UNIT 3 PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF TEACHING-LEARNING EVS

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

The core subjects at the primary stage of teaching learning include language, Mathematics and Environmental Studies (EVS). It is through the teaching-learning
of EVS that the child is helped to understand the processes and phenomena in the environment through integrating the spirit of science and social science subjects. This makes EVS a composite study area unlike the conventional science and social studies.

As you have learnt in Unit 2, the objectives of teaching-learning of EVS shall be realised by emphasising that learning of EVS has to raise awareness and understanding of children about their environment, build their capacities to develop a holistic vision of the environment, to participate in its protection and conservation.

In this unit, you will explore the unique characteristics of EVS and their implications for structuring the learning experiences for children. The Unit will also help you explore the provisions made in the curriculum for effective teaching-learning of EVS.

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the characteristics of ‘Environmental Studies’ as a composite subject.
- justify the implications of these characteristics for planning teaching-learning experiences
- use appropriate teaching-learning strategies for transacting EVS

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF EVS

Environmental Studies at primary level possesses some special characteristics which other subjects do not possess. It is somewhat different from other subjects in the following manner:

3.2.1 EVS is a Composite Area

EVS at the primary stage is a single study area. It is visualised as a composite study area drawing learning experiences/contents from physical, biological, chemical, social, cultural and other dimensions of study. The contents are organised around curricular themes like Food, Shelter, Water, Travel, etc. This thematic organisation is intended to correlate two or more disciplines of study or school subjects. This helps children to develop an inter-related and connected understanding of the subject studied rather than a fragmented view of it. For each theme, a web of possible connections of concepts and skills are suggested, which are to be developed over the period of primary grades. You will study more about these connections in the next unit.
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Through establishing such connections and relationships through their immediate experiences, children develop abilities to comprehend more abstract concepts and relationships in environmental realm at higher levels of education.

3.2.2 EVS is Contextual

The context for EVS is the environment. EVS orients children to this. Since environment differs from place to place, the examples, events, practices used to teach environmental understanding will differ. A dated event in human history and the associated details and explanations will remain the same whether it is being discussed in a hill station or in a coastal town. So irrespective of whether your school is in Jammu & Kashmir or in Tamil Nadu or in Mizoram, your explanation on the significance of 1857 in India’s movement for independence will be the same. Similarly a scientific explanation, say ‘properties of water’ will be the same, irrespective of the time and location where a teacher is explaining it.

This may not be the case with EVS. Most concepts in teaching-learning of EVS will vary from place to place and time to time. For example, teaching and learning about ‘food habits’ cannot follow the same plan and approach in different locations. So it is important for you to appreciate that EVS, as an area of teaching-learning, is extremely contextual. It is so because the perceptions and understanding of environment, problems and issues change with reference to the context—from place to place, time to time and even community to community. You as a teacher need to emphasise it before the learners while dealing with teaching of EVS.

3.2.3 EVS is Learner Centred

You as a teacher dealing with EVS need not focus much on your dialogue. Learners must not be passive listener of your talk and you need their appreciation. Rather focus of appreciation need to reversed.

EVS is Learner-centred and not teacher centred. It means that children’s learning forms the core of the classroom transaction rather than teaching. This is based on the view that each child comes to school with his/her own perception and understanding of the world around. The child correlates this basic understanding with objects and experiences in the environment as he/she goes along in his/her journey and expands his/her knowledge base. Each child, therefore, has the background and the potential ability to formulate new knowledge of his/her surrounding/environment. By organising appropriate learning experiences or situations in EVS for children to explore, observe and expand their vision of their environment/world around them, they could be introduced to higher order learning and behaviours. Such an approach will have a greater engagement of the child in the learning process with longer retention of what is learnt.
3.2.4 No Right, No Wrong

Recall your school days and student life. On how many occasions were you actually encouraged to challenge a statement in the text-book, or even an example that your teacher may have cited, which you did not agree with at all? Can you recall many such cases? Perhaps not! It is so because our present classroom situation and the associated teaching-learning processes, very often, do not tend to encourage a learner to question and debate. The learner is prohibited to do so because of many reasons may be personnel, psychological, emotional or even moral. We have exemplified in the previous point that teaching-learning of and for ‘Environment’ are contextual. Hence no single viewpoint or opinion may remain valid in all situations.

