
CMDR Monograph Series No. - 45

**National Social Science Policy (NSSP),
2003**

A Draft for Consideration

Prepared by
**Centre for Multi-disciplinary Development Research
(CMDR),
Dharwad**

CENTRE FOR MULTI-DISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH
Jubilee Circle, DHARWAD-580001, Karnataka, India
Ph : 091-0836-2447639, Fax : 2447627
E-mail : cmdr@sancharnet.in

National Social Science Policy (NSSP), 2003

A Draft for Consideration

Prepared by
Centre for Multi-disciplinary Development Research (CMDR),
Dharwad

1. Preamble

1.1 Social Science in India has a rich heritage, encompasses a vast number of disciplines and is functionally vibrant, in terms of its research and teaching. Two great streams of ideas, values and methodology, one traditional and the other modern, characterize the current field of knowledge in Social Science and its practice in the country. Unfortunately, however, the two streams have flowed separately for the larger part and period of time, and there has been little attempt to institutionalize linkages between the major functional activities (research and teaching) of the two, thereby providing little scope for mutual enrichment. Consequently, though developments in the modern body of knowledge in Social Science and its practice appears to have overtaken its traditional and indigenous counterpart in terms of 'spread', it lacks the latter's philosophy of adapting to,

and evolving in consonance with, the ethos and norms common to India's pluralistic culture and society. *The National Social Science Policy, 2003 provides for a common platform and with institutionalized linkages whereby there is scope for mutual enrichment between the traditional and the modern, the indigenous and the foreign.*

1.2 Even within each of the two bodies of knowledge, different strands have emerged relating to priorities, approaches and applications, across regions of the country as well as for the different constituent disciplines of Social Science. Consequently, there exists great heterogeneity in responses – spatially as well as discipline-based – to commonly felt needs with little scope for an integrated and holistic approach. At the same time, and apart from the common core, each constituent

discipline and each region of the country have unique characteristic features that may require diversity in focus and approach to the study and practice of Social Science. *The National Social Science Policy, 2003 would endeavour to establish unity in diversity in the study and practice of Social Science across regions of the country and among the constituent disciplines.*

1.3 Social Science teaching and research are functionally complementary processes contributing to the better understanding of social problems as well as their remediation. While research seeks to expand the frontiers of information and the capacity to analyze it, teaching is the process to disseminate, enlighten and empower. Only when there exist functional and dynamically evolving linkages between the two processes, research becomes socially relevant and teaching is effective. In contrast to the situation in case of natural and physical sciences, Social Science

teaching and research in India suffer from the lack of two-way linkages, at the institutional level as well as at the level of the curriculums of the constituent disciplines. *The National Social Science Policy, 2003 envisages an integrated research and teaching activity for the constituent disciplines of Social Science with a matching of needs and approaches and corresponding support structures.*

1.4 Social Science is a live field of knowledge, undergoing changes as the society, the polity and the economy changes. Since the people and their behaviour are not a static phenomenon the contents and the approach to the study of social sciences would be continuously changing. In this background, it may be incorrect to visualize a one-time formulation of National Social Science Policy. *There must be provisions of modification and revisit to the National Social Science Policy at regular intervals.*

2. Structure of NSSP, 2003

The National Social Science Policy, 2003 covers the following aspects:

- a. Objectives of National Social Science Policy, 2003,
- b. Teaching of Social Science and NSSP, 2003,
- c. Research in Social Science and NSSP, 2003,
- d. Integrating Teaching of and Research in Social Science,
- e. Integrating the Focus of Constituent Disciplines in Social Science,
- f. Genderisation of Social Science,
- g. Integrating Action Component in Teaching and Research in Social Sciences
- h. Role of Different Apex Bodies like UGC, ICSSR, ICHR, ICAR, etc. in Implementing the Contents of NSSP, 2003,
- i. Role of Micro Level Institutions – Universities, Research Institutes, Colleges and other Educational and Research Bodies in Translating the Vision of NSSP, 2003 into Action and in the Process of Providing Feedback,
- j. Role of Different Professional Bodies like Subject Associations in Translating the Vision and Providing Feedback,
- k. Interfacing National Social Science Policy with National Natural Science Policy,
- l. Role of the Government in respect of Actions relating to NSSP, 2003,
- m. Frequency of revisiting the National Social Science Policy.

