is doing, at all times. It means to be able to critically think and reflect, to differentiate between right and wrong, to be a responsible human being, to be aware of one's rights and duties, to understand the various social issues that need to be redressed etc., so that one can contribute towards one's own well-being, and further make constructive and serious contribution towards the society's, nation's and mankind's well-being.

I have chosen this specific topic to guide my understanding, for various reasons. Firstly, it helps in limiting the scope of the study to a specific topic, around which the field study can then be conducted. Secondly, an understanding of what 'patriotism' means to students is, I think, extremely relevant and indicative to understanding what actually the students are gaining from the social science curricula that is being imparted to them. It is useful to understand whether students are able to think beyond the immediate 'popular' perception and meaning of 'patriotism'. It is useful to understand whether the students are able to move beyond the usual and popular understanding of patriotism as 'slogan chanting jingoism' and think deeper. It has been interesting to examine how wide a scope are students able to assign to the term 'patriotism'. Patriotism can be interpreted extremely narrowly to mean merely respecting national anthem, national flag and the like, chanting slogans, celebrating Independence Day and Republic Day by listening to speeches and singing patriotic songs etc., and extremely widely to mean doing one's best in whatever one does, being a responsible human being in one's life and one's sphere of influence, respecting and celebrating diversity, being able to critically think and reflect on various issues that affect the nation etc. It has been interesting to gauge what interpretation are students able to give to this term. Thirdly, the choice of this topic is also based on my personal interest in this area. Lastly, but importantly, it

is also based on the current atmosphere prevailing in our society and the churning that is being experienced by it, revolving around an understanding of the concept of 'patriotism'.

- v. Data collection was done in the following manner:
 - a. Classroom observation of upper primary social science classes in each of the above mentioned schools.
 - b. Classroom observation of transaction of Sangati sessions.
 - c. Focus group/classroom discussions on designed case studies and other related discussions to bring out students' understanding of patriotism.
 - d. Questionnaire designed around the same topic administered to the students.
 - e. Discussions with Sangati representative.
 - f. Other miscellaneous observations

Field Study - Part II

1. Understanding the role of pedagogy
 - a. Sites of field study: Separate BMC schools in which Sangati curriculum is transacted by separate teachers
 - b. Sample: Upper primary students of these schools.
 - c. Methodology: Primarily, classroom observation of the Sangati curriculum being transacted by different teachers, to bring out the differences in their teaching style. The impact and the relevance of their transaction has been gauged in terms of certain observations like the objectives of the chapter being met, student participation and interest etc. In certain but not all cases, a broad analysis of the students' understanding after the transaction by the teacher is complete has also been undertaken by follow-up discussions conducted with the students by me or the Sanagti representative who accompanied me on all field

studies. This has helped in understanding the teacher's role in imparting a given curriculum to students. The choice of teachers and schools has been based on the recommendation of the Avehi Abacus representative, who has been attached to these schools, as also availability and convenience.

DESK STUDY

My focus in this entire study was on looking at the Social Science teaching-learning in upper primary schools. Within the broad area of social science, I was focusing primarily on subject matter of Civics. In line with the above objective, in the current section I would be presenting a review of the following curricula:

1. Eklavya Social Science Program – I reviewed the Civics textbooks developed by Eklavya for Classes VI-VIII
2. Maharashtra State Board – A review of Civics textbooks of Classes VI, VII and VIII
3. CBSE Board NCERT textbooks – Social and Political Life textbooks for Classes VI-VIII
4. Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum – A review of the Sangati kits with special focus on Kits IV and V transacted in Classes VI and VII.

After doing an independent review of these curricula, with respect to the objectives these curricula had/have set out for themselves, I would be also providing a comparative analysis of these curricula and certain observations (in my opinion) on what each could gain from the other, purely from the point of view of curricular content. The pedagogical aspect shall not be dealt with here and would be dealt with in the next section.

Theoretical framework

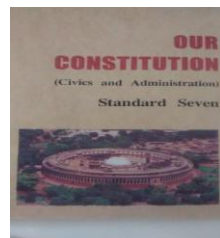
The desk review undertaken is an independent review of these curricula, with respect to the objectives these curricula had/have set out for themselves. The curricular objectives, as follows from the conceptual framework outlined previously, draw out from the broader aims that the curricular frameworks set out for the particular curriculum to achieve. The aims are, in turn, inspired by certain theoretical positions expounded by various theorists in the field. I have tried below to map the objectives of the curricula being analyzed with the corresponding theoretical positions and the thinkers, as per my understanding.

Eklavya Social Science Program

The Eklavya Social Science Curriculum follows an integrated and interdisciplinary approach. Pring, while discussing integrated curricula discusses four kinds of integration, “logical interconnection between different kinds of knowledge, the structuring of knowledge around themes, the integration of knowledge in practical thinking, and the integration in enquiry” (Pring, 1976). Traces of all these types of integration are visible throughout this curriculum. It looks at social science teaching-learning through a constructivist paradigm, which was propounded and advocated by John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner, among others. The text, in this curriculum, aims to follow the ‘cognitive developmental approach’ towards learning, which views ‘development as an aim of education’, (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1973). This approach is based on ‘the progressive position first formulated by John Dewey’ (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1973). This approach broadly aims at ‘developing a free and powerful character’ (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1973), among individuals. The educational process is designed towards achieving this end. It aims at developing higher level of cognitive abilities among individuals as they progress through life. This is attempted to be achieved by following a democratic process of learning, wherein diverse perspectives are presented to children and they are encouraged to critically think and make sense of this diversity. The focus is on generation of ideas and their refinement through continuous dialogue and discussions. Further, it also aims at inculcating in students values of just and egalitarian social order. As against the “banking” concept of education, it views to approach teaching-learning through “problem-posing” method. As Paulo Friere explains this method, “the students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers his earlier considerations as the students express their own” (Freire, 1974). It focusses on the interdependence between humans and environment, and emphasizes the assimilation of local knowledge in the classroom processes

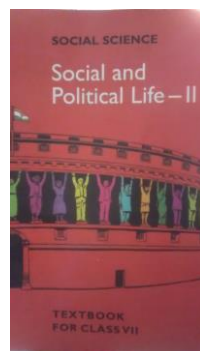
Maharashtra State Board Curriculum

The Maharashtra State Board Curriculum emphasizes on certain aspects like inculcation of values enshrined in the Constitution, development of a responsible and active citizenship etc. which are indicative of the entire discourse being formulated from the dominant perspective, with the newly educated middle class taking on the ‘responsibility of constructing the new nation state’ (Jain, 2005). However, it also lists some of its objectives to be an emphasis on interdependence between humans and environment, empowerment of women and weaker sections etc. It also talks about the need for teaching-learning process to be child-centred and aims to provide joyful learning experience to the students, as propounded by John Dewey.



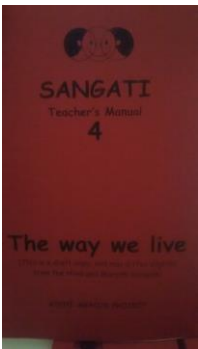
NCERT Social and Political Life curriculum

Similar to the Eklavya curriculum, the NCERT Social and Political Life curriculum also talks about establishing a linkage between a child’s life and learnings in and out of school and discouraging rote learning. It also talks about integration of disciplines. Traces of all the types of integration propounded by Pring are visible throughout this curriculum. Again, it looks at social science teaching-learning through a constructivist paradigm, and the text, in this curriculum, aims to follow the ‘cognitive-developmental approach’ towards learning, which views ‘development as an aim of education’, (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1973). It aims at developing higher level of cognitive abilities among individuals as they progress through life. This is attempted to be achieved by following a democratic process of learning, wherein diverse perspectives are presented to children and they are encouraged to critically think and make sense of this diversity. The focus is on generation of ideas and their refinement through continuous dialogue and discussions. It also aims at establishing a critical understanding and critical thinking abilities in students. “Why should the fostering of critical thinking be thought to be so important? Siegel offers four reasons for so thinking (Siegel, 1988, chapter 3). First, and most importantly, striving to foster critical thinking in students is



necessary if they are to be treated with respect as persons....A second reason for regarding critical thinking as a fundamental educational ideal involves education's generally recognized task of preparing students for adulthood....A third reason for regarding the fostering of critical thinking as a central aim of education is the role it plays in the rational traditions that have always been at the center of educational activities and efforts....A fourth reason involves the place of careful analysis, good thinking, and reasoned deliberation in democratic life" (Bailin & Siegel, 1988). It aims at helping them understand contemporary social and political concerns. It also moves away from the construction of knowledge from a dominant perspective and aims at helping students understand the role played by ordinary citizens in the functioning of 'democracy'. As against the "banking" concept of education, it views to approach teaching-learning through "problem-posing" method. As Paulo Friere explains this method, "the students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers his earlier considerations as the students express their own" (Freire, 1974).

Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum



The Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum is based around the principles of equality of all human beings and respect for all. It aims at developing a respect for work and dignity of labour, which Mahatma Gandhi so emphasized upon. It also talks about establishing a linkage between a child's life and learnings in and out of school and discouraging rote learning. It follows an integrated and interdisciplinary approach (as discussed in previous paragraphs) in the real sense of the term. It again views social science teaching-learning through a constructivist paradigm (as discussed above) and emphasizes on interactive and joyful learning experience for the learners (again as discussed above). It also aims at nurturing values that emphasize interdependence and the need to live together in harmony, as well as a concern for the environment. It works towards developing in students a sensitivity towards beliefs, cultures and ways of life that are different from our own. This curriculum also draws from the work of Jerome

Bruner, who is one of the pioneers of cognitive psychology. “He proposed three modes of representation – enactive, iconic and symbolic. His theory suggests to follow a progression from enactive to iconic to symbolic representation when faced with new material. In contrast to Piaget, he believed that a learner, at any stage, is capable of learning any material so long as the instruction is organized appropriately. He proposed the spiral curriculum, a teaching approach in which each subject or skill area is revisited at intervals, at a more sophisticated level each time. Bruner wanted to create an educational environment that would focus on what was uniquely human about human beings, how human beings got that way and how human beings could become more so” (Jerome Bruner).

Desk review

Eklavya Social Science Program

The review undertaken below deals with Eklavya’s work in social science, which ‘revolved around its social science program which ran for 16 years as an experimental project in eight government schools in Dewas, Hoshangabad and Harda districts of Madhya Pradesh before it was closed down by the state government in 2002” (Eklavya). Eklavya developed social science textbooks for Classes VI to VIII, which were transacted in certain selected schools as an alternate to the standard SCERT social science text books. An extensive and thorough review of this program, the curriculum and the textbooks has been done and published in a book edited by Poonam Batra, namely, ‘Social Science Learning in Schools: Perspectives and Challenges’ (Poonam Batra (ed), 2010). I have borrowed heavily from this book in terms of understanding the context, background and the conceptual and theoretical framework of the Eklavya program. In this background, the review undertaken below is limited to and based on my understanding of the context and content of the curriculum and textbooks. It is also not a review of the complete social science curriculum but only the Civics textbooks prescribed as a part of the curriculum, for Classes VI to VIII.

1. Context and background in which this curriculum was envisaged

The need for a social science program was felt during the course of implementation of the Science program, which led Eklavya to initiate

work in two new areas, namely, primary school education and middle school social science education (The Eklavya Team, 2010). “The Eklavya team involved in formulating the social science curriculum had prior experience of teaching in universities. They found that a major gap existed between the new breakthroughs in the concerned disciplines and teaching-learning methodologies practiced in schools. With a strong desire to bridge these gaps between the frontiers of research in universities and school education, the Eklavya team set to examine these gaps more closely” (The Eklavya Team, 2010). Accordingly, ‘A Background Paper on the Teaching of Social Sciences’ was brought out in 1983, in which some of the critical aspects which were thought crucial to social science teaching and learning were highlighted. The curriculum development process was done in a collaborative manner with inputs and discussions with all the stakeholders, namely, academics, university teachers, school teachers, experts etc. Extensive experimental trials were held on the field and student and teacher feedback was used to revise and refine the textbooks (The Eklavya Team, 2010).

2. Basic principles around which the curriculum has been designed

Some of the significant principles that formed the bedrock of the Eklavya curriculum are teaching-learning through the assimilation of child’s own experiences and local environment, an integrated approach to the teaching of social sciences emphasizing the ‘unity of diverse aspects of society and natural surroundings’, doing away with water-tight compartmentalization of subjects, developing an ability of ‘critical understanding’ rather than a rote memorization of facts as given, static entities etc. “In Eklavya, there was a keen desire to design the social science curriculum in a way that helps children appreciate values of a just world, egalitarian social order, free from exploitation and subordination” (Poonam Batra (ed), Introduction, 2010). Children were considered as active co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients of facts to be committed to memory. The aim was to develop in them an ability to independently think, form linkages, critically evaluate and form their own opinions based on various different perspectives conveyed to them.

3. Objectives of Civics Education

These objectives were outlined by Eklavya team for Civics education in middle school, based on which the Civics textbooks were then developed (The Eklavya Team, 2010):

- i. Civics education should focus on the systematic development of preliminary concepts like the law, the market, representation and taxation.
- ii. It should help children to develop concrete perceptions about how various contemporary institutions operate.
- iii. It should be shorn of its idealistic ‘goodi-goodiness’. A more honest, critical and straightforward discourse on the issues of modern life is called for. It should allow children to understand the strengths and shortcomings of the system by comparing their rules with contemporary reality.
- iv. It should equip children with knowledge and skills necessary to function as conscious citizens, including an understanding of alternatives to and limitations of government policies, legal procedures and rights of people and the inspiration derived from the narratives of conscious, active citizens, overcoming obstacles and problems posed by the system.
- v. It should help to develop attitudes that go towards making a humane society.

Keeping in mind these wider overall objectives the Eklavya team conducted field trials wherein ‘some of the ideas that were thought to lead to the stated objectives of civics education, were tried out with children in real classrooms’ (The Eklavya Team, 2010). This process helped in enriching the understanding of the team in terms of what would and would not work and how they needed to present abstract concepts in order for them to be intelligible.

The curriculum that was brought out was based on these extensive researches and field trials. The curriculum was also revised at a later stage to incorporate further revisions and to refine it further.

4. The curriculum

The Civics curriculum was designed to be implemented through Classes VI-VIII. The outline of the chapters is as follows:

Class VI	Class VII	Class VIII
Chapter 1 – Interdependence Chapter 2 – Weekly markets and mandis Chapter 3 – Village panchayats Chapter 4 – Public amenities in cities Chapter 5 – Farmers and labourers Chapter 6 – District administration	Chapter 1 – Industry Chapter 2 – Brass-smith – an artisan Chapter 3- Contract system in beedi industry Chapter 4 – Big leather factory Chapter 5- A small leather factory Chapter 6 – History of textile industry Chapter 7 – Barter system and money Chapter 8 – India and its states Chapter 9 – State government Chapter 10 – Law courts and justice	Chapter 1 – Banks Chapter 2 – Taxes Chapter 3 – Constitution 1 Chapter 4 – Constitution 2 Chapter 5 – Central Government

5. Curriculum review

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge that a comprehensive curricular review of the abovementioned Civics curriculum has been undertaken by many reviewers. I have read through the review done by Amman Madan (which also includes references from other reviews) (Madan, 2010) and some or many of the observations mentioned below may have been made in these earlier reviews.

