
UNIT 23 UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CURRICULAR AREA ‘THE WORLD AROUND US’

Structure

23.1 Introduction

23.2 Meaning of Environment

23.2.1 The Natural Environment

23.2.2 The Created/ Constructed Environment

23.2.3 Interaction among Components of the Environment

23.3 The Environment of the Child

23.3.1 The Uniqueness of Each Child’s Environment

23.3.2 Levels of the Child’s Environment

23.3.3 Holistic Nature of the Environment

23.4 Nature of the Curricular Area ‘World Around Us’

23.5 Pedagogy for the Curricular Area ‘World Around Us’

23.6 Goal, Competencies and Learning Outcomes for the Curricular Area ‘World Around Us’

23.7 Content of the Curricular Area ‘World Around Us’

23.8 Summing Up

23.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Many of you must have come across and even must be teaching the subject of Environmental Studies, popularly known as EVS to the children in early primary grades. The National Curricular Framework for Foundational Stage Education, 2022 document which has been developed on the basis of the New Education Policy, 2020, has emphasized that the curriculum content in classes 1 and 2 should follow the developmental domains approach, instead of identifying specific subject areas in the early primary classes. Therefore, teaching-learning about the environment has been subsumed under the broad title of the curricular area ‘World Around Us’ and this curricular area has been subsumed under the cognitive domain for the Foundational Stage (which includes three years of preschool and classes 1 and 2). Further, in classes 3 and above, the nomenclature ‘Environmental Studies’ as a curricular/ subject area has been changed to ‘World Around Us’. Therefore, in this Unit, we will understand the meaning and nature of this curricular area ‘World Around Us’, the pedagogy to be used to teach this, as well as the meaning of the term ‘environment’ since the environment is the subject matter of the curricular area ‘World Around Us’.

Objectives

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the meaning, components, and kinds of environment;
- discuss the inter-connectedness of different components of the environment;
- appreciate the need and significance of considering various dimensions of a child's environment in the teaching-learning process;
- understand the holistic, integrated, and inter-disciplinary nature of the curricular area 'World Around Us' and its implications for classroom teaching-learning; and
- discuss the key contents, goals, and pedagogy of the curricular area 'World Around Us.

23.2 MEANING OF ENVIRONMENT

List down any five words that come to your mind when you hear the word 'environment'.

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.....

Does your list contain some of the following words?

Surroundings, Animals, Plants, Houses, Cars, Villages, Towns, People, Sun, Stars, River, Lake, Hills, Pollution, Clothes, Playground, Television, Movie, Hall, Food, Toys, Green, Earth.

By the term 'environment' we mean the surroundings or the conditions in which a person lives. It refers to all things around us and the people with whom we interact. The environment is a significant part of our lives as it influences how we grow and develop.

In the above list of words, can you club those words which reflect a particular aspect of the environment, which seems to you to belong together? This will help you to identify what are the various components (aspects) of the environment. One broad way of understanding the components of the environment is to classify it as 'natural environment' and 'created/constructed environment'.

23.2.1 The Natural Environment

'Natural environment' means that which exists naturally on earth. It encompasses all living and non-living aspects occurring naturally on Earth. The living things can also be called the **biological aspect** of the natural

environment and the non-living things can be called the **physical aspect** of the natural environment.

Living things can be further classified as plants, animals, and fungi.

The non-living aspect can be clarified as the **geographical features** such as natural resources, land formations, air, water, climate, as well as **natural phenomena** (thunderstorms, sunrise, and sunsets, eclipses, snow, ocean currents) not originating from civilized human activity.

23.2.2 The Created/ Constructed Environment

'Created/ constructed environment' refers to that which comes into existence as a result of human activity. It can be classified as a built environment and social environment. The latter can also be called 'socio-cultural environment'.

The 'built environment' refers to the human-made environment within which human activity takes place. It includes houses, roads, buildings, bridges, parks, crop fields, villages, settlements, cities, and their entire supporting infrastructure such as water and energy supply, communication facilities, transport, and technology.

