

Curriculum, Examinations and Textbooks in Maharashtra. Who decides what?

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This paper aims at providing a bird's eye view of the school education system in Maharashtra and focuses on the curriculum, examination and textbook (CET) policy followed by the State. Curriculum, examinations and textbooks can be compared to the basic threads that weave quality into and the education system; exploring the roles played by the various bodies concerned with CET is the primary purpose of this research.

Introduction to Maharashtra

Economy

Maharashtra stands true to its reputation of being an economic powerhouse of India. With less than 10% of the population of the country, Maharashtra accounts for nearly one-fourth of the gross value added by India's industrial sector. It is the most industrialised State in the country and contributes about 20 percent to the country's industrial output. After experiencing rapid and sustained growth till the mid 1990s, the State economy remained vibrant with ups and downs. The State saw a sharp setback of negative growth of 3.4 percent registered in 2000-01, the economy thereafter is railing on the recovery path by registering impressive growth rate of 7 percent and above for the recent 3 years. For the Xth Five Year Plan (2002-07), the target set for GSDP annual growth rate for Maharashtra is 8 percent. The annual average growth rate of GSDP for the State for the first three years of Xth Five Year Plan (2002-03 to 2004-05) is expected to be 7.2 per cent.¹

Population

As per the population census 2001, Maharashtra's population was 9.69 crore. The Scheduled Castes population of the State was 98.82 lakh and the Scheduled Tribes population was 85.77 lakh. Maharashtra is the second largest State in India in respect of population after Uttar Pradesh. With 42.4 percent urban population, Maharashtra was second most urbanised State among the major states of India, after Tamil Nadu (44.0 percent). The sex ratio in the State declined from 934 in 1991 to all time low of 922 in 2001. The density of population of the State was 315 persons per square kilometer. The Birth rates, Death rates and infant mortality rates for Maharashtra (based on Sample Registration Scheme) for the year 2002 were 20.3, 7.3 & 45.0 respectively. The projected population of the State as on 1st March 2005 is about 10.27 crore.² Marathi is the official state language which is spoken by majority of its populace. In Mumbai however, due to its cosmopolitan nature, Marathi is not as widely spoken as Hindi and English. Marathi, English and sometimes Hindi are used for official purposes. In the northwest portion of Maharashtra, Gujarati is spoken by a minority.

Political Scenario

The head of state for Maharashtra like all other states is the Governor, appointed by the central government and having a largely ceremonial post. The Chief Minister is the head of government and is vested with most of the executive powers. Maharashtra's political capital is

¹ *Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2004-05*

² *Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2004-05*

Mumbai, home to the Vidhan Sabha – the state assembly and Mantralaya, the administrative offices of the government. It is also home to the Bombay High Court which has jurisdiction over Maharashtra, Goa and the Union Territory of Daman and Diu. The legislature convenes its budget and monsoon sessions in Mumbai, and the winter session in Nagpur, which was designated as the state's auxiliary capital.

Maharashtra's legislature is bicameral, one of the few states in India to have a bicameral type. The Legislative Assembly – the Vidhan Sabha is the lower house consisting of directly elected members. The Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council) is the upper house, whose members are indirectly voted through an electoral college. Maharashtra is allocated nineteen seats in the Rajya Sabha and forty-eight in the Lok Sabha, India's national parliament.³

After India's independence, most of Maharashtra's political history was dominated by the Congress party. Maharashtra became a bastion of the Congress party producing stalwarts such as Y.B. Chavan, one of its most prominent Chief Ministers. The party enjoyed near unchallenged dominance of the political landscape until 1995 when the right wing Shiv Sena and BJP secured an overwhelming majority in the state to form a coalition. The Shiv Sena with its pro-Marathi stance renamed Bombay to Mumbai and also many other colonial institutions after historic local appellations. During Shiv Sena rule in 1999, reports regarding Shiv Sena attacks on Christian schools during admission time in Mumbai were common.⁴ Most convent schools are government aided as they have been operating since the years when it was still the policy of the government to give aid to English schools. In the year 1976, Maharashtra Government framed a policy which stopped aid to any new English medium schools; this however did not change the demand for them, nor did it encourage parents to send their wards into Marathi medium schools. Schooling in English medium simplifies further problems at the time of higher education, especially college, as education then is entirely in English medium. Also English medium students, and especially from convent schools, are preferred in the job market. For an overwhelming majority, pursuit of education is less for acquiring knowledge and more for access to job market. It is thus paradoxical that the same people that stand to promote vernacular schools are the same one's clamouring the convents for admissions.

At present, National Congress party (NCP) and the Congress party run a coalition in the state. After a split in the Congress party, former chief minister Sharad Pawar formed the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), but formed a coalition with the Congress to keep out the BJP-SS combine. The 2004 elections saw the NCP gaining the largest number of seats to become the state's largest party, eroding much of the Shiv Sena's base. Under a pre-poll power sharing agreement, the Chief Minister would be from the Congress while the deputy Chief Minister would be from the NCP.

Post-independence Development of Education in Maharashtra

Mapping the history of educational development in Maharashtra can provide a clearer understanding of the present functioning of educational administration in the state. This section attempts to retrace the state of education in the state of Maharashtra to the post-

³ *Maharashtra: Redefining Horizons; Mumbai, Govt. of Maharashtra 1997*

⁴ http://bridget.jatol.com/pipermail/sacw_insa.net/1999/000248.html

independence period and throws light upon the transformation of education since independence.

At Indian Independence in 1947, Western Maharashtra and present-day Gujarat were joined as Bombay state. The eastern districts were then part of Hyderabad State, but were later added to Bombay in 1956. The present state was formed in 1960 when the marathi and gujarati linguistic areas of former Bombay state were separated. Prior to 1960 Maharashtra was divided into three main regions:

1. Western Maharashtra
2. Vidharbha
3. Marathawad

In 1968, the Maharashtra Education and Social Welfare Department for the first time in the history of the Education Department in Maharashtra prepared a report called "Educational Development in Maharashtra State (1950-51 to 1965-66)" with the aim of providing a comprehensive basis of planning for future educational development. Information from this document has been used to provide an insight into the educational affairs of the state prior to the formation of Zilla Parishads in 1962. Further, this section enlists some important legislation that came into effect post the Kothari Commission and gives the sequence of formation of the state's most important educational bodies.