Positives:

i. After a cursory glance at the outline of the chapters given above, it is apparent that there are certain broad threads that seem to be binding these chapters across the three classes. The first one is division based on the three sectors of agriculture, industry and services. In class VI, the focus seems to be on agriculture, in class VII on industry, and in Class

VIII on services (although the focus seems to be not on the services sector as a whole but on the banking industry and how it functions, in order to enable the children to have at least the basic/rudimentary knowledge of the same). The second broad theme is the working of the government across various levels, village and district levels in Class VI, state government in Class VII and Central government in Class VIII. The third broad thread can be said to be the coverage of the three organs of the state, i.e., executive (throughout all the classes), judiciary (in class VII) and legislature (through the coverage of Constitution).

ii. The curriculum seems to take the economic perspective as a macro perspective with which to approach Civics. The chapters on 'Weekly markets and mandis' and 'Farmers and labourers' in Class VI, majority of the chapters in Class VII and the first two chapters in Class VIII forefront the economic angle.

iii. One topic, when dealt with, has been looked at in a holistic perspective e.g., in the first chapter, titled, 'Interdependence' in the Class VI textbook, interdependence has been looked at from various angles, like the interdependence between town and city, interdependence between regions etc. Similarly, in the chapter on 'Weekly markets and mandis', the concept of mandi has been dealt with in terms of how mandis are formed, what they do, where they exist, the Mandi samitis and their elections, the benefits of a mandi, its comparison with a 'haat' in a village, some of the problems with the concept of 'mandi' etc.

iv. There is a conscious attempt to break the boundaries between subjects, e.g, in the chapter on 'Weekly markets and mandis' in Class VI textbook, a fictional story titled 'Shridhar's story' has been narrated. Therein, while explaining how a mandi functions through an example of a farmer and his son who come to sell their produce in a mandi, an integration has been attempted with Mathematics. The farmer's son is shown to save his father from a loss of a hundred rupees by being able to correctly arrive at the price their produce should be sold at, thereby foiling a dishonest trader's attempt at fooling them.

v. There is a tremendous emphasis on discussing things through the use of concrete examples, and understand concepts in the process, rather than explaining concepts descriptively, e.g., the differences that industrialization and setting up of big factories has introduced in the

processes involved, the impact these changes have had (positive or negative) etc., is discussed by taking actual examples of how work is done in different environments like home, small factory, big factory etc.

vi. There is a conscious attempt to use examples, situations and explanations that children might be familiar with from their day to day surroundings.

vii. The concepts of government formation, elections, elected representatives, majority, etc. are discussed using actual examples of how these processes take place in the real life, rather than explaining it in terse legal language, e.g., the actual process of election of an MLA from a constituency is explained by taking an example of an imaginary constituency of Kaushalpur in the chapter “The State Government” transacted in Class VII.

viii. The entire content has been designed to equip the students to be able to understand and function effectively in the day to day exchanges that they may be required to use their ‘civic’ knowledge in. Many of the topics selected point in this direction, like the chapter on ‘Banks’ in Class VIII textbook, the chapter on ‘Weekly markets and mandis’ in class VI textbook, the chapter on ‘Barter system and money’ in Class VII textbook etc.

ix. The textbooks are not designed from a dominant perspective but mostly cater to the subaltern perspective. It talks about farmers, labourers, daily wage earners, village industries etc.

x. The examples that are taken talk of members of different communities, religions etc.

Scope for improvement:

1. There seems to be a lack of continuity in the macro design of the texts. Though some broad themes are identifiable as discussed in the previous section, however these do not seem to flow seamlessly from one to other but seem to be haphazardly placed, e.g., after devoting about three-fourth of the book to a discussion of industry, suddenly chapters on ‘India and the states’ follows. It seems a bit abrupt. Similarly in Class VIII textbook, the chapters on ‘Banks’ and ‘Taxes’ are followed by chapters on ‘Constitution’. No particular kind of linkage can be drawn between these, though across the books certain broad themes are seen to be followed.

2. The chapters are mainly focused on the micro-perspective, as in how and why certain day-to-day things happen. These certainly can help the students in understanding their surroundings better and adapt accordingly. However, a macro perspective seems to be missing that can highlight some general principles and guide students to think beyond the immediate and the now and move towards understanding and questioning the basics of things. Such general principles can also assist students in linking the various different things they are learning separately, e.g., in the chapter on 'Farmers and labourers' in Class VI textbook, there is a discussion around landless labourers, small farmers, medium farmers and big farmers, by taking an example of each. These discussions help in understanding the differences between these, but mostly stop at that. These discussions could have fed into trying to understand deeper issues like social and economic inequalities, their causes and consequences, the impact of this stratification on society etc. If not in detail, at least some cursory discussions around these macro topics could have been initiated to guide students to think beyond the immediate inputs they are receiving. Another example is the chapter on 'Law courts and Justice' in Class VII textbook. It explains the hierarchy of courts, difference between civil and criminal cases, role of police and judiciary, the processes for filing FIRs, going to courts etc. very well. However, bigger questions on the meaning of justice itself, questions on social, economic and political justice, the promise that our Constitution makes towards granting these, or the ground realities etc. are conspicuous by their absence.

3. A focus on the economic perspective has somehow led to a considerably reduced focus on social aspects in the Civics textbooks. One of the objectives for this Civics curriculum, outlined by the Eklavya team, was to help build a humane society. This would have required a good focus on social aspects and discussions on certain issues plaguing our society like caste discrimination, social inequalities, religious discrimination, gender discrimination etc., but a detailed and in-depth discussion on these issues is clearly and surprisingly missing from the narrative.

4. The textbooks seem to be also lacking in terms of the space given to women, their role, their struggles and their achievements.

5. There are two chapters in the Class VIII textbook on the Constitution.

These chapters mainly tell the students how, when and why the Constitution was formed and discuss the Fundamental rights. The content, the narrative and the coverage of these chapters have a dramatic scope of improvement. The chapters are giving information to the students on how the Constitution came into being and what Fundamental Rights are. There is no meaningful discussion of concepts like democracy, which is the foundation on which any further understanding of the Constitution, Fundamental rights and Duties can be built. The explanation of rights and duties lacks certain depth and seems to be superficial rendering of the importance of these Rights. The discourse does not seem to be capable of inviting students to think deeply, trace the needs, origins etc. of these Rights, understand their importance, and form linkages between India being a democratic state and the existence of these Rights etc.

6. The curriculum can be made more interactive and engaging through use of activities, stories, games, etc. The end-of-text questions can also be more imaginative, forcing students to think and form connections and linkages.

7. It would be also interesting to see how these textbooks would work with the students belonging to the elite sections of society, going to private schools in big cities. The narratives, the examples, the situations etc. might seem unheard of for them, and they might not be able to relate to much of the text. In that sense, these textbooks might lack in terms of having a universal appeal

Maharashtra State Board curriculum

The review undertaken below is limited to Civics and Administration textbooks for Classes VI to VIII, prescribed by Maharashtra State Board. They are titled as follows: Class VI – Our Local Government Bodies, Class VII – Our Constitution and Class VIII – India and the World.

1. Context and background in which this curriculum was envisaged

The preface of these textbooks states that the Primary Education Curriculum – 2004 was prepared in Maharashtra following the National Curriculum Framework – 2000. These textbooks, approved by the State Board, have been prepared under this curriculum (Kalpande, 2007). While the Maharashtra Elementary Syllabus was revised with reference to

NCF, 2005, in the year 2012, however, the textbook revision did-not take place and hence the textbooks I have referred to are not as per the revised syllabus.

2. Basic principles around which the curriculum has been designed

The preface of the textbooks states the following, “Our approach while designing this textbook was that the teaching-learning process should be child-centered, the method of self-study should receive more emphasis, at the end of primary education the students should have attained the desired competencies and the process of education in general should become enjoyable and interesting” (Kalpande, 2007). What these ‘desired competencies’ are, has not been clarified here.

3. Objectives of Civics Education

The standard VII “Civics and Administration” textbook provides the following objectives (in the Class VI book, no such statement of objectives has been provided) (Maharashtra State Board, 2008):

- To inculcate the values enshrined in the Constitution of India
- To create a sense of a responsible and active citizenship.
- To emphasize the need to empower women and the weaker sections of society.
- To develop awareness regarding the correlation between natural and man-made environment. To create awareness regarding the Fundamental Rights and Duties stated in the Constitution of India.
- To help understand the broad nature of the public administration in India.

The standard VIII “Civics and Administration” textbook provides the following objectives (Maharashtra State Board, 2008):

- To stress the importance of international peace and understanding and human rights
- To develop the sensitivities about the correlation between natural and man-made environment
- To develop awareness about the problems that have emerged due

to over-population

- To empower the students to be able to give the right response to the challenges that have emerged due to the process of globalization
- To motivate students to use the modern information technology

4. The curriculum

The outlines of the chapters is as follows:

Class VI – Our Local Government Bodies	Class VII – Our Constitution	Class VIII – India and the World
Chapter 1 – Our Social Life	Chapter 1 – The Constitution of India	Chapter 1 – Foreign Policy
Chapter 2 – The Gram Panchayat	Chapter 2 – Preamble to the Constitution	Chapter 2 – India’s Foreign Policy
Chapter 3 – The Panchayat Samiti	Chapter 3 – Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens	Chapter 3 – India’s Defence System
Chapter 4 – The Zilla Parishad	Chapter 4 – Directive Principles of the Constitution	Chapter 4 – United Nations
Chapter 5 – The Municipal Council	Chapter 5 – Indian Democracy	Chapter 5 – The Functions of the United Nations
Chapter 6 – The Municipal Corporation	Chapter 6 – Union government The Legislature	Chapter 6 – International Co operation and Development -
Chapter 7 – Importance of Local government Bodies	Chapter 7 – Union Government – The Executive and the Judiciary	Chapter 7 – Human Rights

Chapter 8 – Our participation	Chapter 8 – The State Government	
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5. Curriculum Review

Positives:

- i. Local Bodies and the government at the local level is covered in detail. This organ of the state is the closest to the students and a good understanding of this area will help them in understanding the state and the national governments better.
- ii. There are also chapters dedicated to India's relation with the world, which can give them some perspective about India's position and standing in the world and some insight into international relations and their maintenance.
- iii. The chapters on United Nations, International Co-operation and development etc. can help develop a broader perspective in children.
- iv. There is also a chapter on Human Rights, which can help in initiating the student to the concept of 'Human Rights' and their existence and importance.

Scope for improvement:

- i. Most of the objectives mentioned above have been paid only lip-service, e.g, even though one of the objectives of the Class VII syllabus states the need of empowering women and weaker sections of society, nothing in the book seems to be directed to meet that aim apart from a mention of the various 'laudable' schemes that the government has implemented for the uplift of women and the marginalized. Similarly, there seems to be absolutely no correlation between the objectives mentioned in the Class VIII textbook and the actual text. The text is not even remotely close to meeting the objectives.
- ii. The books are themselves 40-50 pages each. Although the objectives state the contrary, however in actuality bits and pieces of information is provided to the children, without trying to make

it interesting or meaningful in any manner.

- iii. In nearly all the chapters, a completely rosy picture is painted of whatever is being discussed, e.g., in the chapter on 'Gram Panchayat' in Class VI textbook, there is a discussion on Gram Sabha wherein it is mentioned that 'before the meeting of the Gram Sabha, a meeting of the women members is held where they can voice their problems' (Maharashtra State Board, Gram Panchayat, 2008). This is mentioned as if it is a factual and universal statement, which it clearly is not. It is not clear what objective is intended to be met by such obfuscation of facts.
- iv. At innumerable places, the objective statement and the actual content actually seem at cross purposes, e.g., the one of the objective of Class VIII textbook is mentioned as enabling students to rise to the challenges emerged due to the process of globalization. However, the discussion on globalization in the book talks incessantly only about the benefits of globalization, like integration of economies, free movement of goods, economic benefits, spread of Indian 'yoga' and 'ayurveda' abroad, boost to the process of democratization rapid development in the fields of art, literature, music, science, and so on and so forth (Maharashtra State Board, International Co-operation and Development, 2008).
- v. There is no attempt to make the learning 'child-centered' or 'enjoyable'. The way the chapters have been prepared, with single short paragraphs on important topics, it is difficult to decipher whether the textbooks are meant to be even understandable to the children or not.
- vi. Some of the content of the textbooks and the way it is presented as factual statements is highly questionable to say the least. Many examples can be cited to substantiate this point, the one that stuck me the most is the following statement in the chapter on 'Foreign Policy' in Class VIII textbook, "Preserving the sovereignty of our country, giving priority to economic development and protecting our interests in the foreign relations is known as national interest" (Maharashtra State Board, Foreign Policy, 2008).

- vii. There is no discussion of any issues facing our society, how the systems and institutions that have been established are actually functioning, nothing on caste, class, religious or gender discrimination, no meaningful discussion on the Indian democracy etc.
- viii. In short, the textbooks are very disappointing in terms of the quality or even quantity of content, they do-not at all seem to meet their stated objectives, do nothing to make learning accessible or even intelligible to the students and at some places even seem to mask the actual realities and indulge in obfuscation of truth.

NCERT Social and Political Life curriculum

The following review is limited to the NCERT Social and Political Life textbooks prescribed for Classes VI to VIII.

1. Context and background in which this curriculum was envisaged

These textbooks have been prepared following the recommendations of the National Curricular Framework, 2005. NCF, 2005, recommended the transformation from ‘Civics’, which reeked of a colonial past, to ‘Social and Political Life’, including within its purview topics that deal with various aspects of social, political and economic life (Textbook Development Committee, 2005).

2. Basic principles around which the curriculum has been designed

This curriculum and the textbooks have been designed on the recommendations of NCF, 2005. The basic principles which the curriculum and the textbooks envisage to adhere to are establishing a linkage between a child’s life and learnings in school and out of school, discouraging rote learning and maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas and moving towards child-centered learning in the real sense of the term (Director, NCERT, 2005).

3. Objectives of Civics Education

Envisaged as a transformation from ‘Civics’ to ‘Social and Political Life’, the curriculum developers had the following objectives in mind while developing this curriculum (Textbook Development Committee, Introductory note for Teachers, 2007):

- To help students understand contemporary social and political concerns
- To help students understand the role played by ordinary citizens in the functioning of ‘democracy’
- To build in the students an ability to look at the contemporary world in a critical and informed way
- To ensure that the content remained grounded in the lives of the students
- To move away from ‘rote learning’ and towards the development of a holistic understanding in students of the spirit of the Constitution, the actual working of a ‘democracy’, the various social and political issues confronting our society etc.