The 'social environment' includes people and all interactions among people, their livelihoods, occupations, traditions, customs, folklore, traditional arts and crafts, and creative interactions of humans with nature.

The interactions among people lead to the creation of social institutions. A social institution consists of a group of people who have come together for a common purpose and follow certain rules of behaviour. These institutions are a part of the social order of society and they govern the behaviour and expectations of individuals. Examples of social institutions include families, schools, workplaces, religious institutions, political formations like governments, and the economy. When talking about the social environment we can also think of it in terms of religious, political, economic, and cultural environments.

23.2.3 Interaction among Components of the Environment

All the components of the environment interact with and influence each other. Further, human activity influences and is influenced by the environment. Let us understand these interactions through some examples. The following examples describe the interaction between living and non-living aspects of the natural environment and also between human activity and the natural environment.

You may know that the natural vegetation depends upon the physical features of a place. For example, you may find evergreen trees in hilly areas whereas deciduous trees are more common in the plains. The animals that live in an area are dependent on the natural vegetation of the place. They depend upon the plants directly or indirectly for food, shelter, and camouflage. Human activity may result in the modification of vegetation, thereby, leading to a change in the dependence of the animals in that area. On one hand, as part of

human progress, very often forest areas are cut to make way for agricultural fields, houses, roads, and factories. On the other hand, over centuries humans have also favoured certain plants over others, thereby modifying the natural settings. For example, did you know that before the 19th century there were no apple trees in India? However, today the states of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu, and Kashmir are full of apple orchards, mainly because of the way humans intervened/interacted with the natural environment and made the growth of Apples possible in India. Besides, when the vegetation changes, the animals adapt to the new vegetation. Thus, the bees in these regions adapted by taking nectar from the apple blossoms and in turn pollinated them, which helped in the spread of apple trees. This example helps us to understand how human activity has led to changes even in the natural environment and you can see how there is a continuous interaction between various components of the environment.

Another example to understand the interaction between human activity and the natural environment is the impact of population growth on the environment. The rapidly multiplying population is having an impact on all aspects of the natural environment. The natural environment is influenced by the economic activities of humans. For example, in terms of pollution, items such as air-conditioners, cars, and refrigerators, release poisonous substances into the atmosphere. The wood and coal *chulhas* (stoves) also release carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and soot which are quite harmful elements. While there are local differences in the impact of human activity on the environment, yet because the natural environment like air and water are not contained within geographical boundaries, the misuse of environmental resources in one part of the globe affects all humans on the planet.

The following examples show how the socio-cultural environment and the natural environment mutually influence each other.

- The ideas, beliefs, and values formed within a particular culture are influenced by its natural surroundings. The worship of 'sea god' is common in coastal areas as the sea sustains life, while the people in the plains may have many rituals associated with the land, as the land provides food and shelter to them.
- Food habits are linked to the environment. Those living near the coastal areas are likely to have seafood among their staple food and are likely to have a different attitude towards the sea and its creatures as compared to those living in the plains.
- The attitudes and values of a group of people also decide the interactions with the natural environment. For example, while the approach of large-scale profit-making companies fishing in the ocean is to maximize their catch, which leads to a rapid depletion of resources, the fishermen community living near the coasts fish in ways that are in harmony with nature and enable replenishing of resources to sustain their lifestyle. You may be surprised to know that in tribal cultures, no individual possesses the land and their value is about living in harmony with nature. However, this value is not usually held by non-tribal communities.

- The influence of culture is also seen in the built environment. The buildings, monuments, of a particular cultural group are unique to them. For example, a traditional temple in North India may have a dome on top while South Indian temples have a *gopurum*.
- The natural environment also influences how humans construct the built environment. For example, the natural environment influences the choice of materials used in the construction of buildings. Amer fort in Jaipur is made of red sandstone and marble, while granite and lime mortar are chief ingredients of the Golconda fort in Hyderabad, as these are the natural resources in these areas.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Differentiate the given items into the three categories of environment.