As a teacher, your role is to encourage your learner to probe and question what s/he is reading and discovering. Even you may have to instigate and provoke learners to raise question as and when it comes to their mind. You therefore need to support such learning processes through appropriate techniques which encourage self-driven learning process. It is also important for you as a teacher to help your learners understand that there are no absolute ‘rights and wrongs’ in EVS, and that an ‘action’ which seems very positive today may be discovered to be very environment-unfriendly in a different place, location and context.

3.2.5 ‘Values’ are an Integral Component of EVS

Recall from Unit 2 that understanding of EVS among the young learners needs to be coupled with positive environmental attitudes and values. What are these values in EVS that need to be developed in children? Of course many of these are the much accepted ‘universal values’, but then a learners own home (social and natural) environment, the process of upbringing, her beliefs and faith (social) system, etc. together define her values. Please note that these values are integral to EVS because EVS learning places more focus on the affective domain of a child’s psychology!

Respect for all life forms, appreciation of diversity (biological, social, cultural and religious, etc.), accepting differences, openness to multiple viewpoints, peace, compassion and tolerance, etc. are values integral to EVS. An understanding of such environmental values will help you as a teacher to plan and organise appropriate learning experiences for fostering and nurturing them in children.

It is also important for you to note that ‘values’ which individuals should have not be tagged as ‘good or bad’ during the teaching-learning process. It is so, because as stated before, all values have a context (of my environment, my social background, faith in the system etc. It is my context from which I derive my ‘values’. As a teacher it is therefore important for you to make an effort to understand the ‘context of an individual learner’ in order to help her or him review her/his value system.
Check Your Progress-1

State true or false and also correct the incorrect statements:

a. EVS is a single subject.

b. As a teacher of EVS, my role can be best performed if I specialise and focus on only one subject.

c. Concepts in EVS and their interpretation for learners are contextual.

d. As a teacher of EVS, I must pay attention only to the ‘cognitive’ growth and development of the child.

e. As a good teacher of EVS, I must ensure that those values which I practise in life need be practised by my learners as well.

3.3 HOW DO CHILDREN LEARN?

So far we have learnt that EVS has the following unique features:

1. It is ‘composite’ in nature
2. EVS is ‘contextual’
3. EVS is child-centred
4. There are no absolute ‘right or wrong’ in EVS
5. ‘Values’ are integral to EVS

It is essential to understand the meaning of saying of some great philosophers before trying to understand the learning process adopted by children. To summarise the view of a few:

Children are interested in real-life tasks and activities, pretending and fantasy, and rules and rituals. —Friedrich Froebel

School life should grow out of home life; teachers should know their children well, observe them and then plan, organise and document a purposeful curriculum. —John Dewey

The role of the parent and teacher is to be aware of these sensitive periods and design the environment to give the child the full opportunity to concentrate on those things the child is interested in—children learn from the environment around them: —Maria Montessori

The process of learning should be as far as possible a pleasurable one and not laborious. —Mahatma Gandhi
Educational thought lays emphasis on holistic development of the children and education paced according to the needs and capacities of the child

– Sri Aurobindo

The child learns so easily because he has a natural gift, but adults, because they are tyrants, ignore natural gifts and say that children must learn through the same process that they learned by. We insist upon forced mental feeding and our lessons become a form of torture. This is one of man’s most cruel and wasteful mistakes.

– Tagore

For several centuries now, educationists, doctors and interested parents, have observed the behaviours and responses of children to understand their learning styles better. As you know, this has been a field of great research and analysis for a couple of centuries now. Researches have established that Children learn:

- Differently from adults
- Through real-life contexts
- By doing
- From their surroundings and environment
- By constructing and re-constructing meanings from experiences in their environment

These insights have significantly influenced the way curriculum are designed and developed all over the world. As you have already learnt, NCF 2005, to a very great extent, is influenced by the theory of social constructivism.

The NCF 2005 also reiterates these points:

- All children are naturally motivated to learn and are capable of learning.
- Making meaning and developing the capacity for abstract thinking, reflection and work are the most important aspects of learning.
- Children learn in a variety of ways through experience, making and doing things, experimentation, reading, discussion, asking, listening, thinking and reflecting, and expressing oneself in speech, movement or writing—both individually and with others. They require opportunities of all these kinds in the course of their development.

