



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

## Textbooks and Content

**KEY WORDS:** Ideology, Pedagogic Action, social and Cultural Reproduction

Ms. Taruna Jain

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

## ABSTRACT

Education is a social process or secondary socialization through which beliefs, values, ideologies and practices are internalised by the recipients i.e. the young students. This process constitutes a pedagogic work under which pedagogic action. Education is a social process or secondary socialization through which beliefs, values, ideologies and practices are internalised by the recipients i.e. the young students. This process constitutes a pedagogic work under which pedagogic action. This article looks is an attempt to analyse the relation between the content of the textbook and state as an ideologically governed setup. In order to bring the dynamic nature of the relationship ethnographies and the established work in this field has been used as the reference points.

## Introduction

Education is a social process or secondary socialization through which beliefs, values, ideologies and practices are internalised by the recipients i.e. the young students. This process constitutes a pedagogic work under which pedagogic action example- teaching of the textbooks is done by a social agent endowed with pedagogic authority like the teacher which allows the reproduction and maintenance of the habitus. Therefore, education plays a key role in the production of social-cultural capital in the society. Under the Marxist framework, it is the ideology of the bourgeoisie, possessing economic capital, as the cultural arbitrary that is reproduced in the process.

This social process requires an instrument or a medium for its operation .i.e 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. Example- history books popularise the nationalist sentiment among the young readers and simultaneously creates a national identity.

## Textbooks-

Textbook is a pedagogic instrument that establishes a relationship between the teacher equipped with pedagogic authority and the pupil. The textbooks, as noted by Shalini Advani, also entail a notion of performance in which the content of the textbook is presumed to be read aloud in the class comprising of teacher and students. In the course of which, the content of the textbooks influences a student in the following three ways- the content suggests a particular action example- lessons on moral science or mythological readings, the content gives an insight of what others do in a given situation and develops a fraternity characterised by negative solidarity between the readers formed through common experiences and understanding of the content.

## Textbooks and their Content

The textbook, as pointed in the above sections, is a container of the ideologies, values and principles. This content is decided by the author not on an arbitrary basis, but is in relation to a specific ideology that is intended to be popularised. Thus, the content of the textbook disguised as a neutral fact, has cultural codes embedded in it that reproduces a cultural and social capital where the cultural arbitrary gains legitimacy and rejects the marginalized view. The author over here is equipped with pedagogical authority and exercises it to present a particular theme or fact in a specific manner. Most of the time, there is deletion of corresponding facts, oversimplification of certain complex issues and presentation of facts or themes in the textbooks with an exam oriented approach. The lack of provocation to inquire in the textbooks, leaves little room for any alternative interpretation or questioning by the readers. This inhibits the proliferation of the analytical ability of the student and may lead to lack of interest in the subject matter.

To explain the above Prof. Krishna Kumar uses a comparative analysis of history being taught in the schools of Pakistan and India

covering the common freedom struggle and the controversial episode of partition. Firstly, Kumar points out that history is a form of ideological indoctrination due to which the study of the history of a nation is oriented more towards building a national consciousness and identity than towards understanding of the complexities or the controversies related to various episodes of history. These textbooks lack mention of the procedures or the historical principles by which historical knowledge is generated. While generating a sense of oneness, the textbooks also differentiate the "us" from the "other". This creates stereotypes and also a kind of cultural capital that is carried forth by the young generation readers. For example- The 'common past' is interpreted distinctly by both India and Pakistan to create a national identity like- the formation of the Muslim league is treated as a turning point in the creation of Pakistan in the textbooks in Pakistan while this episode is separated from the main narrative of India's freedom struggle. The figures looked upon in the two countries also differ, despite of an intertwined history. For instance- the way Gandhi is looked upon as a visionary and a role model in India, Syed Ahmad Khan is portrayed in the same way in the Pakistani textbooks. However, conversely, Gandhi occupies little relevance in Pakistani studies as Syed Ahmad Khan in the Indian school history books.