Car Television Customs Trees Cloth
Soil Folklores Clouds House Livelihood

Types of Environment	Related Items
Natural	
Social	
Built	

23.3 THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CHILD

A child is a biological, social, and cultural being; in other words, he is a product of his natural and social environment. Having known that a child is a part and parcel of a certain kind of environment and also, he interacts with and changes the environment at different levels throughout her lifetime makes it important for a teacher to understand the child's environment and her interaction with the same.

23.3.1 The Uniqueness of Each Child's Environment

Let us now examine what constitutes the environment for the child. In MCD-001, you have read the Unit "The Experience of Childhood". You would recall reading in that Unit that children's experiences are influenced by their natural environment (for example, whether they live near the sea or in mountainous regions or plains) and the constructed environment (their family structure, social class, caste, and religious group to which they belong; the facilities available to them such as schools, parks). The environment of each child is unique.

Let us understand this by taking the example of two children Velu and Usha.

Velu was born in a fishing village in Tamil Nadu. He will experience the hot and humid climate, be familiar with the smell of the ocean and fish, and see coconut trees (natural environment). He enjoys eating rice and fish and learns to speak Tamil (socio-cultural environment). Usha, on the other hand, was born in Mussorie. She experiences a cold climate, sees pine trees and

hills around her, likes to eat curry with chappati (wheat), and learns to speak Hindi and Garhwali language. Velu and Usha live in two different parts of India, and thus, have different environments and experiences.

It is easy to understand how children living in different places and regions will have different environments. You must appreciate that even living in the same geographical area, the environment of each child is different. Even within a homogenous group, the environment for children from different families could be different. Thus, two Marathi families living in the same locality may differ in terms of consuming vegetarian or non-vegetarian food, the type of entertainment pursued (watching television or reading books), the connectedness with the larger kin group in the city (one family meeting with relatives more often and the other rarely), having a pet or not having one, the type of outings planned, and so on. Thus, children from these families will have different experiences though broadly they belong to Marathi families. However, as a result of belonging to the Marathi community, the children will also have many similarities in their experiences.

Similarly, even within the same family, two children of the same gender are likely not to have the same environment. They will have different interests, temperaments, and response patterns which will cause them to have different experiences. Their parents are likely to treat or respond to them differently because of these aspects.

Children's environments also differ in terms of the stimulation it provides to an individual child and the opportunity available to her for exploration. Each day the child learns something new as she explores the world around her. The experiences available to the child will determine what she will learn. Further, what a child learns about her surroundings also depends on her abilities and interests.

You may ask why it is important for the teacher to understand this aspect of the uniqueness of each child's environment. This will help the teacher to understand the children in her group. Having an understanding of the children's environment will help her to understand what knowledge children bring with them to the classroom, which will further help her to plan her learning experiences. Taking children's prior knowledge into account is the first step in planning any learning experience for the child. In the next Unit of this Block, you will read more about the significance of appreciating a child's prior knowledge.

23.3.2 Levels of the Child's Environment

Another way of understanding the environment from the reference point of the child is to see it in terms of multiple levels. Depending upon how often the child gets to interact with people, participate in events and explore objects in the environment, the child's environment can be categorized as 'immediate', 'local', and 'global'.

The '**immediate environment**' of the child is the one within which the child has interactions with people and participates in events on a daily or fairly regular basis; the child has many opportunities to explore this environment. It

includes the child's family, the friends she plays with, her teachers in school, the park she goes out to play in, the market nearby, the road she travels on, and the festivals and events celebrated in the family. The immediate environment (both in terms of natural and created environment) has a direct impact on the child's day-to-day activities.

The **'local environment'** is at some distance from the child. The child does not have daily interactions with the people in the local environment, does not participate in its events daily, and may have limited opportunities to explore it. The local environment would include the child's village/ city, the nearby areas such as the river at some distance, the relatives who visit the family periodically, the nearby places she visits with her family once in a while.

