CHAPTER SEVEN
Discussion and Contribution

In the present chapter, I have tried to put the entire analysis together, in the form of a discussion, for a better understanding of the work. Generally, the final chapter deals more with the findings but, in the present work, the findings are interwoven with the analysis, as per the need and nature of this research. The present discussion focuses on the responses to the questions related to the research and the objectives of the study. In some places, relevant arguments have been given for findings which are, somehow, beyond the work. In its first part, this chapter presents a brief account in the form of a discussion about an overall understanding of a human rights perspective perceived, observed and analyzed throughout the research work, which has been drawn from education policies, National Curriculum Frameworks, textbooks, classroom practices and co-curricular activities.

The second part deals with the theoretical, as well as the practical contribution towards a human rights perspective based school education, which has emerged from the analysis done in the previous chapters and the discussion in the first part of this chapter. This segment visualizes the possibilities of developing a human rights perspective based school education through all dimensions such as policies, curriculum, textbooks, classroom practices and CCA, which contribute to a human rights perspective discourse.

The final part of the chapter deals with suggestions for further research.

Discussion

Based on the Indian Constitution, a human rights perspective has dominated the formulation of educational policies. The report of the various Indian Education Commissions and the education policy statements have articulated the importance of the Right to Education and education in Human Rights, as a part of educational reforms and the efforts made for its development, in India. Therefore, it is imperative to have an understanding about Human Rights Education and a human rights perspective in education.
A human rights perspective is reflected in the recommendations of the major commissions and the policy documents, including the University Education Commission (Radhakrishnan Commission, 1949), Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission, 1952), Education Commission (Kothari Commission, 1964-1966), and National Policies on Education (NPE) (1968, 1986). Yet, there are certain concerns which raise many questions, as far as a human rights perspective and the educational policies are concerned. To what extent are the policies concerned with a human rights perspective based education? What are the recommendations on which different policies have been based on a human rights perspective? Are there any ambiguities in these policies? If yes, what are these and how should they be dealt with? Do these ambiguities hinder the process of a human rights perspective based education? What are gaps that exist regarding the policies and their practice? How can these gaps be filled? How do the policies perceive educational issues with reference to a human rights perspective? and so on. In the light of these, and other emerging questions, the policies have a lot to say and a lot can be added or suggested.

The Ramamurti Committee (1992) was established to suggest the reforms in the education system, at different levels. Stressing the importance of education, as a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation for the realization of national goals, the Kothari Commission (1964-1966) recommended that ‘Education’ should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values”.

The NPE (1986) expressed conviction that a national reconstruction of education was “essential for the economic and cultural development of the country, for the national integration and for realizing the ideal of socialistic pattern of society”.

The NPE (1986) and the 1992Plan of Action (POA) are important documents in that they emphasis international peace and harmony, along with value-education that looks at our heritage, national goals and universal perception, based on a human rights perspective. The UNESCO recommendations, on international peace and harmony, can be found in the legislative and educational documents of India. The NPE (1986) continues to guide the curriculum in India.

In spite all this, there are certain things and crucial concerns that need to be addressed as far as a human rights perspective is concerned. For instance, in the Kothari
Commission, education is seen, primarily, as a tool for social engineering, though the vision of a desirable society presented, in the report, does contain glimpses of the ideals of equality and social justice. But, the primary objective should govern other things in the process. Education is not only a tool for social engineering, but it has an aim in itself. A human rights perspective based objective has been ignored here, which is necessary for a humane society.

The NPE, 1986/92, upholds the individual, with a tilt towards critical thinking. However, the individual is still a resource to be used to pursue national goals, rather than a participant in setting those goals. This needs to be looked at from a human rights perspective.

A shift is appreciated, at least, at the policy level in the report of the Ramamurti Committee 1992 (POA) where it lends full support to developing rational autonomous individuals, who have the abilities to participate in defining and critiquing the national aims and objectives, as well as equipping people to work towards achieving both personal and national goals. This surely is representative of a human rights perspective, as far as education is concerned.

It becomes important to highlight what works best for different types of students, which is not the focus or prime concern of the policies, there by clearly ignoring the identity and dignity of students.

The policies must look at a wide range of educational outcomes, not only in terms of the cognitive abilities, but, also, in terms of how to make a human, actually a human. The policies have not been successful in providing opportunities to the learners from using a range of knowledge-related tools, including language and technology; interacting effectively with other people; and exercising personal autonomy. This raises questions whether the policies have a human rights perspective.

Another concern, which needs to be highlighted here, is the problem of equalization of educational opportunities and educational development. The polices, themselves, carry ambiguities which prohibit equalization, such as the different layers of the government school system with schools such as Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya and the private schools. This multi-layer school system has a serious relationships with economic inequality. How can one say that such recommendations have a human rights based perspective? It is very important to
discuss alternative ways of education that do not hinder the process of equal educational opportunities for all, such as night school and so on.

Various studies have proved, that teachers’ education and school education are closely related. Though the policies talk about this, but efforts have been rarely made to make the teachers’ education more humane or based on a human rights perspective. Therefore, a kind of blame game is taking place, where the school system blames teacher education for quality and teacher education blames the school system for its governance. This relationship should be given priority in polices.

Another issue related to quality education are the single teacher schools. The single teacher schools are still a reality in India but, there has been, hardly, any improvement in the system. The teachers, in such schools, are very helpless and they are there only because doing something worthwhile is not possible under the circumstances. Is this a human rights based perspective education system?

The policies have been subjected to criticism, because Social Science, as a subject, has always been undermined and we can see the consequences in social issues. The curriculum in India has, historically, prioritized the study of Mathematics and Science, rather than Social Sciences or Arts. This has been actively promoted since the Kothari Commission, which argued that the developmental needs of India have to be better met by engineers and scientists, than historians. The perception remains that students only study Social Science or other Arts subjects as a last resort, though, recently, Commerce and Economics have risen in stature. This may be the need of the current times but, actually, it did not gain favor as it undermined the importance of Social Sciences. Technological development cannot and should not be the only aim of education and if this is the only aim of education, then, it cannot be based on a human rights perspective, because education has larger aims.

It is very clear, in the history of the Indian education system, that the education policies, here, are more politically rather than educationally governed. The aims and objectives of education are politically moulded, modified and developed, which is a real concern, as education has its own aims, in itself, which has been ignored by the policies.

However, in many places, the policies have a human rights based perspective. “The rural areas, with poor infrastructure and social services, will not get the benefit of the
trained and educated youth, unless the rural - urban disparities are reduced and determined measures are taken to promote diversification and dispersal of the employment opportunities” (1.12, 1986) shows its concern with a human rights understanding where it talks about how to remove the rural – urban disparities to make better use of education. Further, the 1986 policy said, “Education has an acculturating role. It refines the sensitivities and the perceptions that contribute to the national cohesion, a scientific temper and an independence of mind and spirit, thus, furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution.” (2.2). Here, Constitutional to create objective is a socialist and secular democracy, which would lead to a human rights perspective.

A system, such as the common school, has, also, been incorporated in policies, particularly the 1986 policy. The concept of a National System of Education implies that, up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, have access to education of a comparable quality. To achieve this, the Government initiated appropriately funded programmes. Effective measures were to be taken in the direction of the Common School System, recommended in the 1968 Policy. (3.2). The common school system is one of the most important recommendations, based on a human rights perspective, where all children will be able to access school education, without any kind of discrimination, as far as accessibility is concerned, but, to date, we have not been able to implement this.

Secularism, egalitarianism, democracy and the equality of sexes in the curriculum, across the nation, has been suggested by all the education policies and the commissions. The idea behind this was to develop and promote national integration which represents a human rights perspective but, on the other hand, it, also, dismisses the contextual and the regional existence of knowledge, which is again a serious concern from the human rights perspective.

The policies talk about the different levels of learning abilities of learners in school. They emphasize special attention for first generation learners. They mentioned that the first generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and should be given supplementary, remedial instruction, so that they can cope with the existing educational demands and needs, which would make them more humane. On the same lines, the NPE 1986, is quite concerned with the division among streams of the different social groups. The policy is concerned about the issues associated with
secondary education, not only with the dropouts and quality but, also, about the division of streams and the students’ enrollment. It says that, women, SC, ST and so on, should, also, opt for Science and Mathematics because, over a period of time, it was observed that these social groups of society only opted for the humanities. But, now, there was a need to encourage them to take Sciences. But, an important question that arises here is whether the policy meant that humanities did not have the potential to develop the learners’ personality and have less career opportunities, or only was the concern that all the students should opt for all the options. There is a discriminatory essence in the policy. These lines represent this understanding, “the access to the secondary education will be widened with an emphasis on enrolment of the girls, SCs and STs, particularly in Science and Commerce.”

The NPE 1986, section 8.2, articulates that the curricula and processes of education should be sensitive to beauty, harmony and refinement. Section 8.4 is concerned with the need for readjustments in the curriculum, in order to make education a tool for inculcation of social and moral values. The cultures of different communities in India should be looked and this shows its concern for a human rights perspective.