As a practicing teacher you have this wonderful opportunity to observe your students keenly to re-affirm learning processes and style of children, especially in the age group of 8-10 years. However, you will be able to make these observations meaningful, only when you inform yourself as a Teacher why should I learn about how children learn’. As educators, one can have very different answers to this question. However, one’s answer to this question may largely
influence the way one perceives, understands and transacts EVS. Your answer to this question will also help you appreciate the pedagogical considerations for EVS.

**Young learns differently from adults:** adults learn mostly with a cognitive approach emphasising on learning of concepts, principles and problem solving and gain mastery over the content area. He/she understand the benefit need be derived from learning areas and focusing on transfer of knowledge seriously. The need of the adult decides the area of learning and he/she learns with intention and formulate knowledge. Whereas the child is not very serious willing learner. Situation influence him/her to formulate knowledge by interacting with environment forces acting around. Influence of superior, peer and teachers, natural inquisitiveness and curiosity create learning situations for young learners mostly in societal contexts. Trial and error, habituation, intuition also play role in his/her learning so as to formulation and application of knowledge in identical situations. Focus need be more on affective domain to create motivation and interest so as to bring attitudinal change to learn in young learners. Emphasis on bring real life context, engaging learner in psychomotor activities, drawing surrounding environment in formulating knowledge and providing them learning experiences in their own environment.

### Check Your Progress-2

a. Find the missing one -

Researches have established learning process of children:

i. ________________

ii. *through real life contexts*

iii. *by doing*

iv. *from their surroundings environment*

v. *by constructing and re-constructing meaning from experiences in their environment.*

### 3.4 PEDAGOGICAL ORGANIZATION FOR TEACHING-LEARNING OF EVS

The above section helped you understand how children learn? What implications does this understanding bring for teaching-learning of EVS? In this section, we will help you explore connections between the nature of EVS, the way children learn and pedagogical strategies that can facilitate effective teaching-learning of EVS. Thus, in this section of the Unit, we will thus consolidate the various discussions so far and realise their significance for a teacher of EVS.
3.4.1 Let Child’s Environment be his/her Learning Laboratory

For you as an EVS teacher, it is important that you creatively utilise the immediate environment (school and community) of the child as the learning lab. The major advantages of this are:

1. It takes care of the fact that Environment is a ‘composite’ subject. It is so because your student is all the time operating in real-life situation and hence is observing and learning in a manner which is seamless and not limited by the boundaries of science or social science.

2. Learning through real-life processes and experiences is an effective way of learning among children. By using school and local environment as the learning ground, you ensure that your students follow their naturally preferred way of learning, thereby enhancing their learning, knowledge and competence.

3. It is said that learnings made from immediate environment and from real life experiences remains with the individual for a longer period of time. Also such learnings are easier to be recalled and applied in the later stage of life.

4. Bring in social context, and encourage cooperation and collaboration based learning within and outside the class.

3.4.2 Facilitate Exploration from ‘Known to Unknown’ and ‘Coincrete to Abstract’

In the earlier years, it is said to be more effective to ensure that new concepts and information is explained ‘in relation to’ a known one. It is so because during this period the ability to learn abstract concepts is rather limited. Thus new information is recognised and understood by the child ‘in relation’ to an existing one.

When appropriate connections and linkages are made in the child’s mind about his/her own immediate experiences, he/she is enabled to understand more abstract or sophisticated concepts and arguments later.

An example of this from the current EVS syllabus is the theme on ‘Plants’. Traditionally in many textbooks, the concept of ‘Plants’ is introduced to young
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children by providing explanations on ‘typical parts of a plant’. However, in the current syllabus, keeping in mind the development and progression of concepts from concrete to abstract, the concept of ‘plants’ is first introduced through the theme of ‘Food’ which is familiar, starting with what plants do children eat; and what parts of a plant do they eat, etc.

The advantages of such an instructional design for EVS are that:

- Children learn about their environment through their environment.
- Locate new learnings on a tested and well developed ground.