Pattern of Education until Formation of Zilla Parishads

The three parts of the state were poles apart in their educational practices. There were no common links at either the primary or secondary school levels; each region followed a different pattern of classes and a separate syllabus structure. Moreover even the administrative machinery in place for both Primary and Secondary Education was widely different across the state.

Primary Education:

As early as 1947, the Primary Education Act was enacted. This act, which has been amended several times since its enactment, purports to provide compulsory education and make provision for its management. In Western Maharashtra, starting 1st April 1949, the Primary Education Act of 1947 came into force and under the act it became the duty of the government to finance the scheme of compulsory education. District school boards were responsible for conducting primary education in rural areas and authorised municipalities assumed this responsibility for areas within their jurisdiction. The non-authorised municipalities conducted primary education in their areas and were required to contribute their share to district school boards. Until 1965, the syllabus in this region for classes I-VII was prescribed by the Directorate of Education.⁵

The Primary Education Act of 1947 however was enforced only in Western Maharashtra. In Vidharbha, Janapad Sabhas were responsible for primary education in rural areas and Municipal Committees were responsible for primary education within their limits. Janapad Sabhas like the district local boards in Western Maharashtra were entrusted with a variety of functions, education being only one of them. The government paid grants to the tune of 75 per cent to the Janapad Sabhas and 50 percent to the Municipal Committees for expansion of primary

⁵ *Educational Development in Maharashtra State (1950-51 to 1965-66)*

education. In Vidharbha, syllabus for classes I-IV was decided by the Directorate but the syllabus for classes V-VII was prescribed by the Vidharbha Board of Secondary Education.⁶

In Marathawad, the government was directly responsible for primary education and very few schools were run by private agencies on a grant-in-aid basis and these private schools were required to follow a curriculum prescribed by the government.

Secondary Education:

Secondary education in Maharashtra was mainly provided at the initiative of voluntary agencies subsidised by government on grant-in-aid basis. Though this was the case in Western Maharashtra and Vidharbha, the Government conducted majority of the schools in Marathawad. In Western Maharashtra, a Board of Secondary School Certificate Examination was established in 1948 with a separate Chairman. In Vidharbha, there was an autonomous Statutory Board of Secondary Education. In Marathawad, prior to reorganisation of states in 1956, the Board of Secondary Education of the former Hyderabad state conducted the H.S.C and H.S.S.C Examinations.

The country's early attempts at decentralisation led to the setting up of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957 to make recommendations on new structures to be created to involve the local people in the development process. The committee recommended the 'establishment of an inter-connected three-tier organisational structure of democratic decentralisation at the village, block and district levels'. Maharashtra was quick to enact the Panchayati Raj system and in 1961 it passed the 'Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961' which has been detailed below.

Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961

This legislation was enacted to establish zilla parishads and panchayat samitis as local government agencies for administration of rural areas of the state. It contains the composition, election procedure, powers and functions of these local government bodies. Every zilla parishad should appoint a standing committee for education besides the standing committee for several other subjects. This committee for education is responsible for, firstly, the establishment, management, maintenance and inspection of the primary and basic schools; and, secondly, for the grants to the aided schools. It is not responsible for any academic component like syllabus, prescription of textbooks, conduct of scholarship exams, etc. It is also responsible for the establishment, management, maintenance and inspection of secondary schools, but not for the prescription of textbooks, formulation of curricula, rates and conditions for maintenance grants, etc. The general conditions for recognition and conduct of primary and high school scholarship examinations are also looked after by the committee. Similarly, the Social Welfare Standing Committee of the zilla parishad is responsible for the educational development of all backward classes, including the establishment and maintenance of 'balwadis'.

After the reorganisation of the States, the Government of Bombay appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri J.P.Naik to deal with the integration of problems connected with primary education in the state. The Committee was requested to survey and report to the

⁶ *Educational Development in Maharashtra State (1950-51 to 1965-66)*

government on the position of primary and pre-primary education in the different regions in the state. The committee submitted its report in 1959. Government considered the committee's report and accepted some of its recommendations. Similarly, the Government of Bombay appointed during 1957-58 another committee under the chairmanship of Shri L. R. Desai to deal with the problem of integration of secondary education in the state. The government accepted the major recommendations of the committee, in respect of the higher rates of grant-in-aid, enhanced salary scales for teachers in non-government secondary schools and maximum and minimum in tuition fees chargeable in different standards of secondary schools⁷. Consequently, in December 1960, the Government of Maharashtra appointed a committee and entrusted it with the work of suggesting a unified code for the government's consideration. The Secondary Education Code is primarily based on the draft code prepared by that committee and submitted to the government in 1961.

Maharashtra Secondary Education Code, 1960

The present secondary education code is based on the draft code of 1961 was enforced in 1963-64 as a common code for the recognition of grants-in aid to the non-government secondary schools in Maharashtra. Since the time the code was first printed in 1963, the government has issued orders, from time to time, regarding the modification of certain rules relating to school practices and administration in the code. For example, after the introduction of the 10+2+3 pattern of education (which has been discussed later in this section) and the starting of the +2 classes in the junior colleges and the secondary schools, the government issued certain orders, from time to time, regarding the junior colleges. The summary of these orders has been annexed separately in the code. The code lays down, firstly, various conditions which have to be fulfilled by the secondary schools to get recognition; secondly, the rules and regulations to be followed by the institutions which desire their pupils to sit for any public examination conducted by the State Education Department; and, thirdly, the rules regarding syllabi, curricula and textbooks for various courses to be taught in the schools. Besides, the service conditions of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the secondary schools are also laid down in the code. The code also contains provisions regarding the health of children in these schools, fees, free scholarships, school terms, school hours, holidays and principles of discipline in addition to the records, registers and inspection reports that are to be maintained by the various types of secondary schools.⁸

Even upto early 1960's there was no uniformity of syllabus followed in the three main regions of the State viz. Western Maharashtra, Vidharbha and Marathawad, nor was there any uniformity in the duration of school education at different stages. This resulted in an imbalanced growth of education in various regions of the State and also gave rise to administrative problems. As a first step for bringing about uniformity in the pattern of secondary education in different regions, the Maharashtra Secondary Education Board's Act, 1965 was passed under which the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary Education was constituted, with three Divisional Boards operating under its supervision on 1st January 1966.