Finally, the **'global environment'** is far removed from the child and the child may rarely interact with it. Nonetheless, all the environments influence the child directly, or indirectly through their influence on the child's parents and other caregivers. All that is not within the child's local environment would constitute the child's global environment.

These divisions of the environment as 'immediate', 'local', and 'global' are not rigid. What may be immediate at one point in time for a child may become local for the child if the circumstances change. A relative who stays with the family is 'immediate' environment for the child, but if she goes away, the child's interactions with her will become limited. Also the meaning of 'immediate', 'local', and 'global' will be different for different children. Two children may live in adjacent houses but one child may not be taken along by the mother when she goes out of the house while the mother of the second child may take the child along with her wherever she goes. So the 'immediate environment is different for both children though they live in the same place. The immediate environment for the second child would encompass a much bigger geographical area in comparison to the first child.

Let us also briefly see the implication of visualizing the environment as 'immediate', 'local', and 'global'. One implication is for the planning of the curriculum and identification of themes for the curriculum. In the initial phase of teaching-learning in the curricular area 'World Around Us', one may choose themes for classroom transactions that are from the child's immediate environment and then gradually move to an exploration of the local environment. Begin from the immediate 'self' and gradually extend the child's understanding of her world to include her family, the neighbourhood, and locality.

Another implication of having an understanding of different levels of the environment is that it helps us to understand that the child's environment is not static. The environment is ever-expanding and also changing as the child meets new people, encounters new events, and moves to different locations. For a young child in early primary classes, the global environment may be quite difficult for the child to visualize. Unless there is some significant event or place which children may find exciting to explore or learn about, the curriculum of Grade 1 and 2 is not likely to have themes and concepts from the global environment for young children.

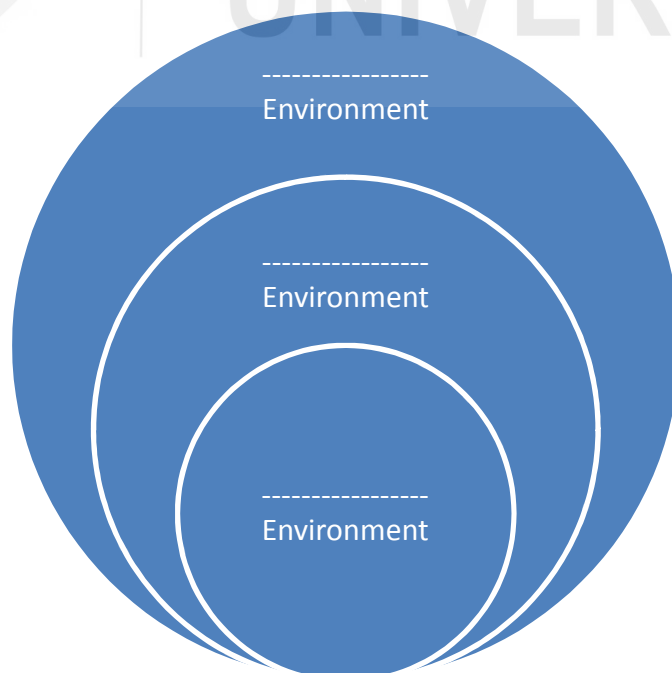
23.3.3 Holistic Nature of the Environment

The classification of the environment into its components ('natural' and 'created') and as 'immediate', 'local', and 'global' is only for the adult understanding so that we can comprehend the vastness of the environment and can discuss its various aspects. However, when we experience the environment, we do not experience it as fragmented into its components. We experience the whole of the environment as one integrated experience and the concepts related to the environment reside holistically in our experience and mind.

For example, when you see a bird on the tree against the blue sky, you are not thinking of the bird in terms of the discipline of zoology, the tree in terms of the discipline of botany, or the sky as part of the discipline of geography and its blueness as related to the discipline of physics. Rather, you just enjoy the total experience by perceiving the bird, the tree, and the sky as one holistic Unit. Even though you have studied 'environment' as part of different subjects, you still experience and perceive it holistically. This will help you to appreciate that children too experience the environment holistically. The implication of understanding the holistic nature of the environment is with respect to how we teach the children about the environment. This has been discussed in detail in Sections 23.4, 23.5, and 23.6 of this Unit where we have further discussed the nature and meaning of the curricular area 'World Around Us' at length.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) There are different levels of a child's environment. Mention these levels in the chronological order in the figure shared below. Also share an example of each.