3.4.3 Design Real-Life Based Learning in your Classrooms

Imagine yourself discussing availability of freshwater in a classroom in a remote village in Lohardaga or Dumka in Jharkhand. How would you compare it if you were to deal with the same concept with students in a school in Ranchi? Would your approach towards the topic remain the same? Perhaps not!

This pedagogical strategy of bringing about real-life examples in the classroom leads to effective transaction of EVS. It has several advantages:

- Locale-specific examples become an effective way of teaching-learning of EVS.
- Since ‘environment’ begins with me and my immediate surroundings, this approach of learning about EVS ensures effective results.
- EVS concepts get located in the environmental, social and cultural context of a child, ensuring that you are not alienating him/her from the reality, rather you are helping him/her connect information in the ‘textbook’ with that of her own life and surrounding.
- This helps you as a teacher to ‘teach EVS contextually’.

With the younger age groups you can facilitate real-life based processes by encouraging children to explore and probe at home—with parents, grand-parents and other relevant members in their community. It is for this reason that when you read the NCERT EVS Syllabus (Annexed), the pedagogical organisation of EVS is ‘web-based’ which moves outwards over the three years:

“…it gradually extends the child's understanding of her world, beginning from the immediate ‘self’ to include her family, the neighbourhood, the locality and also the country. Thus by the time the child reaches Class V, she is able to see her ‘self’ in the larger context—as being a part of community, the country and also more tacitly, as located in this world.”

NCF 2005: Syllabus for Classes at the Elementary Level; Pg 92
**Themes for a Child Centered and Integrated Approach**

This syllabus web has been developed within a child centered perspective of themes that provide a common interface of issues in social studies, sciences and environmental education. The syllabus for Classes III-V is woven around six common themes given below; the predominant theme on ‘Family and Friends’ encompasses four sub-themes:

1. **Family and Friends:**
   - 1.1 Relationships;
   - 1.2 Work and Play;
   - 1.3 Animals;
   - 1.4 Plants

2. **Food;**

3. **Shelter;**

4. **Water;**

5. **Travel;**

6. **Things We Make and Do**

The syllabus web moves outward over the three years; it gradually extends the child’s understanding of its world, beginning from the immediate ‘self’ to include its family, the neighbourhood, the locality and also the country. Thus by the time the child reaches Class V, she is able to see her ‘self’ in the larger context – as part of a community, the country and also, more tacitly, as located in this world. Indeed, in some flights of fancy the syllabus even goads the young child to ride on a spacecraft and leap beyond the earth, into outer space, that may yet not be comprehensible but is certainly fascinating for her.

Thus, for instance, the theme on ‘**Food**’ begins in Class III with ‘**cooking**’, ‘**eating in the family**’, about what we eat and what others eat, what animals eat, etc. It then moves on in Class IV to how food is grown, what different plants they may have seen, how food reaches us, etc. In Class V children discuss who grows it, the hardships farmers may face, while staying grounded to the reality of our own pangs of hunger or the plight of people who do not get food. In addition, ‘**when food gets spoil**’ explores spoilage and preservation of food, while changes in food habits and the crops grown are analysed through the experiences of elders/grandparents. Finally ‘**our mouth - tastes and even digests food**’ sees how the saliva makes food taste sweet on chewing, while ‘**food for plants?**’ also introduces the idea of some curious insect eating plants.
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The theme on ‘Travel’ was developed to help the child on this journey of ideas, of expanding social and physical spaces, into newer and unfamiliar terrains of often mind-boggling and no less fascinating diversity. In Class III the theme encourages children to look at their own journeys, if any, and to see how older people in their family may have travelled in earlier times, as they also hear of accounts of how people travel today in a desert, through forests, in the hills, or in big cities. Moreover, it also suggests a story as a ‘resource’, to bring into the classroom the experiences of a child of a migrating family and the problems she faces in the process of her schooling. Such narratives suggested as ‘resources’ are meant to provide creative opportunities of bringing in experiences of other children/people, who may be very different, but whom children can relate to. This can be done through stories, posters, plays, films, and other media. In Class V the theme ‘Travel’ takes children through the ‘rough and tough’ terrain of the Himalayas with, perhaps, the story of Bachhendri Pal, who hoists the national flag after a trying expedition, while they can also be encouraged to design a flag for their own school.