Maharashtra Secondary Education Board's Act, 1965

This act provides for the establishment of a State Board and Divisional Boards to regulate matters pertaining to secondary education in Maharashtra. Initially, the act provided for

⁷ *Educational Development in Maharashtra State (1950-51 to 1965-66)*

⁸ *Secondary School Code*

establishment of only three divisional boards for the divisions of Pune, Nagpur and Aurangabad. The number of divisional boards has since increased to eight, with the establishment of five more such boards – a separate divisional board for Mumbai in 1985 and two others at Amravati and Kolhapur set up in 1991 and later on at Nasik and Latur. The state government, however, is authorised under the act, to direct the state board on issues related to any of the divisional boards. It can suspend or stop the execution of a resolution passed by a state board or any of the divisional boards.

Taking into consideration the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964-65) and the National Education Policy (1968), the State of Maharashtra adopted the 10+2+3 educational pattern to be implemented uniformly throughout the state. Accordingly the first Secondary School Certificate Examination on the new syllabi was held in April 1975. The implementation at the +2 stage for Standard XI and Standard XII was done from the academic year 1975-76 and 1976-77 respectively. The first Higher Secondary Certificate Examination was held in April 1977.

Educational Structure in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is divided into 7 educational regions, each region being in charge of a Deputy Director of Education. Except Greater Mumbai which is both a region and a district, each of these regions consists of at least 4 districts. The Government of Maharashtra introduced the 10+2+3 system in providing for a uniform pattern of structure all across the state. The age of instruction for formal instruction in class I is 5+. The break up of the ten year school education is: primary stage - classes I-IV, upper-primary stage - classes V-VIII, and secondary stage - classes IX-X. After passing the secondary examination, conducted by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education at the end of class X, a student is eligible for admission to a general education secondary school, an Industrial Training Institute (ITI), or even a technical school. The +2 stage comprising class XI and XII was introduced in 1975-76. This stage is popularly known as Junior college and is either attached to a secondary school at the higher secondary stage, or in most cases is under a degree college as the +2 stage. At the end of 12 years, a student is eligible to join a bachelor's degree course of three years for a graduation degree.⁹

TABLE- STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION IN MAHARASHTRA

In Maharashtra, education governance, especially for primary education, takes place through collaborative effort of the State Government and local bodies. Though, the major responsibility for basic education lies with the State Government, the local self-government bodies in the rural areas and municipal councils in the urban areas have also been associated with school education. The main types of schools include:

- a) *Zilla Parishad Schools*: These are schools wholly managed and financed by the State Government. In Maharashtra, 80 percent of the primary schools are Zilla Parishad schools and 4 percent of the secondary schools are run by the Zilla Parishads.¹⁰
- b) *Municipal Schools*: Around 6 percent of primary schools in the state are run by municipal bodies. Many municipal bodies also run secondary schools in their jurisdiction.

⁹ *Educational Administration in Maharashtra State*

¹⁰ *The percentage figures quoted in this section have been obtained from The Department of School Education at Mantralay*

However, majority secondary schools are run by private societies and the government pays them a grant. The grant paid to C class Municipal Councils is 100%, B class Municipal schools get 90%, A class municipal councils get 80% and Municipal corporations 50%.

- c) *Private Aided Schools*: These are schools with private management but receiving grants from the government. 5 percent of primary schools and 64 percent of the secondary schools are private aided schools. The school does not receive grant for the first four years, in the fifth year 20% grant is permissible, 40% in the sixth year, 60% in the seventh year, 80% in the eighth year, and 100% in the ninth year. According to government's policy decision, no aid is provided to English medium schools opened after 1973. However, 267 English medium schools opened before 1973 are grant-in-aid.
- d) *Private Unaided Schools*: These include schools managed by trusts etc. These schools receive no aid from the government, however, they must obtain recognition from the Education Department. Private unaided schools constitute 4 percent of the total primary schools and 22 percent of the total secondary schools in the state.

TABLE - MANAGEMENTWISE ENROLLMENT

Apart from the above, the Government of Maharashtra has started many schools under several schemes. Some of the important schemes presently being followed by the Maharashtra Government include:

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched in Maharashtra in 1994 with the intention of operationalising the strategy for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The DPEP was planned to achieve the cherished goal of UEE by creating a sustainable and decentralised educational management system with a focus on community participation. It aimed at improving access, retention and quality of primary education on sustainable basis with a major focus on the education of girls, SC and ST, disabled and children belonging to minority groups. In June 2003 DPEP came to an end and the national programme 'Sarva Siksha Abhiyan' was started. DPEP covered only 11 districts, whereas SSA covers the entire State.

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan aims at providing useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010. It also has the goal of bridging social, regional, and gender gaps with the active participation of the community in the management of schools. Several Programmes supplementary to the main programme such as construction of class rooms, distribution of free textbooks, Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Community Resource Centres (CRCs), programmes for disabled children, endeavours for bringing 'out of school' children in schools, teacher training, opening of new schools and training of the community leaders for full participation in management of the school.¹¹

Vasti Shalas

As a part of universalisation of education, the Government has fixed the norm to open a primary school within a vicinity of 1.5 km. of a habitation having minimum population of 200. This norm for tribal areas is 1.0 km. vicinity and population 100. But still there are some habitations which do not fulfill above conditions. For such habitations, the Government has started 'Vasti Shalas' as an alternative education within a radius of 1 km. for at least 15 students. Under this scheme, in all 8256 vasti shalas were running, of these 877 vasti shalas

¹¹ *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan; 10th Annual Report 2003-04, pg. 1*

have been opened during 2004-05. The provision of Rs. 863.76 lakh was made during the year 2004-05 under this scheme and about 3.93 lakh students are expected to get benefit. All these shalas are run by a single teacher.