The universalization of Elementary Education has been recommended by most of the policies and commissions and now RTE (Right to Education) has become a fundamental right as per the Constitution. The reality is something else. To date, we have failed to make the fundamental rights to education accessible to all. There are lots of issues and concerns that have been ignored, even in the RTE, such as ‘the definition of a child’, ‘child labour’, ‘Person with Disability Act’, ‘quality of education’, ‘25 % seats in the private schools’ and so on. It is really a serious concern to, qualitatively, educate our children, at least, till elementary education and we have failed in that. The policies and Acts need to be reviewed in the light of a human rights perspective, which believes that education is essential for every one, not only because the Constitution says so, but, because it is important in itself.

The idea of establishing the Navodaya Schools for talented students, from the rural areas, articulated in the NPE 1986, has lost its importance today, focusing on the controversy regarding excellence and equity. The NPE 1986, developed a technocratic model, for the maladies in the education system, rather than bringing about any basic change in the educational structure. The Ramamurti Committee felt that a technocratic
model which looked at facilities and infrastructures, was not required. Certain structural changes, instead, are needed.

The merit based selection in Navodaya Vidyalayas has been favored by the policies, but it needs to be accepted that merit based selection is not always right and fair and merit holders may not serve the purpose of education. It is also true, to some extent, that the children from the poor economic strata, struggling for their daily food, cannot compete with children, who are comparatively in a better economic situation. The Ramamurti Committee, therefore, rightly recommends the discontinuation of the 'Navodaya' school model. Further, the recommendation of the committee, for an integrated universal school system at the elementary level, is, conceptually, very sound. But, unfortunately, the Committee has not suggested any concrete programmes for its implementation. It has not cared to develop the base for a human rights perspective. Without any concrete programme to date, we have not succeeded and its clear impact can be seen at the secondary school education.

Another suggestion of the Ramamurti Committee, which has generated a favorable response everywhere, is that of giving adequate attention to pre-school childhood care. But, even after effectively accepting the idea of preschool childhood care, it loses the spirit of a human rights perspective, as only a vague resource allocation has been made for this purpose.

There is growing concern at the unusual rate of dropouts in the Indian school system, which, again, raises the concern of sustainability, as mentioned in the analysis earlier.

Teachers’ education and school education has a significant relationship but, practically, this relationship has not been actualized. This gap exists even at the policy level. It has, also, been observed that a lot of importance has been given to teachers this training. But, the difference in attitude before and after the training is quite visible. This is really a matter of serious concern, as far as a human rights perspective based education is concerned.

The educational policies are the rules that are used in schools to effectively and efficiently teach students and keep them safe. These rules determine how the students are taught, what they are taught and how the schools manage the students and school personnel. The policies, also, affect the quality of education. The educational policies are important because effective policies can help keep students in school. An
integrated approach, a structural transformation of the education system, the content of education, a appropriation of the new priorities are required that would base school education on a human rights perspective. The content of education is very crucial for school education and the content has been developed on the basis of the curriculum frameworks in India. Thus, the development of the curriculum raises certain concerns with reference to a human rights perspective, such as, how is the school curriculum developed? What are the basic assumptions of the National Curriculum Frameworks? To what extent are these assumptions based on a humane understanding? How do these frameworks perceive education and its transition processes? To what extent do the suggested frameworks include the Constitutional values and norms? How are these frameworks biased or not biased against the existing social and political structure and values? What are the recommendations of these frameworks with reference to what should or should not be included in the school curriculum and why? Are these recommendations based on a human rights perspective? If yes, how and if no, how? What kind of curriculum issues have been raised by these frameworks? What is the relevance of these issues in relation to a human rights perspective?

Like the policies, the curriculum framework does play an important role in school education. Their assumptions, principles and the governing schemes determine the school curriculum and syllabus.

The curriculum documents articulate the official view of knowledge taken, for teaching students, in a society. If there happens to be a National Curriculum or a National Curriculum Framework, the official view of knowledge taken in such a document, influences the whole national education system. Thus, the notion of knowledge guiding the National Curriculum Framework of a country, is far from being an issue of major importance.

The term ‘curriculum’ has taken on various connotations today, such as the ‘prescribed curriculum’, ‘hidden curriculum’, ‘transacted curriculum’, ‘intended curriculum’ and so on. Such debates bring out the gap between theory and practice and, hence, are important from a human rights perspective. However, a curriculum is designed for what ought to take place in the school, as what, actually, takes place in the schools may be different. Curriculum is, thus, the prescribed content of knowledge, understanding and skills that become the objectives of education. However, knowledge should, also, include moral education. The structure of the
The Curriculum Framework, as understood in India, need not provide the details of the content, as to what methods and activities are to be taught it, the content, books and material, and evaluation procedures. What is, however, expected from a Curriculum Framework is a set of clear guidelines to generate details for all these curricular components. The Curriculum Framework, therefore, provides ways to develop a syllabus, as well as the grounds for its justification. But, these guidelines and principles articulated in the Curriculum Framework, are of such a nature that they, themselves, require further justification. For example, all the NCFs recommend “child-centered pedagogy”, which cannot, truly speaking, be taken as self-justifying, even if the Indian curricular documents take it as such. Therefore, further questions of the explanation of meaning and the justification for the curricular recommendations need to be raised, addressed, and answered. What should such a justification consist of? If there is a dispute on the recommendations? On what grounds can such curricular guidelines and principles be critiqued and debated?

To understand a Curriculum Framework, one has to examine: one, the adequacy and the internal consistency of the basic assumptions; two, the consistency of the basic assumptions with the components in the curriculum (i.e. aims, objectives, and so on.); and three, the adequacy of and the consistency among the various components of the curriculum.

The present work is, primarily, concerned with an examination of the epistemic assumptions: the epistemological assumptions on the one hand, and the relationship of the epistemological assumptions with the aims, objectives and recommendations for content selection and organization and pedagogy, on the other hand, from a human rights perspective.

So far, there have been only three versions of the National Curriculum Framework, as analyzed in Chapter Four.

The NCF 1988 and 2000, extensively discuss the aspect of ‘value’. All the NCFs, specifically the first two, look at various aspects of ‘values’, but fail to define or justify them. The three NCFs set the context and the values in their first chapters, but
continue to mention values in the aims, context and pedagogy, throughout the document.

The Constitutional values are mentioned, most prominently, in all the NCFs. The idea of India, as a political entity and a nation, was shaped in the course of the long freedom movement, started in 1857 and culminated in 1947. This movement, simultaneously, was, also, a movement for nation building. The future vision and values that emerged out of this long and intense socio-political churning, were crystallized in the Constitution of India. All three documents, therefore, draw their values, most prominently, from these two sources: the history of the freedom movement and the Constitution of India.

The Preamble of the Constitution of India gives a very short, but well-articulated statement, of the values, Human Rights and a human rights perspective. These values are, often, referred to in all the three documents as grounds for particular recommendations, as well as broad policy statements, which give these documents a human rights perspective base. Equality and Social Justice, among them, stand out most prominently. (NCERT, 1988, p. 3; NCERT, 2000, p. 9; NCERT, 2005, p. 7)

Education is expected to inculcate the values of equality and justice, as well as to become an instrument for the promotion of equality and social justice, in society.

National integrity and identity are looked at in all the three NCFs. The NCF 1988 and 2000, look at certain ethical, moral, universal, spiritual and social values. The NCF 2005, takes certain additional values, as derived from Constitutional values, such as, equality, justice, liberty and so on. This shows their concern with a human rights perspective.

The NCF1988, makes it clear that the “National Curricular Framework for the Elementary and Secondary Education is envisaged in the context of the National System of Education” (p12). Thus, the aims of education in the NCF1988 and the NCF2000, should be seen in the perspective of education for nation-building. Education is seen “as a powerful instrument of Human Resource Development” and is expected to “help in the process of the desired social transformation and the achievement of the national goals and priorities.” (NCF1988, p3)

The aims of education are the capabilities and the skills developed in the learners. The aims include knowledge, understanding, moral values, qualities of character and so
on. In the NCF 1988, the section on ‘Curricular Concerns’ articulates this, representing a human rights perspective. A little reflection on the NCF 1988, helps to understand that the building up of character and the inculcation of values, as important objectives of the NCF, these include the inculcation of the Constitutional values: equality, justice, liberty, secularism, human dignity, fraternity and so on and the development of the cultural and national identity with cultural values, an appreciation of the national heritage. Values such as honesty, truthfulness, righteous action are the other important concerns of NCF1988, as far as values and human rights are concerned. Emphasis on the relationship between work and education and development of a global perspective are important and other aims of education have been discussed in NCF 1988. These represent a human rights perspective.

A similar exercise of culling out the aims of education from the “Curricular Concerns” as stated in the NCF2000, will result in different aims of education. It emphasizes education for development of values, which includes Education for a cohesive society, strengthening national identity and preserving cultural heritage, integrating indigenous knowledge and India’s contribution to mankind and values such as honesty, truthfulness, righteous action, and so on. The development of the aesthetic sensibilities, an interface between cognition, emotions and actions, relating education to the world of work, linking education with life-skills, responding to the impact of globalization and meeting the challenge of Information and Communication Technology, are the other important aims of education.

