

“What's Wrong with Social Studies Education?”

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Abstract

The study of social sciences has always been an essential part of a well-rounded education, and few other subjects are as directly related to the goals of formal schooling. Unfortunately, the topic has failed to pique the interest of educators, school administrators, students, and other key players. As a result, students often rank Social Sciences among their least preferred subjects in the classroom. It's not only that teaching and understanding this topic is difficult; people's apathy about it is a major contributing factor to the issue. The purpose of this research was to examine the academic and professional backgrounds of Social Sciences instructors at schools in Kohima town, Nagaland, in order to better understand the challenges they face while instructing their students.

Introduction

Because to the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and its subsequent National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework (1988), the study of social sciences has always been required of all students in Indian schools (NCERT). Before this, students in Upper Primary studied History, Geography, and Civics independently before combining their studies in Secondary with Economics/Commercial Geography. However, beginning with the Upper Primary grade level in 1988, the components have been combined into the single subject of Social Sciences. 'Social sciences is possibly the sole curricular field which may prove to be the most successful vehicle for imparting instruction in the framework of all the basic components mentioned in the NPE-86,' the National Curriculum Framework, 1988, reaffirmed.

The significance of the Social Sciences in "facilitating the learners to develop into well educated and responsible citizens, who might contribute meaningfully to society" was reaffirmed in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF), 2000. 'learn how to learn,' and 'learn to live together,' as well as 'participate and contribute to the process of nation-building,' is a curriculum that helps construct an emotionally intelligent learning society. The NCF-2005 recognises the centrality of the social sciences by noting that they bear the special burden of instilling a solid set of human values in students. As a result, educators in this field should work to foster in their charges the critical moral and mental energy, perspective, and knowledge necessary to create a "just and peaceful society."

As a school topic, Social Sciences derive their material from a wide variety of fields, including History, Geography, Political Science, Economics, and Sociology, as well as an ever-expanding array of new global challenges and problems. Learning about this topic is important because it helps students develop the broad breadth of knowledge and the proactive, self-aware mindsets that are hallmarks of educated, productive, and responsible citizens. The topic is vital for educating students for the 21st century since it fosters not just knowledgeable citizens but also the analytical and creative thinking skills necessary to thrive in the new era. Because of the breadth and depth of the material covered and the variety of learning outcomes that must be met, teaching Social Sciences is a demanding and intricate endeavour that calls for instructors with strong pedagogical and professional chops. 'With the upgradation of courses and topics, Secondary Education, especially in Science, Mathematics, and Social Sciences, demand expert teaching personnel,' the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE, 2005) notes accurately. There are separate topic areas and procedures within the Social Sciences that warrant the maintenance of borders; yet, in order to teach the subject effectively at the K-12 level, it is necessary to open up the barriers between the disciplines and use integrative approaches. However, there are a number of issues that plague classroom instruction of social studies. The first difficulty is from the breadth of the topic, which depends on a wide range of distinct academic fields but are yet interconnected. Along similar lines, there has been a push for taking a "global view" to comprehending a wide range of topics and subjects. Teachers may be able to demonstrate subject-matter expertise in one or two areas, but it's unlikely that they'll be able to demonstrate expertise in all areas at once, much alone the capacity to combine knowledge from other fields. Teaching the Social Sciences effectively requires familiarity with more than one discipline.

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Professional competency in transacting the topic, utilising suitable and relevant techniques, and methods of teaching would be as much of a difficulty as academic competence in managing the component disciplines for instructors of the social sciences.

According to the NCF-2005, social science was frequently devalued in favour of more practical disciplines like the natural sciences because of this perception. People also seem to think that the Social Sciences are textbook-focused and only deliver data. According to "poor self-esteem drives the classroom-transaction process, with both instructors and students feeling disinterested in learning the information," as stated in the NCERT's 2006 Focus Paper on the Teaching of Social Sciences. This may help explain why Social Sciences ranked so low on students' lists of preferred school courses in a recent research (Mehta et al). (2007).

Nagaland State Board of Education Social Science

Since 1988, the Nagaland Board of School Education has included Social Sciences (or Social Studies, as it was formerly known) as part of the Core Curriculum for students in grades 6 through 10. Prior to that time, History, Geography, and Public Administration were taught as individual subjects in the Upper Primary (grades 6 through 8) and Secondary (grades 9 through 10) levels. Exams in this topic were divided into two parts, each worth 100 points: Social Studies-I (History and Civics) and Social Studies-II (Geography, Economics, and the Study of Nagaland). Using the same terminology as the NCF-2000, the total possible score for this course is 100. History, geography, and the study of Nagaland make up the Social Sciences curriculum at the Upper Primary level, while history, geography, political science, and economics are taught at the Secondary level.

In light of the history of the subject and the difficulties it presents in the classroom, this research aims to identify the educational and professional backgrounds of Social Science instructors in Kohima, Nagaland's secondary schools.