Sainik Schools

The main objective of the scheme is to develop the spirit of nationality, co-operation, discipline, leadership, self-confidence, valour and patriotism amongst the students. In 1996-97, the State Government has taken the decision to start sainik school in every district by giving permission to non-government organisations. By the end of November, 2004 under this scheme, 41 Sainik Schools (including 3 existing schools) have been established in 33 districts. Of these, 6 schools are exclusively for girls. Intake capacity per class in these schools for standard V to XII is fixed at 45 students, and 8,544 students are taking education in all these schools.¹²

Mahatma Phule Shikshan Hami Yojna

This scheme is being implemented to provide education for the children working as child labour in urban and rural areas, mainly in agricultural field, animal rearing, and for shelterless children, deprived of primary education due to poor economic condition. Under this scheme, total 3.92 lakh students have taken education from 20,184 centres in the State.¹³

Maharashtra Cadet Corps (MCC)

The State government introduced MCC on the lines of National Cadet Corps (NCC) for all students in the IX from the year 1996-97.¹⁴ This scheme was restructured in the year 2000 and now is offered to as a voluntary activity to all students of VIII and XI. The main objective of the scheme is to inculcate a sense of discipline, nature of leadership and to build a spirit of corps. The Physical Training teachers are given training and the tsaudnets are inurn trained by them. During the year 2003-04, the scheme covered 25.50 lakh students and is expected to retain the same number of students in the following years.¹⁵

Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme

To promote education amongst girls, the State Government has started Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme providing free travel concession to girls from 1996-97. Under this scheme, girls in the rural areas studying in standards V to X are provided free travel in Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation buses to attend middle/secondary school, if such school is not available in their village. During 2003-04, about 13.92 lakh girls availed such facility and in 2004-05, about the same number of girls are expected to avail this concession. Out of the total expenditure made under this scheme, one-third expenditure is reimbursed to the State Road Transport Corporation from the State Government. The share of State Government in the expenditure incurred for the year 2003-04 was just Rs. 57.49 crore, which was adjusted against the passenger tax to be paid by the State Road Transport Corporation to the State Government.¹⁶

¹² *Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2004-05*

¹³ *Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2004-05; 12.49*

¹⁴ *Educational Administration in Maharashtra; pg 72*

¹⁵ *Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2004-05; 12.53*

¹⁶ *Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2004-05*

State-level Administrative Machinery

Education is administered with the aid of a multi-tiered educational structure. The Department of education is divided into two sections - the Secretariat and the Directorate of Education. The Secretariat is the primary policy making body whereas the Directorate is the executive organ. There are 7 regional set-ups. There are also set-ups at the district and sub-district level. The Minister of Education occupies the top most position in the educational hierarchy, immediately below him is the State Minister of Education. The State Minister of Education is responsible for forming the educational policy in general and answering queries in the Legislative Assembly. He is aided by the Deputy Minister of Education. These ministers do not need to have any expertise or training in the field of education. The secretary of the Secretariat assists the State Minister of education. He is the designated Secretary of Education and is required to be a member of the IAS and is the real policy maker.

Within the Secretariat, the two main departments are School Education and Higher and Technical Education, they are headed by their separate Secretaries. Some of the major functions of the Secretariat include:

- Formulate, guide and co-ordinate educational policy in all aspects
- Framing and amending legislation
- Supervision, direction and control over educational administration in the state
- Monetary, including budgetary control over the entire framework
- Co-ordination with national level bodies and policies

The following Directorates fall under the Secretary of School Education:

1. Directorate of Primary Education
2. Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education
3. Directorate of Adult Education
4. Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training
5. Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education
6. Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research
7. Maharashtra Prathmik Shikshan Parishad
8. State Institute of Education Technology
9. Maharashtra State Council of Examinations
10. Maharashtra Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

The Secretary for Higher and Technical Education is responsible for Higher education (after Std 12), Technical Education, Art, Libraries and Archives. This paper will primarily focus on School Education.

Directorate of Primary Education

There are about 65000 primary schools in Maharashtra, 80% run by the Zilla Parishad, 6% by municipal bodies, 5% private aided and 4% private unaided. New thrusts by state government include *vasti-shalas* and Mahatma Phule Shikshan Hami Yojana schools. This department has a budget of about 4200 crores.¹⁷

¹⁷ *The Department of School Education*

The major functions of this body are to grant permission to open private nursery and primary schools, it also controls and supervises primary and nursery schools and works towards the universalisation of primary education.

Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

This department has a budget of about 3500 crores. There are about 15000 secondary schools in the state, about 64% private aided, 22% private unaided, 4% by Zilla Parishad including ex-government schools, 2% by state government, Ashram schools and technical schools, 1.5% by municipal bodies with 41 Kendriya Vidyalayas and 28 Navodaya Vidyalayas.¹⁸

Directorate of Adult Education

This Directorate is entrusted with tasks and programmes related to adult literacy and non-formal education as the two are inter-related and there is no separate body dealing with non-formal education. They are responsible for implementing programmes to promote and administer adult literacy for the age-group of 15-35 years.

Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training

MSCERT is the apex institute of the state. Its function is to provide academic support and improve quality of Primary Education. It was established in 1964-65 as a State Institute of Education (SIE). It was upgraded and renamed as Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training in 1984. MSCERT works in the area of quality improvement of School Education; it carries the responsibility of teacher education, research and evaluation.

MSCERT is under the Department of School Education of Maharashtra Government for quality primary education and teacher education. It assists and advises the State Government on educational matters and also undertakes and promotes educational research and uses the same for betterment of School Education. The institute works in close co-ordination with other educational institutes like NCERT, NIEPA, MIEPA, NCTE, RIE, MSEC, Text Book Bureau etc. Its State Level Constituent Institutes include State Institute of Science Education (SISE), Nagpur; State Institute of English for Maharashtra (SIEM), Aurangabad; State Institute of Audio Visual Education (SIAV), Pune; Educational Technology Cell (E.T. Cell), Mumbai; State Institute of Vocational Guidance and Selection (SIVGS), Mumbai.

The chief functions of the MSCERT are:

1. *Teacher training:* MSCERT organises long term and short-term in-service training programmes for teachers, teacher-educators and other functionaries in the field of school education. It also reviews, restructures and develops curriculum for pre-service and in-service training programmes for primary teachers and for other orientation programmes to be conducted for various functionaries. Apart from this, MSCERT is also responsible for developing teaching-learning material for teachers and teacher-educators.
2. *Curriculum Development and implementation:* Reviewing, restructuring and developing Primary curriculum is Primary (Standard I to VII) is one of its prime functions. MSCERT also organises orientation programmes to create awareness about Population Education, Women Empowerment, Human Values and Environment Education.
3. *Control over DIETS:* MSCERT exercises full academic control over the DIETS and monitors their progress.