In the NCF 1988, education was meant for democratic nation building where the individual was important, as a national resource. In the NCF 2000, cultural identity was looked at, along with the democratic nation-building and the importance of an individual. The NCF 2005, upholds the individual as valuable in herself, as an autonomous citizen with her own rights and capabilities. Thus, the NCF 2005, looks at a human rights perspective, which was first seen in the report of the Secondary Education Commission, after independence, in 1952.

The aims of education in the NCF2005, are articulated as a commitment, based on reason and understanding, to democracy and the values of equality, justice, freedom, concern for the well-being, secularism, respect for human dignity and Human Rights, the development of an independence of thought and action, the development of sensitivity to the wellbeing of others feeling, the development of an ability to work,
participation in economic processes and social change, an appreciation of beauty and the art forms. All these aspects are associated with a human rights perspective.

In all the three documents under consideration, the socio-political vision receives due consideration. In spite of confusion over the aims, objectives and content, in the NCF1988 and the NCF2000, the aims and objectives are in agreement with the values and the democratic vision of the country. The articulation of the values and aims in the NCF2005 are its significant aspects.

The NCF 1988 and 2000 believe that Science has an ability to develop the potential against superstitions and Mathematics for scientific temper, where as Social Science is more focused on value education. This categorization is, surely, not healthy, but has been taken from contemporary policies. It implies that Social Science does not have the ability to develop a scientific temper, which is problematic and again not based on a human rights perspective. Beyond this, the NCF 2005, talks more about the process of knowledge construction, irrespective of subjects.

Knowledge is of, primary, importance in any curriculum, which implicates selection and organization of curricular context. It influences pedagogy. Thus, the adequacy of the idea of knowledge can be checked by other related areas such as selection, organization and pedagogy.

Here, I treat the NCF1988 and the NCF2000 together in one section and the NCF2005 in a separate section, as the latter is quite different in its understanding of knowledge from the earlier two.

The content and process of education in the NCF1988 and NCF 2000, are aimed at developing “knowledge, skills, attitudes and values”. (NCERT, 1988, p. 3 and NCERT, 2000, p. 39) The term “knowledge,” in these two documents, is, almost, always used to indicate the propositional knowledge (knowing that).If it is only propositional knowledge, then it, necessarily, involves claims about the world and, perhaps, beliefs about those claims; but the evidence for and the truth of such claims remain only implicit.

The Ishwar Bhai Patel Committee, in 1977 and the Yashpal Committee, in 1992, were concerned with curricular load and rote- learning. An inadequate notion of knowledge as facts or examination- orientated could be the factor behind these problems. Therefore, the idea of knowledge needs to be reworked. Reasons for this are, that, in
the absence of a clear distinction between knowledge that is recommended and information that is seen as a case of rote learning, no teacher can make proper sense of the recommendations, and, therefore, cannot implement them.

In the acquisition of knowledge, both the documents (NCFs 1988 and 2000) place a great deal of importance on experience, activities, interaction with others and talk of the presentation of facts and concepts. A teacher’s role is recommended to be that of a facilitator. (NCERT, 1988, p.8) The NCF2000 goes a step further. The constructivist teacher is supposed to “follow no rigid prescriptions for successful teaching”. (NCERT, 2000, p. 26) The possibility of any public criteria for knowledge is denied as, “knowledge acquisition is a constructive or generative process and each student’s knowledge is personal and unique.” (NCERT, 2000, p. 42)

The distinction between knowledge as information and knowledge and understanding needs to be clearly defined. Both the documents articulate their concerns about knowledge as understanding. However, until and unless a clear distinction is not made, the, actual, practice in classrooms will continue to be impeded by knowledge as information.

The nature of knowledge and methods of knowledge are the essential components of any subject, but both the NCFs (1988, 2000) do not include these aspects in the curriculum. Specific concerns about the nature of knowledge in any other subject area (other than Science) has been given no consideration, which is inappropriate from a human rights perspective, as far as the nature of a subject is concerned.

The operational definition of knowledge, in all the Indian classrooms, is memorization of the given knowledge. The confused and contradictory claims about knowledge in the NCF1988 and NCF2000 have put a question mark on this entrenched authoritarian definition of knowledge. Unless the role of epistemic criterion for knowledge and the child’s right to, effectively, use it in assessing his claim to knowledge is emphasized, the recognition of a child, as a free constructor of knowledge is, unlikely, to challenge this authoritarian view of knowledge.

The NCF2005, sees knowledge in a, significantly, different light. The NCF 2005, recognizes the consideration of the nature of knowledge, in various curricular decisions. Chapter two has discussed learning and the nature of knowledge, in
general. Further, epistemological issues, concerned with different subjects, have been
taken into account.

In spite of the emphasis on the notion and nature of knowledge, the NCF2005
presents a, somewhat, confused picture of knowledge, particularly with regard to
learning and knowledge. This is, partly, because the document has two mutually
contesting views of knowledge and both are partially articulated, which is not in
appropriate for curriculum development as, later, it will give the learners a confused
understanding. One view of knowledge emphasizes experience and personal
interpretation of the meaning more; it is skeptical to public norms and categorization.
It emerges from constructivist pedagogy. Children are seen as the constructors of their
own knowledge (NCERT, 2005, p. 11); and learning is seen as, “a process of
construction of knowledge. The learners actively construct their own knowledge by
connecting new ideas to the existing ideas on the basis of materials/activities
presented to them (experience).” (NCERT, 2005, p. 15) What is constructed are the
“mental representations of external reality through a given set of activities
(experiences). Structuring and restructuring of ideas are essential features as the
learners’ progress in learning.” “Construction indicates that each learner individually
and socially constructs meaning as he/she learns. Constructing meaning is learning.”
(ibid, p. 16)

This view upholds children, as the constructors of their own knowledge and negates
the authorization view of knowledge, as propagated by the teachers. However, the
distinction between authentic and false knowledge has not been clarified. The
question of ‘true’ and ‘valid’ knowledge is not answered and, hence, raises problems
for curriculum development. It is not based on a human rights perspective, as it
provides an incomplete way to understand knowledge. Here, learning is important.
However, it is doubtful whether learning, in this sense, will be of any educational use.
Without a set standard for, say, passing class 10, one may not define learning with its
relevance to educational aims. This is far from a human rights understanding.

The other view takes knowledge, essentially, as requiring publicly debatable norms of
validation and admitting categorisation. This view, while it recognizes knowledge as
rooted in experience, considers the role of language, articulation and conceptual
organisation to be very important. This is, somewhat, more clearly delineated in the
document. It suggests that, “knowledge can be conceived as experience organized,
through language, into patterns of thought (or structures of concepts), thus creating meaning, which, in turn, helps understand the world we live in. It can also be conceived of as the patterns of activity, or physical dexterity with thought, contributing to acting in the world, creating and making of things.” (NCERT, 2005, p. 23). Knowledge is defined as propositional knowledge and procedural knowledge. Experience is taken to be the basis of knowledge and its use is to make sense of the world or act upon it. The definition is obscure in its aims; rather it illustrates the original use of knowledge and the concept of knowledge.

Epistemological issues have been completely ignored and psychological processes have been emphasized. This gives the impression as if epistemology, itself, is a problem. However, the organization of curriculum and pedagogy, at the upper primary stage, is looked at. In the document, the two views seem to coexist cordially with each other, rather than informing each other and integrating into a coherent epistemology. Unfortunately, both are only, partially, articulated. One view does not elaborate upon the criteria for the validation of knowledge and it gives an impression that all the beliefs and opinions, created by the learner, are automatically granted the status of knowledge. The second view of knowledge does not articulate its relationship with learning, organisation of school subjects, and, therefore, can be misinterpreted as arguing for disconnected, watertight subject areas and neglecting the child’s interests, existing understanding and active engagement. This incomplete articulation leaves out the questions of distinction between knowledge and information, the relationship between knowledge and values, and the role of knowledge in the development of skills.

In NCF2005, an awareness of a need for epistemological considerations is very visible. Earlier, there was an almost total absence of the need for epistemology. Now, there is an interest and recognition of its possible contribution to a better curriculum development.

The NCFs, from 1988 to 2005, have classified values and the aims of education. The articulation of values has become more coherent with the democratic ethos of the nation. The socio-political assumptions, pedagogy, inclusion of psychology of education have made a major shift. The contextual knowledge, and the need to relate pedagogy and curricular content with context, have been considered significant.
It does not seem to be possible to challenge the entrenched rote learning pedagogy in the Indian classroom and, constantly, increasing the curricular load, without taking a more clear, robust and coherent epistemological position, along with well-articulated text books for schools. But, how are Social Sciences books written? What concepts one more emphasized in these Social Science books? Are these books biased against or neutral to the different social and political groups? To what extent does the content incorporate a human rights perspective? How are the issues presented and discussed in the books? How have equality, justice, freedom and other such democratic values been perceived and presented? What can be edited from and added to the books with reference to a human rights perspective? And why? What are the teachers’ views about the Social Science text book? What issues do they raise in this regard? Do they have some suggestions regarding Social Science books, with reference to a human rights perspective? How do they perceive and conceptualize Social Science? These questions are very relevant when we talk about the Social Science textbooks and try to understand them from a human rights perspective.

