



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

## Schools- Textbooks, Ideology and Reproduction

**KEY WORDS:** Textbooks, Pedagogy, Pedagogic Action, Ideology, Capital

Ms. Taruna Jain

Designation: Assistant Professor Organization: Mata Sundri College for Women  
Pandav Nagar, Delhi-91

## ABSTRACT

Textbook, a major instrument in imparting education, is a container of the principles, ideologies and values that is aimed to be propagated among the readers i.e. the students. The textbooks, therefore, become a part of the ideological state apparatuses which enables the reproduction of the social relations of production or the status quo. Textbooks are written with the intent of allowing internalisation of a specific ideology and fostering identity formation of a particular kind. This article is an attempt to analyse the pedagogic encounters in the schools, impact of pedagogic action upon the recipients. It also connects upon the framework of 'Capital' by Bourdieu. Finally, in the last section author attempts to connect it to provisions of RTE and brings upon her perspective upon the same.

## Textbooks-

Textbook, a major instrument in imparting education, is a container of the principles, ideologies and values that is aimed to be propagated among the readers i.e. the students. The textbooks, therefore, become a part of the ideological state apparatuses which enables the reproduction of the social relations of production or the status quo. Textbooks are written with the intent of allowing internalisation of a specific ideology and fostering identity formation of a particular kind. Example- history books popularise the nationalist sentiment among the young readers and simultaneously creates a national identity. Althusser notes that, this in a way controls the society by orienting people to understand the world in a particular way. Thus, there is genesis amnesia where a particular ideology is naturalised. This in turn results in the legitimisation of the dominant bourgeoisie ideology or the cultural arbitrary and the ignorance of the subaltern view leading to the creation of hegemony. However, the point of consideration over here is, whether this socialization process is vicious in nature or whether it is disrupted by the counter culture.

The following sections deal with a discussion on the textbooks as a unit producing cultural and social capital through its content, influence from the state, school and the pedagogy adopted. It also dwells into the conditions for creation of passivity amongst the student. However, the situation is problematised when passivity is contested in relation to the agency of the student followed by a conclusion that searches for a holistic approach towards education in the Indian context.

## Textbooks and pedagogy of school

The pedagogic work is executed in the school where the teacher is considered to be the centre of pedagogic authority. Teaching in the school is instrumental in shaping the experience of a child in the school as the pedagogic style determines the way a child would relate to the symbolic world and also how would they relate to a specific text. The sense of empathy generated would give a better understanding of the society to the reader. The teacher, therefore, can provide the space for alternative interpretation of textbook's content which is not accessible otherwise. The teacher's interference can initiate a democratic class environment which would provide a platform for the expression of the individual will of the students. How successfully the teacher is able to bridge this gap or how willing is he or she to do the same, is matter of consideration. The material conditions of the school are also influential in determining the pedagogy practiced.

The rigid timetable which is a product and symbol of the industrial culture and the stress on completion of the syllabus within a stipulated time frame followed by assessment restricts the pedagogical style of the teachers in the school. It prevents intense discussion amongst the students and the teacher over contested issues of the syllabus that could provide an alternative understanding to various issues. The Indian teacher is a subject to the syllabus and textbook prescribed by the state's authority

leaving them no autonomy over what they are teaching. This powerlessness is masked by the authoritarian role a teacher performs in the class, which inhibits the student-teacher interaction and thereby suppresses the inquisitive nature of the child.

The other options available for exploration to the students can be ensured by the material conditions of the schools. Krishna Kumar points out that library, one of the material facilities, can be utilised to develop a holistic understanding of a text by the student without the interference of any intermediary like teacher. This is rarely used freely without prohibitions as the libraries are either absent or else if present, are scarcely equipped. Shalini Advani also states that apart from accessibility to facilities, the material conditions also determine the availability of teachers with proficient pedagogy style. The pay scale of teachers determines their interest in teaching and the delivery of the pedagogic action. The ethnography of English classes in the non elite schools of UP and Delhi reiterates the point.