4. The curriculum

The outlines of the chapters are as follows:

Class VI – Social and Political Life - I	Class VII – Social and Political Life - II	Class VIII – Social and Political Life - III
Unit One – Diversity	Unit One – Equality in Indian Democracy	Unit One – The Indian Constitution and Secularism
Chapter 1 – Understanding Diversity	Chapter 1 – On Equality	Chapter 1 – The Indian Constitution
Chapter 2 – Diversity and Discrimination	Unit Two – State Government	Chapter 2 – Understanding Secularism
Unit Two – Government	Chapter 2 – Role of the Government in Health	Unit Two – Parliament and the Making of Laws
Chapter 3 – What is Government?	Chapter 3 – How the State Government Works	Chapter 3 – Why do we need a Parliament?
Chapter 4 – Key Elements of democratic Government	Unit Three – Gender	Chapter 4 – Understanding Laws

Unit III – Local Government and Administration	Chapter 4 – Growing Up as Boys and Girls	Unit Three – The Judiciary
Chapter 5 – Panchayati Raj	Chapter 5 – Women Change the World	Chapter 5 – Judiciary
Chapter 6 – Rural Administration	Unit Four – Media and Advertising	Chapter 6 – Understanding our Criminal Justice System
Chapter 7 – Urban Administration	Chapter 6 – Understanding Media	Unit Four – Social Justice and the Marginalized
Unit Four - Livelihoods	Chapter 7 – Understanding Advertising	Chapter 7 – Understanding Marginalization
Chapter 8 – Rural Livelihoods	Unit Five – Markets	Chapter 8 – Confronting Marginalization
Chapter 9 – Urban Livelihoods	Chapter 8 – Markets Around Us	Unit Five – Economic Presence of the Government
	Chapter 9 – A Shirt in the Market	Chapter 9 – Public Facilities
	Unit One – Equality in Indian Democracy (Continued)	Chapter 10 – Law and Social Justice
	Chapter 10 – Struggles for Equality	

Curriculum review

Positives:

- i. True to the title of this course curriculum, it deals with both the social and political aspects of our lives. In addition, it also

touches upon the economic aspects of our lives.

- ii. It discusses various socially relevant themes like diversity and discrimination, equality, gender, social justice and the marginalized etc. The discussion on these various themes is spread out across the three classes.
- iii. The second broad thread, the political, is discussed in detail. The discussion on government follows the logical progression from local to state to central. The meaning of democracy is discussed from the perspective of the ordinary citizen. Apart from the legislature and the executive, there is a unit on the third organ of the State, i.e., the judiciary.
- iv. The fourth pillar is also not left out and an entire Unit in Standard seven is dedicated to a discussion on 'Media and Advertising'.
- v. The economic aspect is covered through discussions on rural and urban livelihoods in Class VI, markets in Class VII and economic presence of the government in Class VIII.
- vi. Any topic that has been taken up for discussion has been given a holistic treatment and has been discussed from various angles and perspectives. As an example, the first Unit of Class VI deals with diversity. Whereas the first chapter of the Unit is aimed at developing an understanding of this term, the second chapter highlights the interrelationship between diversity and discrimination. In the first chapter, diversity has been discussed in terms of the various ways in which people are different from each-other, like differences in languages spoken, food habits, religions, dressing styles etc.
- vii. Whereas the first chapter in the unit dealing with diversity focuses on differences as a neutral term, the second chapter talks about how these differences could lead to discrimination based on gender, class, caste, colour etc. Formation of prejudices and creation of stereotypes is discussed in detail. The entire unit discusses the issue comprehensively, from all perspectives and in a manner that invites students to think, to discuss and to understand the issue in its entirety.

- viii. The boundaries between various social science disciplines have been broken and the content is dealt with in an integrated manner. e.g., in a discussion on the state government in the Class VII textbook, students are taught with the help of examples of their own state, are asked to locate their state and other states in a map etc. In a discussion on gender in the same textbook, there are anecdotes about exemplary women from the past, like Ramabai etc.
- ix. The entire curricular content is replete with examples, discussions, stories, anecdotes, activities, exercises, etc., designed to engage with the students as much as possible.
- x. The concepts are explained by relating them to the local experiences of the children, e.g., the title of a chapter in Class VII textbook that aims at discussing gender, is 'Growing up Boys and Girls'. The title itself suggests that the discussion centers around daily lived in gender experiences.
- xi. Another interesting aspect of the textbook is that along with catering to local knowledge of the students, it has also included examples and experiences from various places all over India and the world, e.g., the chapter on Secularism in Class VIII textbook, compares and contrasts Indian secularism with the concept of secularism in other parts of the world. This helps the students puts things in a global perspective.
- xii. The examples that are taken are inclusive of all the different sections of society in terms of gender, caste, class, religion, region etc.
- xiii. The coverage of the curriculum is quite comprehensive and substantive, both in terms of breadth and depth. The inclusion of the unit on media and advertising is extremely relevant, given the powerful role that media plays in today's world. The discussion on the role of media in a democracy helps understand the working of democracy in day-to-day life much better.
- xiv. Similarly, the Unit on Markets, along with explaining students the various kinds of markets, how they work etc., also features a discussion on Markets and equality, which helps throw a useful

light on the working of the concept of equality in today's times.

- xv. Rather than relying on a textbook as the sole resource, it has been considered as one of the many resources that the teacher can use. There are many places where space has been provided to other resources like maps, newspaper clippings, magazine articles etc.
- xvi. All in all, the curriculum and textbooks are true to the objectives stated to be met and these textbooks offer a monumental change to how education and teaching-learning should and could be envisaged.
- xvii. There are notes to teachers at the beginning of every Unit and also in the beginning of the textbooks, which would be of great help to teachers in administering the textbooks more effectively.

Scope for improvement:

- i. There is a scope for improvement in the in-text and end of text questions included in the textbooks. There is a scope for inclusion of more of group activities, group games etc. in order to understand and grasp the crux of the issues being discussed.
- ii. Discussion of certain issues and topics could have been more balanced, e.g., in the discussion on gender stereotypes in the chapter 'Women Change the World' in Class VII textbook, the discussion on female stereotypes far outweighs the discussion on male stereotypes.
- iii. Some issues which are extremely relevant and important to understand and appreciate do-not find space in these textbooks, like the meaning of patriotism/nationalism etc. While discussing gender, space could also be given to the issues and problems faced by the transgender community. Environment and its importance, though touched upon at various places could have been dealt with exclusively and comprehensively, considering its importance in today's times.

Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum

The following review is limited to the six Sangati Kits transacted with students of Classes V to VII in the BMC schools in Mumbai.

1. Context and background in which the curriculum was envisaged

The Avehi Abacus Project has been working with municipal schools and non-formal education centres in Mumbai and outside since 1990 (Avehi Abacus Team, Acknowledgements, 2001). The Sangati curriculum has been developed with a vision to fulfil the objectives of education, to 'equip children with the knowledge and the skills that they will need to face the world, to build values that will help them take care of themselves and contribute to the society they live in and to bring about a positive change in individuals and society' (Avehi Abacus Team, Dear Teacher..., 2001).

2. Basic principles around which the curriculum has been designed

The curriculum has been designed to be interactive and joyful, to replace 'teaching' by a voyage of exploration to discover facets of ourselves, our society and the world, to accommodate the understanding that each child thinks and learns differently, to encourage students to express their thoughts and share their life experiences, to help them cope with different situations and make the right choices and determine better futures for themselves and those around them (Avehi Abacus Team, Dear Teacher..., 2001).

3. Objectives of the curriculum

The aims of the Sangati series, according to the curriculum developers are as follows (Avehi Abacus Team, Introducing Sangati, 2001):

- Provide links between different subjects taught at school
- Help children relate what is learnt in school to their own lives
- Help children integrate all that they learn in school and outside
- Build children's self-confidence and develop skills of observation, analysis, articulation and decision-making
- Provide a perspective based on values that emphasize interdependence and the need to live together in harmony

Some fundamental values are emphasized throughout the Sangati series. These include (Avehi Abacus Team, Introducing Sangati, 2001):

- Equality for all human beings and respect for all

- Sensitivity towards beliefs, cultures and ways of life that are different from our own
- Celebration of the diversity that exists in nature and culture
- Understanding the interdependence of all living beings Concern for the environment
- Respect for work and the dignity of labour

4. The curriculum

The outlines of the chapters are as follows:

Class V – Sangati Kits I and II	Class VI – Sangati Kits III and IV	Class VII – Sangati Kits V and VI
Sangati Kit I – Myself, My Body Our Needs	Sangati Kit III – How Societies Developed	Sangati Kit V – Understanding Change
Session 1 – Introducing Sangati Myself	Session I – An introduction	Introduction
Session 2 – Getting to know myself	Session 2 – The detective story	Session 1 – Constant change is here to stay!
Session 3 – My appearance and physical abilities	Session 3 – Settling down	Session 2 – Why we need to understand change
Session 4 – My feelings and temperament	Session 4 – Organizing society	Changes at the Individual Level
Session 5 – My family and I	Session 5 – Trade and conquest	Session 3 – Growing up
Session 6 – My friends and I	Session 6 – Different people, different lives	Session 4 – Dealing with changes circumstances
Session 7 – My school and I	Session 7 – Making sense of the world	Changes in Society
Session 8 – The media and I	Session 8 – Old worlds	Session 5 – Societies change too!
Session 9 – The place where I live	Session 9 – The renaissance	Session 6 – How changing technology changes lives
Session 10 – Myself – a recap My body	Session 10 – Voyages of conquest	Session 7 – How urban centres grow
Session 11 – My body : an	Session 11 – The industrial revolution	Session 8 – Life in the city
	Session 12 – Freedom –	Session 9 – Bringing the world closer and closer...
		Session 10 – Economic

introduction	winning it, losing it	changes
Session 12 – Cells and skin	Session 13 – The futility of war	Session 11 – Political changes
Session 13 – Bones and muscles	Session 14 – Towards peace and freedom	Session 12 – Changing attitudes and values
Session 14 – Respiration and circulation	Session 15 – In conclusion	Changes in the Environment
Session 15 – Digestion and excretion	Sangati Kit IV – The Way we	Session 13 – The world picture
Session 16 – The nervous system	Live Introduction	Session 14 – The situation in India
Session 17 – The brain and the senses	Session 1 – Living together	Session 15 – Changing attitudes
Session 18 – Our mind and our emotions	Family	Assessing Change
Session 19 – Dealing with emotions	Session 2 – Families familiar and unfamiliar	Session 16 – Different angles, different views
Session 20 – Growing up	Session 3 – The world in my family	Session 17 – Understanding progress
Session 21 – Dealing with illness	Gender	Session 18 – Getting actively involved with change
Session 22 – Good health	Session 4 – Carrying the burden	Session 19 – Making changes happen
Our needs	Session 5 – Spreading her wings	Conclusion
Session 23 – Identifying our needs	Caste	Session 20 – We can do it!
Session 24 – Fulfilling our needs S	Session 6 – Trapped in the web	Sangati Kit VI – Preparing for the Future
angati Kit II – Our Earth and the Web of Life	Session 7 – Enough is enough	Introduction
Session 1 – A story, a poem and a game	Communal conflict	Session 1 – When tomorrow comes
Session 2 – Stories of creation	Session 8 – The wall we build	Self – Image
Session 3 – What some scientists say	Session 9 – Breaking it down – brick by brick	Session 2 – Who am I?
Session 4 – The beginnings of life	Stereotypes	Session 3 – I am what I want to be
	Session 10 – Stuck in the mould Democracy	Session 4 – The inner
	Session 11 – Everyone’s	

<p>Session 5 – Life in the seas and on land</p> <p>Session 6 – Evolution of amphibians, reptiles and birds</p> <p>Session 7 – The evolution of mammals</p> <p>Session 8 – The changing earth</p> <p>Session 9 – Life proliferates</p> <p>Session 10 – The interconnectedness of everything</p> <p>Session 11 – How human beings have changes the earth</p> <p>Session 12 – The web of life</p>	<p>right</p> <p>Session 12 – Everyone’s fight</p> <p>Economic Inequality</p> <p>Session 13 – The great divide</p> <p>Session 14 – A world of difference</p> <p>War</p> <p>Session 15 – Where there is no winner</p> <p>Patriotism</p> <p>Session 16 – We have a dream</p> <p>Media</p> <p>Session 17 – Take a closer look</p> <p>Session 18 – Whose news is it anyway?</p> <p>Summing Up</p> <p>Session 19 – Meeting the challenge</p>	<p>voice</p> <p>Life Skills</p> <p>Session 5 – Our lives, our skills</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Session 6 – Trying to connect</p> <p>Session 7 – Crossed wires</p> <p>Session 8 – Please wait, connecting you!</p> <p>Dealing with Conflict</p> <p>Session 9 – Discordant notes</p> <p>Session 10 – Should I? Shouldn’t I?</p> <p>Session 11 – There is another way</p> <p>Problem Solving</p> <p>Session 12 – Try it!</p> <p>Session 13 – Some special ingredients</p> <p>Planning Ahead</p> <p>Session 14 – Dreams and goals</p> <p>Session 15 – Getting there</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>Session 16 – Preparing for the future</p> <p>Concluding Sangati</p> <p>Session 17 – The Sangati journey</p>
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5. Curriculum review

Positives

- i. If there has to be a living example of an integrated curriculum in the real sense of the term, it has to be the Sangati curriculum. This set of six kits cannot be fit into any 'subject matter' in the sense of the subjects that we are taught in schools. The Sangati curriculum is a journey towards understanding life and the world around better, and also learning how to live it better.
- ii. The entire curriculum is based on certain themes that are interlinked with each other. These flow logically and smoothly into each other. The journey starts with the self, understanding oneself, one's body and the needs that all human beings possess. As these needs are met by the resources provided by the earth, the second kit then moves on to 'Our earth' and the 'Web of life' that we all are a part of. The third kit then moves on to 'How societies have developed' over time, across the world. The fourth kit then focusses on our nation and 'The way we live' in the present, discussing various issues like caste, religion, gender discrimination etc., and understanding important topics like patriotism, democracy etc. As change is a constant and continuous phenomenon, the next kit then focusses on 'Understanding Change', and analyzing it better so that we can 'create the society we want'. The curriculum ends with a futuristic note and helps understand how to 'Prepare for the Future', as an individual and as a society.
- iii. The first kit, namely, 'Myself, My Body, Our Needs' aims to help students understand who they are, get to know their bodies both physically, by understanding the various organs that make up one's body, their roles, how to take care of them etc., and also mentally, by understanding one's emotions. It talks about the importance of good health and how to deal with illness. In the end, it brings home the point that we all have certain basic needs, and certain other needs which are different for different people. The important thing to understand is these needs are fulfilled through the resources that earth provides and the work that different people do. Hence, the message given is that all these

people should be respected for their work and the earth should be always valued for the immense resources that it provides us. Through this one kit, numerous and multifarious topics are discussed, the importance of good health, how to maintain it, the different parts of our body, their functions, how to keep them healthy, understanding our emotions, the value of work, importance of all types of work, dignity of labor, importance of protecting environment and valuing earth's resources, and so on and so forth.

- iv. The second kit, namely, 'Our Earth and the Web of Life', talks about the evolution of life on this earth through ages. The important points that it is trying to make are that all life forms on earth are interconnected and interdependent on each other, that all life is possible on earth because of the immense resources it provides, that these resources are finite, and hence it is essential to use these resources wisely in order to preserve life on this beautiful planet. This entire theme could not be more relevant than it is in the present day world, where global warming is staring mankind in the face.
- v. The third kit, namely 'How Societies Developed', attempts to tell a brief history of the human civilization, the major milestones that have shaped history and that are crucial to an understanding of the world. The entire kit is tied together by three fictional characters, Nanaji, Saeeda and Kabir, and through the use of flip-charts. Another device called the 'Calendar of the Past' has been introduced that has to be used to sum up each session, so that by the end of the kit, students have 'a broad idea of the main developments over the last 10,000 years of human history'. An important aspect of the way history has been treated in this kit is by not telling it as indisputable facts, rather by giving perspectives. This way, it helps students understand the positives and negatives of everything and also helps them realize that in life, as in society, everything has two sides to it, and it is important to understand both, e.g, whereas the discussion on industrial revolution talks about the benefits it accrued, it also discusses its negative impacts like the deterioration in the work environments, the growth of colonialism etc.