23.4 NATURE OF THE CURRICULAR AREA 'WORLD AROUND US'

The curricular area 'World Around Us' deals with the interrelationships between humans and the environment, specifically natural (biological and physical) environments, and the created (built and social) environments. It is concerned with how humans, their culture, and their biophysical surroundings influence each other. This process of learning, begins at the preschool stage, and continues throughout life.

India has a long tradition of using the environment as a basis for learning. Various policy documents of India, right from the Basic Education Policy (1937) have emphasized the need for the study of the environment or, as now stated in the National Curricular Framework –Foundational Stage 2022, 'World Around Us'. The nature of the curricular area 'World Around Us' is interdisciplinary, integrated, and holistic wherein it draws upon insights from sciences (biology, physics, chemistry, and geology), social studies (economics, geography, political science, and sociology), and environmental education (protection and conservation, sustainability). This approach goes beyond a single-subject approach and helps children to use the contents and methods of science and social sciences to understand the environment and address environmental problems/issues in the future. The interactions between humans and the environment are studied through an interdisciplinary lens. **An interdisciplinary approach puts the environment as the key focus and uses the concepts and methods of these different disciplines to create an awareness and understanding of the environment holistically.** Such an approach allows one to develop an integrated and holistic understanding of the environment which is important to develop awareness about the environment as a whole and solve issues in daily life as citizens. An integrated approach to the study of the environment also draws from the fact that we experience the environment holistically, as we have explained above.

We have stated above that the curricular area 'World Around Us' adopts a holistic, integrated, and interdisciplinary study of the environment. Let us understand through an example what we mean by these terms.

When you hear the word 'Water', what are the first words that come to mind? List down at least 10 things that come to your mind, when you think of water. Our list is the following:

- Thirst
- Bath
- H₂O
- “*pani re pani tera rang kaisa*” (A film song in Hindi)
- Rivers, lakes, oceans
- Dams
- Summer
- Water rides in an amusement park
- Starting of civilizations

Try to categorize the words you listed in terms of the disciplines where you are likely to study them. For example, in our list rivers, lakes and oceans can be grouped as ‘water bodies’(discipline of geography). The symbol ‘H₂O’ is the symbol for water in the discipline of chemistry. The start of civilizations along the banks of major rivers is the content of the subject of history.

Some of your possible words and the disciplines with which they could be associated could be the following:

- Water bodies, water cycle –(Geography)
- Physical and chemical properties –(Science)
- River water sharing disputes –(History)
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Now examine our list again. The words ‘water rides in amusement park’ and the ‘film song’ belong to no disciplines as such. Even the two words ‘bath’ and ‘thirst’ may be brought together and placed under the category ‘uses’ but one would wonder under which discipline to put ‘uses’ – maybe biology or geography. However these words are valid associations with the word ‘Water’. So when you thought about ‘Water’, you did not choose words based on various subjects and disciplines. Instead, you focused on the concept of ‘Water’ and thought of whatever was meaningful for you in relation to it. You saw the world as the child does – integrated and holistic. If you were in a geography class and asked about words related to water you would probably only say, ‘rivers, ‘lake’, ‘water cycle’. If you were in a physics class, you would probably talk about the properties of water.