The present Social Science textbooks, for the schools, were developed on the understanding and the believed assumptions of the NCF 2005. The textbooks, at school level, play a major role and influence the leaners’ thinking and knowledge. The analysis of the Social Science text books, in the present study, shows that there are serious concerns about the content and how that content is presented in the textbooks. The kind of examples used, also, need to be revisited.

The analysis of the content of the textbooks shows that the books are full of examples, which have been used to explain the content to the learners. But, what has, also, emerged from the analysis is that the examples used are pessimistic. There are very few examples, which are optimistic. The optimistic examples could have motivated children in a more positive way, to them aware of their rights and responsibilities. But, unfortunately, the examples are more on the side of pessimism. For example, the exploitation of women has been shown, but where women have contributed to the nation, has been ignored.

The books can, also, be criticised in that they deal more with the sociological perspective, than the political perspective. The examples have been taken more in relation to social, rather than political life. The social system has been blamed for all the problems in the social and political life, which is an inadequate way of presenting
content. Clearly, the books seem to put the blame on the social system for all the existing problems in society, such as education, inequality and so on. The books seem to create a safeguard for the political system. Though differentiating or understanding the political system outside the social system is tough, yet when it comes to policy-making and decision-taking, based on such policies, the political system plays a major role, which has been shown as very positive and the social system has been questioned. The elections, establishing democracy, gender equality & so on, have been considered, in such a way, that the books do not provide a healthy perspective to the learners and society. This takes the content away from a human rights perspective.

The books, in most places, talk about only one dimension; democracy has been discussed only for its merits, which does not provide space to analyze it and without analyzing it, how can one develop a critical perspective about the functioning of a democracy? The books seem to feed the learners, with, only, positive aspects of democracy.

The concept of equality has been discussed with reference to gender, caste, religion & so on. All these categories have been shown, only, in terms of their oppression, with pessimistic examples. The people, who have contributed tremendously to the alleviation of the oppression in society have, rarely, been introduced. In most places, the books emphasize more on inequality than equality, which develops a kind of negative attitude in the learners. There is a need to include some positive examples which may develop an optimistic understanding to make the content more human rights perspective based.

Religion has been used with reference to secularism, but the only perspective presented is that India is a secular state and does not favor any one religion. But, there are many instances, when secularism has been used just for the sake of politics. A critical perspective needs to be included, such as creating a vote bank. However, seeing secularism, not in the form of an ideology, is appreciable.

Broadly, Classes IX and X textbooks talk about democracy and the democratic processes. Democracy has been presented as the need in the world, in contemporary times. Democracy has been compared with the monarchical form of government, but, mostly with reference to elections and rights, whereas democracy is much more than this. Democracy has been discussed with reference to its working and establishment.
The textbooks, also, talk of the making and unmaking of democracy in the world, with examples.

The need for democracy has been shown in terms of the participation of people for governance and contributing to policy-making. But, how this happens, has not been discussed, except through the elections. The constitution has been seen as an important aspect of a democracy, helping to govern the system effectively.

Diversity has been discussed almost in all the books, from VI to X, in some way or the other. Diversity has been represented in terms of caste, gender, religion and so on. However, this diversity has been discussed on the rationale of the federal system and democratic system in India, which is a matter of concern.

The books seem to strengthen the notion of diversity, but, rarely, have any efforts been made to discuss unity in diversity. The social structures have been blamed for the divisions or diversities in society. But, the political aspect has, again, been ignored. Political Science books, which are the replacement of earlier civics books, should have more focus on the political aspect, which is missing. Thus, Political Science or Sociology is another matter of concern regarding these books. It is significant to acknowledge the importance of the sociological aspect in these books, but limiting the political understanding is inappropriate. A balanced perspective needs to be presented.

There are certain places, where the books appear to be very biased. The ‘Tawa Dem’ displacement has not been seen as a very serious problem. Moreover, it has been shown in favor of the people and for their livelihood, which is not the complete truth. In the same way, Naxalism has been represented as against human beings. Thus, the lack of a balanced perspective, in some places, make the books biased.

Rights and Duties have been discussed throughout the books, but the dimension is social, not political. The Right to Equality, Right to Liberty, women’s rights, rights of the minorities and so on, have been discussed across the classes. Rights have been explained as the claims of a person to society and the state and they are associated with the dignity and respect of human beings. It has been argued that these rights should be rational. A kind of relationship between rights and responsibilities has, also, been touched upon.
The books provide arguments which are not satisfactory, such as diversity in a democracy and the federal form of government, the constitution on the issue of the language problem in Sri Lanka, blaming men for the poor condition of women, USA’s intervention in Asian countries for establishing democracy and so on.

It is important to mention here that Indian society is not only divided on the basis of caste but, also, on the basis of class. But, the books do not talk much about discrimination based on class. Over emphasis has been given on caste and gender-based discrimination. It is important to discuss the discrimination people face because of class. This may not have been discussed because the class disparities are not considered important, as compared to those of caste and gender.

Development was the first need of India after Independence and democracy was chosen for this purpose. But, development that takes place in democratic nations needs to be evaluated. It has been assumed in the textbooks, that if there is democracy, there will be development. The books prove, with authentic examples, that non-democratic nations are more developed, than democratic nations and that democracy is justified only with the Right to Speech. The Right to Food and other such concerns have been ignored. Therefore, how development takes place in a democracy and what challenges it faces needs to be discussed. Functional knowledge has not been included in the textbooks which is, again, a serious concern. It is an important concern as to how this given knowledge in the textbooks is transacted to the learners, what role a teacher plays in this regard, what kinds of pedagogies are used by the teachers in the Social Science classes and to what extent are these based on a human rights perspective, What is the status of the students in the class? Does the participation of the students exist in Social Science classes? If yes, how? And if no, why? What do the students say about the classroom teaching -leaning processes? Is the teacher’s behavior in the classes and towards the students humane and based on a human rights perspective? How? Does the interaction taking place in the classes incorporate a human rights perspective or not? How? What are the kinds of opportunities given to the learners in the classes? Are these opportunities based on a human rights perspective? How are the students respected in the class? How do the teachers perceive their own teaching in the classes and do how they justify it? An attempt has been made to discuss these concerns in the following segment. This discussion is based on the analysis done in detail in the analysis in chapter one.
What the analysis reveals is very interesting. Almost in all the observed classes, there was hardly any role of the students, except just to be in class and listen to the teacher. In more than half the classes, the teachers just read the textbook and asked some questions. But, the questions, asked by the teacher, were not satisfactory or adequate.

As these were Social Science classes, it was very obvious that some sensitive and crucial issues would emerge, during the classes. Some are critical, while some are quite sensitive. It has been found in the analysis that there were classes, where the issues came up, but the teacher could not or did not deal with their adequately, and showed his/her insensitive behavior. In some classes, the teacher taught in such a way that no crucial issues came up and in some classes, such issues were ignored or suppressed by saying, “you ask too many questions.”

Across the classes, from 6th to 10th, only reading the book was the pedagogy used in the classes. In some classes, if questions were asked, they were answered very inadequately. The teachers read the books themselves or asked a student to read the book and, then, some explanation was given, which was problematic, as has been, extensively, discussed, in the analysis.

The context is important in any subject, especially subjects such as the Social Science, which directly relates to the social context and, also, originates from there. Its epistemological beliefs are embedded in the social context. Therefore, contextualizing the teaching of Social Science becomes important.

For developing the context and context based teaching, some categories come up during the observations: first, in classes some context was hardly created to help the learners to understand the concepts; second, the teacher seemed unable to create the context and third some context was created with examples, but the interpretation of these examples made the process of learning more problematic. In the classes dealing with very crucial concepts, such as ‘Democracy and challenges’, ‘Constitutional design’, ‘Electoral politics’, ‘The Indian constitution’, ‘Key elements of democratic government and ‘Federalism’, the teacher did not, even try to relate the concept with daily life experience; he/she could not, even state any examples to clear the concept, although an effective context -based teaching is possible with these concepts.

The objective of asking questions in a class is to understand the learners’ perspective, so that learning can be developed accordingly. The nature of questions should be such
that it has possibilities of taking many responses. But, unfortunately, nothing like this was observed in the classes. Most a time the teachers asked questions just for the sake of asking questions. The questions were mostly ‘what’ type of questions - ‘what is the meaning of participation in a democracy, what is a federal system, what is government, what is the meaning of equality, what is Constitution and so on. These questions were quite vague and only knowledge- based. There were hardly any questions which promoted the process of thinking. There was hardly any question which provided space for critical and reflective thinking and if there was, such as; why is there a need for elections in a democracy? No time was given to think and reflect upon.

Mostly, the classes were teacher- dominated and everything was decided by them, from the content to the method and even what was right and wrong. There was hardly, any scope in the classes, where one could say that some collaborative task had taken placed. Almost in all the classes, the teachers used to teach, as if they were declaring everything. It has been accepted in educational discourse that child-centered education is the best form of education. But, nothing like this was observed in the classes. Education, which is not child centered, cannot be based on a human rights perspective.