¹⁸ *The Department of School Education*

4. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:* MSCERT is one of the partners sharing the responsibility of conducting various programmes under the SSA. The major programmes related to SCERT are Teacher Education, Research and Evaluation, Training on early childhood, education for girls and children of disadvantaged classes.¹⁹

The Director is the administrative head of the MSCERT. In the heirarchical positions immediately below him are the Joint Director for Administration and the Joint Director for Training. They are assisted by Deputy Directors. MSCERT, Pune-30 is functionally divided into 15 sections. The Joint Director for administration is in charge of the Curriculum Development Unit, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme , establishment and SMART P.T among other things. The other Joint Director is responsible for sections such as Evaluation, Extension, OET & Research, Balshikshan, etc. We will focus on some of the important sections of the MSCERT:

1. *The Curriculum Development Unit:* It is a 3 person committee, comprising the section head along with a researcher and correspondent. This unit is responsible for updating and modifying curriculum for classes 1-8. It is responsible for conducting workshops and programs to discuss and change the curriculum. The CDU had been assigned the task of designing and implementing a new curriculum for classes I-VIII. Committee meetings were organized under the major programme of curriculum revision for the purpose of preparation of draft syllabi. Subjectwise experts were invited for final review of the syllabi. Their suggestions were accommodated by the curriculum committee. The curriculum reform committee members meeting was organized for formal sanction before recommending the syllabus to the government. The implementation plan for the new curriculum was initiated in 2005.
2. *Training Section:* Conducts in-service training in the field of education at all levels with new educational techniques, approaches and trends for primary, secondary teachers, clerks, field officers and teacher educators. Its recent activities include conducting district level training programmes on value education through plan and non-plan schemes.
3. *Research section:* Suggests various solutions to the educational problems by undertaking research on the problems faced by the teachers. Every year Action Research Workshops are undertaken whereby around 30 primary and 30 secondary teachers are selected and five-day workshop is conducted for them. This section also publishes the Research Bulletin and an Annual Progress Report every year.
4. *Women Education Cell:* Its function is to spread awareness about the importance of educating girls. It also organizes programmes to promote girl education.
5. *Evaluation section:* The objective of this section is to bring about improvement in the evaluation procedures of the student's achievement at primary level for effective implementation of competency based curriculum.

Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE)

The MSBSHSE, was brought into existence in 1966, as per the Maharashtra Secondary Board Acts, 1966 and later amended in 1977 to regulate certain matters concerning education in the state. It plays a vital role both secondary and higher secondary education. The jurisdiction of the board extends to all the 33 districts in the state. It has eight divisional boards, each of the divisional boards enjoy autonomy in the conduction of examinations.

¹⁹ www.mscert.org

The state chairman is the highest authority in the board. He is assisted by a Secretary and Assistant Secretary. Each division has a divisional chairman who is assisted by a divisional secretary. The statutory committees of the board are advisory in nature. They are, a) General body b) Executive council c) Academic council d) Examinations Committee e) Finance Committee. The state board also appoints committees such as Board of Studies and the curriculum Research committee.

The board advises the state government on several areas related to policy in areas of secondary and higher secondary education within the state. Its role is especially important in maintaining a qualitative equanimity and ensuring coordination in regard to national and state policies. It is also instrumental in the prescription of elements related to infrastructure, this ranges from teaching and administrative staff to textbooks for different standards. Its other functions include awarding scholarships, inspecting the divisional boards and determining the general conditions pertaining to admission and examination of candidates. It is also responsible for curriculum development and modifications. Another activity carried out by the board is the development of textbooks, handbooks and other support materials for teachers. It is also responsible for conducting the SSC and HSC exams and affiliating schools and junior colleges. The board has adopted the 3 language formula and offers 27 other languages besides Marathi, Hindi and English. This reflects the multicultural and multilingual character of India.

Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research

The Bureau, better known as Balbharti was established by the Government of Maharashtra in 1967 under the Societies Registration Act(1860), with the objective of providing quality textbooks to the student body while sustaining affordability. The Bureau is an autonomous body and has a budget of over 20 crores. It prints the books of the State board up to Standard XII. It prints textbooks in eight languages.

The Bureau, which is registered as a Society has nine members, six of whom are officials in the Education department, the others are experts working in the field of education. The Minister of Education for the Government of Maharashtra is the Ex-officio President of the Bureau, while the Director of Education is its Vice-President. The Bureau has a general body which convenes annually, but it is the Board of Governors, that is responsible for the actual management of the body through various committees.²⁰

The functions of the Bureau pertain to, as the name suggests, curriculum research and textbook production, and are stated in its Memorandum of Association in the form of 21 objects. Some of the functions of the Bureau are:

1. To promote primary and secondary education.
2. To undertake and promote grant-in-aid research for the improvement of curricula and the preparation and production of school textbooks and books intended for supplementary reading at all stages of school education.
3. To develop curricula and advise the Government on all matters concerning the experimental development and revision of curricula, textbooks and supplementary material, when called upon to do so.
4. To assess utility of textbooks and other educational material.
5. To maintain libraries to facilitate and aid research on CET.
6. The Bureau's Council for Curriculum and Textbook Research undertakes research in areas of both curriculum and textbook as they are both strongly inter-connected. It is

²⁰ *Curriculum and Textbook -Annual Research Report (1999-2000)*

responsible for making arrangements for testing out new books and subsequently assessing the results of these tests. It serves as an advisory body to the Bureau in fields of curriculum design and production.

The Bureau plays a vital role in the fields of Curriculum and Textbook production, its functions and the committees through which they are carried out will be elaborated on in the next section.

Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad

MPSP, a registered state level autonomous body was constituted to implement programmes related to primary education, particularly the District Primary Education Programme in the state. This body is responsible for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) scheme. The Secretary of this society and the State Project Director who is also the ex-officio Director of Primary Education provided convergence between this programme and the state government schemes. MPSP works in co-ordination with MSCERT and the Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research. SSA is an extensive scheme at the national level that aims to universalise elementary education. It is being implemented in all districts for children under the age of 14 years. The SSA aims to provide useful and quality primary education for all children in the 6-14 age group by 2010.