- vi. The fourth kit, namely, 'The Way We Live', turns the focus to the Indian society of today, the problems that we face and how these can be understood and resolved. Various issues are discussed in this kit, like, caste, religious and gender discrimination, economic inequalities, war, the meaning of patriotism and democracy, the presence of mass-media in our lives and its impact etc. The topics that have been discussed are all really relevant and that need to be understood by the students in their correct perspective, for them to be able to contribute positively towards making our society a better place to live in.
- vii. The fifth kit, namely, 'Understanding Change', talks about the only thing that is constant in life and that is change. It explores changes at three levels – 'at the individual or family level, at the societal level and the changes in the natural environment'. This kit is extremely essential in helping students understand change and deal with it effectively. A special feature of this kit is the 'Kites of change', on which the children shall write some 'mantras of change' after every session and by the end of the kit, shall have it as a summary of the whole kit. Plethora of and various different types of changes are discussed threadbare, changes that a child experiences in its body while growing up, changes that come with urbanization, changes that come with changes in technology, social changes, economic changes, political changes and so on and so forth. It is an indispensable source for the students to understand themselves and the world around them and adapt to the constant flux that the world is in.
- viii. The last kit, namely, 'Prepare for the future' is aimed at 'equipping children with some of the most important skills for living together, for building a better future for all'. Some of the skills which it deals with are communication, dealing with conflict, problem solving, and planning for the future. The importance of these topics and these discussions cannot be overstated. These life skills are really essential in helping children live a meaningful, confident and a fulfilling life. A special feature that is used in this kit is the feature of 'diary entry'. Some activities are specially designed to enable children to enter into their diaries, 'so that children get used to the concept and use this

device for introspection and to improve their writing skills’.

- ix. The entire Sangati curriculum is as interactive as any curriculum can be. There is use of stories, games, songs, discussions, poems, flip charts, diary entries, worksheets and so on and so forth to talk to children and reach as close to them as possible. This is not teaching-learning but a journey of exploration that the teacher and the students take together.
- x. The teachers are provided with guidance at every step on how to transact the sessions using these multifarious resources. The teachers’ manuals are sufficiently detailed and provide very effective guidance to the teachers.
- xi. The objectives that the curriculum has set out for itself are adequately met and the curriculum remains true to its form and nature throughout.

5 Scope for improvement:

- i. Although it is extremely difficult to find a scope for improvement in this curriculum, however one point that is worth noting is that it is difficult to envisage if this curriculum can be administered as intended, given the fact that it is meant to be a supplementary curriculum, to be administered once a week by the regular teachers. The teachers are under immense pressure to complete their prescribed syllabi along with other non-academic responsibilities that are put on them.
- ii. Secondly, there is no formal training imparted to these teachers for administering this curriculum. It is pertinent to mention here that training to teachers is not currently administered because the department does-not allot time for training. In the past, till about 5 years ago, this was done regularly. Although the teachers’ manuals are pretty detailed, it is questionable whether the teachers have the time and the interest to go through them. The effectiveness of the sessions is thus bound to suffer.
- iii. Thirdly, the discussions in this curriculum are so threadbare (not that it means these should not be this way) that it would be interesting to note whether or not the teachers actually take up those discussions in their true essence in the class. Discussions on

caste discrimination, communalism etc. are some such examples. The discussion on 'Growing Up' in Kit V talks about the physical changes that occur in girls and boys when they reach the age of puberty. There are factsheets that need to be distributed to children to explain these changes. Whether or not the teachers actually take up these discussions and administer these factsheets is the question. Although all the teachers don't do this as expected, most of them still do so.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CURRICULA

	Eklavya Social Science Program	Maharashtra State Board curriculum	NCERT Social and Political Life curriculum	Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum
Aims of social science teaching	Help children appreciate <i>values of a just world, egalitarian social order, free from exploitation and subordination</i>	Emphasis on content essential to <i>nurture national identity</i> with the aim to <i>develop a sense of fundamental duties....and a sense of pride in being an Indian</i>	Developing <i>a just and peaceful society</i>establishing <i>social enquiry as a scientific endeavour that must challenge patriarchal frames....developing amongst students sensitive, interrogative and transformative citizens</i>	'To replace 'teaching' by <i>a voyage of exploration to discover facets of ourselves, our society and the world, to accommodate the understanding that each child thinks and learns differently, to encourage students to express their thoughts and share their life experiences, to help them cope with different situations and make the right choices and determine better futures for themselves and those around them</i>

<p>Comparative analysis in terms of meeting its objectives and coherence with the theoretical framework</p>	<p>A sincere attempt at meeting the enshrined objectives Breaks the strict water-tight compartments between disciplines Holistic treatment of concepts Interactive teaching-learning Designed to enable students to interact effectively in their day-to-day exchanges Connects to the students' local knowledge</p>	<p>Focus on local government bodies in Class VI textbook The textbook for Class VII is entirely dedicated to the Constitution and its various Parts Focus on India and the World in Class VIII textbook</p>	<p>Deals with social, political as well as economic aspects All the topics are given holistic treatment Boundaries between various social science disciplines have been broken Engaging and interactive Local experiences of children given due space Global perspective also given due space while dealing with a topic Sufficiently gendered. Takes care of various perspectives Coverage quite comprehensive Textbook considered as only one of the many resources Teachers</p>	<p>Truly integrated curriculum. Doesn't fit into any subject matter. The Sangati curriculum is a journey towards understanding life and the world around better, and also learning how to live it better The entire curriculum is based on certain themes that are interlinked with each other. These flow logically and smoothly into each other Completely interactive using a plethora of resources apart from textbooks The teachers' manuals are</p>
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			provided useful guidance through 'Notes to Teachers'	sufficiently detailed and provide very effective guidance to the teachers The objectives that the curriculum has set out for itself are adequately met and the curriculum remains true to its form and nature throughout
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Possible pitfalls	Over-reliance on economic aspects leading to a neglect of the social and political aspects Inadequate coverage and understanding of the concept of 'democracy' Insufficient space given to women, their role, struggles	Many objectives paid only lip service Bits and pieces of information Contradictory to stated objectives at many places Many statements provided as factual are highly questionable, e.g., in the chapter on 'Foreign Policy' in Class VIII	Some issues which are extremely relevant and important to understand and appreciate do-not find space in these textbooks, like the meaning of patriotism/nationalism etc. while discussing gender, space could also be given to the issues and problems faced by the transgender community. Environment and its importance, though touched	Challenges of implementation Implemented through regular teachers – challenges in providing them adequate training to administer the curriculum effectively Biases of the teacher Might be looked by the teachers as imposed from the top, as it is not based on extensive
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	<p>and achievement s Interesting to see how these textbooks will work with elite sections of society Overempha sis on the day-to-day exchanges leads to a neglect in developmen t of general unifying principles</p>	<p>textbook, “Preserving the sovereignty of our country, giving priority to economic development and protecting our interests in the foreign relations is known as national interest” (Maharashtra State Board, Foreign Policy, 2008) Provides rosy picture – doesn’t deal with conflict in society</p>	<p>upon at various places could have been dealt with exclusively and comprehensively, considering its importance in today’s times Could have been more interactive</p>	<p>consultations with the teachers and other stakeholders, as for example, the Eklavya curriculum A periodical review of the curriculum based on the experiences of its implementatio n could be envisaged</p>
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CASE STUDY

A COMPARISON OF HOW THE TOPIC OF 'DEMOCRACY' IS TREATED ACROSS ALL THE FOUR CURRICULA

Before ending this desk review, I felt it would be useful to attempt a comparison of the four curricula through one common topic that forms a part of all the curricula. A discussion on 'democracy' was something that I found was touched upon in all the curricula. Also, as any social science curriculum is not complete without a discussion on democracy, I thought this would be a suitable topic to base this comparison on. Also, a mature understanding about democracy and its functioning is extremely essential to be able to understand further deeper issues and to be able to contribute meaningfully towards enriching and improving the working of the Indian democracy. It is a prerequisite for every active, thinking and responsible citizen of this nation.

Eklavya Social Science Program

The only place where a discussion on democracy is attempted is in the Class VIII textbook, in the chapter titled "Constitution I". The discussion on democracy in this chapter is detailed below:

"In a democracy, people should participate in the making and changing of governments. Thus, every adult has the same power to vote. Whether a person is rich or poor or belongs to a particular social background does not matter. The Freedom Movement had highlighted the idea that all people are equal.

demos (people) + kratos (rule) = democracy, meaning rule by the people.

Thus, the Constitution states that governments in India are to be formed through elections. These elections are based on the principle of universal adult franchise. All elections in India for forming governments at any level have to follow this principle, since it is stated in the Constitution.

The Constitution is to be followed by all the people of India. In a democracy no individual should be considered to be above the law, no matter how high or important that person is. Therefore whether it is

the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, President or any other high official, they all have to follow the laws. They also have to make sure that these laws are followed by all. The Constitution tells in detail how these officials should function.” (Eklavya Team, 1998)

For a concept as important and as basic as ‘democracy’, the above discussion seems quite inadequate and rudimentary. Incidentally, the Eklavya curriculum was born out of a critique of the existing Civics Textbooks, wherein one of the major criticisms of the existing text was on its handling of the concept of democracy, which was quite elementary, and did not in any way help students understand the real import and meaning of this term. The Eklavya textbooks, surprisingly, don’t do much in handling this concept in a much better way. Though, they deal with the concepts of majority in government formation at various places and explain it using real life examples, however, democracy as a concept is not dealt with to give students a real import of this term. Democracy, as such, is a very complex term, much more than ‘government for, by and of the people’. Eklavya texts, however, don’t go much beyond this basic understanding of democracy

Maharashtra State Board Curriculum

There is a chapter titled ‘Indian Democracy’ in Class VII ‘Civics and Administration’ textbook. The aspect of democracy that has been emphasized throughout the chapter is the political aspect. Democracy has been narrowly interpreted as only a political concept. The first line of the chapter sets the tone for the entire discourse on democracy in the chapter. The first line states “Democracy is a way of running the government” (Maharashtra State Board, Indian Democracy, 2008).

The chapter then lists the characteristics of democracy as ‘regular elections, multi-party system, decentralization of power, participation of people’s organizations, freedom of mass media and economic development’ (Maharashtra State Board, Indian Democracy, 2008). The challenges before Indian democracy are mentioned as ‘communalism, terrorism, regionalism and corruption’ (Maharashtra State Board, Indian Democracy, 2008).

Even the discussion of the political aspect is done in a pretty ordinary manner. One paragraph each is devoted to all the above points. The

paragraph on Regular elections talks eloquent about how free and fair elections are held in the country because of the Election Commission. In real life, students would have to witness the realities of money and muscle power in the electoral process, which they will not be able to even conceive of, if they go by this textbook.

Economic development has been said to be a prerequisite for a healthy democracy (Maharashtra State Board, Indian Democracy, 2008). It has been hinted that in India, the growth of democracy has been facilitated by the economic planning adopted, which has led to economic development, protection against exploitation, malnutrition, starvation etc. (Maharashtra State Board, Indian Democracy, 2008). Nothing could be further from the truth and the realities of even the day-to-day life of the children whom these books are catering to.

The sense that one gets from this chapter and from the entire book is that the government and the state are doing a fantastic job, everything is as it should be in our society and there are no problems and issues whatsoever. Even when certain issues are listed as challenges to democracy in this chapter, the impression is that these issues are created by the people and the government tries to solve these problems. Democracy, which champions people, seems to have been inverted and somehow these very people seem to have been delegitimized.

The only silver lining, if any, can be that media, people's organizations etc. have at least been cursorily mentioned, though what purpose it is serving is anybody's guess.

NCERT Social and Political Life curriculum

The Unit II in Class VI Social and Political Life textbook is titled "Government". It consists of two chapters "What is government" and "Key elements of a democratic government". The first of these chapters talks in brief about 'Democratic Governments' (Textbook Development Committee, What is Government, 2005). It starts off with India being a political democracy, i.e., its people having the power to elect the leaders. It then talks briefly about representative democracies and universal adult franchise. It also discusses how women have struggled to get a right to vote, across the world (Textbook Development Committee, What is Government, 2005). The next chapter then talks about the key elements

in the working of a democratic system. Four of these elements are discussed, namely, peoples' participation, resolution of conflict, equality and justice (Textbook Development Committee, Key Elements of a Democratic Government, 2005). It starts with a discussion of evolution of the democratic system in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid. It then discusses the role and importance of peoples' participation in a democracy, why elections are required after regular intervals, what are some of the other means of participation etc. It then talks about various conflicts that can arise when diverse people live together and gives some examples like conflicts on religious grounds, on sharing of river waters etc. It then discusses equality and justice and their inseparability. It touches upon untouchability and the gender discrimination here, and how special provisions have been made to address these discriminations.

The discussion on democracy continues in the Class VII textbook. Here, the first and the last chapters talk about 'Equality in Indian Democracy' (Textbook Development Committee, Equality in Indian Democracy, 2005).

The emphasis here is on making the students understand the inseparability of equality and democracy and how equality is a prerequisite for the functioning of a healthy democracy. It brings home the point that political democracy is only one aspect of the democratic system and an equal right to vote and universal adult franchise are meaningless if there is no equality in other spheres of life. It discusses economic, religious and caste inequalities. It then lists various ways in which government has tried to address these inequalities, through laws and government programs, where it details the working of the Mid-Day Meal scheme. It then also discusses inequalities and racial discrimination in USA to emphasize the point that the existence of inequality is a global phenomenon.

The second part of this unit talks about peoples' struggles against inequalities, wherein it discusses the protests by the 'Tawa Matsya Sangha, a federation of Fisherworkers' cooperatives, an organization fighting for the rights of the displaced forest dwellers of the Satpura forest in Madhya Pradesh' (Textbook Development Committee, Equality in Indian Democracy, 2005).

The coverage of the concept of democracy is a lot more comprehensive

and meaningful in the NCERT curriculum. Democracy is not limited to only a political concept, but interlinkages have been formed with the concepts of equality, justice etc., which are deemed essential for democracy's functioning. The threats to democracy like caste, religious, economic discrimination and inequalities are discussed. The struggles and various push and pull factors that exist in the daily working of a democracy are highlighted. Peoples' struggles and role in the enrichment of democracy are highlighted. The coverage is limited not only to India but also examples are taken from across the world to discuss concepts of democracy, freedom, equality etc., which helps in widening the perspectives of the students.

On the flip side, although attempts have been made to include various anecdotes, case studies, dialogues, stories etc., yet the discourse does not sound much interactive. The impression that emerges is that most often there is an attempt at imparting knowledge rather than drawing the students to think, participate and critically analyze things on their own. More space could also be given to inequalities based on gender. Also, the role of the state and the government, in terms of their contribution towards threatening the proper working of a democracy is not analyzed threadbare. There could be more on corruption, politics-crime nexus etc. where there is a mention of Government laws and schemes, they could also be commented upon for their lackadaisical implementation, which seems to be missing.

Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum

Two sessions in Kit IV to be transacted in Class VI, are devoted to the discussion of democracy. "The first session on this theme introduces the idea of democracy and how it works in India; it points out how our Constitution protects some fundamental human rights. The second session focuses on the need to struggle for rights that will enable our democracy to function well and make it more meaningful" (Avehi Abacus Team, 2003).

True to the spirit in which the Sangati kits have been designed, the ideas follow a logical flow and move smoothly from one to the other. The discussion on democracy begins with the need for any kind of governance in the first place, why at all laws are required in a society. It then arrives at the government's role in law making through a game 'Who

decides?’ played by the children. It then explains the concepts of democracy as a political concept, and why indirect democracy or representative democracy is the only possible form of democracy today. Through the next activity, it then proceeds to explain the power that the government derives from the Constitution of India, which allows it to make laws for the people. It then arrives at the need for fundamental rights, as a check on the government against the exercise of its power arbitrarily. All the fundamental rights are then explained through a poster. The next activity (a game) then highlights the importance of a limit to these rights. The session is then summed up highlighting the importance of realizing our rights, demanding them, respecting others’ rights and keeping a check on the government. The worksheet which the students are supposed to do as their home task requires them to watch the news and read newspapers for a week and note down their observations about how the Parliament/government functions, to understand the actual working of democracy in our nation. The second part of the home assignment requires them to talk to a female and a male adult and ask them certain questions about their experiences with their local legislators (MLAs). Two factsheets are also distributed to the children about ‘Childrens’ Rights’ and some interesting facts on ‘elections and voting’.

The second session begins with a discussion of the worksheet given in the previous session. The central idea that this discussion is trying to convey is that the people have the right and the duty to make the government work for them. It then leads to the next activity, wherein the struggle of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan for the enactment of the Right to Information, is detailed in the form of a story, to be transacted through a flip-chart. The aim is to exemplify how people, if they get together, can really make the government function in the true spirit of democracy. The next activity then dwells on the importance of the Right to know, and how knowledge is important and essential to the functioning of democracy. The unit on Democracy ends with the following sentence, “Democracy has been called government of the people, for the people and by the people. And it is only we, the people, who can make our democracy work” (Avehi Abacus Team, 2003).

The best thing about the Sangati curriculum, which is evident here as well, is the logical flow it follows and how every idea keeps on beautifully

flowing from one to the other. Nothing sounds constrained or artificial. Every idea is discussed in as simple a way as possible. There is tremendous use of activities, games, discussions, stories, flip-charts etc., which can help in completely involving the students in the discussions and help them understand the crux of the matter being discussed very easily. The emphasis on the Right to Information, for democracy to be successful in real terms is very pertinent. The concept of democracy is discussed in as holistic a manner as possible, looking at it from all perspectives. The curriculum actually relies on plethora of resources, apart from the actual textbook, which enriches the curriculum tremendously. The activities that children are required to do are also very meaningful like the activities given to them as a part of their worksheets in this Unit. One interesting thing to note here is that the point where the unit on democracy begins in the Maharashtra State Board curriculum, is the point where it ends in the Sangati curriculum. The same point has been merely 'told' as an information in the first curriculum, whereas, here it has been introduced, discussed, reasoned and finally concluded and arrived at beautifully.

What could be added to this curriculum, if compared with the other curricula, especially the NCERT, can be a perspective on how democracy has fared in other parts of the world. This aspect, though, has been touched upon in a factsheet and also in the Kit 3, which has a history of political systems, however, some more detailed discussion would even enhance the discussion further.

FIELD STUDY – PART I

Theoretical framework

It is understood that any educational experience imparted to children is a combination of curriculum (where I am focussing on the textbooks here, mainly) and pedagogy. In the desk review that I undertook above, I have attempted to analyse as well as compare various curricula. Curricula, textbooks, all teaching-learning and sharing of experiences that happens in schools fulfils the purpose of providing certain education to children. What should the aims of education be? Does education serve only a utilitarian purpose of enabling an individual to earn his/her livelihood once he/she passes through this education system? Or should it serve some other purpose as well? Rather, can it serve some other person? Does education have any role in shaping of thoughts and actions? The National Curricular Framework, 2005 recognizes 'basic concerns of education' as 'to enable children to make sense of life and develop their potential, to define and pursue a purpose and recognize the right of others to do the same' (Aims of Education, NCF, 2005). It is essential for an education system to provide an education that enables an individual to think, reflect and reason, to decide the right and wrong for himself and herself and to act according to these. It also implies a tolerance for the opinions and viewpoints of others, an ability to 'agree to disagree', to be able to live in peace and harmony within diversity of opinions. It would imply developing an ability of self-introspection and an ability to engage with diverse ideas, in the process also subjecting one's own ideas and opinions to test. It also implies the development of an ability to recognize an individual's liberty over his/her own thoughts and actions, as long as they do-not affect others. Mill emphasizes the importance of this liberty in his work 'On Liberty' (Mill, 1859). The recognition of this liberty would enable an individual to be able to live in harmony with diverging and even conflicting viewpoints, without feeling the need to force one's own opinions on others. However, the liberty to hold opinions needs to be accompanied with a responsibility, that of subjecting those opinions to the rigor and turmoil of being debated and discussed, lest they turn into static entities (op.cit). This is the spirit that needs to be developed and inculcated through creating an atmosphere of engagement, discussions, constant generation of new ideas and refinement of the existing ones. Schools and teachers have an indispensable role to play in this, along

with families and the society.

A major portion of responsibility for developing the abovementioned abilities in students falls on the social sciences. This is because the domain of social sciences deals with the interactions and interrelationships between individuals, nature and the society. However, the trajectory of the development of social sciences as separate independent domain of study has its own history.

Social studies, as a separate subject of study owes its origin to 'the report of the Committee on Social Studies (CSS) on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in US (1916)' (Jain, Social Studies and Civics: Past and Present in the Curriculum, 2005). Its broad scope and the direction that its curricular content was to take as it spread to other parts of the world was set out at its inception itself. USA was grappling with the issues of racial prejudice at the time. The subject was visualized by its inceptors as trying to address the concerns of the blacks through curricular mediation. It sought to silence the onset of a revolution by methodically 'teaching' the blacks that they were the inferior race, responsible for their own dismal situation. The onus to bring about a change was on them and it would gradually come about if they acted as 'good citizens' and 'within the confines of the system', instead of acting 'emotionally' and 'impulsively'.

In India, 'Civics as a subject had appeared in the Indian school curriculum in the colonial period in the background of increasing 'disloyalty' among Indians towards the Raj' (Jain, Social Studies and Civics: Past and Present in the Curriculum, 2005). The conditions of its inception are amply indicative of the scope that this subject was envisioned to have. It was meant to instil in students the 'qualities' of a 'good citizen', those of 'obedience, loyalty to the government of the day, trying to bring about improvements in oneself to be fit enough to be responsible citizens of the society' etc. The nationalist movement, though, brought about the independence of the nation, yet could not rid the nation of the colonial ethos. Most of the nationalist leaders were highly impressed with the western ideas and thought that the natives would need substantial time to develop themselves into able individuals, due to the centuries of servility that had experienced. Thus, the direction that the Civics discourse took in independent India remained mostly unaltered. The curriculum was envisaged from a dominant perspective

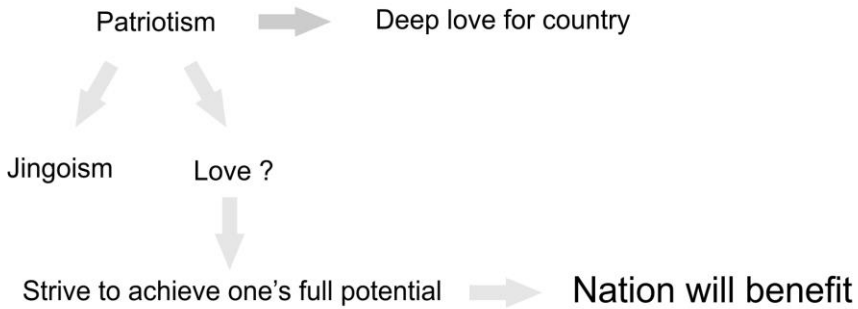
and sought to develop individuals into 'ideal citizens' who would be loyal to the nation, obedient, responsible and would appreciate their role as the citizens of the nation and continuously work towards improving themselves so that they could be worthy of being a part of this great nation. As the agenda of the leaders of the newly born nation was to integrate the highly diverse nation, in terms of the varied cultures, languages, religions, castes, classes etc. that existed, all effort went towards portraying the nation as an ideal one, brushing aside the various conflicts that existed in the society. Civics education was meant to 'teach' the students the 'greatness' of the Constitution, the structures and institutions that governed the nation and the infallible 'unity in diversity' of the Indian nation.

A salient characteristic of the Indian education system from the very beginning has been its being dominated by the dominant narrative and perspective, without giving much space to alternative perspectives. For instance, even while recounting the growth and development of history education, Uma Chakravarty recalls, 'The brahmanical texts were the main sources for whatever passed by way of religion, culture and society in 'ancient' India, and there was little attention to alternative traditions and ways of looking at history' (Chakravarty). Similarly, civics education has traditionally been about developing of a 'good citizen' and has had no place for inclusion of any other alternative perspective. As has been discussed by Alex George, 'citizenship education perspective' has been the dominant one in the Civics discourse throughout. Even 'NCERT's 1986 curricula guidelines express similar views' and 'the same document recommends the inclusion in the syllabus of concepts pertaining to political institutions' (George).

However, there has been an attempt at bridging these gaps through interventions like Eklavya Social Science Program, Aveshi Abacus Sangati curriculum and at a much larger scale, the NCERT curriculum post NCF-2005. The important thing, now is to understand, the on the ground realities post implementation and transaction of these curricula.

In the first part of my field study, my attempt is to analyze the ground level impact of three of the abovementioned curricula, namely, Maharashtra State Board Civics curriculum for Classes VI-VIII, NCERT Social and Political Life curriculum for Classes VI-VIII and Aveshi Abacus Sangati Curriculum for Classes V-VII.

Conceptual framework



The impact of these curricula has been analyzed primarily through the means of students' understanding of the concept of patriotism. The hypothesis that I am trying to test here is based on the assumption that patriotism is not merely national-anthem singing or slogan chanting or celebrating Republic and Independence Days or glorifying the Indian security forces etc., but much more deeply, trying to put in one's best in whatever one is doing, at all times. It means to be able to critically think and reflect, to differentiate between right and wrong, to be a responsible human being, to be aware of one's rights and duties, to understand the various social issues that need to be redressed etc., so that one can contribute towards one's own well-being, and further make constructive and serious contribution towards the society's, nation's and mankind's well-being.

George Orwell, in his Notes on Nationalism, 1945, differentiates between patriotism and nationalism, wherein he states that patriotism was a devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world, but has no wish to force on other people. Nationalism, on the other hand, was inseparable from the desire for power (Thapar, 2016). For my purpose, in this research, however, I have used the two terms interchangeably.

The interrelationship between democracy and patriotism and the role of hidden curriculum also needs to be understood here. The understanding of patriotism as a deep love for one's country pushing an individual to strive to achieve her/his best can only develop in an atmosphere of real democracy, as against only a symbolic democracy. A real democratic

atmosphere is the one where critical thinking, discussions, debates and dissent are promoted and encouraged. Such an atmosphere is conducive for the development and growth of a society based on free exchange of ideas and the ability to co-exist with one-another in harmony, despite differences in ideology. On the other hand, a mere symbolic democracy dissuades and also penalizes, to some extent, all of the above, and aims at pushing through the dominant political ideology and thought process. The hidden curriculum has a major role to play in this agenda. Through the use of out of curriculum spaces like school walls, assembly time etc., the dominant political ideology is forced through, which dilutes the impact of even an extremely progressive curriculum like Sanagti.

The lofty aims of education and the aims of teaching of social sciences outlined in the preceding paragraphs, can be said to be met in practice only if the students develop an ability to think beyond the immediate, critically reflect on what goes on around them, celebrate the diversity that is an inseparable part of human existence itself and learn to accept and respect perspectives other than their own.

Field study

In order to assess the impact, I had prepared certain case study scenarios in order to elicit student responses and viewpoints on the same. These scenarios are listed below:

1 An Army Officer, who has fought gallantly on the borders many times and has foiled many enemy attempts to infiltrate in our country, has come for a holiday to his home. He is driving on the road and breaks the traffic signal, as he is in a hurry. The traffic policeman stops him. He apologizes and justifies that he has broken the signal unintentionally, only because he was in a hurry. He also mentions that he is an Army Officer dedicated to the service of the nation and follows all rules and laws always, and hence, he should be forgiven this time and allowed to go without being fined for breaking the traffic rule. The traffic policeman is convinced and allows him to go, acknowledging his great service to the nation. Do you think the traffic policeman is right? Why or why not?

Statement of objective of this scenario: To understand if the

student feel that army officers should be given a favorable treatment as they are doing a great service to the nation, or do they feel that rules and regulations should be same for all. This will help understand whether or not students eulogize army officers and think that they are above the rest in lieu of the great service they are providing to the nation.

2 How do you celebrate Independence Day every year? Is there any other way rather than mentioned by you in which this day can be celebrated?

Statement of objective of this scenario: To understand if the students feel that Independence Day can be celebrated only in the traditional manner how it is done, or do they feel that other ways of celebrating it are equally valid.

3 Recently, there was a newspaper report wherein it was mentioned that a Pakistani national was jailed for 10 years for supporting Virat Kohli in a cricket match and hoisting Indian flag. Was the decision to punish him correct? Why or why not?

Statement of objective of this scenario: To understand if the students gave importance to mere symbolic nationalism or were able to think beyond and deeper

4 Do you think patriotism is related to the profession a person chooses to undertake? Are army officers, for example, more patriotic than people doing other jobs? Why or why not?

Statement of objective of this scenario: To understand how students perceived patriotism, whether they thought certain professions like armed forces etc. gave more scope for displaying patriotism, or they thought that patriotism and one's profession was mutually exclusive

5 A big factory is planned to be set up in an area which currently inhabits a village. It is a fertile land. Handsome compensation is promised to the villagers in lieu of their land. They are also promised new flats and jobs in the factory. The factory also will provide employment to many once it is fully functional. It will also lead to infrastructure development in the area. However, environmental activists are against the project,

owing to its causing irreparable damage to the environment, and some of the villagers are also refusing to part with the land. Should the construction of this factory be permitted? Why or why not?

Statement of objective of this scenario: Again, to try and gauge the nuances in the thinking and understanding of students. Whether they are able to look at various perspectives of things and think through whenever they are presented with certain dilemmas in their lives.

6 In a cricket match between India and Pakistan, some of the Indian spectators at the stadium are supporting Pakistan cricket team. Would you consider this act unpatriotic or anti-national? Why or why not?