The point that we want to bring out through the above discussion is that the curricular area ‘World Around Us’ makes it possible to study a theme/concept in an integrated manner which becomes difficult when the focus is on the disciplinary study of the theme/concept. For example, when the focus is on the discipline, then in geography class you will study about ‘water bodies’ and in science class about ‘water cycle’. However, in the curricular area ‘World Around Us’, when you talk of ‘Water’ as a theme of study, you will integrate all these aspects which come to one’s mind when one thinks of water and transact the content in accordance with the child’s

level of understanding. Under the theme 'Water', children will learn about the sources of water, how water is used in their daily lives, how rain occurs, how to save water, and how to prevent water pollution. Here the theme 'Water' connects the different aspects of water which otherwise come under different disciplinary domains. In the curricular area 'World Around Us', linked aspects would be considered simultaneously and would also be related to the environment of the child so that meaningful understanding is developed.

Therefore, when teaching about the environment adopts a holistic approach, it integrates ideas from the various disciplines available to it. This has two advantages:

- The content matter is transacted holistically which is as per the child's natural way of perceiving the environment.
- As the understanding of the environment gets built, it enables one to deal with environmental issues and concerns more effectively.

It is possible to independently study the aspects of the environment under different disciplines, as we have explained with reference to the example of 'water' above. To take another example, we can study plants and animals under biology, about the land and sea formations under geography. Although, when we study the environment in this way, it has often been observed that people do not make the connection between different aspects of the environment. In the above case, we may not make the connection that the growth of plants and the life of animals will be influenced and determined by the land and sea formations. This knowledge tends to reside separately in our minds. This often leads to the situation that while as an adolescent or an adult we know a lot about different aspects of the environment, yet, we do not realize how they are interrelated or how different aspects of the environment influence each other. As a result, we are unable to apply our knowledge to solve the environmental consensus in our daily life situations.

23.5 PEDAGOGY FOR THE CURRICULAR AREA 'WORLD AROUND US'

The term 'pedagogy' means the theory, method, and practice of teaching; to put it simply, it deals with how best to teach. **The approach to teaching-learning that the curricular area 'World Around Us' emphasizes is hands-on and experiential learning. This is the pedagogy of the curricular area 'World Around Us'.**

This curricular area is envisioned as 'an area of doing'. The child learns about and studies the environment, not by reading about it and answering the teacher's questions but by finding out about the environment through active exploration and by asking questions. You know that the child is naturally curious about her surroundings. The approach to the transaction of the curricular area 'World Around Us' through exploration satisfies this curiosity of the child. The child herself seeks answers by using various processes such as observing, identifying patterns, classifying, surveying, asking questions,

experimenting, reasoning, analyzing, inferring, recording, and presenting data.

These processes are the key instruments of learning. These processes may belong to different disciplines —such as 'experimenting' is a method of doing science while conducting a survey is usually a method of social science. The curricular area 'World Around Us' brings these processes together. The focus of this curricular area is on how to learn; in other words, on the processes of learning. As the child uses various process skills to gain an understanding of and information about the environment, she acquires content knowledge and also refines these processes further. Thus, acquiring content knowledge and refinement of process skills happen simultaneously. These processes would also help the child in the study of other disciplines. The strong emphasis in the curricular area 'World Around Us' on the processes of acquiring knowledge does not imply that content is not important. What it means is that content is acquired simultaneously while using the process skills to develop an understanding of the environment.

So, for example, the task of classifying various leaves provides the child the opportunity to use and refine the process skill of classification and also helps the child to learn about the shape, size, and colour of leaves (content). In other words, apart from learning about the environment (i.e., about the shape and size of leaves) the child also learns how to learn (i.e., using the process skill classification to develop the understanding of types of leaves). The environment serves as a resource by providing learning materials and is also a source of knowledge.

While interacting with the environment, the child not only develops content knowledge and process skills but also learns to appreciate the environment and value its various aspects. For instance, as the child participates in a discussion about the uses of water, she may realize water is scarce and begin to value it. As she explores the various flowers in the garden, she begins to appreciate the beauty in nature. She begins to understand the relationship between different components of the environment. Read the following example to understand this.