3.a Objectives of NSSP, 2003

The objectives of National Social Science Policy may be stated as below:

- i. To develop a vision document for Social Science teaching and research in the country covering, say, a rolling period of one and half to two decades,
- ii. To indicate the action points for making Social Science teaching and research, more relevant to the country,
- iii. To integrate action component with research and teaching of social sciences with a purpose to making social sciences more relevant at a micro level and thereby give a sense of participation to researchers, teachers and students.
- iv. To indicate the thrust areas of different social sciences in such a way that the teaching and research would extend the respective frontiers of knowledge,
- v. To address intra and inter-regional differences relating to priorities, methods and applications in the teaching and research of constituent Social Science disciplines

- vi. To institutionalize linkages between the traditional and modern systems of teaching and research in Social Science,
- vii. To establish standards of quality in the teaching and research of Social Science,
- viii. To encourage the genderisation of Social Science teaching and research so that they function as processes of women enlightenment and empowerment,

3.b Teaching of Social Science and NSSP, 2003 – Value-based, Multi-disciplinary and Innovative

At a time when our society is beginning to feel the strain of increasing materialism and consumerism, there is a strong need for refreshing our values and firm up the roots of our culture. While it is true that there can be no growth and development and isolation, it is also required from us that we know which windows to open to receive fresh ideas and perspectives from foreign shores that do not pollute our culture and conflict with our values. Teaching of Social Science should play a pro-active role in checking ‘*mind pollution*’ among the younger generation and for this there is a need for unanimity among the academia on the *values* that should underlie the designing of curriculums and teaching methods. It may

be worth pursuing the idea of *National Curriculum Design Principles* of Social Science teaching in the country, based on a set of agreed upon values, with sufficient flexibility in its design to accommodate the regional and cultural diversity of the country.

Teaching of Social Science needs to move out of the classroom to be effective. It is imperative that a system is institutionalized and curriculums redesigned such that the pursuit of learning Social Science takes one out of the confines of classrooms and individual disciplines. As in the case of Physical and Natural Science, there is a need for *innovations* in the teaching of Social Science that would make possible ‘*learning by doing*’. New experiments in teaching can be visualized such as economics laboratories for teaching economics (e.g., Clay Models of Three Dimensional Graphs, project work in banking with actual interaction with the Bankers, project work in public finance with actual interaction with Dept. of finance at the State and the Central govt. level, etc.), integrating the anthropological methods of understanding the processes of social change, etc.

3.c Research in Social Science and NSSP, 2003 – *Socially relevant and Quality controlled*

Current research in Social Science in the country is highly diffused, underrated and disregarded. While there are sporadic attempts for identifying the *thrust areas* for research in Social Science, such attempts are not either taken seriously by the researchers or implemented seriously by the research promoting bodies. Of course, the autonomy of the individual researchers and research institutions should not be hampered, but at the same time, the need for *social relevance* of Social Science research cannot be overlooked.

Research in Social Science is being under-rated because of the wide spread decline in its quality. Broad *norms* (e.g., social relevance, originality, accessibility, etc.) may be developed that would enable the identification of meritorious works in Social Science research. Apex research promoting bodies should bear the responsibility of disseminating such research and even promoting *national level debates*

among researchers on research in the frontier areas of Social Science.

Regional Social Science Associations and the Universities Research Institutes and colleges of the region might work out the focal areas of each of the social sciences relevant to their respective region. An institutional mechanism has to be evolved to identify the common elements of the focal areas of regional social science initiatives so that they can contribute to the formulation of the National Social Science Policy.