Statement of objective of this scenario: Same as scenario 3 above

In addition to the above, I also administered to the students a written questionnaire consisting of five questions, with the same purpose as above. The questions in the questionnaire are listed below

- 1.) Why do you think Civics is taught in schools?
 - a) So that we understand our rights and duties properly
 - b) So that we become civilized and good citizens
 - c) So that we understand how our Constitution and the different organs of the state function
 - d) So that we understand and learn about important issues that are prevalent in our society like issues of caste, gender, class bias etc., and be able to critically reflect on them.
 - e) Any other, please specify here
- 2.) Who do you think is a good citizen?
 - a) One who obeys all the rules and laws
 - b) One who strives to do her best in whatever she does
 - c) One who is very patriotic and is ready to even die for one's country

- d) one who supports the decision makers of the country when they are fair to the people and criticize them when they make mistakes
 - e) Any Other
- 3.) What do you think being patriotic means?
- a) Respecting national flag, national anthem etc.
 - b) Wanting to join the army so that one could fight the nation's enemies and protect her sovereignty and integrity
 - c) Being a responsible human being
 - d) Supporting the government in whatever they do
 - e) Any Other
- 4.) Where do the following lie on the patriotic index? Rate these in decreasing order from the most patriotic to the least patriotic. Give reasons for your answer.
- a) Teacher
 - b) Sweeper
 - c) Doctor
 - d) Army Officer
 - e) Postman
 - f) Social worker
 - g) Police Officer
 - h) None of them is patriotic
 - i) All of them are equally patriotic
- 5.) What is more important – loving one’s country or protecting the earth’s environment and why?

Observations and analysis

A private English medium school following CBSE syllabus, based on NCERT books post NCF-2005

Observations based on discussions with students on the scenarios

I undertook this discussion with VIII Standard students of this school. There were 17 students present in the class at the time of the discussion. I presented the scenarios to the students one by one and solicited their responses. I tried to elicit their viewpoints and let them speak as much as possible. I tried my best not to ask any leading questions, but in between did try to present a different perspective to the students in order to see how they would react to it. It is also essential to understand that as might be expected from such free flowing discussions, there were a few students who were very vocal and were speaking most often, while certain others either did-not speak at all or some of them only repeated what the others had said. In order to neutralize some of these problems, as also try and get a view from all who were present, I administered the written questionnaire to them individually later.

Scenario 1: An overwhelming majority of students felt that the traffic policeman was wrong in letting the Army Officer go, as they felt that the rules and laws of the land are same for every person. They did acknowledge the ‘great service’ that army personnel were doing for the nation, but felt that this did not mean that they were above law. One student went further and argued that being in army, the army personnel should be even more disciplined as military training teaches them such. Only a couple of students felt that the traffic policeman did the right thing by letting off the army officer.

Scenario 2: The students narrated how they celebrated Independence Day in their schools and in their residential societies and colonies by hoisting the national flag, singing patriotic songs, performing various plays, etc. Various competitions were also held in their school. They were pretty vocal about the importance of Independence Day, and were very excited about all these celebrations that were held in their school and homes. They thought that such celebrations were very welcome and apt and could not think of any other way in which this day could be celebrated.

Scenario 3: None of the students agreed that the punishment meted out to the man was correct and valid. They were confused as to what the basis was for such a punishment being given. Some of them vehemently argued that such a thing could not be contemplated in India, as if the government tried to do any such thing, the other political parties would not allow it as India was a democratic country.

Scenario 4: There were very intense discussions around this topic. The initial response of the majority of the students was that army officers were definitely serving the nation better than others because they were directly fighting on the borders for the country and could even die in the process. A couple of the children then argued that everyone was patriotic in their own way as doctors were saving lives, the sweepers on the roads were keeping the place clean etc. One of the boy was however very vocally arguing that since army people also had the opportunity of laying their lives for the country, their patriotism could not be matched. Many of the others, had arrived at the view that people of all professions were patriotic in their own way. Many, however, also continued to argue that though all were patriotic, still army officers had the comparative upper hand and could do a lot for the nation.

Scenario 5: The students were truly in a dilemma in this scenario. They were offering the pros as well as cons for the construction of the factory. The arguments in favour of the factory had to do with employment generation, growth, development etc., whereas the ones against had to do with pollution of the environment, loss of fertile land, farmers having to part with their lands etc. But the overall opinion was slightly tilted in favour of the construction of the factory, as it was felt that it was for the good of the villagers themselves.

Scenario 6: The students felt that supporting any nation in a cricket match depended on an individual's personal choice and supporting Pakistan, or any other country for that matter, did not make anyone unpatriotic.

Observations based on the questionnaire

Questions	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Why do you think Civics is taught in schools?	5	6	6	12	
Who do you think is a good citizen?	7	1	1	9	
What do you think being patriotic means?	10	4	4		

Rating on patriotic Index: 8 students answered that all were equally patriotic, 5 rated army officers as the most patriotic, followed by police officers and 2 rated teachers as the most patriotic.

Whether loving one's country was important or protecting the environment: 10 of the students felt that protecting the earth's environment was more important, 2 felt that loving one's country was more important and 2 felt that both were equally important

Analysis based on the above observations

- NCERT curriculum has been modelled on the recommendations made by NCF-2005. It has envisaged to bring into focus the issues prevailing in our society, discuss them and learn to accommodate and think from various perspectives. It has envisaged to enable children to question, think and critically analyze everything and form their understanding based on such analysis. The nomenclature of 'Civics' has been changed to 'Social and Political Life' with such an objective in mind. Based on the replies given by the students to the first and the second questions of the questionnaire, it is evident that the abovementioned envisaged aim is being fulfilled to a good extent. A majority of the students felt that the aim of Civics teaching was to help them understand various issues plaguing our society and be able to critically reflect on them.
- Even though many felt that a good citizen was the one who obeyed all rules and laws of the land, however, a majority of them felt that they were in their right to criticize the government if it

did something wrong and that it was their responsibility as a good citizen to do so. This indicates a welcome broadening of the understanding of who constitutes a 'good citizen'.

- In terms of the understanding of what 'patriotism' means, an overwhelming majority related it to symbolic acts of respecting the national symbols like national anthem, national flag etc. They also looked in awe of the armed forces of the nation. Although they did-not eulogize them as much as to place it above the law of the land, yet they saw them as someone doing a great service to the nation, may be better than the rest as they were ever-ready to lay their lives for the nation. Such an understanding seems to concur with the general mood prevailing in the society. Although, the students felt that senseless acts like prison term for waving 'enemy' country's flag, were not possible in India as India was a democracy and Indian politics won't allow it, yet the students were themselves somewhat stuck with symbolic 'nationalism' and could not think or move much beyond that. Independence Day to them meant hoisting national flag and singing patriotic songs. Their lack of imagination here may not be their own fault as much as that of the inability and lack of intent of the system to move beyond these symbolism. On the contrary, in recent times, there has been only a visible shift towards this symbolism.
- The students do display an ability to think through things from various perspectives. Their dilemma on the scenario of setting up a factory in a village substantiates this point. However, their tilt towards the benefits of setting up of factories and industrialization might be an indicator of their socio-economic status in society (most of them came from the nearby elite areas), or the general prevailing dominant mood in the society, of growth and development through industrialization, or a combination of such factors.
- The students though vocal about their 'patriotism' and wanting to display it, are not yet into the 'adult occupation' of putting up enemies and criticizing and hating them. They are content with letting everyone believe and follow what they want to and live life on their own terms. Their 'patriotism' has not yet reached the

stage of ‘negating and vilifying’ others. They would support India in a cricket match, but would not have a problem if you went ahead and supported Pakistan, or any other nation.

- Another interesting thing to note was that to the general question that what all the students could do in their personal capacities for their nation, the first reply that came was that they could do a service to their nation by keeping it clean. This reply was constant in all the schools, private or BMC, Sangati or Non-Sangati, that I covered. Although it is not possible to establish a concrete reason for the same, may be it has to do with the current political thrust on ‘cleanliness’, indicating how the politics of the day impacts the education and the teaching-learning processes. However, many a times I felt that the cleanliness slogan was only on their lips and was not getting translated into much action on the ground. The BMC schools specially, used to get very dirty especially during the lunch time and this private school also did not have very clean surroundings.
- The students are not able to go very deep in terms of being able to totally disconnect one’s profession from patriotism. It seems it is a bit difficult for them to understand that patriotism does not have anything to do with one’s profession.
- They don’t link being a good citizen or being patriotic to being a responsible human being or to doing one’s best in whatever one does. Such linkages are may be too abstract for them and in the absence of any such guidance or pedagogical or curricular support, it seems very difficult that the children would on their own be able to arrive at such a linkage. The NCERT curriculum does-not deal with patriotism directly in its curriculum.
- I also did some classroom observations to understand the pedagogical aspect of how the curriculum is being transacted in the classrooms. The classroom transaction was more or less in a discussion mode, as a give and take between the teacher and the student. The classroom environment was completely non-intimidating and the teachers and students were sharing ideas back and forth. The textbook was being used optimally, however, the use of any other teaching-learning resource (other than the

textbook) was minimal.

- Having said the above, there is another point that I would like to convey. The teacher transacting the social science curriculum for Standard VIII, also taught Social Science to Standard X. I happened to observe one class when she was teaching Standard X. To my surprise, I found a noteworthy change in the pedagogical style of the teacher while teaching Standard X students. She started transacting mostly in the lecture mode, asking the students to underline at various places, as those portions were important for the exams. There was minimal interaction with the students and the students were also only listening and underlining. This may have been because X standard had the Board examinations. I just thought of including this observation because it underlines the impact that the various systems and processes create on the classroom interaction. Any study on teaching-learning, on curriculum and pedagogy cannot be divorced of the wider systems and processes that exist, within which curriculum and pedagogy have to exist and survive.
- There is a latent environmental concern in the students and they feel that protecting the earth's environment is important for the continuation of life on this planet. However, it is difficult to comment whether this is a superficial realization or they have thought deep on the issue or, actually act on this realization. Also, how deep is this environmental concern is not clear as in the scenario of setting up the factory, they were mostly in favour of it, although understanding the environmental concerns in its setting up.
- Although this does not directly concern my area of study, however, I would still like to put up this observation. All the students were pretty comfortable speaking in English as they were studying in a private English medium school mostly catering to middle-upper middle strata of society. However, their written English was surprisingly not very up to the mark. In the last question in the questionnaire, where they had to give a descriptive reply, many of them were not even able to construct proper sentences. This was a bit surprising for me given the

socio-economic background they belonged to and the school they were studying in.

A BMC school following the Maharashtra State Board syllabus, where Avehi Abacus Sangati curriculum has not been transacted

Observations based on discussions with students on the scenarios listed above

I undertook this discussion with VIII and IX Standard (these two classes had been combined and the students were sitting together) students of this school. It was an English medium school. There were 42 students present in the class at the time of the discussion. I presented the scenarios to the students one by one and solicited their responses. I tried to elicit their viewpoints and let them speak as much as possible. I tried my best not to ask any leading questions, but in between did try to present a different perspective to the students in order to see how they would react to it. It is also essential to understand that as might be expected from such free flowing discussions, there were a few students who were very vocal and were speaking most often, while certain others either did-not speak at all or some of them only repeated what the others had said. In order to neutralize some of these problems, as also try and get a view from all who were present, I administered the written questionnaire to them individually later.

Scenario 1: Majority of the students said that the traffic policeman is right in letting the army officer go because he was an army officer and rendered great service to the nation. Also, they felt that a ‘common man’ should have been fined and not let go. On further probing whether rules were not same for all, they didn’t have any convincing reply, only that would have fined a common man because he could have been a dangerous thief, and the army man could not have been.

Scenario 2: Their replies to this scenario were similar to the above set of students.

Scenario 3: Most of the students felt that the punishment given was correct as the man had flown Indian flag in Pakistan.

Scenario 4: They felt that one could serve the nation in any capacity.

Scenario 5: The initial response of the students was that setting up the factory was bad as it was on fertile land. This could again be due to the socio-economic background which most of the students came from. On being provided alternate perspectives, they could understand and think more, but never accepted that setting up a factory was unconditionally good. One of the students then came up with an option that setting up a factory could be good if it is set up on fallow and infertile land.

Scenario 6: The students shouted that they would always support India against any other country in any match. They were divided over whether not supporting India could be called unpatriotic. Some of them later conceded that one could support anyone one wanted based on one’s likes and dislikes.

Observations based on the questionnaire

Questions	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Why do you think Civics is taught in schools?	23	5	4	10	
Who do you think is a good citizen?	6	3	23	10	
What do you think being patriotic means?	28	4	8	2	

Analysis based on the above observations

- An analysis of the Civics textbooks of Maharashtra State Board has already been undertaken in the previous section on desk review. The curriculum does-not offer much to the students in terms of trying to induce a spirit of enquiry or critical thinking in the students. Their responses to the scenarios as well as the questionnaire display certain lack of depth and confidence in their thought process. At the outset, it required some effort on my part to get them to start talking and share whatever was coming to their minds in response to what I was asking them. Secondly, their responses were very simplistic and they did not seem to be

analyzing various different perspectives before answering.

- Their response to the first scenario that the army officer should be let go without a fine and the common man should be fined was near unanimous. However, they could not give a reason for this choice that they made, except for one student who said that the common man could have been a thief. There could have been a variety of reasons for the choice that they made. Firstly, they were equating an 'army officer' with someone other than a common man. In their mind their response might be just a statement of fact that they might be stating. May be they feel that this is how it happens always, only common men face troubles like fines etc., officers and other 'big shots' are always let off. Another interpretation could be that they feel that once you become an 'officer', that too an 'army officer', whatever you do is a genuine mistake, so you could be let off, whereas if you are a 'common man', you could be anyone, may be a thief also, so a cloud of suspicion always surrounds you. Alternately, they really feel that army officers, in lieu of their great service to the nation, should not be punished for minor mistakes.
- Even if they would have been taught that laws were the same for all, they might not have experienced it in their actual lives. The textbooks don't do anything to discuss such discrepancies any further, so they seemed in a flux as to what was true and what they should follow or believe in.
- The BMC schools were given micro directions in terms of Independence Day celebrations this time. They were required to conduct various programs/competitions like patriotic songs singing, painting, declamations, speeches etc. (related to 'patriotism'/nationalism) and send a proof of the same (photos/videos etc.) to the concerned officials. The schools were busy doing this work even till the twenty third of the month (the last day to submit their reports and proofs). Such forced celebrations of Independence Day in certain particular manners obviously left no room for imagination for the students to think about the meaning of the term 'Independence', or what else could be done on this day etc.

- The meaning of patriotism seemed to be again very simplistic for the students. In the scenario where the Pakistani man had been jailed, they felt that the prison term was correct as the man had flown Indian flag. There were no further nuances to their thought process.
- They did not put army officers on a pedestal and were not particularly enamored with them, unlike the private school students. On the contrary, I felt that they were more in awe of police forces. On being asked what they would want to become once they grew up, many of them gave their first responses as 'police officers'. On being asked the reason, many of them referred to the authority that the police officers possessed. This may be because of their day to day observation of the police forces and how they operate.
- Their stand on setting up of the factory was diametrically opposite to the students of private school. This may be attributed to their socio-economic background and their first hand experiences/knowledge about agricultural processes.
- Again, the understanding of 'patriotism' was largely symbolic, a majority felt being patriotic meant to respect the national symbols. Their definition of a good citizen also had much to do with being patriotic and being ready to even die for the nation. They did not give much thought on how they could live well if they wanted to do something for the nation.
- Despite a lack of curricular support to help children think beyond the immediate, some of them showed tremendous depth in their thought process. Eight out of forty two students could relate being patriotic to being responsible human beings and doing their best in what they do. Also, many of them could disentangle the relationship between one's profession and patriotism. Many responded that these were mutually exclusive. They showed enough spark and potential and could really come up with good ideas like one student said that factories should be set-up on infertile fallow lands and not on fertile agricultural lands. The missing link is the lack of curricular depth and the corresponding

pedagogical support in guiding these students and nurturing their minds. The umpteen administrative duties, trainings, other administrative tasks like providing proofs of Independence Day celebrations, etc., assigned to teachers quite often does not in any way help the students or the teachers.