The pedagogic style is also influenced by the genealogy and the stereotypes present in the society. For instance- In non elite schools usually with a non democratic environment, the teachers presume that the students will be unable to understand concepts of the textbooks in English language. This presumption is based on the fact that the usage of English language (cultural capital) is absent at the centres of primary socialisation i.e. family. Therefore, translations are done by the teacher to make children understand, making the content irrelevant, unrelatable and boring to the students. The teacher does not indulge in those questions of the textbook which offer a scope of discussion on the same presumption. Thus, they control the class through the textbook and giving more importance to rote learning. This triggers passivity among the students.

Hence, it is evident that when the content of the textbook, pedagogy used and the material conditions of the school is in consonance with primary socialization then there is reproduction of the cultural and social capital. This is generally seen in the case of children belonging to the dominant class. In the contrary case, the child is subjected to a kind of symbolic violence which may lead to the formation of a confused value system with a constant endeavour to attain cultural capital in the prohibitive environment for upward mobility.

The point to focus over here is that, is the process of social and cultural reproduction with instruments like textbooks an uninterrupted process that makes the recipients of education passive in nature or is it problematized? The following section discusses this aspect.

## Textbooks generating passive recipients?

Firstly, it needs to be specified that a student before coming to class is pre-equipped with a certain worldview as it undergoes

primary socialization at home, has influence of the peer group, mass media like internet etc. Therefore, a child is subjected to primary socialization as well as the secondary socialization as discussed above which together work towards reproduction of the cultural arbitrary or the social-cultural capital. However, this view overlooks the individual will of the student, as pointed by Rousseau, which may or may not be similar to the general will of the society. Therefore, the student's subjective agency needs to be acknowledged too in the process of social and cultural reproduction.

The agency of the student makes its presence felt in the system through resistance in the form of disobedience. Despite of all the compulsion laid by the hegemonic tradition to reproduce the power structure by regulating the content of the textbooks, as described above, the response or interpretation to a particular text is a person specific process in regard with their agency. Hence, despite of the communal content of the textbook, internalization of the sentiments is directly correlated to the agency of the student. There is hysteresis or constant modification occurring that is countering the cultural arbitrary or modifying it. Thus, there is proliferation of counter culture through which the marginalized view finds its space. Similarly, the human agency of the teacher should also be acknowledged that makes the pedagogic style of each teacher different and in many cases allows the easy implementation of the subjective agency of the students possible in a classroom setting through the allowance varied interpretation to a text.

Therefore, textbook emerges as an instrument of cultural and social reproduction which is possible only when the primary socialization, the secondary socialization and the human agency (individual will of the student) are in sync with one another. The agency of the students prevents the formation of passivity and docility allowing various interpretations to the textbook knowledge.

### Textbooks and Reproduction

Bourdieu has worked extensively upon the relationship between schools as a form of Capital. According to Bourdieu, Capital is accumulated labor. He essentially distinguishes between three major forms of Capital; Social, Cultural and Economic. His work brings out extensively the relationship between the schools and how is a major acquired resource which works in the process of social mobility. Hence, people are more than willing to 'invest' in schools and education of the child. However, very interestingly Bourdieu brings out his outlook upon it. He helps readers understand that even though schools are a major institution for acquiring the cultural arbitrary but access to certain forms of cultural arbitrary doesn't come easily and to all. It also comes with its arbitrary boundaries and thereby creating internalized domains of differences. These differences are difficult to wear off. However, never to say impossible. Many movies have been based upon this theme. To name a few; My Fair lady, Hindi Medium, Neel Batta Sannata, etc.

### RTE- a step to bridge the gap?

In India, right to education act 2009 made it a fundamental right of every child to attain free primary education. However, pedagogy under RTE needs to adopt a holistic approach to promote and acknowledge the agency of the child and prevent any form of temporal passivity. The content of the textbooks should be free of stereotypes and should provide an alternative view for example – a feminist understanding of the urban landscape. Similarly, the specialization of departments inhibiting cross-subject analysis like stark divisions between sciences and social sciences at the primary level that leads to a narrow understanding of any phenomenon should be debunked. Therefore, infrastructural upgradation and modifications in the syllabus along with personalised classroom culture would lead to a holistic understanding and would thereby fulfil the basic goal of RTE where students become an active participant in the nation building process.

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