3.d Integrating Teaching of and Research in Social Science – *Mutually enriching*

In view of information revolution, different disciplines of knowledge are coming closer and the students and researchers in particular and people in general are developing an integrated view of their roles. The mechanism of interface of the study and practice of Social Science needs to recognize this reality and work out concrete modalities of institutionalizing an integrated *mutually enriching system* of teaching of and research in Social Science.

3.e Integrating the Focus of Constituent Disciplines in Social Science – *Holistic and Indigenous*

Since each of the individual disciplines of Social Science (such as sociology, political science, economics, psychology, history, education, law, etc.) have a different focus, it is necessary to identify and institutionalize an approach of integrating these focal thrusts so that a *holistic* view of Social Science is developed in the country. A regular multi-disciplinary interaction at different levels and in different forums may have to be visualized for this purpose.

The main focus of such integration has to be to develop an *indigenous* Social Science discipline, borrowing from the experiences of the people of the country itself. At present, even the examples quoted in Social Science reading materials refer to bushels, Jones, etc. Rediscovery of our rich ancient heritage and integrating the traditional with the modern would help indigenizing ideas, values and methodology in Social Science teaching and research in the country.

3.f Genderisation of Social Science – *Empowering women*

Women empowerment requires a revolutionary change in our ideas, thoughts, perceptions and attitudes. Much of Social Science involves the study of these impulses of human behaviour. The *genderisation* of Social Science study and its practice would be an *empowering process* through which the social gain would be in terms of better and wider understanding of the issues/impulses underlying women deprivation and degradation in our society. The gender dimension needs to be distinctively introduced and emphasized in the teaching of many of the accepted theories of social change, development paradigms and study of human relations. Research by women social scientists and on women related issues should be encouraged.

3.g Integrating Action Component in Teaching and Research in Social Sciences – *Making Social Sciences more challenging and Relevant*

NSSP should recognize the importance of action component in social

science teaching and research so that the sub disciplines under social science are not dubbed as arm chair disciplines and all the stakeholders- students, teachers and researchers feel the sense of participation in their respective involvements. For different sub disciplines the *modus operandi* of integration of action component might vary. However NSSP should initiate steps to spell out various aspects of effecting such integration.

3.h Role of Different Apex Bodies like UGC, ICSSR, ICHR, ICAR, etc. in Implementing the Contents of NSSP, 2003 – Consensus and Coordination

Since planning of teaching and research in social sciences comes under the purview of different apex bodies, a *national consensus* has to be evolved regarding their respective roles in promoting and implementing NSSP, 2003. At present, there is much to be desired so far as the inter apex body coordination in this connection is concerned. The initiatives may begin with regard to recognition to institutions for Ph.D. programmes, UGC and ICSSR fellowships, UGC and ICSSR sponsored research

projects, etc. A mechanism for examining the *areas of coordination* needs to be evolved in terms of say quarterly meetings of a representative Committee of the apex bodies, interaction of the institutions coming under each of these apex bodies, etc.

Moreover, a balanced view of teaching and research responsibilities of social scientists in the country and their *coordinated promotion* by the apex bodies will create better ground conditions for attracting greater resources to Social Science teaching and research activities. The apex bodies of UGC and ICSSR have a great role to play in this respect.

ICSSR and ICMR joint panel has been already constituted and some research projects are jointly sponsored under the aegis of this panel. However, there is much to be desired so far as the degree of dynamism and proactive initiative of its working is concerned. So far as other apex bodies are concerned there does not seem to be any effective coordination in their functioning or the effects of such coordination, if it all coordination does exist, are not felt at the micro level teaching and

research. NSSP needs to spell out areas and modalities of coordination among the apex bodies of different disciplines.

3.i Role of Micro Level Institutions – Universities, Research Institutes, Colleges and other Educational and Research Bodies in Translating the Vision of NSSP, 2003 into Action and in the Process of Providing Feedback – Two Way Linkages

The role of micro level institutions in implementing the contents of NSSP, 2003 can hardly be over emphasized. What is thought at the apex level has to filter down to the individual institutions. Various experiments in teaching and research at the micro institutional level can provide rich feedback for formulating NSSP in the next cycle.