Snigdha wanted her students to become sensitive to the hazards of plastic bags. She planned an activity where each student identified a place in the ground and buried a piece of plastic and paper. They marked their areas since they had to examine what happened to the piece of paper and plastic that had been buried. After a week, they saw that the paper had disintegrated while the plastic was intact. This helped the children to develop the value of not using plastic bags. In the discussion which followed, the teacher brought out the concept that since plastic did not mix into the mud, one should be careful about using it; and if using it, one should be careful about where to throw it. Thus, the concept and value of 'biodegradable' were explained at the level of children though the teacher did not use this difficult word yet.

Such an approach to learning about the environment alters our typical adult notion of the study of the environment. Learning about the environment is no longer simply memorization of facts. The teacher has to plan to talk less and

focus on making children become enquirers and problem solvers. Helping children learn to question requires much more work on part of the teacher than mere lecturing.

The curricular area 'World Around Us' may be defined as learning about the 'environment' 'through the environment', and 'for the environment'. It develops in the child the body of knowledge (content), the ways of knowing (skills), and the values and attitudes towards the environment that would develop, thereby, leading to education for sustainable development. To say it in another way, the environment is simultaneously that about which one learns, it is also the medium of learning, and the child also learns how to protect and conserve it.

23.6 GOAL, COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE CURRICULAR AREA 'WORLD AROUND US'

Using the National Curricular Framework – Foundational Stage, 2022 as the base, the primary goal of the curricular area 'World Around Us' is as follows:

“Children make sense of the world around through observation and logical thinking”

Within this curricular goal, the competencies to be developed during the five years of Foundational Stage Education as stated in the NCF-FS, 2022 are:

- Observes and understands different categories of objects and relationships between them
- Observes and Understands Cause and Effect Relationships in Nature by Forming Simple Hypothesis and Uses Observations to Explain their Hypothesis
- Uses appropriate tools and technology in daily life situations and for learning

For each of these competencies, in the NCF-FS, 2022 learning outcomes have been stated from 3 to 8 years – that is, for three years of preschool education and two years of primary education in Grades 1 and 2 (refer to page). There is flexibility in achieving learning outcomes across the age range 3 to 8 years, depending upon the child's individual pace of learning. Further, the respective schools and the teachers also have the flexibility to devise learning outcomes appropriate to the context of children and their interests.

23.7 CONTENT OF THE CURRICULAR AREA 'WORLD AROUND US'

You have read earlier about what constitutes the child's environment. The content of the curricular area 'World Around Us' for children in Grade 1 and 2 would comprise themes from their own immediate and local environment as these would be of relevance and interest to the child. Within the themes,

the concepts chosen would be concrete, given the child's stage of cognitive development. Using these themes you would help the child to expand their body of **knowledge about the environment**, refine and develop **process skills**, and develop **positive values** for the environment. This, then, is the content of the curricular area 'World Around Us'. Given the diversity of children's backgrounds and their prior experiences, the themes should also be diverse so that learning is meaningful for each child. Hence, the content of environmental studies ranges from developing process skills by using the environment as a medium of learning to know the facts and concepts about the environment to what it is that one can do to protect and conserve it, thereby valuing it.

Sometimes, it may not be important to directly discuss a theme, but through her own behaviour, the teacher can initiate an understanding of a theme in an indirect manner, which can be introduced more directly to the child in later levels. For example, the child in Grade 1 and 2 may not be aware of gender as a potential source of discrimination and inequality. It will be difficult to carry out explicit discussions on gender discrimination with these young children but the teacher can, through her ways of dealing with the children in the classroom, create opportunities to understand and imbibe values of gender equality without explicit teaching. For example, if she gives equal opportunities to learn to both girls and boys, children imbibe equality of gender as a fact. Gradually, the content of the curricular area 'World Around Us' enlarges from all that a child experiences in immediate environment to the local/national, and then, global.