Most of the time, the teachers’ engagement with the class was just to complete the chapter. The teacher did not even bother whether the students had understood. Most of the time, the teacher rushed to class saying that there was very little time and a lot of syllabus had to be covered

Sometimes, the teachers just wanted to scold the leaners to hide his/her own inability, such as in class 9, while teaching about ‘the Constitutional design’, the teacher’s engagement was very superficial, as she did not show any concern. When she did not get the answer from the students she said, “tum log dyanse nahi sunte ho, ye to bahut asan prashan hai” (you do not listen carefully, otherwise it is an easy question), “I cannot help you people now, khud padh lena baad main, mein agay padhati hun” (I cannot help you people, read it yourself later, I am teaching further). That is how, she just moved ahead. Where was the human rights perspective in this class is the question?

It has been observed that, mostly, the students were not happy at the end of the class. They used to talk, “uff jambachi”(Class 10), “is teacher ko kuch nahi ata” (this
teacher know nothing) (class 9). There were many other responses like this which were very common after the classes, which showed that the students did not have a good perspective about the teachers and this can, easily, be identified in the observations of how the teacher was, hardly, concerned about the students’ learning and about respecting the students' knowledge and understanding in class.

The examples used by the teachers were not effective. Sometimes, they were biased and sometimes they were just bookish with no concern for the students’. There were certain classes where the teacher could not even state an example. A question was asked by the teacher, in class 9, as to what was that difference between a car owner and a ‘rikshaw’ owner. But, she could not handle it effectively, when a student started teasing another student, whose father was a rikshaw puller. Instead of stopping this, the teacher asked that particular student about the differences, who did not respond as he felt humiliated. This shows disrespect for the student and the teachers’ incapability. How can such a teacher provide a human rights perspective to teaching?

Teaching, learning and examination have a close relationship in our education system. But, the situation becomes worse when the entire teaching-learning-process becomes examination centered or just a duty, which a teacher has to do in class. In many of my observations, many such issues emerged. In many classes, the teacher was just teaching and showed no concern for the students’ learning. The only concern was the examination. The following examples have been taken from class 9, where teaching was only done for the sake of teaching from the examination point of view. He said, “hum kitaab ka first part chhood sakte hai kyoonki usme Africa ke bare mein likha hai, to hum log page 48 se shuru karte hai” (we can leave the first segment of the chapter, as it talks more about Africa, we will start from page no 48). Even the questions were asked in a very traditional style and he asked the students to do questions 1, 4, 9. Without any kind of critical and reflective process, how can any class be based on a human rights perspective.

It is very natural, in Social Science classes, that one will debate on social issues and, therefore, it becomes important to observe how teachers deal with such debatable issues. Or how teachers provide space for such debates to come up in the classroom and channelize the discussion in the right direction, with proper and appropriate feedback. A very meaningful discussion could have been done in class 10, when a student observed on the definition of democracy given by the teacher (Janta ka janta
ke dwara or janta ke liye—by the people, of the people and for the people) that we do not rule and even do not make rules then how is our nation democratic. Instead of taking this point ahead for discussion, the teacher simply silenced the question by saying “chupkarō what do you want, to sit in parliament to make rules?” (shut up, what do you want, to sit in parliament to make rules?). Again, the student tried to ask but the teacher interrupted and said, “if you will listen carefully, then you will not have as many questions. We cannot waste the entire class to explain democracy. Ask me later.” These declarative statements created problems in class, as it stopped a healthy discussion.

The students’ respect in the class is a very serious concern. Do they get proper respect or not, whether their understanding is respected or not, is their socio-cultural and economic status respected and accepted or not. It is essential for a teacher to give due respect to the students in class, in general, and while teaching, as well. But, unfortunately, there was hardly any class, where the students were accepted or respected.

Feedback is important for any teaching-learning process. Providing a healthy feedback makes the teaching-learning process more effective and interesting for students. Feedback may be in any form, such as answers to the questions asked by the students, general discussion based feedback and so on. Unfortunately, the feedback given in the classes observed was very problematic and very insensitive. Feedback was based on the teachers’ preconceived notions.

Not a single definition can be given of a good teacher or teaching but, without any debate, it can be said that it is good for a teacher to have faith in the learner’s potentialities and capabilities. This not only motivates the learners, but, also, makes them feel responsible for their learning. This will develop the students’ faith in the teacher. But, in most of the classes observed, nothing like this happened. The teachers, clearly, showed that they had no faith in the learners’ abilities. That was why, everything was just prescribed to them and hardly any space was given for active learning. The teacher judged the students only if they replied (correctly) to the question asked by the teacher, otherwise the teacher did not miss any opportunity to blame the learners by saying, “sab fail ho jaogy”(all of us will get fail), “tumhe kuch nahi aata”( you know nothing), “mujhe tumse puchna hi nahi chahiye tha” (I should
not have asked you), “tumhe kuch pata to hota nahi hai bas prashan karte ho, shant raho” (you do not know anything just ask questions, be quiet) and so on.

The meaning of discipline in the classes was observed, specifically, in two ways. First, all the students had to standup and wish the teacher, as the teacher entered the class and second, they had to be quiet in the class, without asking any questions. It was, clearly, observed in the classes, that the more the questions asked by the students, the more the teacher behaved rudely. Though many examples have already been given when the teacher reacted badly too students asking questions in class, the reason given by the teacher was that she/he had to complete the syllabus.

It is important for a teacher to be in class with an objective for the day or for the class. This objective can be to provide opportunities to the learners, to develop certain abilities or to develop certain knowledge. This objective, also, helps teachers to focus in class. But, in most of the classes observed, there were four objectives that clearly came up: first, preparation for the examination; second, to complete the course; third, just to declare their (teachers’) rights and wrong understanding- based knowledge and fourth, to take class.

It is quite important for a teacher to be secular in a multi-cultural and multi- religious class and, even, otherwise, it is the responsibility of a teacher to give due respect to all religions in class. Religious sentiments should not be hurt by the teacher and, most importantly, the teacher needs to provide opportunities to the learners, to develop a secular understanding about concepts. Unfortunately, nothing like this was observed and, most of the time, directly or indirectly, the teachers showed their biased understanding of religion.

It seems that the teachers were not ready to read anything new. Whatever they had learned, they wanted to teach only that. Their pre-conceived notions created more problems, as far as knowledge about the social system was concerned. In class 9, while discussing poverty, the teacher said that most thefts were done by the poor and they did not even bathe.

Collaborative work is important in Social Science classes, where students can learn through each other’s perspectives. Collaborative work, also, helps them to develop the ability and understanding to respect others’ views and perspectives, but nothing like this was observed in the classes.
Space for critical and reflective thinking was not available. Most times, the teacher declared things and the students just listened. Thus, space for reflection and critical thinking was lacking. It was the teacher’s point of view, which was the ultimate truth in class. As mentioned earlier, there was no space for discussion on debatable issues. The teacher declared everything. In such an atmosphere, how one can think critically and reflectively and how can one think about a human rights perspective-based class? Beyond the classes, the CCA has great potential to develop a human rights perspective, if, one CCA is based on a human rights perspective. What and how are the activities conducted by the school? What are the assumptions behind those activities? What kind of CCA system exists in the school and how does it function? Does it carry a human rights perspective or not? On what basis is the participation of all the students ensured? What is the teachers’ understanding of CCA? How do they justify their understanding? Do they co-relate the classroom practices and CCA? Yes or no. How? These are very relevant questions related to the CCA, based on a human rights perspective. The following segment will discuss these concerns from a human rights perspective.

The CCA is an integral part of the school system and the vision behind the CCA is the all-round development of the child, where these activities are not a separate part of the curriculum, but integrated. However, the reality seems to be different, in practice, where nothing like this was observed in the present research. The teachers showed a very narrow understanding about CCA. For them, CCA were only activities that took place on the 15th August, 26th January and other such occasions. For them, classroom teaching and CCA had no relation. It was mentioned by the teachers that there was no difference between CCA and the ECA (extra-curricular activities), these were only jargons used by the government, and, otherwise, they were doing the same as before. They said that it sounded good theoretically, but not in practice.

One or two teachers, who favored CCA in the school, mentioned the problem in its application, for various reasons such as time, facilities, orientation. They directly raised the issues to the government system and practice. They mentioned that they had to do a refresher course in the summer vacation, but nothing happened there. Everybody just passed their time. A concept such as the CCA, generally, was not a part of the discourse of such a programme and if, somewhere, by chance, it was very superficial and only theoretical.
Though the importance of the CCA has been mentioned by some teachers, the school has the responsibility to provide time, space and infrastructure. They mentioned that each and every student must participate in the CCA, not only because it was important, but because it was an integrated part of the school life experience. Some suggestions to improve the CCA came across, such as regular attendance in the CCA period, compulsory participation, revisiting the teachers’ role and their participation in activities such as role play, slogan-writing, chart-making, songs and so on. The notion of spirituality was, also, discussed by one of the teachers. According to him, one of the most important aims of education should be the development of spirituality in the learners and as the CCA is a part of education, it should be based on spiritual values and should promote the same.