This theme also takes them on a ‘ride on a spacecraft’ into space, from where for the first time they see the aerial view of the earth, and being no less than a Rakesh Sharma or a Kalpana Chawla, each child is asked to give an interview to the Prime Minister of India about what they see from there! The exercise of looking at aerial views is developed through different views of school, where different perspectives get introduced. It is linked to the concept of mapping, which they begin in Class III through a basic two-dimensional representation of their classroom, and by the time they reach Class V they can read and draw simple aerial views of their locality or city.

‘Plants’ and ‘Animals’ as Part of the Theme ‘Family and Friends’

‘Plants’ and ‘Animals’ have consciously been included under the theme of ‘Family and Friends’ to highlight how humans share a close relationship with them and to also provide a holistic and integrated scientific and social perspective of studying them. Traditionally ‘plants’ or animals’ are presented as autonomous categories, seen purely from the perspective of science. Here an attempt is made to locate them in a social and cultural context, and also to see how the lives and livelihoods of some communities, such as the gujjars, musahars or ‘pattal’-makers, are closely connected with specific animals or plants. Moreover, in the universe of young children narratives of animals and plants play a significant role, and they can relate well even to the animated characters perceived as ‘family and friends’. It is a challenge to transcend conventional boundaries of scientific disciplines to try and relook at the notions of, say, ‘plants’, ‘animals’, ‘food’, or ‘our body’ from a child’s perspective. In fact, some scientific categories are seen to be too formal and counter-intuitive, and perhaps even ‘reductionist’, for the

Notes

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child to understand. Conventionally biologists divide living things broadly into two categories ‘plants’ and ‘animals’. The idea of ‘plants’ is considered simple enough to be presented in primary school along with ‘parts of a plant’, ‘functions of the parts of the plant’, etc.

But why should this way of looking at a plant be considered more ‘natural’ or even desirable for a child? In fact, extensive research across the world has shown that young children find it too abstract to make a distinction between living and non-living, or to divide the living world between plants and animals. Despite considerable exposure to science teaching in several countries, children as old as 13-15 years have consistently believed that a tree is different from a plant, contradicting the conventional categories of biologists’. Children also systematically differentiate between plants and vegetables (‘a carrot and cabbage are not plants’), or even between plants and weeds (‘grass is not a plant’). Moreover, a majority of children do not naturally think of seeds as parts of a plant. This has led some primary school curricula to postpone these conventional categories and first allow space to children to explore their own intuitive ideas, in order to achieve a better understanding later of how science tends to classify them differently.

Taking cognisance of the way children think ‘plants’ are first introduced through the theme on ‘Food’ – through what plants children eat, and also through the idea that we may eat the leaves, or the stem, or seeds of different plants. In fact, this comes after a discussion on questions related to ‘Which of the following is food?’ – red ants, birds’ nest, goats’ milk, etc. This is to sensitize them to the idea that what some of us take to be ‘food’ may not be so for others; that food is a deeply cultural notion. As discussed above, to allow for a more connected approach ‘plants’ is a sub-theme under the umbrella of ‘Family and Friends’. Thus in Class III children look at the different ‘plants around us’, at possible changes over time from when their parents were young, and also what things around them are made of plants. They are expected to talk to their parents and other elders around them, so that these discussions can act as scaffolding to their learning. This is also indicated in the activity column of the syllabus. Children in Class III also observe the shapes, colours, aroma, etc to see the diversity of ‘leaves in our lives’, to talk of how plant leaves may be used to eat on, the times of the year when lots of leaves fall to the ground, which may be used to make compost, and also paint different leaf motifs they see on their pots, animals, clothes, walls, etc. In Class IV they look at ‘flowers’ and flower sellers, and discuss ‘whom trees belong to?’ while in Class V they move on to ‘forests and forest people’, the notion of parks or sanctuaries, and also ‘plants that have come from far’. In this way they are enabled to construct a more holistically connected understanding, from a scientific, social, cultural and environmental perspective, that is enriched with an aesthetic and caring appreciation of plants around them.
Our Bodies, Ourselves: ‘Family and Friends’ offer Sensitivity and Sensibility