State Institute of Education Technology

In 1984, the Government of Maharashtra set up the SIET under the centrally sponsored 'INSAT FOR EDUCATION' scheme. In 1986 it was moved from Mumbai to Pune and renamed as *Balchitravani*. Its primary purpose is to design and develop audio and visual educational material for the students and teachers in primary and secondary schools. SIET is an autonomous body under the administrative control of the Government of Maharashtra, but continues to be fully funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, under its Educational Technology scheme.²¹ The curriculum based programmes that are broadcasted are mainly produced in Marathi with the exception of a few special programmes that are produced in English, Hindi and Sanskrit.

Since 1993-1994 12708 Zilla Parishad Primary schools have been provided with colour television sets. 54,994 Zilla Parishad primary schools have also been supplied with Radio-cum-Cassette Player sets and educational audio cassettes on various subjects.

Maharashtra State Council of Examinations

Maharashtra State Council of Examinations is an autonomous body (body corporate) established by school Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra under the special Act "Maharashtra State Council of Examinations Act 1998".

The MSCE is entrusted with the duty of conduct and organisation of various examinations of School Education Deptt. ranging from Primary to Professional stages, like Scholarship Examinations and Professional Examinations like D.Ed., GCC & departmental examinations for the employees of the School Education, Higher Education and cultural Deptt.

The MSCE is the premier organisation in Maharashtra, known for the Middle School & High School Scholarships and National Talent Search Examinations since last fifty years. In 1968, the separate office of the Council of Examinations was established and further it was named as "Maharashtra State Bureau of Examinations" in 1996. And ultimately on 15th August 2002, it

²¹ <http://sietpune.nic.in/html/aboutus.htm>

has taken the shape of the body Corporate named as "Maharashtra State Council of Examinations". In nutshell, the MSCE organises and conducts 12 different examinations, in 22 times every year comprising 5000 examination centres for around 10,00,000 of candidates. About 66000 Primary Schools, 14000 Secondary Schools and 2000 Typewriting & Shorthand Institutes 238 D.Ed. Colleges and 3 TT Colleges as well can send their students for appearing of various exams conducted by the Council.

The mission of the MSCE is to take up talent search at primary, secondary and Professional level, through reliable, transparent and and valid conduct of examinations.²²

Maharashtra Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

This body is the state level counterpart of the national body, NIEPA. It is based in Aurangabad and headed by a Director. The Director of Primary Education supervises it. MIEPA trains administrators in the education sector.

Zooming in on CET

A) Curriculum

In Maharashtra, Primary curriculum for classes I-VIII is decided by the Maharashtra State Council for Educational Research and Training (MSCERT) and curriculum for classes IX-XII is fixed by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE).

Primary Curriculum:

All primary schools in the state are required to follow the specific syllabi prescribed for them by the State Education Department or seek permission from the department to do otherwise. The syllabi for the various subjects are drawn up by committees of teachers and other educationists. At the MSCERT, the curriculum development and implementation are handled by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The functions of the CDU include formulating curriculum for primary level (I- XIII), distributing and acquainting primary teachers with the new curriculum, and assisting teachers and providing any other additional related materials. Its work calls for strong alliance with the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The section head along with one lecturer and one correspondent-all from the field of education and recruited through the Public Service Commission, form the core members. The National Policy of Education (NPE) formulated by the Government and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) serve as guidelines for framing of the curriculum. Communication with NCERT though continuous is not mandatory. The national-level advisory board at NCERT invites representatives from SCERT for all seminars and programmes, and similarly, NCERT is kept updated about any progress made by at SCERT. Revision of the curriculum is conducted only when there is a change in policy that calls for it. MSCERT claims that around 70% of the NCERT syllabus is incorporated.

No fixed time span is set for curriculum revision, since the National Curriculum Framework serves as the primary guideline referred to, revision generally takes place in accordance with NCERT framework. Since the establishment of the section in 1984, curriculum has been revised by them twice following the NFC pattern, once in 1988, and most recently in 2004 on the lines of the NFC 2000. The recent decision of the Supreme Court which made it

²² <http://msce.mah.nic.in/>

compulsory for inclusion of environmental education at the elementary stage also made revision of the curriculum mandatory. Revision of curriculum is conducted in the following stages:

1. Subject Committees consisting of experts in that subject are formed by sending invitations. The subject committee generally has the strength of 10 members.
2. List of members is sent to the Government for sanctioning.
3. After approval, the members meet for drafting the syllabus.
4. The draft syllabus is put up for discussion to a group of people from different districts. All the people involved in the teaching learning process are adequately represented. Everyone from educationists, teacher union representatives, students and even parents are invited to give their opinion on the revision.
5. Changes are made if essential and final draft is then sanctioned by the State Secretary for School Education.

Representation from the State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, as well as the presence of an officer from The Textbook and Curriculum Research Bureau ensures a link between the various bodies and ensures a concentric syllabus.

Secondary Curriculum:

After adoption of the 10+2+3 system, the first uniform syllabi for the state were implemented in 1975. Subsequently the syllabi were revised based on the recommendations of Dr. Ishwarbhai Patel National Review Committee. This was implemented for Standard VII from the academic year 1982-83 and the first SSC Examination was conducted in March 1985. It was implemented at the +2 stage from the year 1985-86 and 1986-87 respectively and the first Higher Secondary Certificate Examination was held in March 1987.

Based on National Policy on Education of 1986, The syllabi were again restructured for the third time. 'National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education', a framework published by NCERT has been followed by the board. The restructured syllabi contain approximately 70% of the core supplied by the NCERT and 30% has been framed on the basis of regional requirement and situation. These syllabi were introduced in standards IX and XI from the academic year 1994-95 and in standards X and XII from the academic year 1995- 96.