Participation in the CCA is based on quality and capability. There was hardly any effort made in the schools observed, to make all students participate in the CCA. The teachers, generally, chose those students who they believed were able to do such activities. Developing such abilities was not a serious matter of discussion among the teachers and the reason they gave was time and extra work. In such a situation, CCA not based on a human rights perspective, is a matter of serious concern.

The notion that the CCA, in schools, is a waste was very prominent. In some teachers, view only studies helped one’s career and life. Their understanding of the CCA was very traditional and this understanding influenced their attitude towards CCA. It seemed, from their responses, that CCA was a burden on the students, as they believed that every student could not do the activities and it was not necessary. Some were good at studies and some at activities so, the CCA should be voluntary. Some of them said that, if the CCA was removed from the school system, it would not make much difference. Moreover, the students would be able to concentrate on their studies. With such an understanding, what kind of CCA can be possible in the school, needs no explanation.

Any relationship between classroom teaching and CCA was, hardly, mentioned by the teachers. They said that there was no time to conduct activities in class. There was a possibility that the class would be a little noisy during activities and some of them said that the principal did not want any noise in class, then how could the activities be done? The teachers said that it was better not to allow activities, in such a situation.
The issue of secularism was, also, touched upon by the teachers. One said that he felt uncomfortable, sometimes, regarding the activities that were happening in the CCA. He said that the school was a secular place, so it was not right to worship ‘Saraswati’. He said that choosing such items for the CCA made it non-secular. He said “hume soch samjhkar gatividhiyon ko chunana chahiye” (we should select activities after appropriate thought). He said it would be quite tough for non-Hindu students to feel a part of the school. He again mentioned, “ap to jante hai schools mein ho kya raha hai. Wahi sab chala a raha hai jo pehle hota tha. Ye badlaav intana asan nahi hai. School mein teacher ki soch bhi aisi hi ho gai hai. Kutch naya to padte nahi, jo kabhi pada the usi mein jee rehne hai” (you are aware of what is happening in schools. The same things are happening which used to happen earlier. This change is not that simple as teachers thinking in the same lines, they do not want to update themselves, and teach what they read years ago). He said that there was a strong need for a good framework for the CCA in school. Along with this, a quality orientation programme was, also, required for school teachers. This indicated that there was a great need to develop CCA based on a human rights perspective.

The entire discussion raised many questions of the existing policies and practices needed to be addressed, in order to give school education a Human Rights perspective.

**Contribution to the Discourse of Human Rights Education and its Implications**

A human rights perspective to education is a framework that integrates the norms, principles, standards and goals of the Human Rights system, into the plans and processes of education. It is characterized by the methods and activities that link the Human Rights system and its inherent notion of an egalitarian society.

Deprivation of education is a Human Rights violation, and the deprivation, in itself, is the root cause of a number of Human Rights violations. Looking at education, through the lens of Human Rights, calls attention to the fact that deprivation of education is something that is, often, imposed on people, as an active act of discrimination and marginalization. It, also, calls attention to what has not been done.
The goal of a human rights perspective to education is simple: to assure quality education to every child that respects and promotes her or his right to dignity and optimum development. Achieving this goal is, however, enormously complex.

Education has to be achieved on the basis of equality of opportunity, where any kind of discrimination is prohibited. But, the analysis, at various levels, shows that this equality was not vibrant, not only in the classrooms but, also, at the policy level. The practice and internal ambiguities of the policies has created problems for a human rights perspective based education.

Measures must be taken to encourage regular school attendance to reduce the dropout rate. But, only such measures are insufficient. It is necessary to remove barriers such as poverty and discrimination and provide education of sufficient quality, in a manner that ensures the children can benefit from it. Only then can human rights perspective based education be thought of.

Even in schools, discipline must be administered in a manner consistent, both, with the child’s dignity and with the Right to Protection from all forms of violence, thus sustaining respect for the child, in an educational environment. Lack of such understanding is clearly visible in the analysis, where the classroom environment suppresses the learners’ voice and participation. This disrespects their dignity in an educational setting.

The aims of education should be defined and applied (which do not exist and did not come up in the analysis) in terms of the potential of each child and the scope of the curriculum, clearly establishing that education should be a preparatory process for promoting and respecting human rights. This approach is elaborated in the general comments on the aims of education, in which child-centered, child-friendly empowering aims are considered, and where education goes beyond the formal schooling to embrace a broad range of life experiences, through which positive development and learning can occur. Such an understanding was not found in the pedagogic processes, in the analysis of the present research.

Education is, today, failing to promote social cohesion, integration and stability. There is a strong need for a human rights perspective based education, which would promote democracy and social progress. Even where the children have access to school, education, of poor quality, can be a reason not to attend school. A human
rights perspective to education, which focuses on quality, can encourage the
development of a school environment, in which the children’s culture, views and
understanding are valued. It includes a focus on the respect for their families and the
values of their society. It can, also, promote an understanding of the other cultures,
which could facilitate an inter-cultural dialogue and respect for the richness of cultural
and linguistic diversity, and the right to celebrate one’s cultural life. In this way, it can
serve to strengthen social cohesion. But, unfortunately, there this perspective needs to
be launched in school education, not only in practice but, also, in the policies.

The analysis indicates that there is a need to build *respect for peace and a non-violent
conflict resolution in school education*. A Human Rights Perspective to education is
founded on the principles of peace and non-violent conflict resolution. In achieving
this goal, schools and communities must create learning environments, which are free
from all kinds of punishment and bullying. This still needs to be assertively actualized
in our school education, from policy to practice. In other words, school education
must promote and build a culture of non-violent conflict resolution. The lessons that
the children learn from school-based experiences, in this regard, can have far-reaching consequences for them personally and for the wider society.

There is, also, a need that school education, at all levels, must *contribute to a positive social transformation*. A human rights perspective to education, that embodies human rights education, empowers children and other stakeholders and represents a major building block, in an effort to achieve social transformation toward right-respecting societies and social justice. The analysis, in the present study, shows a clear need for such a perspective based education.

Though many steps have been suggested by different policies to make education more *cost effective and sustainable*, yet the applicability is not prevalent. To serve the purpose of educational outcomes, it is important that children must be treated with dignity and respect, to develop an inclusive, participatory and responsible education system. Such a system will represent the concerns of the parents, school and so on. In many schools, the failure to adapt to the needs of the children, particularly working children, results in high levels of dropout and repeated grades. Punishment, abuse, discrimination, an irrelevant curriculum, infrastructure, and poor quality of teaching are the common reasons for problems in the learning process. In addition, health issues can diminish the ability of a child to commence and continue schooling. Thus,
lack of such cost effectiveness, especially at the secondary level, creates more issues for school education.

Another outcome of the study is a strong need for capacity building, through school education. By focusing on capacity-building and empowerment, a human rights perspective to education harnesses and develops the capacities of the government to fulfill their obligations and of the individuals to claim their rights and entitlements, which are, rarely, perceived in our society.

The analysis leads to the findings that there are some elements which are necessary, specific and unique to a human rights perspective and need to be used for policy and programming in the education sector:

- Assessment and analysis should identify the claims of Human Rights in education and the corresponding obligations of the government, as well as the immediate, underlying and structural causes of the non-realization of the rights.

- Education must assess the capacity of the individuals, to claim their rights and of the governments, to fulfill their obligations. The strategies are, then, developed to build those capacities.

- There is a need to monitor and evaluate, both the outcomes and processes, guided by the standards and principles of Human Rights.

- Above all, steps should be taken from the recommendations of the national and international Human Rights bodies and mechanisms.

In addition, many elements of effective educational practices are essential, within a human rights perspective. Overall, then, the required steps are: situation assessment and analysis, assessing the capacity for implementation, programme planning, design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The analysis shows that school education has failed to recognize that people cannot be developed, they must develop themselves. Children, young people and other learners, including those who are poor, should be recognized, as the key actors in their own education and development, rather than as passive beneficiaries of services and as commodities.
In a human rights perspective to education, children are the subjects of the rights with ‘claims to’ education and ‘claims from’ the State. Thus, it is the responsibility of education to develop children’s capabilities and fight for their rights. A human rights perspective based education is an important instrument in empowering people to understand, claim and realize their rights.

For an effective education, participation is crucial, both as an end and a means. Participation does not mean that one needs to participate everywhere, but there are defined fields of work where one should be acknowledged and due weightage must be given to them. This includes students in class, teachers in curriculum development and educationists for policy formation. There is, also, a need to make education policies more educational, than political. A clear lack of such practices is visible in our education system.

Empowerment is an important aim of education, which is not appropriately represented in our school education. Empowerment may be an aspect of a strategy, such as capacity-building to develop a human rights perspective based school education, which implies dignity and respect for the individual and acknowledges that empowerment is, both, a necessary strategy and a goal.

Monitoring of outcome and processes, as well as the actual use of information for decision-making, at all levels of education, are very important, which are lacking, somewhere, in our school education system. A human rights perspective implies accountability of those with duties or obligations in fulfilling, respecting and protecting the right to education and the rights within education, at the policy level, as well as at the practical level.

The analysis of school education done by organizations or individuals, other than the government, will increase the quality of education, because it would identify clear accountability in the community and society. But, such initiatives are rare in our school education and, if some are prevalent, they need qualitative improvement.