Similar to the case of ‘plants’ discussed above, traditionally ‘our body’ is also treated in a purely scientific and socially distanced manner, with units such as ‘our senses’, ‘parts/organs of the body’ and ‘respiration’, ‘digestion’, etc. However, the theme ‘Family and Friends’, specially through its two sub-themes 1.1 Relationships and 1.2 Work and Play, allows children to look at their own body as part of their ‘self’ in a more contextual and connected manner. In Class III in the sub-theme on Relationships, they discuss their relatives, who live with them and those who have moved away, to get a basic idea of relationships and changing households. They reflect on whom they admire among their relatives and for what qualities or skills, and describe on which occasions or festivals they meet most of them. The unit ‘our bodies – old and young’ helps them place their own body in relation to those of their family members, and asks them to notice differences that may occur with age. More significantly, the rubric of the family provides a sense of intimacy and empathy, to help develop sensitivity towards people having different abilities/disabilities. For instance, they look at how some of their older family members may have difficulty in hearing or seeing, and then go on to discuss how they themselves or their friends may cope with such challenges. In Class IV, the same sub-theme ‘Relationships’ has a unit on ‘your mother as a child’ to make children find out about who were her relatives with whom she lived then. They also think about their body in relation to their mother’s; how a baby rat or kitten is related to its mother, and through a possible narrative, about children who may have been adopted/looked after by foster parents, say, after a cyclone. By ‘Feeling around with eyes shut’ they explore their senses of touch, smell, etc. - not in isolation of the people or animals they care for - but by trying to identify all those living with them only by touching, hearing or smelling them. They continue the exploration of feeling what is smooth/rough, hot/cold, wet/dry, sticky/slippery, etc. and are asked to think if there are some things (or people) they are not allowed to touch. This unit also attempts to make them sensitive to the fact that while touch can mean both a caress and a painful slap, the caress too can be a ‘good’ touch or a ‘bad’ touch. In Class V, the unit ‘Whom do I look like?’ helps them identify family resemblances, to look for any similarities in the face, voice, height, etc., and also to note particular traits such as ‘who laughs the loudest?’. It goes on to how by ‘feeling to read’ on a Braille sheet, someone like Helen Keller could manage to overcome tremendous challenges, as described through accounts of her autobiography. ‘Family and Friends’ has another sub-theme 1.2 ‘Work and Play’ through which they explore different patterns of activity when people are working and ‘not-working’ in their family and neighbourhood. This helps them to sensitively look at stereotyped gender roles, and to compare their own daily routine with that of a working child. It also allows them to analyse the games they play, to see how traditional games or toys have changed since the time their grandparents were
young. In Class V this sub-theme looks at ‘team games - your heroes’ and also martial arts or wrestlers and how they are trained. An exploration of our bodies and the process of respiration naturally falls into this context, and in ‘blow hot blow cold’ they compare how much faster they breathe after a run. They also see how much they can expand their chest, how they blow on a glass to make it cloudy, and blow to warm their cold hands and also to cool something hot. As suggested this unit could make use of the beautiful story by Dr. Zakir Hussain, ‘Use Se Thanda Usee Se Garam’ as a resource. The unit ‘clean work, dirty work’ sensitises them to the dignity of labour and how different people’s work provides essential services to society, possibly through a narrative/story based on Gandhi’s work.

3.4.4 Establish Links between and Across Disciplines

It is challenging to make lesson plans and adapt teaching-learning techniques which will help you in dissolving the conventional boundaries of science, social science etc. However the following two features of EVS help you in this:

- Positioning of EVS in the overall scheme of primary education is such that it provides a common interface of issues in social studies, sciences and environmental education.

- Syllabus of EVS (in grades 3 to 5) is thematic and not concept based.

3.4.5 Encourage Dialogues and Questioning

Do remember that ideas, notions and perspectives in ‘environment’ can be contested. It is so, because meaning and understanding of an idea/concept in ‘environment’ can change with time and location.

Opportunities to talk, discuss and have a dialogue help children to articulate and share their ideas and experiences. The syllabus provides many such opportunities. For example, the theme of ‘Travel’ in the EVS Syllabus provides you, as a teacher, with a lot of scope of letting children enter into dialogue with each other. This theme provides each child with an opportunity to create his/her very own ‘travel log book’. Even if two children in your class travel to the same place, or take the same journey, yet their accounts of the journey could differ from each other at certain points.