National Council of Educational Research and Training published the most recent National Curriculum Framework on 14th Nov 2000. State board is developing curriculum framework for the state accordingly. Summary of this framework was published through the board's monthly called "Shikshan Sankraman" in January 2001 for all secondary and higher secondary schools in the state. Responses on this framework by education experts have been taken into consideration by the board of studies. While restructuring the syllabi after almost a decade, a variety of exercises were undertaken by the State Board to ensure a broad based participation of the stakeholders. Syllabi are often criticised as being framed by experts in ivory towers and the stakeholders' views are ignored. To pre-empt this, the State Board undertook various studies before framing the revised syllabi. This also ensured the adopting of the 'bottom up' policy i.e. taking into consideration the needs of the society before framing the syllabi.²³

²³ MSBSHSE -General Information booklet

Participative Restructuring of Syllabi

A comprehensive questionnaire was prepared covering various issues related to the framing of syllabi, such as scheme of subjects, nature of the textbooks, contents of the textbooks, teaching and learning methodology, evaluation process, inclusion of non-scholastic subjects, need to bring quality into education, need to include life skill education and other such topics pertaining to curricula. The respondents were requested to make a note of their expectations from the new syllabus and give valuable suggestions. The respondents included headmasters, teachers, parents, experts in education, heads of institutions, social workers, education officers, deputy directors of education, elected members, government officers, and students. The questionnaire was also made available through a website. The responses were analysed and the observations were made available to the various Subject Board of Studies for their considerations. The board claims that the suggestions made have been adequately reflected in the restructured syllabi. Apart from the questionnaire, the State Board also undertook various studies to obtain the relevant database for revising the syllabi. Some of the studies undertaken were:

Subjectwise review of previous Syllabi:

The study included a review of the old and the existing syllabi implemented in the State from time to time. In keeping with the changing times, the Board claims to have incorporated changes in the content, approach and methodology in the syllabi at every stage.

Comparative analysis of the Syllabi of other states:

Before framing its own policy the MSBSHSE undertook an in-depth study of the syllabi of various subjects of different State Boards of Education. Different parameters of observation were decided upon and detailed reading of the syllabi was undertaken. The parameters included:

1. The place of the subject in the curriculum.
2. Objectives of the syllabus
3. Presentation of the syllabus
4. Contents of the syllabus
5. Suitability of the textbooks with respect to the syllabus
6. Periods to be allotted
7. Evaluation pattern
8. Total marks to be allotted to the examination
9. Duration of the examination
10. Minimum marks for passing
11. Design of the question paper and test items

Some of the states whose syllabi were studied included Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. The syllabi of NCERT, CBSE and ICSE were also studied and a comparative statement was evolved to note the status of the State's position. The exercise was an effort to keep the State syllabi at par with national standards.

Study of Newspaper Cuttings:

News items, articles, letters to editors, reports, editorials were studied and the points highlighted by them were considered during reconstruction in order to understand the views of the society regarding the kind of education expected in the state.

Reaction of Expert Teachers:

Around hundred teachers were sent special questionnaires so as to elicit the reactions of these experienced teachers regarding objectives, content and presentation of the syllabi.

Study of NCERT Recommendations:

NCERT, New Delhi makes several valuable recommendations in the National Curriculum Framework 2000. Views pertaining to the organisation of the curriculum at the elementary and secondary stages, goals and aims of education when seen in a larger perspective, the scheme of studies at different levels, organisation of the curriculum at the higher secondary stage, vocationalisation of education, adopting more relevant modes of evaluation of the learners' progress having been explicitly dealt with in the document, have served as the primary guidelines for reconstruction. To know the reactions of all the experts and all the stakeholders of the syllabi, the document was translated into Marathi and published through 'Shikshan Sankraman' and the reactions were sought. A State level conference was arranged and various issues were discussed.²⁴

B) Examinations

Examinations serve as important tools in testing the efficiency of teaching, in judging the general progress of pupils and allowing for self-correction. Today, however they largely serve only the purpose of ranking pupils.²⁵ The Kothari Commission Report of 1964-65, clearly states that 'evaluation at the primary stage should help pupils to improve their achievement in the basic skills and develop right habits and attitudes. It would be desirable to treat classes I to IV as ungraded to allow children to advance at their own pace.' The State of Maharashtra however, it seems, has its own ideology. The Government of Maharashtra had plans to start a board examination after grade IV, and had to drop its plans only due to the strong public opposition. Presently, there is no public examination at the primary level. All primary school students are examined at the institutional level. In big cities the municipal corporations decide the pattern of evaluation to be adopted by the schools under their jurisdiction. Zilla Parishads are given freedom to conduct a common examination at the end of the fourth and seventh standards. However, some local bodies delegate the responsibility of evaluating pupils through the examinations to the institutions.²⁶

At the secondary stage, the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary and its Divisional Boards conduct public examinations at the end of the tenth and twelfth standards. The Board undertakes all the activities connected with the conduct of examinations such as setting of question papers, organisation and supervision of examination centres, evaluation of answer scripts and declaration of results. The Board has the power to grant recognition to secondary schools for public examination; but since it does not have any supervisory machinery of its own at the field level, the recommendations of the concerned District Education Officer are invited through the Regional Deputy Directors of Education.

Internal evaluation upto ninth standard and that of the eleventh standard is carried out by the schools themselves and is not a part of the evaluation responsibilities of the board. However, the student is required to have successfully cleared these examinations in order to be eligible for the Board exams. Schools in Maharashtra have accepted the semester system and for continuous evaluation, unit tests are also conducted in addition to the two terminal

²⁴ MSBSHSE - Information booklet; Analytical Restructuring of the syllabus

²⁵ Indian Education and Its Problems

²⁶ Educational Administration in Maharashtra

examinations. Recently a new rule was passed allowing students who had failed to clear the XI to take a chance at the XII standard Board Exam. This amendment has been one of the reasons for the low pass percentage at the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations this year.

The State Board conducts the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations at the end of the X and XII standards respectively. The examinations are conducted twice a year, the main examination is conducted in February - March and the supplementary in October. The scheme of examination has been defined under the Board's Regulations. The examinations are conducted in the state with the help of schools and junior colleges. The infrastructure and man-power is made available by the institutions and the overall supervision is ensured by the Board with the help Board Members and Officers of the Education Department. The co-operation of the District Level revenue machinery is also sought to check mal-practice and use of unfair means in the examinations. The State Government extends full cooperation by appointing adequate police force at the examination centre and question papers custodies to ensure security and sanctity. The Officers of the Education Department are entrusted with the custody of Question Papers and written answer books before they are despatched to examiners.