3.j Role of Different Professional Bodies like Subject Associations in Translating the Vision and Providing Feedback – Crossing borders

The professional bodies and subject associations at present seem to function in a mechanical way of promoting regular 'get

together' of the professionals of different Social Science disciplines. Since large amount of resource use is involved in the functioning of these bodies, a well thought out mechanism needs to be set in motion for achieving greater mileage for the integration of various Social Science disciplines. Such an initiative may provide rich feed back for NSSP for the next cycle. *Inter disciplinary and multi disciplinary meets* may be one of several ways of achieving a better mileage at the micro level.

3.k Interfacing National Social Science Policy with National Natural Science Policy – Meaningful collaboration

While the Govt. of India has already adopted a National Natural Science Policy, it is possible to work out the modalities of interfacing the components of National Social Science Policy with National Natural Science Policy. Areas such as medical sociology, medical anthropology, economics of health and medical care, economics of environmental issues, etc. have already emerged as outcomes of this interface in social sciences. A concerted effort to identify such areas of possible interface, initiatives

to develop research agenda for extending the frontiers of knowledge, developing teaching and learning material for this purpose may be the action points in this connection. Apex bodies of the respective disciplines should develop mechanisms for *meaningful collaboration* in this regard.

3.1 Role of the Government in respect of Actions relating to NSSP, 2003 – Proactive and Inclusive

There is much to be desired with regard to the response of the government in respect of promotion of Social Science teaching and research. The role of the government should not be limited to resource allocation alone. Rather, it is essential that the government and its different implementing agencies take up a *proactive role* in using the services of social scientists in the country. There should be a system of utilizing the output from Social Science research as valuable *inputs* to the development planning process in the country.

In India, there is no effective mechanism of involving social scientists in

governmental policy implementation. In the same way, there is no mechanism of involving government officials in Social Science research. Researchers feel frustrated on account of this government indifference in the same way probably as the government officials do with regard to Social Science research. From this point of view, there is a need to evolve and establish concrete measures for the *mutual involvement* of Social Science researchers and policy makers in developmental research.

3.m Frequency of revisiting the National Social Science Policy

On the basis of past experience, the need for changes in the focus of different sub disciplines of social sciences is felt at different time intervals. For example, in the case of disciplines of sociology, frequency of revisit to the contents may be longer than in the case of disciplines like economics, political science, etc. However, by and large, a quinquennial revisit to the contents of National Social Science Policy, 2003 may be considered feasible.

4. National Social Science Research Policy (NSSRP) ?

National Social Science Policy (NSSP) also consists of National Social Science Research Policy (NSSRP). While there are sporadic attempts for identifying the research thrust areas for social sciences particularly more directly policy relevant economics, such attempts are not either taken seriously by the researchers or implemented seriously by the research promoting bodies. Of course, the autonomy of the individual researchers and research institutions should not be hampered with the need for social relevance of social science research cannot be overlooked. From this point of view, the apex bodies like UGC, ICSSR, ICMR, etc need to have regular interactions for evolving NSSRP.

The role of foreign funding in social science research promotion has to be considered with an element of caution since

it is likely to distort the very direction and contents of social science research in the country. It is also likely to affect the indigenization process of social sciences. The local funding institutions need to promote social sciences in general and social science research in particular in such a way that the dependence on foreign funding is minimized. At present, in view of the serious resource crunch, the research institutions are compelled to indulge in *project chase*, which is not conducive to relevant social science promotion. The role of governmental institutions in countering the project chase is quite significant.

NSSP thus provides a tremendous opportunity to clarify our approach towards teaching, research and action in different sub disciplines of social sciences and also to specify the responsibilities of different stakeholders, apex bodies and policy makers in respect of social science promotion and orientation.