Thus, the author over here is an architect who assures the social and cultural reproduction of a specific kind. One of the ways to control this process of reproduction is through 'memory posters' (the memory just contains the scenes from the past devoid from time frame or context) where the textbooks are devoid of the context for many historical events. For instance, the revolt of 1857, characterised as a milestone in the freedom struggle and also in generating nationalist consciousness, lacks context i.e. the textbooks do not provide any description about the social involvement of the different sets of people example- the participation of different castes, role of women, etc. There is also, oversimplification of facts in the textbooks of both the nations, for instance- the choice of salt as a symbol for Satyagraha is not problematized as to whether it was consensual or not? Similarly violence following any upsurge is sidelined. Such a history is whimsical to the historians as they reconstruct and reform the content. It even restricts the imagination and analytical abilities of the young students in engaging with the debate and understanding the complexities surrounding the freedom and partition of both the countries or interrogating the positive and negative side of the leaders like Gandhi, Jinnah, Syed Ahmad Khan etc. Bhog et.al stresses on the fact that not just history, other subjects are also under the same influence. The syllabus is often outdated and simultaneously reinforces the content that reestablishes the power relations of the structure. For instance- The European-centric colonial approach still used to understand the landscape, development, environmentalism, poverty, etc is outdated and biased. For example- regarding Africa as a backward nation in the textbooks is a biased opinion. Instead of using these textbooks to create gender parity, the content of these books are devoid of local geography and club the contributions of the

women, belonging to a presumed naturalized patriarchal family, in the non-productive labour category. The textbooks in the course of oversimplification of facts do not elaborate on the heterogeneity of a particular category in a society, for instance farmers and their demands. Many of the facts lack clarifications too for instance degradation is coterminous with overexploitation of nature.

The above mechanism enables in the reproduction of a specific cultural and social capital by discarding the alternative understanding of a complex reality. This oversimplification of facts or lack of contextualisation is based on the presupposition that the young mind is inept to understand the complexities –political and religious surrounding such incidents. Kumar considers this to be a falsified notion and argues that a comparative analysis should be provided by the textbooks to understand how similar or different is the present political life from that of the past. The absence of child's perspective because of the above mentioned leads to lack of reflexivity where the student is unable to empathise with the subject matter which may lead to passivity among the students.

### Textbooks and the State

As established above, textbooks enable cultural and social reproduction through its content. The state also, in order to maintain the territorial, social and political integrity utilise the textbooks to instil national sentiments and celebrate "oneness" among the youngsters. The state is alleged over here to adulterate the content of the textbooks either through the deletion of certain events, oversimplification of a particular debatable or contested event or overemphasis on a certain person or incident. Through this state uses power to reproduce cultural and symbolic capital that helps to reaffirm their position in the power structure. There exists a pertinent threat even a democratic set up, of facts being marred or manipulated with communal elements. For example- in India, the content of the textbook is subject to change with a change in the government.

By controlling the content of the textbooks, the government in power tries to push its ideology to the forefront and popularises it to the extent that it is internalised even by the children. The strategy adopted here is to use textbooks as a medium. For instance, when the BJP government came to power in India in the 90's, it promoted the mushrooming of Saraswati Shishu Mandirs which was backed by RSS ideology. The textbooks of these schools were fraught with hate ideology against the Muslims, and were circulated and taught despite of the recommendations made by the NCERT committee comprising of eminent secular scholars. The textbooks generated bigotry and fascism of a kind that was at loggerheads with the secular ideology of the nation. The textbooks became politicized where efforts were made for a communal reinterpretation of history using the state power in hand through deletion or addition of facts that generated a social-cultural capital of a specific kind.

The manipulation of the content of the textbook and legitimising it through the pedagogic authority gives a singular interpretation that is restrictive and limited in nature and prevents the student from exploring the facts through reasoning, empathising and analysing the content. Simultaneously a genealogy is constructed and reproduced that reestablishes the power structure. The recipients of knowledge i.e. the students may tend to become a docile body under the state apparatuses. However, the pedagogy adopted in the schools by the teachers can liberate the child from the docility by allowing alternative learning.

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