Examination Statistics²⁷

Examination	Pass Percentage	No. of Institutes	No. of Students	No. of Centres
SSC - March 2005	57.31%	97,049	14,98,719	3,327
HSC - Feb/Mar 2005	61.93%	4,567	10,11,140	1,599

The newly introduced Bar Code System on the answer books has helped to a great extent in maintaining confidentiality and objectivity in the system. The Divisional Boards mainly engaged in the conduct of examinations and declaration of results as per the regulations of guidelines of the State Board. The time-table, question papers and dates of declaration of results are a common for all the Divisional Boards. There is high degree of uniformity in various practices followed by the Divisional Boards in the conduct of examinations. The 'Maharashtra Prevention of Malpractices at University, Board and Other Specified Examination Act, 1982' passed by the State Legislature to check unfair means at the public examinations has stringent provisions to prevent examination mal- practices.

Central Valuation Scheme

For the HSC Examination, the scheme of Central Valuation has been adopted in the Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Electrical Maintenance, Mechanical Maintenance and Electronics in order to ensure uniform reliable assessment.

Cross Moderation Scheme

For the HSC Examination, the scheme of Cross Moderation has been adopted in English, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Electrical Maintenance, Mechanical Maintenance and Electronics in order to ensure uniform assessment. The scheme ensures sure checking of the answer booklet and has yielded excellent results.

²⁷ MSBSHSE - Information Booklet

Computerized Process of Examination Results

Maharashtra State Board is among the first few boards in the country to undertake computerised processing of results. The board has the latest set up of computers and related machinery in EDP section. After the introduction of Bar Code system, the counterfoils of answer books with concealed seat numbers for scanning of the data and the database so generated is processed by the computers in EDP for preparing final result sheets.

Online Examination

Maharashtra State Board also claims to be a pioneer in conducting online examination of information technology subject for HSC students in the main examination of February/ March 2004. The subject of Information Technology was introduced in the year 2002 in Std. XI, both as one for the four optional subjects and lieu of Second Language. Out of 4800 junior colleges in the state 348 junior colleges have offered information technology as an optional subject. In order to familiarise the students with this examination technique, mock examination were administered to the Std. XI as well as Std. XII students for three times. The last of such a mock examination was conducted in January 2004. 18,378 students appeared for the examination.

Scheme of Examination for Special Children

Special attention has been paid to the problems of handicapped students. These candidates are given half an hour extra time at the time of examination. They are also given certain concession with respect to scheme of subjects.

Examination Reforms: Implementation of Barcode System on Answer Books

The examinations conducted by the board till year 2002, were based on open evaluation system, where seat No. of candidates was open on answer book and only total marks were given on mark list. The system was wide open to malpractices at every level. To control the situation board officials visited the other examining bodies where the 'Concealed Evaluation through Barcode System' is utilized successfully for past few years. After visiting and carefully studying, the system adopted and verifying the merits of the system board decided to go for Barcode System of Concealed Evaluation. This system has two significant advantages.

C) Textbooks

The Indian education system has placed much emphasis on textbooks. Much of the student body relies on them as a primary source of learning. Almost every student in the state receives textbooks; many of them receive them free of cost. The quality and readability however are areas in which much scope for improvement exists. It has become evident, that for the effective administration of education and for ensuring wholesome learning, it is imperative to heavily invest into development and distribution of good-quality textbooks. To most teachers, parents and even educational administrators, the word 'textbook' is synonymous with the word 'syllabus'. Paper setters rely on them for preparing questions and administrators who determine educational policy look upon them as the most important tool of change in the curricular pattern.

Textbook production and distribution is considered to be a state subject. The NCERT publishes some textbooks, but the state has complete discretion in regards to the usage of these textbooks. Maharashtra designs and produces most of its own textbooks while keeping in mind the national guidelines. Maharashtra state fares better than several of its counterparts in the production of textbooks, but it still has a long road ahead. The report 'Primary Education in India' states that the six DPEP states distribute 180 million books at prices that

are very low compared to international standards. It has also pegged a 33 million dollar figure as the business done through text-book production in these states.

At the primary level, for classes 1-8, the Maharashtra State Council of Research and Training (MSCERT) is responsible for the development and modification of curriculum. This body was introduced earlier in the paper; we had also specified some of its functions. MSCERT works in co-ordination with the Textbook Bureau, its members are present on several committees of the Bureau concerned with textbook research, production and improvement. The Director of the MSCERT, is in fact a member of the Textbook Bureau's Council for Curriculum and Textbook Research. Members of the Textbook Bureau are also present on committees of the MSCERT and the MSBSHSE.

After the MSCERT designs and sanctions the syllabi, it hands it over to the Textbook Bureau for developing the manuscripts and printing. For classes 9-10, the syllabi is set by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, after which the government sanctions it. On receiving the sanction, the MSBSHSE prepares manuscripts that are then printed by the Textbook Bureau. For classes 11-12, the MSBSHSE prepared the manuscripts, at this level printing is autonomous, several private publishers print textbooks for these classes, the Textbook Bureau only prints and distributes textbooks for language subjects. Private publishers have to develop textbooks as per the design and guidelines of the MSBSHSE and can only be published after the Board's approval.

At the Textbook Bureau, manuscripts are prepared in eight different languages- English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujrati, Urdu, Kannada, Sindhi(2 scripts) for all subjects. This is an expensive practice. They are proofread and have to be reviewed by a committee and sanctioned by the government. Textbook Bureau officials say that textbooks and manuscripts are subjected to random sampling methods from a cross-section of people from different fields and backgrounds in Maharashtra. Workshops are held and feedback in the form of questionnaires is also used to check the quality of textbooks. No reports were available about this review procedure. The Textbook Bureau has undertaken some research initiatives to improve the quality of the textbooks. The description, findings and recommendation of these can be found in the Research Reports published by the Bureau.

The state supplies free textbooks to all primary school students in an effort to raise the literacy rates in areas where the female literacy rates are lower than the national average. In 2003-04, 4.05 lakh students were provided free textbooks under this policy(reference to ecosurvey). Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes also receive free textbooks under the Book Bank scheme. Under this scheme the government has established book banks in several primary and secondary schools, 2.35 lakh students were covered under this scheme.

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