At this point of time, encourage them to have ‘peer talk’ to find out why their experiences of the same places can be so different. Create a confident learning setting for them, where if required, they feel comfortable questioning some information provided in the textbook.
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Such learning strategies bring many advantages, such as:

- Children learn to think critically and to analyse their own experiences
- At the same time, children also grow up to be sensitive to others’ viewpoints and beliefs. They learn to be different and appreciate diversity of thoughts, experiences, people, food, languages, environment and above all socio-cultural traditions, practices and beliefs
- Such experiences help children develop ‘group/social skills’. These provide them some of the earliest experiences of dealing in a ‘group’, working with group members—learning to ‘listen’ to them and ‘talk’ to them.
- Children with such experiences in their early years of life, grow up to be good citizens of a democratic society.

You will learn more details about several of these teaching-learning methods in Block 2 of this Course.

3.4.6 Your Role as an EVS Teacher

By now you, as a teacher, will appreciate that it is required that EVS is taught and learnt in a very different manner from most other subjects. The learner must be encouraged to understand what the textbook says, and then through appropriate learning strategies, s/he must be supported by the teacher to explore and discuss the relevance of these concepts in his/her life.

For a teacher like you, nurturing learning among students in such learning environment would be exciting yet challenging. This will require that you, as a teacher, review and enhance your role in the teaching-learning process.

Traditionally a teacher was seen as the ‘provider/giver of knowledge’. In this role, the teacher’s main role was to ‘teach’—add new knowledge to the child’s thinking and understanding.

Till the very recent times, a good teacher was also expected to be a ‘facilitator’ in the classroom—facilitating learning among students. That means, helping and guiding children explore and discover through her experiences and construct knowledge based on these experiences.

However, with newer research and emerging thinking on learning and education, today a teacher is expected to be not only a teacher and a facilitator, but also a co-learner. This change visualised in teacher’s role is based on the fundamental understanding that learning is a life-long process. Learning takes place in all circumstances and situations irrespective of one’s age. As a result no individual, including a teacher, can have with him/her all the knowledge in the world. There is always something new to learn about. Thus, there could be occasions in the classroom, where the teacher may need to say ‘I do not know, I shall find out and
learn about this.’ Such a statement does not mean that I am a poor/bad performing teacher. It only means that I am a co-learner (with my learners), exploring and discovering new ideas and processes around me.

ACTIVITY-1
Prepare an action plan on your role to act as a facilitator in teaching any theme in EVS.

3.5 EXPANDING THE CHILD’S UNIVERSE

The syllabus for EVS (classes III-V) is thematic in approach rather than being structured around individual topic/s (as it used to be in the earlier years). It is woven around six common themes – Family and friends, Food, Shelter, Water, Travel and Things we make and do. As you would have read in Unit 2, these themes provide real-life links to the children’s daily experiences. This begins by helping children explore their immediate ‘self’ to include his/her family (environment), and expand to gradually include neighbourhood, the locality, country and the world.

Thematic organisation of content in EVS helps dissolve the conventional subject boundaries created in the formal education system. It also encourages the learner to realise the linkages between the various subjects.

Thematic structuring of the contents in EVS cuts across the boundaries of several disciplines such as social sciences, sciences, languages, history, geography, civics, etc., developing in children an interdisciplinary perspective (contributions of various disciplines) to understanding environment and environmental problems and their solutions because this is related to our life and lifestyles. EVS, thus, is an interdisciplinary study of how humans interact with their environment – physical, biological, social and cultural.

As a teacher, let us try to understand the implications of thematic organisation of concepts for teaching-learning process. Let us take an example of the theme ‘Water’.

If ‘Water’ was to be taught and learnt through discreet subject boundaries of science and social science, perhaps one would need to look through the Geography textbook to understand the distribution of water on earth. Now to understand how the earlier generations accessed and used water, one would need to browse through the textbooks of social science. Then to understand the need of water for plants and animals, you would be required to refer the Biology textbook.