- Finally, though an English medium school, the level of spoken as well as written English had tremendous scope of improvement. The students were not understanding the meaning of the word 'patriotic' itself. Also, I really doubt if they actually got the import of the last question despite my trying to explain them in whatever way I could. The strange thing is that I offered them a Hindi questionnaire as well but they said they would not understand it and requested me to give them an English one, which they were anyway finding difficult to decipher.

BMC schools following the Maharashtra State Board syllabus, where Aveshi Abacus Sangati curriculum has also been transacted

Before going to the observations and analysis, I would like to make a few initial comments and clarify certain points here. The Sangati curriculum is transacted as a supplementary curriculum for Classes V to VII in all the BMC schools in Mumbai. However, there are a few classes where teachers do-not teach Sangati, either due to personal resistance, or due to lack of continuity, or because some schools are 'adopted' by other NGOs and do-not use Sangati for their classes. The classes are held once every week. The particular chapter on 'Patriotism' forms a part of Kit IV that is transacted in the second half of Class VI. I had initially planned on observing these sessions when this chapter would be transacted and conduct my discussions with the students of either Class VII or Class VIII. However, these sessions were to be done only towards the end of the year and hence it was not possible for me to observe these. As for the discussion, I could find students who had been transacted Sangati curriculum, who were now in Classes VIII or IX. For some batches of students in the schools that I went, the Sangati classes had not been held and hence I could interact with students who were now in Classes VIII or IX. I interacted with two batches of such students, In addition, I also observed classes of and interacted with Class VI students, with whom the

Sangati curriculum was presently being transacted. I will present my observations and analysis for each of these groups separately below.

Observations based on discussions with students on the scenarios listed above – First batch of VIII and IX class students (combined)

At the outset, I would like to state that this particular class was again a combined class of Standard VIII and IX students. It was an exceptionally noisy class. There were two teachers present in the class, yet, the students were shouting, talking and fighting among themselves. It was very difficult for me to conduct my discussion here because of the huge number of students, their noise levels and their disinterest. The teachers were also pestering me to hurry up as the students were getting out of control. Hence, I could not complete my discussion with them and also could not get the questionnaire filled. I tried to ask the students to try and remember what they had learnt in the Sangati classes across three years. However, I could not get much of a response from them. They just said that they remember something like this being done but did not remember as to how and why these classes were held or what they had learnt from them. I tried to then discuss some of the scenarios with them, the observations of the same are as below:

Scenario 1: A majority of them immediately replied that laws were equal for all and nobody should be let off without being fined.

Scenario 2: There replies were again similar to the two sets of students above.

Scenario 3: I could not discuss this scenario with them.

Scenario 4: A majority of the students initially responded that army people could serve the nation better. Then a couple of the students started shouting that doctors could serve the nation better, as they could save lives. Then all of them started cross-talking and shouting together. Their teachers then asked them to maintain discipline, after which they all changed their stance and said that one could serve the nation in any capacity, and army officers were not necessarily more patriotic.

Scenario 5: I could not discuss this scenario with them.

Scenario 6: The students shouting the names of various countries that they would support. There was one interesting and unique response that

I got here. A group of students were shouting that they supported Pakistan in cricket matches. When I asked them the reason, one of them shouted that this was so because, in his words, “hum Miyan log hain na isliye”. I presume the reference here is to their being Muslims, however, I did-not ask any further clarifications on this topic. By this time, as it is, there was a huge amount of noise in the class and it was not possible to interact any further with the students.

Observations based on discussions with students on the scenarios listed above – Second batch of class IX class students

These students were from a different school. It was a Hindi medium school. There were 21 students in all in the class. Sangati curriculum had been transacted with them from Classes V to VII. The Sangati representative who was accompanying me had stated that the previous batch of students (the ones mentioned above) were very rowdy and not interested in studying, whereas the ones we were going to interact with now were good students. When I asked these students about Sangati curriculum, they said that they had studied it previously. They could not recall exact details but said that it was different from other subjects they studied. They had heard many stories, done activities and prepared worksheets. They had also learnt many things that were helping them in life. The Sangati representative then showed them certain photographs related to the Sangati sessions and most of them could recall the specific stories, what they had learnt through them etc. (Photographs had been shown to the previous batch of students also, but much response could not be elicited).

Scenario 1: The responses were pretty similar to the previous group.

Scenario 2: Similar as above.

Scenario 3: Most of the students felt that the man had not done any wrong to be punished. He was only trying to support the player he liked and he had all the right to do so.

Scenario 4: Many students felt that everyone could serve the nation in their own capacities. Some of them felt that the army officers had better opportunities to serve the nation, however the number of such students was less than those who felt that all could serve the nation equally. Also,

many among this group also seemed very fond of the teaching profession and said that teachers served the nation best as they taught nice things to children and made them good human beings.

Scenario 5: There was again much discussion around this topic and the students pointed out both pros and cons of setting up a factory. However, they remained undecided, but did-not seem much keen on setting up a factory on agricultural land.

Scenario 6: They said that one could support whosoever one wanted to, based on personal choice and preference. This would not make anyone unpatriotic.

Observations based on the questionnaire

Questions	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Why do you think Civics is taught in schools?	4	14	5	2	
Who do you think is a good citizen?	8	5	8	2	
What do you think being patriotic means?	10	2	8	6	

Rating on patriotic Index: 10 students said all were equally patriotic, 7 rated army officers as the most patriotic and teacher/doctor after that, 3 rated teachers as most patriotic and 1 rated doctors as most patriotic.

Whether loving one’s country was important or protecting the environment: There is not much I can comment based on the replies to this question. Half of the children did-not answer this question and those who answered did-not write anything that could be analyzed. I feel they did-not understand in the first place what they were expected to do in this question, despite my trying to explain them orally as well, to the best of my abilities.

Analysis based on the above observations of the two groups of students

- Both these groups had been transacted the Sangati curriculum

previously, but only one group could recall something meaningful from what they had learnt. This may be an indicator of the manner in which these sessions were done by them, i.e., the pedagogical differences, how seriously/non-seriously were these sessions taken by the school management and teachers etc. It is difficult to say if the individual differences in children had a role to play in this, because the differences were visible in the whole groups and not individual students. This may be a pointer to the role of pedagogy in how successfully the objectives of a curriculum might be met, although more research is required before arriving at any such conclusion.

- The students of one of the groups could recall quite well on being provided with visual clues, and related examples of various lessons they had done, activities performed, worksheets made etc. They could also, in many cases convey what they learnt from a particular session. One story which was very popular among them was that of Helen Keller. They said that they learnt that despite all odds, it was possible to succeed. They also recalled an activity wherein they had hit some objects and were later asked to imagine that these objects were live human beings and they had hit them. They said that they hadn't felt good after realizing that they had hit human beings. They said that they had felt that it was not good to fight and wars and fights should not be there. Such examples show that the students (at least some of them) have been able to grasp and understand the discussions that have been held with them. It has also helped them in developing their thought processes, look at things from various angles and critically reflect on things.
- The students (2nd group) were really appreciative of the way the Sangati sessions were carried out. They were explained through stories, various activities were done, they were required to write, draw etc. in the worksheets given to them and so on and so forth.
- A certain depth of thought is visible in the children's responses to the scenarios. They were trying to look at situations from all perspectives rather than forming a lopsided view of things.

- One area where they seemed out of depth was in terms of Independence Day celebrations. Again, I think this has to do with the way in which these celebrations have been standardized and attached to symbolism across the nation that no-one is able to break the shackles of this symbolism.
- Their replies to the first three questions of the questionnaire are also pretty interesting. Majority of them related the teaching of Civics to 'citizenship education'. In the previous group, where Sangati was not transacted, a majority related it to being able to understand one's rights and duties. Very few related it to being able to understand the issues prevailing in society and being able to critically reflect on them. The Civics curriculum taught to them as part of Maharashtra State Board syllabus actually does not leave much scope for the students to go much beyond being a 'good citizen' or talking tersely about fundamental rights and duties and a legal and formal narration of the Constitution. Majority of them relate a good citizen to a 'docile' citizen, or someone who loves his/her nation enough to be able to even die for it.
- As compared to the students who have not studied Sangati at all, there is a visible difference in their responses to what they thought patriotism meant to them. Although the maximum number gave the reply relating patriotism to symbolism, however, a considerable and noticeable percentage (8/21) as compared to the ones who haven't studied Sangati (8/42), also related patriotism to being responsible human beings. Sangati has a chapter specifically dedicated to 'patriotism' and it seems it has had some impact on these students.
- The impact that the transaction of Sangati curriculum is having on children, in addition to the State Board curriculum, is visible on a comparison of the two groups. However, there are a few caveats to this statement. The Sangati curriculum in itself has much potential and seems to be quite promising and path-breaking. However, the extent of the impact on the students does not seem to be that revolutionary, but a bit modest in that respect. There might be various reasons for this. Firstly, this

curriculum is transacted only once a week. Secondly, it is an addition to the regular curriculum and hence the seriousness of the teachers in transacting the same is doubtful. Thirdly, it is transacted through the regular teachers, who are as it is quite overburdened with finishing the regular curriculum as also other ad-hoc and administrative tasks assigned to them. Due to this, they do-not normally get time to read through the manuals and often transact the chapters without much prior preparation. Fourthly, many issues are discussed openly in the curriculum and are meant to be discussed that way with students. However, many a times teachers do-not do so and gloss over many parts, or dilute its import., for example, in a chapter that was discussing caste hierarchies in previous times, the impression given to children was that this happened in the past but in today's times everyone is equal and such issues of caste discrimination, untouchability etc. do not exist. While this may be theoretically and legally true, however the reality is quite different, which the teachers do-not want to discuss with the students. When such things happen, the entire purpose of the curriculum sometimes stands defeated. However, it would be relevant to mention here that the curriculum itself makes sufficient attempts to discuss the issue in its entirety, for instance, in Sangati Kit 4, there are sessions on caste which talk about caste in our daily lives today. Similarly, in Kit 5, in a session on Urbanization, there is a reflection on caste in our daily lives. Also, my analysis on pedagogy is solely based on the observations that I made. Fifthly, the differences in pedagogical style also effects the actual impact it is going to have on the children. Sixthly, as time passes, the effects of what they have learnt two or three years back tend to wear off slowly. The last two points will be clearer after going through the subsequent sections of this report.

Observations based on discussions with students on the scenarios listed above – Class VI students where Sangati curriculum is presently being transacted

The purpose of including these observations and analysis here is to try and understand the differences between students who have been transacted the curriculum a couple of years back and those who are

presently being transacted the curriculum. This group of students is a group of 42 students studying in Standard VI of an Urdu medium BMC school. They are currently doing Kit III of Sangati curriculum. The chapter on patriotism has not yet been transacted with them. I did not discuss all the scenarios with them but a subset of the abovementioned scenarios. The questionnaire was administered to them. The purpose of including this set of observations here is to only understand what impact the transaction of Sangati curriculum is having on the students during the years it is being transacted. This group of students is in VI standard and their responses should be analyzed keeping in mind their age group.

Scenario 1: A majority felt that the rule of law is equal for all and no discrimination should be done with anyone.

Scenario 2: Similar as above.

Scenario 3: I could not discuss this scenario with them for a particular reason. In the previous scenario, when I was discussing with them about Independence Day, what it meant to them, what patriotism meant to them etc., as the students were answering, their teacher mediated and started guiding their responses. She started speaking about why Independence Day should be important to them. When I asked them if and why it was important to love one's nation, the teacher mediated and started guiding them that they all should love their nation because they are its citizens. They should stand for the national anthem and respect the national flag. They should love their nation because people of all religions lived in harmony here, and they got to know about various religions, their religious festivities etc. I had not expected the teacher to mediate in this manner. I got a feeling that she was feeling some sort of a compulsion to prove that the students love their nation like everyone else, because being an Urdu medium school, most of the students were Muslims. She dwelt on the harmonious existence of all religions, respect for national symbols etc. as if trying to prove the patriotism of the students. These are purely my observations and interpretations and should not be taken as conclusive of anything. However, after this, I felt a little uncomfortable discussing any scenario related to India and Pakistan etc., so I omitted these discussions.

Scenario 4: Majority felt that army officers could serve the nation best, as they could lay down their lives for the nation.

Scenarios 5 and 6: Not discussed

Observations based on the questionnaire

Questions	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Why do you think Civics is taught in schools?	7	3	5	24	
Who do you think is a good citizen?	13	3	11	11	
What do you think being patriotic means?	23	11	5	1	

Rating on patriotic index: A majority of them (25) felt that army officers were the most patriotic.

No specific analysis could be done based on the last question as again, students could not really understand what was expected of them in response to this question.

Analysis based on the above observations

- The purpose here was not so much to elicit their views on patriotism. This was because they had still not been transacted the chapter on patriotism in the Sangati curriculum. The purpose was mainly to see if the transaction of this curriculum in addition to their regular Civics/Social Science curriculum was benefitting them in any manner.
- To this extent, there is a considerable difference that can be noticed in the responses of these students to the question of why they thought Civics was being taught to them. Whereas, both the Sangati and non-Sangati groups above did-not relate it much to the issues prevailing in the society, a majority of the students in this group did so. While the difference with the non-Sangati group can be explained in terms of their complete non-exposure to the Sangati curriculum, the difference with the students who have been taught Sangati curriculum earlier may be because these students are being exposed to the Sangati curriculum in the present, and thus the inputs that they are getting are fresh in their

minds. Along with studying the standard social studies subject, they are also experiencing the Sangati classes and hence can relate to them, can recall what and why they are learning. The effect on the students who have already gone through the curriculum earlier seems to have worn down a bit.

- Their understanding of patriotism is still much closer to 'symbolism'. This may be due to various reasons. Firstly, they are younger and might not be able to think as far as an VIIIth or IXth standard student. Secondly, the chapter on patriotism which in the Sangati curriculum, which advances an alternative perspective has not yet been transacted with them. Thirdly, whatever inputs they are currently getting in terms of how the Independence Day celebrations are held in schools, the defensive attitude taken by their teachers etc., all of such inputs are only helping to solidify their perspective of equating patriotism with symbolism.
- Their general excitement towards Sangati classes is clearly visible. They really wait for the Sangati class once a week. They love listening to stories, performing activities and doing their worksheets. They all love the process of engagement that the Sangati classes give them an opportunity of.
- As compared to the students with whom the Sangati classes had already been transacted previously, these students remembered much more, could narrate various things that they had learnt, what all they enjoyed about these classes etc.

