

**A**nalysis of social studies papers across three Boards- what are we currently testing in social science? Is this responsible for the deplorable state of affairs?

To start the argument, let's look at the three Boards Question Papers on social studies of the academic session 2008- 2009, closely. The analysis of the CBSE, ICSE and State Board (Karnataka) papers is based on different cognitive levels like Knowledge, Understanding, Application, and Skill.

- Q2. Which are the two sources of fresh water in India?
- Q3. Name the two main ferrous minerals.
- Q4. Where is the largest solar plant located in India? (CBSE)

- Both State Board and CBSE papers indicate certain points quite clearly:
- The geography portion carries only 30 marks.
- More than 95%-96% of the paper (geography) is based on pure recall of information, and only 4 % of it is skill-based.

Q.No.45 Why are National Parks created?

- A. to protect forests B. to protect birds C. to protect wild life D. to protect tigers.  
(Karnataka Board)

- Even those questions which 'appear' to be beyond recall have been possibly taken from the practice questions at the end of each chapter in the textbook. Hence they demand nothing beyond reproducing learnt facts. This particular question is a wrong one as the distracters used in this multiple choice question are all correct.
- The paper gives no opportunity to students for answering 'thinking questions'. Almost everything in the paper can be answered through rote-learning.
- Both the Boards have textbooks.

**The ICSE Question Paper is different from other two Boards on various aspects**



Q 7. a) Which is the largest producer of mineral oil? Name any 2 oil-refineries of India. b) Name any 2 off-shore oil fields of India. c). i. Name the largest and oldest coal field of India. ii. Name any two raw materials derived from coal. d. Name the different types of iron ore found in India. Which is the best quality iron ore? (ICSE)

### Limitations of the Board Papers

All the three Board question papers have one thing in common - in no way can these assessment tools bring out the essence of the subject, its relationship with life, its necessity in life.

None of the questions address any geographical concepts; for example:

#### A. Karnataka State Board Paper

Q. No.33. Basket making is a product of cottage industry whereas making of electrical fan is a product of

- a) Small scale industry b). Medium scale industry  
c) Large scale industry d). Specialized industry

Q. 44. Why are cottage and small scale industries suitable to Indian condition?

- a) Provide employment b) Require less capital  
c) Depend on indigenous resources  
d) Require less power supply

Q. 46. Which organization is providing loans to cottage and small scale industries?

- a) State Finance Corporation  
b) Industrial Development Bank of India  
c) Nationalized Bank  
d) State Bank of India.

All the three questions ask only for some information. Students can get the answers right by guess work and luck

also. So what is the objective of asking this question? What is being tested? Definitely not the concept of 'industry'.

### B. CBSE Paper

Q. No.2. Which are the two resources of fresh water in India?

Q. No.4. Where is the largest solar plant located in India?

Both the questions never referred to the concepts like 'fresh water and salt water' or 'solar energy'.

Instead only names have been asked.

Q. No.16. Explain any three factors that affect the location of industries in a region.

Instead the question could have been as follows: Study the given map of India showing three industrial regions of India namely, Mumbai, Jamshedpur, and Vishakhapatnam. Each region has a host of industries; in Mumbai it is cotton textiles, Iron & Steel industry in Jamshedpur and Ship-building industry in Vishakhapatnam. Why do you think the various industries cannot be setup anywhere and everywhere? While answering this question the student would definitely have had the opportunity to link the industry with the location. The language of the question paper is dry, without any context, to some extent didactic and not student-friendly.

Let's examine some more examples – they validate my views.

### E.g. A. Karnataka State Board Paper

Q. No.69. What are subsistence farming, commercial farming and mixed farming?

Q. No.73. Why is India backward in agriculture?

This question is lifted from the "Textbook", Pg, 230, Q. No. IV, 2

### B. CBSE

Q. No. 21. Look at the picture carefully and answer the questions that follow: 21.1) Name the crop shown in the picture.

21.2) Write climatic conditions required for cultivation of this crop.