Teaching-learning about the environment can be integrated with the teaching of any topic or any activity that you are transacting with children. For example, while narrating a story to develop children's listening skills and imagination, this could be about some aspect of the environment. While carrying out a discussion to develop children's oral expression, you could give them any theme from the environment to talk about. Of course, you can also specifically pick up a theme related to the World Around Us and focus on that. The idea is to provide a unified learning experience to the child in the early primary grades instead of dividing it into subject areas of language, mathematics or environmental studies.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Which of the following is NOT developed by the curricular area 'World Around Us'?
 - a) Knowledge about the environment
 - b) Insensitivity towards the environment
 - c) Values and attitudes about the environment
 - d) Process skills

23.8 SUMMING UP

The curricular area 'World Around Us' is an interdisciplinary area that examines the relationship between people and the environment. It

systematically studies human interaction with the environment in the interest of solving complex problems. The environment includes both the natural and the constructed environment; and this curricular area also examines the interplay between the social-economic, legal, management, and scientific aspect of the environment. Being interdisciplinary, it emphasizes the links between different subjects that study human interaction with the environment such as ecology, economics, geography, geology, meteorology, sociology, and political science.

Broadly speaking, the aim of the curricular area 'World Around Us' is to enable children to learn about their environment by allowing them to explore and interact/connect with their natural and human-made surroundings. This curricular area aims at developing in children a *holistic or integrated perspective* of our environment, wherein they understand the intricate interconnections between and interdependence of natural and human-made surroundings. In the process of learning about the environment, children acquire concepts (content) and learn the value of appreciating, valuing, and sustaining the environment. They develop insights regarding the functioning of the natural and human-made environment.

This learning about the environment is not done not by just memorization of content but through direct engagement/interaction with the environment focusing on "experiential learning" rather than textbook-oriented "teaching". Thus, the environment becomes the subject matter of learning (that about which conceptual understanding has to be developed) and is also the resource for enabling learning to take place.

When engaged in learning by doing, children begin using certain skills, and in the course of learning and doing, they refine these skills further. These skills are called process skills and are the tools for learning across subject domains. Some of the process skills that children use and develop further in the process of engaging with the environment are the skills of observation, reasoning, experimenting, and surveying. These skills are the basic processes of science and social science inquiry and children later learn to use them in a more sophisticated manner as they pursue science and social science in secondary classes.

The broad aim of the curricular area of developing an understanding of the environment by exploring it also synchronizes with children's natural curiosity about their surrounding world. They observe various phenomena in their lives and gather knowledge by asking questions, testing their ideas, and sharing ideas. Such interaction with the environment enables the healthy development of children as holistic and wholesome individuals and enables the growth of ethical, emotional, physical, cognitive, and aesthetic dimensions of the personality.

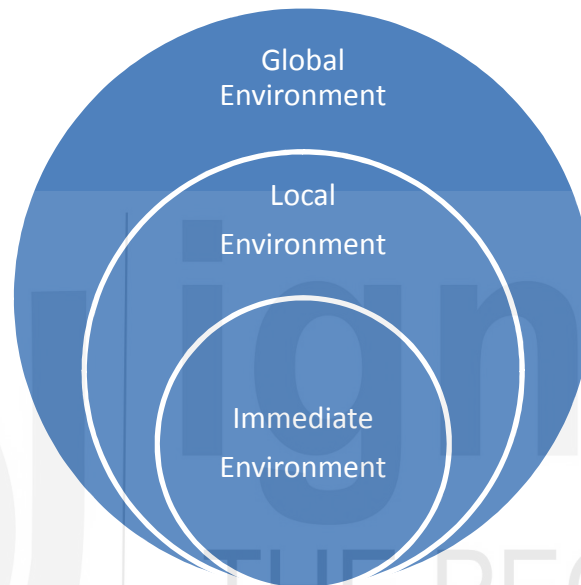
23.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) **Natural:** Trees, Soil, Clouds
Social: Customs, Folklores, Livelihood
Constructed: Car, Television, Cloth, House

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1)



Immediate Environment: Members of the child's family, pets, food eaten, the language spoken in the child's family

Local Environment: The festivals celebrated in the child's neighbourhood/ community, neighbours, nearby park or market place

Global Environment: Events happening around the country or other countries

Check Your Progress Exercise3

1) b