Research aims

The following research aims have guided its design and execution:

- i) To learn more about the graduate and postgraduate specializations of those who teach in the social sciences.
- ii) To learn more about the educational and work experiences of those who teach social science.
- iii) To learn how people evaluate Social Sciences as a curriculum option.

Methodology

In this study, researchers used the descriptive survey approach. The questionnaire the researcher created was used by instructors of social sciences in Kohima, the state capital of Nagaland, at both the upper primary and secondary levels. The schools included in the research were chosen using a Stratified Random Sampling technique. Four (4) of the five (5) Government Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools and seventeen (17) of the thirty-five (35) High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools under Private Management in Kohima town were included in the survey sample. A total of 57 Social Science educators from across 21 schools participated in the analysis.

Questionnaire responses were analysed by factor, with the results tabulated. The ratings were calculated using elementary arithmetic and shown as percentages.

Results of the study

The results of the research found that:

- a) Sixty percent of the total responders were women whereas just forty percent were men | There were 21% of those who said they were managed by the government and 79% who said they were managed by private companies.
- b) The majority of social science faculty (54%) also had bachelor's degrees, with 43% holding master's or doctoral

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- degrees. Only 3% of educators have advanced degrees in fields unrelated to the social sciences.
- c) The vast majority of professors have at least a second-division GPA during their academic careers. 51% of the Graduates had Second division degrees, 33% held Third division degrees, and just 1% held First division degrees. Sixty percent of postgraduates and thirty-four percent of undergraduates did not get First Division honours.
 - d) Of the total responders, only 15 (26% of the total) held the necessary Professional qualification (B.Ed.).
 - e) Comparatively, just 22% of instructors at private schools were found to have the necessary credentials, whereas 42% of those working in public schools had.
 - f) Only 46% of educators were found to be solely responsible for the Social Sciences, whereas 30% were also English instructors.
 - g) It was discovered that while 81% and 97% of all Social Science teachers had completed post-secondary coursework in History and Political Science, respectively, only 48% and 14% of all Social Science teachers had completed coursework in Economics and Geography, respectively, indicating low competences in teaching the subjects. The majority of Geography instructors (68%) only had a Matriculation-level education in the field. vii) Only 47% of subjects were assigned based on specialisation and topic combination at the graduate level. Teachers were found to have been assigned to teach the history and political science components of the social sciences based on the subjects they had studied in college, while teachers of economics and geography may have been assigned to teach these areas based on interest, the stream in which they graduated, or the equal distribution of workload.
 - h) The instructors' views on how simple or challenging it is to teach this material looked to be at odds with one another (see viii). Sixty percent of respondents thought it was challenging and difficult to teach social sciences, while sixty percent felt it was simple.
 - i) If given the option, 35% of respondents would want to teach upper-level courses in the social sciences. 23% said they'd rather teach what they know best, while 17% said they'd rather educate younger students. This suggests that many educators are attempting to instruct on this topic without having a firm grasp of the subfields within it.
 - j) Seventy-five percent of teachers said that the Social Sciences were undervalued by the school administration.
 - k) According to surveys of professors, 51% believe that students don't understand the relevance of Social Sciences, while 33% believe that students are interested in the topic but struggle with it.
 - l) It was discovered that 55% of instructors were allocated to teach Social Sciences because they had a degree in the Arts, 10% because they had a degree in Commerce, and 35% because of the courses they had taken in college.

Analysis and Concluding Remarks

The survey found that almost half of all Social Science professors had master's degrees, with the majority holding no better than a second-class standing in their fields. More than 80% of instructors had studied History and Political Science to the graduation level, which would have given them the requisite confidence in teaching the relevant components of the Social Sciences topic. It would be difficult for instructors to cover these topics if just 46% of the population had completed a bachelor's degree in Economics and only 14% had done the same in Geography. There is cause for worry about the quality of Geography education in schools where 68 percent of instructors have only completed up to the tenth grade.

With just 26% of instructors holding a Bachelor of Education, it's unlikely that they have the pedagogical skills to teach the topic, much alone use the advised Integrated method, which provides a comprehensive view on comprehending social issues. It's possible that most Social Science educators have a hard time teaching the field because they lack both the subject-matter expertise and pedagogical expertise needed to effectively instruct students in the field. This is particularly true in the subfields of economics and geography. It's understandable that professors of the social sciences would struggle to instil in their students a deep appreciation for the field and a love for studying about it, given their likely limited academic and professional backgrounds. The situation is exacerbated by the apathy of school administration, which routinely hires anybody with a degree in the Arts to teach the subject.

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Therefore, it may be suggested that, if the teaching of Social Sciences is to effectively achieve the goals envisioned, the recruitment of teachers should include subject specialists in all the core disciplines that constitute the content of the subject at the Secondary level, having studied the disciplines at least up to the degree level, and also ensure that only professionally qualified teachers, with sound pedagogical knowledge in Social Sciences are employed. While it may be challenging for schools to hire enough teachers with the appropriate subject-matter expertise, they can still ensure that their teachers have at least a foundational understanding of the subject matter by organising regular content enrichment programmes in all the component disciplines of the school's Social Sciences curriculum.

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