The basic needs of children should be catered, through education, to give it a human rights perspective. Local ownership is important, which does not exist and developmental support from outside should, always, build on the existing capabilities. Poverty elimination and disparity reduction should be long-term goals for all education development efforts, if a human rights perspective based education system
has to be developed. For this, education should respond to the needs, but must, also, take account of the rights of children, young people and other learners. The stakeholders in education should have ownership of the education programmes, as a right, rather than as an option. All forms of disparities can be tackled with the Right to Education and rights in education. Thus, a clear relationship between future actions and their relationship, to reduce the disparities and eliminate injustices, must be articulated. This may involve, both, institutional and legal reform. The Human Rights standards provide tools and legitimacy for an advocacy for change.

The realization of a human rights perspective based education requires, both, the achievement of desirable outcomes and achieving them through a process that reflects the Human Rights values. A human rights perspective to education calls for simultaneous attention to the outcomes and processes. A shift of focus is needed to lead education towards capacity development and advocacy.

The findings highlight that there is a need for an analysis of the legislative, policy and practice environment. Legislation, in the absence of applicability, is insufficient. In most cases, legislation exists, but problems do exist because of lack of implementation. Various issues exist in this regard which have created problems. These include inadequate resources, lack of capacities in terms of policy implementation, lack of public demand and low levels of information, awareness and training.

The analysis shows that the government initiatives at the practical level, have several problems. In many places, the government doesn’t seem to take responsibility. Very little responsibility has been taken by the government in education. For example, schools, trained teachers, monitoring standards, elimination discrimination and promotion of equal opportunity of access, need to be looked at. Local authorities, schools, parents and communities – also have responsibilities. It is very important to know that their entire role is defined, limited and dependent on government initiatives.

As far as a human rights perspective based education is concerned, an analysis of violations and denials of the rights need to be seriously taken care of. It is, primarily, important that this analysis should deal with immediate, underlying and structural causes of violations. It should be extended to access to education, quality in education and respect for children’s rights within education, which is missing at present. To deal
effectively with this, a participatory approach is required, which, is again, missing. A participatory approach enables the input of parents, teachers, religious leaders, community groups and children and provides opportunities for a positive feedback on its conclusions. The children’s perspectives are indispensable. The views of girls and boys of different ages, within and outside the school, with and without disabilities, and from different castes and religious groups, geographic locations and socio-economic situations, should be taken into account. Such a participatory approach is not present in our present school education and if it does exist in policy documents, it does not exist in practice.

One cannot claim his or her rights, unless they are aware of their rights which they are entitled to have, how they are seen and addressed, how decisions are taken and why, what procedures and mechanism are used in the process and so on. Parents must be made aware of how their children are treated in school, not only behavior wise but, also, how they are taught. If something incorrect happens in this regard, parents must demand a resolution to the problem. Beyond this, parents need to know what exists within the schools. Efforts need to be made to build opportunities for children to claim their rights. There must be increasing opportunities for children to access the media, an increase of tools and strategies to promote children’s access to the media, policymakers and politicians, as well as an evidence of the capacity for effective child advocacy. Empowering rights holders to claim their rights requires a range of strategies, including information, advocacy, capacity-building, parent networking, peer support and technical assistance and the same is true for school education, from accessibility to quality.

Some inefficiency in the system has come up through the analysis, such as lack of resources – financial or human (skills and institutional capacity), lack of authority – legal, moral, spiritual or cultural, lack of responsibility – refusing to accept obligations and demonstrating no political commitment to doing so, lack of coordination between various levels and sectors, and lack of knowledge – for example, illiterate parents may not know that they have an obligation to send their children to school. These need to be revisited with a more human rights perspective based understanding and action plans are required.

The analysis indicates that there is a need to develop some efficient strategies to make a positive change, in the school system. For example, in order to assess the parents’
capacities to fulfill their obligation to send their children to school, states need to analyze not only the real costs associated with schooling but, also, the economic sustainability of the family. Regarding secondary education, only exemption from paying fees is not enough; the government has to make provision for free school uniform, equipment and transportation. They, also, have to eliminate the economic burden on parents for their economic survival, where a child contributes if he/she does not go to school. In situations of crisis, conflict and transition, the obstacles are likely to be, particularly, acute. However, it is possible to build capacity and commitment to sustain or restore access to education, even in the worst situations.

A human rights perspective to education, recognizes that the process of education is as important as the outcome. Indeed, the process, largely, determines the type of outcome, resulting from educational activities. The principles that form a human rights perspective should be seriously taken into consideration in the planning, designing and implementation of school education. A human rights perspective to education has several issues:

- *Lack of initiatives* from the government is very prominent. Thus, there is a need to develop constructive dialogue regarding the governmental obligations for its best fulfillment and to achieve this, there is a need for capacity-building.

- *People (teachers parents and children) are not involved* in the assessment, decision-making and implementation of education.

- *Evidence-based advocacy* has not been used to increase the scale of impact through, for example, replication, legislative and policy change, and resource allocation.

- *The Role of society* is not very visible in programming, implementation and promotion, regarding the responsibilities of the government.

- Special attention is paid to the most *marginalized* groups, but this approach needs to go beyond addressing the poor communities, to identifying the most vulnerable people, among the poor, for example, children with disabilities, internally displaced persons and so on. It needs to develop specific program to reach them.
Besides this, the system, for better sustainability, needs several changes, such as making children capable, so that they can measure whether they are getting education and whether it is quality education, without any violation of their Human Rights---changes in legislation, policy, structures and practices and their impact on the realization of educational rights---changes in favor of quality education for all and the experience of children within it. For example, have more marginalized children been reached and have discriminatory references in the curriculum been removed? Have opportunities for participation and active citizenship of children, as well as parents, in schools and in the wider development of education policy, been realized.

According to a human rights perspective (and otherwise, also), all children have a right to learn. This implies that all children are entitled to be given effective opportunities to learn within and outside the school, not only at the primary level but, also, at the secondary level. It implies that they have responsibilities to ensure their behaviour does not deny that right to other children. The Right to express is a Fundamental Rights of a child and it cannot be denied. A child must get space to speak and should have space to be listened to. For this, there is a need to develop space with children’s help, where mutual respect can be promoted. As teachers have responsibilities for children’s rights, so do children have responsibilities towards the teachers. But, the opposite has been found in the present study, which is of serious concern from a human rights perspective.

As the teachers have responsibility to prepare lessons, teaching, grading work, maintaining positive classroom discipline and creating opportunities for children to express views, so do children carry responsibilities for undertaking their work, collaborating with other children, keeping the classroom in order, so far as it is within their means. Such an understanding needs to be used in school education, in practice, to give it a human rights based perspective.

Respecting one’s rights can develop understanding to respect others rights. It means children will respect others rights, if their own rights are respected. This will make them feel responsible towards others. The findings of the analysis are quite the opposite, where the class environment does not respect the students.

The analysis shows that certain things are important to be kept in mind to give education a human rights perspective where, the first, is access and quality. Wherever resources are limited and only temporary arrangements are made, there is a clear
violation of a child’s right to quality education. Where the pupil teacher ratio is very high, there is lack of material, poor infrastructure quality and untrained teachers, there is violation of the child’s rights to be given quality educated and leads to sacrificing access to education. In these circumstances, access to education is an overriding concern, and it is not acceptable to discriminate among groups of children and offer preferential treatment to some, on the basis of resources. For example, Navodaya Vidayalya, Kendriya Vidayalya, Pratibha Vidayalaya and so on, are examples of such discriminatory policy provisions. Yet, it is very important that efforts should be made to increase the budgetary allocation, to ensure there is access to quality education, for all children. The second is equity and efficiency. This approach is based on the understanding, that education must be available to all children. This availability should, also, carry efficiency, such as how to make all children come and attend school, how to bridge the gap between children who are not in school and the children who are in school. This is needed from the government policy to practice to develop a human rights perspective based school education system. It is important to consult children, parents and communities, to explore what will work most effectively in their environment. This will help build a sense of ownership and collaboration in finding solutions that will best strengthen access to education. The third concern is universality and diversity. It is important to acknowledge that children have a right to be respected, without any kind of differences, such as caste, class, language, religion, region and so on, because it is their Human Right. The respect for differences and the right to be different must be protected. Failure to do so implies a failure of the school system. A, further, concern is teachers’ and children’s rights. It has, sometimes, been argued by teachers, in the present research, that giving respect to the rights of children, diminishes respect for their own rights. The teachers believe that prohibiting physical punishment, or involving students in decisions, makes it more difficult to maintain discipline. This view is derived from an assumption that the rights represent a fixed quantity of entitlement and that giving more to one constituency, necessarily, deprives the other. It is, also, derived from an authoritarian understanding of the teacher-child relationship. Respecting the rights of children does involve some transfer of power. This does not necessitate the loss of rights, on the part of the teachers. Mutual respect leads to better pedagogic processes. Creating a school environment, in which the children’s rights are respected, is more likely to enhance respect for the role of the teacher, although this outcome can only be achieved, if the teachers are appropriately supported by the system. .
It is the states responsibility to make arrangements for the education of each child with all the facilities & without discrimination. Each child must, therefore, be provided with an available place in the school or be given a learning opportunity, together with, appropriately, qualified teachers and adequate and appropriate resources and equipment. The level of provision of secondary education must be consistent, with the number of children entitled to receive it.