FIELD STUDY – PART II

Theoretical framework

This part of the field study is aimed at understanding the role of the teacher in the transaction of a curriculum. Every curriculum is prepared with certain objectives in mind. Its makers envisage certain objectives which they expect their curriculum to meet. In order to meet those objectives they have certain pedagogical style in their minds, certain tools and resources that should be used in order for those objectives to be met, certain basic principles that should be understood so that the vision of the curriculum makers is turned into reality. Teachers are the intermediaries through which this vision can be realized. But they are much more than mere implementers of someone else's vision. They are active thinking individuals who are experienced and aware of the practicalities in the transaction of a curriculum. They can offer valuable insights to the development of a curriculum because of the rich experience they possess in engaging with the students. They are the immediate interface who are directly in touch with the students. Any curriculum is hugely dependent on the teachers if it is to meet its objectives satisfactorily. At the same time, it is imperative that the teachers are provided with adequate pre-service and in-service training so that they can hone their skills and utilize their abilities to their best. They also need to be unburdened of all the extra workload that is often put on them, like various administrative responsibilities, various ad-hoc instructions that are given from time to time etc. In brief, teachers need to be viewed as 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 2004).

Field study

The below mentioned analysis is based on the observations of four Sangati sessions transacted by four different teachers. Sangati sessions are held once a week, and also due to constraints on matching those days with the time I had for my field work, I could not observe the same class multiple times. However, my purpose here is to not present a conclusive analysis but an indicative one, based on which further research could be done to arrive at some conclusion. The observations presented below should be seen within the above limitations. Following the above method of observations also gave me an opportunity to observe the pedagogical style of multiple teachers and helped me get a broader perspective on

how these sessions are conducted by teachers generally. In addition to the Sangati sessions, I also observed some regular classes being transacted just to see the difference in pedagogical style of the teachers in transacting Sangati sessions and other regular classes.

Observation I

The first of these observations was in Class VI of an English medium BMC school. The chapter being transacted was Chapter 4 of Kit III. The name of the chapter was “Organizing Society”. The main ideas envisaged to be transacted as per the curriculum, and mentioned in the teacher’s manual were as follows (The Avehi Abacus Team, 2002):

- Life in settled societies was more complex than the earlier nomadic lifestyle. Since many people were living together, there was a need to have some rules and maintain law and order in society
- To coordinate the activities of different people, most of these societies had a king or a group of people who governed them
- All over the world societies were divided into groups of people enjoying unequal power and privileges

The following resources have been listed as essential in order to conduct the sessions for this chapter (The Avehi Abacus Team, 2002):

- Map of the world
- Flipchart: All hail the king!
- Copies of Worksheet (Learning is Fun) Copies of Factsheet 2
- Calendar of the past

Observation Table

S.No.	Area of observation	Yes/No
1	Has the teacher read the teacher’s manual before transacting the session?	No
2	Has the teacher read the flipchart prior to (a day prior or earlier) transacting the session?	No
3	Has the teacher internalized the main ideas to be communicated through the transaction of this chapter?	To a certain extent

4	Is the teacher using all the resources mentioned above while transacting the chapter?	No
5	Is the teacher stopping intermittently to ask questions and solicit student's opinions?	Yes
6	Is the teachers using relevant examples and trying to relate what she is teaching to what the students might already know?	To a certain extent
7	Is the teacher carrying out the discussions without any inhibitions and biases and discussing all aspects so that the children are able to understand what is being discussed holistically and put things in the right perspective?	To a certain extent
8	Are the students participating actively in discussions?	Yes
9	Is the teacher encouraging such discussions or indulging in only symbolic question-answers?	Yes
10	Is the teacher interested in looking at the worksheets of students to gauge their understanding and progress?	Did-not seem to be

Observation II

The second of these observations was in Class VI of a Hindi medium BMC school. The chapter being transacted was Chapter 3 of Kit III. The name of the chapter was "Settling Down". The main ideas envisaged to be transacted as per the curriculum, and mentioned in the teacher's manual were as follows (The Avehi Abacus Team, Settling Down, 2002):

- Learning to grow food and to tame animals changed human life forever.
- From being nomads, humans began to cultivate the land and live in settled communities
- Food security led to division of labour and the rise of new occupations
- The use of metal and the onset of the Bronze Age led to the growth of huge cities
- As early as 3000 years ago, these cities flourished in different parts of the world

The following resources have been listed as essential in order to conduct the sessions for this chapter (The Avehi Abacus Team, Settling Down,

2002):

- Flipchart: Agriculture changes human life
- Copies of Worksheet
- Learning is Fun 2 and 3
- Calendar of the Past
- Copies of Factsheet 1

Observation Table

S.No.	Area of observation	Yes/No
1	Has the teacher read the teacher's manual before transacting the session?	No
2	Has the teacher read the flipchart prior to (a day prior or earlier) transacting the session?	No, but he teacher had taught this chapter in the previous years also
3	Has the teacher internalized the main ideas to be communicated through the transaction of this chapter?	Yes
4	Is the teacher using all the resources mentioned above while transacting the chapter?	No
5	Is the teacher stopping intermittently to ask questions and solicit student's opinions?	Yes
6	Is the teachers using relevant examples and trying to relate what she is teaching to what the students might already know?	To a certain extent
7	Is the teacher carrying out the discussions without any inhibitions and biases and discussing all aspects so that the children are able to understand what is being discussed holistically and put things in the right perspective?	Yes, mostly
8	Are the students participating actively in discussions?	Yes
9	Is the teacher encouraging such discussions or indulging in only symbolic question-answers?	Yes
10	Is the teacher interested in looking at the	Did-not seem

	worksheets of students to gauge their understanding and progress?	to be
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Observation III

The third of these observations was in Class VI of an Urdu medium BMC school. The chapter being transacted was Chapter 5 of Kit III. The name of the chapter was “Trade and Conquest”. The main ideas envisaged to be transacted as per the curriculum, and mentioned in the teacher’s manual were as follows (The Avehi Abacus Team, Trade and Conquest, 2002):

- Though most ancient societies developed in isolation, they also interacted with and influenced each other. One way in which they interacted was through conquest. When kings conquered foreign territories, different cultures came together and learnt from each other
- Another way was through trade. People from different areas of the world learnt many new things when they travelled around the world for trade. Along with goods, ideas were also exchanged and many new discoveries and inventions travelled from place to place with the traders

The following resources have been listed as essential in order to conduct the sessions for this chapter (The Avehi Abacus Team, Trade and Conquest, 2002):

- Map of the world
- Flipchart: The world opens up
- Copies of the worksheet (Learning is Fun) 5
- Calendar of the past
- Copies of stories known and unknown 1

Observation Table

S.No.	Area of observation	Yes/No
1	Has the teacher read the teacher’s manual before transacting the session?	No
2	Has the teacher read the flipchart prior to (a day prior	No

	or earlier) transacting the session?	
3	Has the teacher internalized the main ideas to be communicated through the transaction of this chapter?	No
4	Is the teacher using all the resources mentioned above while transacting the chapter?	No
5	Is the teacher stopping intermittently to ask questions and solicit student's opinions?	No
6	Is the teachers using relevant examples and trying to relate what she is teaching to what the students might already know?	No
7	Is the teacher carrying out the discussions without any inhibitions and biases and discussing all aspects so that the children are able to understand what is being discussed holistically and put things in the right perspective?	No
8	Are the students participating actively in discussions?	No
9	Is the teacher encouraging such discussions or indulging in only symbolic question answers?	No
10	Is the teacher interested in looking at the worksheets of students to gauge their understanding and progress?	No

Observation IV

The fourth of these observations was in Class VI of an English medium BMC school. The chapter being transacted was the same as above.

Observation Table

S.No.	Area of observation	Yes/No
1	Has the teacher read the teacher's manual before transacting the session?	No
2	Has the teacher read the flipchart prior to (a day prior or earlier) transacting the session?	No
3	Has the teacher internalized the main ideas to be communicated through the transaction of this chapter?	To a certain extent
4	Is the teacher using all the resources mentioned above while transacting the chapter?	No
5	Is the teacher stopping intermittently to ask questions and solicit student's opinions?	To a certain extent
6	Is the teachers using relevant examples and trying to	To a certain

	relate what she is teaching to what the students might already know?	extent
7	Is the teacher carrying out the discussions without any inhibitions and biases and discussing all aspects so that the children are able to understand what is being discussed holistically and put things in the right perspective?	To a certain extent
8	Are the students participating actively in discussions?	Somewhat
9	Is the teacher encouraging such discussions or indulging in only symbolic question-answers?	To a certain extent
10	Is the teacher interested in looking at the worksheets of students to gauge their understanding and progress?	Did not seem to

Analysis based on above observations

- The Sangati curriculum is transacted by the regular teachers of the BMC schools with sessions held once per week. The teachers are hard pressed to complete the syllabus for the regular subjects, conduct various kinds of tests at regular intervals and perform various other administrative and ad-hoc responsibilities assigned to them. Hence, majority of them do-not go through the Teacher’s manual prepared for every Sangati Kit. The manuals are pretty comprehensive and have detailed guidance for the teacher to help them conduct the sessions meaningfully so that maximum benefit can be drawn out of them. In the absence of a reading of these manuals, teachers are not able to fully grasp the essence of the chapter, its main objectives and how the sessions should be conducted. The impact on the children is thus not as significant as it could be.
- There is no separate and specific training or familiarization that the teachers get with the Sangati curriculum before they can impart it. It thus very often boils down to the teacher’s understanding, interpretation and interest in imparting the curriculum. The need for specific training of teachers on this curriculum is more so felt because they are otherwise exposed to the syllabus/textbooks similar to the current ones used by Maharashtra State Board, and are part of the larger dominant

discourse on issues. Sangati is probably an exception that challenges this discourse. Teachers are not thus prepared sufficiently to deal with these issues on their own without reading the manuals – their pre-formed ideas dominate classroom discourse and pedagogy. Aveshi Abacus does recognize these limitations and has thus done work on pre-service teacher education in D.Ted colleges, through their “Manthan” curriculum.

- Experience of the teacher also plays a major role in determining how he/she transacts the chapter, e.g., the teacher in the Observation II above is very experienced in transacting the Sangati curriculum, whereas the teacher in Observation III as a first-timer, which is clearly reflected in the way they transact the sessions.
- The teacher’s manual requires the teachers to go through the flip-charts and other material at least a day in advance of the session, so that the teachers understand the chapter and its ideas fully and are able to transact it better. However, in actual practice this seldom happens and mostly the teachers read the flip-chart just prior to transacting it and hence are not able to grasp the ideas fully and in return are not able to transmit them to the fullest.
- Many a times, the core idea is altogether missed, e.g, in Observation 3, where the chapter Trade and Conquest was being transacted, the crux of the chapter was to explain to the students that though when we talk about ancient times, mostly kings and wars and conquests are talked about, however, war and conquests also gave a chance to trade to flourish. Various civilizations interacted with each other which led to development of ideas, learning, growth and diversification of arts, crafts etc. and intermingling of people. This is explained to them through the story of King Alexander. However, the teacher while transacting this lesson only focused on who King Alexander was, how and what conquests he did etc. The central idea of the chapter and its essence was completely missed and not discussed at all.
- Apart from the flip chart, which is to be used for every chapter, many other resources are mentioned which need to be used, e.g.,

maps etc. However, I could not find these resources being used at all, thereby defeating the whole purpose. Some teachers were not even using the flipcharts and were only using it to read out to the students.

- Many issues touched upon in the curriculum are extremely important and need to be transacted with complete honesty and sincerity in order to provide the full import and understanding to students. However, many a times this does not happen, e.g., in Observation I, there is a discussion on the discrimination based on class, caste and gender that happened earlier and its comparison and contrast with the situation now. The teacher, though gives a clear view to the students about these discriminations in the earlier times, however she does not hold any further discussions or solicits the views of children on whether they think such discrimination exists now or not. She simply ends the discussion in a one liner that caste discrimination and untouchability do not exist nowadays. She does not even talk about class or gender discrimination. If such issues will not be discussed fully, then the entire purpose of including them in the curriculum will stand defeated. The Sangati representative also mentioned that though exceptions exist, many teachers generally shy away from discussing issues like class, gender discrimination etc. and prefer to provide a goody-goody picture to students.
- The activities mentioned in the chapters are many a times conducted by the Sangati representative and the completion of the worksheets etc. is also mostly supervised by the Sangati representative. This indicates that the teachers are mostly not very interested in gauging the progress of the students based on the Sangati curriculum. It is taught as a duty they have to fulfil but that sense of ownership has somewhere not developed. These interpretations are of course based on my observations and there are bound to be exceptions.
- The children seem to thoroughly enjoy the Sangati classes and wait for it eagerly. They are very excited to complete their worksheets and many a times complete it in advance. They also participate enthusiastically in discussions, activities etc. However,

the degree of their participation in class also varies from class to class and teacher to teacher. Some teachers try to make the class extremely participative and the students respond equally, whereas some teachers resort to simple lecturing and symbolic questions, which then does not interest the students also.

- The crux and the main ideas of the chapter, how they should be imparted, what resources should be used etc. are detailed in the manual. However, teachers seldom go through the manual. In such a scenario, it would be beneficial if another tool, like a placard or a chart giving the central idea of the chapter, why it is being imparted, and the major learnings etc., is included with each chapter. This can be given to every teacher for each chapter. It can be shown to the students at the beginning and end of the transaction of the chapter, so that the crux and the objectives are not lost to them. They can even make a note of these in their worksheets for future retention.
- The change of thought processes, removal of biases etc. is a gradual and continuous process. A constant dialogue process needs to be maintained with the relevant authorities to ensure that Sangati curriculum is given due importance and teachers are duly trained to be able to grasp the full import of the curriculum and transact it further.
- A major role in what is given importance is of the political atmosphere of the day. The value being placed on symbolic nationalism and patriotism in the current times is clearly visible and having its impact on the schools and the children and teachers. An example is the way in which all the schools were required to conduct programs and competitions on Independence Day and provide proofs to the administration. This kind of keen interest would be required in the Sangati curriculum by the relevant authorities, if its full and honest transmission has to happen and its complete benefit has to be reaped by the students .

REFLECTIONS/TAKEAWAYS

1. Curricular frameworks often talk about a plethora of things, but what gets into the curriculum depends a lot on the political thinking of the day
2. Further, textbooks might not always fulfil the curricular objectives
3. The role of teachers in fulfilling the vision outlined in a curriculum cannot be overstated. In the absence of this interface being adequately equipped, for whatever reasons, the actual impact of any curriculum, howsoever good, may be modest and muted
4. The political atmosphere of the day has a major role in steering and guiding the course of the learning that takes place in schools
5. Hidden curriculum has a considerable role to play in terms of the takeaways for the learners, due to its continuous interplay with the stated curriculum, which may on numerous occasions be contradictory to each other
6. To be able to realize its vision, a curriculum has to navigate the dominant political, social and cultural thinking, which has the potential of considerably slowing down the realization of the vision. However, having said that, avoiding bypassing these forces and choosing to navigate through them may be the more favourable and sustainable option in the long run, for the entire system as a whole

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE FIELD STUDY

1. The research portion of this study was conducted over a discontinuous period of 10-12 days across 2-3 months. It is, thus, at best only an indicative study and in no way a conclusive one.
2. I have attempted any field study only for the first time and the process of observations making and interpreting based on the same may not be fool-proof.
3. My observations have been limited by my own paucity of time and also the unstructured way in which the BMC schools function. At times, the classes would get cancelled and when they would be available, I would not have time.

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