However, in the case of EVS, various aspects of ‘Water’—scientific, social and historical—are dealt within a common larger theme and not necessarily as physics and chemistry of water.
In the syllabus, the contents of EVS explore the different dimensions of certain themes like food, water, shelter, etc. These discuss or deal with real issues of children by connecting them with children’s real experiences at home, neighbourhood, community, etc. Such connections to real life experiences and situations play a crucial role in developing and fostering lifelong attitudes, values and conviction of actions and behaviours towards environment and its conservation. Thus, EVS is not only values education, as regards environment but is also life-skill education as it encourages children to develop knowledge, ideas, values and attitudes about the world and how it works and learn to communicate and collaborate with other children and adults in their environment. You can learn more about the thematic structure and the syllabus in the subsequent Unit.

**Check Your Progress-3**

*Fill in the blanks*

a. *The syllabus of EVS is organised in a ..................... manner.*

b. *The 6 main themes of the EVS syllabus are:*
   
i. ..................  
ii. ..................  
iii. ..................

   iv. ..................  
v. ..................  
vi. ..................

c. *The EVS syllabus is aimed to forge an ......................... perspective of learning at the primary stage of schooling (integrated, multiple, individual)*

**3.6 LET US SUM UP**

In this Unit, we have learnt about features that make EVS different from most other subjects; and the implications of this for pedagogical considerations for EVS. The Unit also discussed key curricular provisions for enabling effective teaching-learning of EVS at the primary stage of education.

You learnt that EVS is a composite subject and draws links to most other subjects. EVS is contextual and locale-specific (as problems and issues of environment are specific to the local environment/locales and solutions to these problems/issues may not be right and wrong). EVS issues may not have a single right answer. Thus, a good EVS learning environment must encourage dialogues, debates and questioning. Strengthening analytical and critical thinking skills among learners are thus critical during EVS teaching.

Through this Unit, you have realised that your most significant role as a teacher is that of a facilitator and co-learner who not only encourages children to learn
by experiencing, exploring and discovering, but also learns with her learner. A good teacher must be sensitive that ‘values’ form integral part of EVS and hence s/he must be able to deal with values (in the classroom) in a very prudent manner. Some examples of these are provided in **Block 2** of this Course.

While studying this unit, you learnt about desirable pedagogical considerations to be made for effective transaction of EVS. In the earlier section of this Unit, you have further learnt that curricular provisions built in for EVS are different from many other subjects at the primary stage. EVS syllabus is organised in a ‘thematic’ manner. In this Unit, you have also learnt and realised that thematic organisation of the EVS syllabus is very suitable for dealing with the unique features of EVS and how these themes can be effectively transacted in your class.

In the next Unit you will see how these considerations are reflected in the EVS textbooks for **classes 3 to 5**, and learn more about the teaching-learning opportunities these provide.

### 3.7 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress -1**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>False, EVS is a single study area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>False, As a teacher of EVS my role can be best performed if I do specialise and focus on multiple subject areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>True,</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>False, As a teacher of EVS, I must pay attention to holistic growth and development of the child</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>True</td>
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**Check Your Progress -2**

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<tr>
<td>a. i.</td>
<td>differently as adult</td>
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**Check Your Progress -3**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Family and Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Shelter</td>
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<td>iv.</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
v. Travel
vi. Things We Make and Do
c. Integrated

3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Syllabus for classes at the Elementary Level, NCERT, New Delhi.
- Shivani Jain and Shefali Atrey, Centre for Environment Education, India; An Innovative Approach to Biodiversity Conservation Education; Journal of Biological Sciences; September 2011; International Union for Biological Sciences
- NCERT, 2005, Habitat and Learning, NCERT, New Delhi
- www.moef.nic.in
- www.ceeindia.org
- www.paryavaranmitra.in
- http://moef.nic.in/divisions/ee/ngc/index_ngc.html
- www.ncert.nic.in
- www.atozteacherstuff.com (for thematic unit plans)

3.9 UNIT-END EXERCISES

i. How can be compared with other subjects of teaching-learning at the primary stage? List and explain key features of EVS as a composite subject.

ii. Based on your experiences of working with children and the discussions in this Unit, what pedagogical considerations do you think can make EVS teaching-learning process effective and why?