

Editorial

Welcome to the April 2026 issue of i wonder... In this issue, we focus on the relationship between the teacher and the textbook. Why does this matter? As NCF 2005 recognises, *“for a great majority of school-going children... [the textbook] is the only accessible and affordable resource for education.”* Based on this, the Framework stresses that textbooks be designed to promote equity, include diverse experiences, and value local knowledge. As teachers, we recognise that textbooks can play an important role in linking students across contexts and geographies through a shared national curriculum. At the same time, we know from experience that a book—no matter how relevant and well-designed—is static. While it provides the foundation for classroom instruction, words on a printed page only come alive in teaching-learning experiences that bridge the gap between abstract concepts and tangible, real-world experience. The student needs to be able to see themselves in what they learn, and see what they learn in how they make meaning of the world they are part of. When this begins to happen in the classroom, learning moves naturally and spontaneously from memorisation to understanding. It is this tacit knowledge that grounds most of our teaching practice and is acknowledged in NCF 2005: *“Good science education is true to the child, true to life, and true to science.”* Seen from this perspective, the teacher's role becomes central to learning. In mapping a topic, they interpret the textbook through the national curriculum. As NCF-SE 2023 emphasises, 'curriculum' is more than subject content—it includes the *“...overall goals, plans, arrangements, and practices that shape the experiences of students,”* as well as *“aspects such as school environment and culture.”* In planning their approach, the teacher adapts questions, examples, and activities to the local geography and social context of the children who are at the heart of it. In translating a lesson, they acknowledge, listen to, and develop a personal and supportive relationship with each child. In this way, classroom instruction becomes a reflective practice of bringing these different forms of understanding together.

This issue presents three examples of such practice around 'Teaching about Forests'. Each recognises that students can fully grasp a forest's complex web of relationships only by direct observation. Rich textbook descriptions provide detail, but experiencing a forest—or any local ecosystem—engages students' senses, invites curiosity, and allows them to notice patterns and interactions that words alone cannot convey. **Lokesh Dasila** invites us to examine **what we teach** by using curricular criteria from NCF 2005 to assess the national scope of an EVS chapter. By identifying how it can be grounded in Uttarakhand's long cultural history of struggle for forest rights, he shows how curricular aims can help students develop a broader sense of belonging. **Nachiket Sandeep Shirude** encourages us to explore **how we teach** by expanding what students recognise as forests. By drawing attention to the ecological richness of community-managed orans of Rajasthan, he underlines the need to help students appreciate the vital 'lifelines' that exist in landscapes in their own backyard. **Priti David** urges us to consider **why we teach** by looking at the human and social consequences of iconic conservation models. By revealing their competing needs and uneven consequences, she highlights the importance of helping children navigate real-world complexities while learning to think and feel for others. Taken together, these stories remind us that teaching about the environment is rarely just about facts. By connecting our teaching to the histories, landscapes, and people around us, we help our students move beyond the pages of a textbook and into a deeper, more empathetic relationship with the world they inherit. How do you bring the textbook to life in your classroom? Do share your stories, reflections, and examples with us.

Chitra Ravi
Chief Editor