21.3) Name two major producing states of this crop.

The same question could have been asked differently.

Q. i. Name this plant which you may have seen in the market during festival or at the juice center.

ii. What kind of climate do you think this crop would require for its growth?

iii. It is found in plenty in Karnataka, can you suggest the names of any other two states of India where it is grown?

- Information like names is asked repeatedly, there is no variety. This highlights that geography is more like 'General Knowledge' rather than a branch of science that involves various skills like observation, classification, calculation, measurement, experimentation etc.
- Questions assessing skills of creativity, application, and analysis, critical thinking are conspicuously absent in the paper.
- The information asked is very direct, and has no scope for the student to be innovative in her answers.

### What is our learning from the above analysis?

The paper supports a style of pedagogy which is limited to direct transmitting of information - facts and figures mostly.

Such a paper can put a student off, as she has nothing to answer in case she is not aware of the names/information asked.

There is no scope for students, to think and come out with possible answers. The overall impression the assessment tools exhibit is that the papers are aimed at how best a child can score pass marks.

This prodding inquisition, 'is this (the assessment tool) responsible for the deplorable state of affairs?' suggests a number of issues that involve school and its stake holders, like:

1. There is a total absence of the knowledge and understanding of NCF amongst all stake holders – this includes the vision of the school, pedagogy used by teachers and parents
2. The attitude and interest of the school/community/parents/ students, towards the subject is discouraging.

The subject (geography), remains as a paper to be learned for the examination only, where students answer the paper only through memorization and regurgitation; it is therefore a process in which no skill is developed, no knowledge that makes a person wiser, no creativity of the brain aroused, no

horizon of the mind expanded, no joyful learning indeed.

Whether the question paper is the only reason for this state of affairs or is it the whole get-up of the textbook, including, print, picture and content, pedagogy, attitude projected by the school, teachers, Boards, the parents and community, to be blamed – this remains a pertinent question.

### What is the Vision of NCF?

“ ....recognizes the primacy of children’s experiences, their voices and their active involvement in the process of learning.

Learning experiences at school should pave the way for construction of knowledge and fostering creativity and become a source of joy, not stress.

Curricular transactions seek hands-on experiences and project based approaches. Concerns and issues pertaining to environment, peace oriented values, gender etc.

The approach proposed in the NCF recognizes disciplinary markers while emphasizing integration on significant themes, such as water.

In the social sciences, the syllabi center on activities and projects, which would help learners to understand society and its institutions, change and development.

Examination system seeks a shift from content based testing to problem solving and competency based assessment.”

### What is the Objective Outlined in the NCF?

- To train children locate and comprehend relationships between the natural, social and cultural environment.

- to develop an understanding based on observation and illustration, drawn from lived experiences and physical, biological, social and cultural aspects of life, rather than abstractions
- to nurture the curiosity and creativity of the child particularly in relation
- to natural environment(including artifacts and people)to develop awareness about environmental issues.

All stake holders have a big responsibility in instilling the vision. The syllabus should be in sync with this vision and pedagogy should pursue this.

The Board, the school, the teacher all play a very decisive role in implementing this. The board sets the syllabus as well as the textbook and finally the assessment tool, while the school along with the teacher does the most important job of bringing the whole vision and objectives into the classroom.

The ‘pedagogy’ is key to successful implementation of the NCF, but in reality the Board, school and teacher are all in dark about the NCF.

NCF has no place in school, classroom or the Board Paper. Teachers are never made aware of this document and its content in any of the trainings. Thus the pedagogy and the assessment tool aims only at getting marks and the subject is looked upon as dead and irrelevant to life; attitude of the parents and community, also add to this grave situation.

Let’s wake up and take the call, long overdue. It’s better late than never.

## Reference

1. Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, 1917: 116-17)
2. Karnataka SSLC Question Paper Review By Academics & Pedagogy Team, Azim Premji Foundation, 10-9-2009
3. NCF - 2005

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