The children’s personalities, talents, and mental and physical abilities need to be developed to their fullest potential. A human rights perspective based education will promote respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedom, and prepare children for a responsible life in the spirit of peace, tolerance, equality and friendship, which is absent, at present, in school education. It is, also, important to promote respect for the child, his or her parents and others, cultural identities, language and values. Such an environment will, surely, promote respect for children, evolving capacities to exercise their rights.

The teaching-learning environment, also, needs to be critically reviewed and there is a need for the following:

- Respect for every child, equally, without discrimination on any grounds.
- Helping the child to develop an understanding of the Fundamental Rights with reference to peace, tolerance, quality and togetherness.
- The child’s interest must be, primarily, valued.
- Believing in evolving the capacities of the child.
- Space to express views freely, regarding any concern and giving due weightage to their understanding.
- Acknowledging the Right to Freedom of Religion, conscience, thought and assembly..
- School discipline must keep in mind the dignity of a child, with due respect.
- Physical violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligence, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, should be prohibited in school.

A nationally prescribed curriculum (NCF, 2005) is available for school education, which focuses on fundamental knowledge and skills. It should address all aspects of the child’s development and provide an appropriate explanation of the view of
knowledge and way of learning, consistent with their evolving capacities and needs, at the secondary level. This entire process should be based on a human rights perspective.

The Curriculum should always try to avoid any ambiguities within it. The curriculum must be relevant to the life of the child in the present and in the future. It is, therefore, important to consider the involvement of teachers and students in its development. Curriculum must have a flexible nature to reflect the interests, concerns and needs of the local environment, and to allow the interests of children to be acknowledged, respected and valued, not only on paper but, also, in practice. It is important that this flexibility should not be used to justify hidden agendas.

Measures are needed to introduce a human rights based perspective learning environment, in which the role of the teachers and parents is defined in terms of inspiring and facilitating the children’s confidence, to motivate them for their own learning. To achieve the best potential, children must be helped to develop and acquire abilities to analyze, investigate, create and apply knowledge. It is important to recognize the individual differences among children regarding ability and aptitude, which would also decide the pace of their learning. Their capacities are not only associated with their age but, also, with their personal experiences and with their social life. For this reason, there will be different needs for different children. The classroom environment, and teaching and learning resources, need to enhance a participatory approach to learning, with appropriate tools and resources to reflect these differences. These have not been found in the findings of the present research.

There are expected learning outcomes for each class and if students are not able to achieve these, they cannot be blamed. Moreover, it is required to identify the extra support they need. The teachers need to acknowledge the differences among children and explore ways of handling these differences. Children can work together in mixed group or the same ability group. Older or more able students can be appointed as mentors, to help those who have missed schooling or need additional help. Evidence shows that these approaches benefit, both, the bright and less able children.

Creating a child-friendly school, based on respect for Human Rights, expects a very different form of teaching from one in a traditional school. The teachers will need support in helping learners understand, appreciate and implement the changes.
Teacher-training courses need to include a human rights perspective based design, to build capacities and competencies on such issues as:

- Child-centered education.
- Evolving capacities of children.
- Learning through participation.
- Acting as a learning facilitator.
- Children’s rights, including the principle of non-discrimination.
- Positive forms of discipline and class management.
- Teaching in inclusive environments.
- The participation of children, at all levels, in educational environments.

It is necessary to review, both, initial and in-service training and to develop an ongoing programme to provide all teachers with training on a human rights perspective framework.

The analysis of the present work has identified five essential components for achieving a successful human rights perspective based education: educational policies, policy implementation, the learning environment, teaching and learning, and the professional development of teachers. The analysis shows that some orientation promoting respect for Human Rights is expected is not a matter simply, or even primarily, of the school curriculum. It cannot be taught in an environment where these rights are, consistently, violated. The principals must permeate the ethos of the school with Human Rights understanding. It is important to build a culture in which Human Rights are respected for all members of the school community. Human rights need to be incorporated in all the school policies, through negotiation and involvement of all members of the school community, so that children and teachers are aware of what their rights are, and consequent responsibilities are and, how to exercise them.

Many forms of discrimination exist in every society. Students come to school with different kinds of attitude and understanding, some of these are negative and some are positive. It is the responsibility of the school to provide them opportunities to develop these attitudes and arguments in a positive direction, in favor of humanity. Not only do these attitudes and the behaviour that accompanies them violate the rights of many children, they, also, impede their education. Schools need to take a proactive role in promoting a culture of inclusion and respect for all children, through both the formal
curriculum and the way the school is run. This is not possible only through practice, as this understanding needs to be incorporated in policies, curriculum, textbooks, and the teaching-learning processes, which is absent in the present education system.

Therefore, the primary need is to invest more for systematic, structural changes. Until such reforms are introduced, it is essential to provide support to the most vulnerable groups, through compensatory and positive discrimination programmes.

In conclusion, education cannot be realized without the fulfillment of other’s rights, without the active engagement of all the social actors in taking up their responsibilities and without a vision of social change. This framework, for the realization of children’s right to education and the rights within education, is one step forward towards this goal.

A human rights perspective promotes a holistic approach, that includes both, "Human Rights through education," ensuring that all the components and processes of education—including policies, curricula, textbooks, pedagogy and co-curricular activities—are conducive to the learning of human rights, and "Human Rights Perspective in education," ensuring that the Human Rights, of all members of the school community, are respected.

Although many factors contribute to the effective integration of this perspective in secondary school education, where the focus is required in different dimensions and associated practices is given below:

**Educational policies** are commitments made by the government. Educational policies including legislation, plans of action, curriculum, training policies and so on, should, explicitly, promote a human rights perspective to education. These statements should infuse a human rights perspective, throughout the education system. The policies should be developed in a participatory manner, in cooperation with all the stakeholders and fulfill a country's international treaty obligations to provide and promote quality education, without and beyond biases and internal ambiguities.

**Policy implementation** is another important aspect which needs to be taken care of. To be effective, the policies need a consistent implementation strategy, including measures, such as the allocation of adequate resources and the setting-up of coordination mechanisms that ensure coherence, monitoring and accountability, based on a human rights perspective. Such a strategy should take into account the
multiplicity of the stakeholders, at both the national and the local level, and involve them in putting the educational policy into practice.

*Curriculum* is seen as an official meaning of knowledge and its associated aspects. It develops on certain assumptions about knowledge, learners and learning and, most importantly, the aims of education. It is important that these assumptions must carry an understanding of a human rights perspective so that comprehensive human rights perspective based principles can be developed to guide the curricular needs of school education.

It is also crucial for the *textbooks* and their content to provide appropriate weightage to a human rights perspective, while selecting and rejecting any content or concept to be included in the books. Only including some topic/ content of Human Rights will not solve the purpose. The need is to include a human rights perspective throughout the textbooks, where content, language, examples, explanation and so on, become crucial. Developing the textbook on the understanding of a human rights perspective, is essential.

The *learning environment* plays a major role in the students’ learning. A human rights perspective emphasizes an environment where Human Rights are practiced and lived in the daily life of the whole school community, along with cognitive learning. A human rights perspective includes the social and emotional development of all those involved in the teaching-learning process. A human rights perspective based environment respects and promotes Human Rights of all the school actors and is characterized by mutual understanding, respect and responsibility. It enables children to express their views freely and to participate in school life, which make help them in the future role they would play in society.

Introducing or improving a human rights perspective requires using a holistic approach to *teaching and learning* that reflects human rights values. Starting as early as possible, the Human Rights concepts and practices need to be integrated into all aspects of education. For example, curriculum content, text books, objectives and methodologies should be democratic and participatory. All material and textbooks need to be consistent with the Human Rights values.

*Coo-curricular activities* have proved to be a tool to promote a human rights understanding in learners. It is required that the entire system of CCA must be
developed on a human rights perspective where, from administrative responsibilities to actual practices, everything should incorporate a human rights perspective. This would involve selection of activities, maximum participation of learners, motivational attitude towards students and events, establishing linkages between the CCA and classroom practices and so on.

Education and professional development of the school personnel: For the school to serve as a model of Human Rights learning and practice, all teachers and staff need to be able to transmit and model Human Rights values. Education and professional development must foster the teachers’ knowledge about, commitment to and motivation for Human Rights. Furthermore, as stake-holders, the school personnel need to work and learn in the context of respect for their own dignity and rights.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

- Studying Science and Languages from a human rights perspective can be beneficial, as science has a lot to contribute to society and this contribution can be studied, with special reference to education.
- The nature of assessment in school education from a human rights perspective can be a contributory work in the discourse of education.
- Analyzing primary school education, from a human rights perspective, can provide a comprehensive field for research.
- The child’s agency in the class and school can be studied, with reference to the importance of the identity and dignity of a child.
- An exploratory study can be undertaken to understand the interface between a National Human Rights and an International Human Rights perspective, with reference to education.