

Teaching Map Skills at the Third Grade

Swati Mehrotra and Sugra Chunawala
Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (TIFR)
Mumbai, India

Social studies, which are important for all-round development of students in the primary school, tend to be underestimated in comparison to other school subjects. Research on textbooks and views of students and teachers towards the school subjects suggests an urgent need for changes in the curricula.

A study of upper primary students' attitudes towards various school subjects (Chunawala & Pradhan, 1993) indicated that history, civics and geography were the least liked subjects. A review of geography textbooks of Maharashtra State produced between (1836-1967) revealed that though the social studies textbooks were technically correct they lacked a great deal from a learning point of view.

At the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education there is an attempt to develop a primary social studies curriculum that views the subject as crucial for building concerned citizens and helping students develop personal and social skills. The curriculum aims to increase students' sensitivity to issues about people and places and help them recognise human activities in the context of a social system.

This alternative curriculum has initially begun at the level of grade 3. The preparation of the teaching/learning units involves interaction with schools and field-testing of the materials prepared. The following features have been taken into account when preparing the curriculum.

One of the essential skills which students are expected to develop at this grade level is map reading and map drawing. Maps are difficult for young students as they involve a transformation of three-dimensional and concrete experiences to two-dimensional abstractions. In the current textbooks, this topic is not only handled in a dry and unappealing manner, but is also unconnected with students' experiences.

In the alternative curriculum, a number of activities have been adapted and developed with the aim of familiarising students with the various concepts related to maps, such as scale, direction, symbols, etc. The activities focus on the development of language and mathematical skills and include numerous applications of maps in the students' daily lives. The field-testing of these activities has provided interesting results, which will be presented in a poster form.

Making Public Examination Fair: Some Strategic Aspects

R. S. Sindhu and Rashmi Sharma
Regional Institute of Education
Bhopal, India

A public examination has a high public credibility and can serve several ways if it is 'fair'. However, a number of researchers and practitioners have raised questions about the fairness of public examinations. These questions are more vexed in science discipline because of its different nature as it is seen highly objective in respect of validity and fairness in assessment. Science examination is more susceptible to malpractices. Several efforts have been made by different Central and State Boards, holding public examinations, to bring fairness at all levels of process of examination. The present articles give a critical account of those efforts and suggest some strategies such as preparation of blue print, pool of test items of different learning objectives (knowledge,