

*Analysis of Text books in the light of
reflecting sensitivity to Gender, Caste and
Class parity, Peace and Health.*

Course - VAI

TEACHER Education Institute

Contents

➤ Introduction

➤ The role of Text books in Education

➤ Text book analysis

➤ Analysis of Text book of social and political life class II – VII

➤ Analysis in the light of reflecting sensitivity to caste and class

➤ Analysis in the light of reflecting sensitivity to health

➤ Analysis in the light of reflecting sensitivity to gender

➤ Analysis in the light of reflecting sensitivity to peace

Introduction

Any organised teaching-learning situation can be considered basically as consisting of a specific curriculum, which in turn, would include the syllabus, the instructional materials, and the transactional strategies. The ultimate efficacy of the learning situation would thus be dependent largely on the relevance of each of these components in the context of the learner and the learning outcomes. In the national context today, the significance of an appropriate curriculum becomes even more critical in view of the efforts towards universal primary education wherein the diversity of the students' needs will be inevitably become still greater and so will the need to adapt educational approaches to match curriculum, instruction, and learner.

In the Indian situation, at the primary stage, the textbook continues to be the most essential and in majority of cases the only aid in the hands of the teacher and the learner through which the given curriculum is transacted. This situation consequently places a heavy responsibility in the quality of

Teacher Sign

the textbook for ensuring effective-teaching-learning interactions and outcomes. For any instructional material to be effective, it has to be necessarily planned keeping in view the requirements of the learners particularly with reference to their age, their educational and cultural background, their immediate environment as well as their proficiency in the language, which is the medium of instruction.

Textbooks are a vital ingredient of successful learning. The importance of their role can never be exaggerated. A large number of textbooks are being prepared in India every year, both at the central level and in the different states. Recent researches have led to the speculation that the effectiveness of these text books and those available with the students - often the distance between the home language and the grade language used in the textbooks also serves as a contributing factor. There is a dearth of research input or base to facilitate informed decisions regarding appropriateness and sequencing of the content to match the linguistic competence of the target group. As a result, neither any state nor any central agency has specified

any language content to be used in the textbook in linguistic terms. Norms of linguistic competence of our children are also not defined. The authors do not get any specific guidelines or training and are also not even familiar with the needs of the stage of education for which they are writing.

THE ROLE OF TEXTBOOKS IN EDUCATION

Textbooks are artifacts. They are part of schooling that many stakeholders have the chance to examine and understand. In most classrooms they are the physical tools most intimately connected to teaching and learning. Textbooks are designed to translate the abstractions of curriculum policy into operations that teachers and students can carry out. They are intended as mediators between the intentions of the curriculum policy and the teachers that provide instruction in classrooms. Their precise mediating role may vary according to the specifics of different regions, educational systems and classrooms. Their great importance is constant. Following points explain the importance of textbooks:

They allow the teacher to manage and organise the learning process more efficiently. They give directions to lessons, they guide discussions, they provide continuity to the learning process and provide a plan of action to the teacher.

Teacher Sign: _____

Textbooks offer security to teachers, the teachers does not have to make important decisions on what to teach, in which order and how to teach. This is particularly useful for inexperienced teachers who lack skills and confidence for developing materials of their own.

Textbooks can also save teachers a lot of time since they offer a wealth of activities and ideas for language development and practice.

One of the primary advantage of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured consistently when we use them.

For learners, textbooks acts as reference books and guides on the basis of their textbooks, students know what has been covered and what needs to be covered.

Textbooks can also facilitate the introduction of an innovation and can act as agents of change. New ideas and methods can be embedded in a textbook enabling teachers to become familiar and comfortable with new ideas.

2. They are effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource of presenting material, a source of ideas and activities.
3. They provide structure and syllabus for a programme.
4. They can provide effective language models and input.

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TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

It is axiomatic that all school curriculum frameworks and thereby textbooks must draw solely from a framework of which the pillars are the Indian Constitution and the national policy on education. Schools, institutions, and individuals involved in the preparation of textual material must have as a strong reference point this postulate: installing an awareness of constitutional rights and values. Ensuring an emphasis on the egalitarian content of citizenship and inculcating a consciousness of the cultural diversity underpinning national identity is therefore a useful template on which to assess textbooks. For example, if textbooks which should have as their primary aim the building of harmony and unity between people are found instead to have the impact of invidiously polarising young people, creating antagonism and faction among them, based on unsubstantiated and politically motivated arguments designed to perpetuate social, economic and gender oppression, or to enhance the hegemony of a particular identity when relating to region, caste, religion,

Teacher Sign: _____

or language. Such books, which are based on rigorous research are in effect part of an ideologically motivated or cultural project, must be rejected as being violative of the basic tenets of the constitution and educational policies. There is need to identify the sources of these distortions.

Though not always easy to locate the sources, in some cases distortions occur because of the ideological predilections of the sitting establishment.

Textual material is intended for use in schools that are obliged to function in the secular and culturally pluralist environment mandated by the Indian constitution; there is a need to make sure that all the textual materials is as factually verifiable as possible and that it reflects the range of cultural and social identities that underlie citizenship of this republic. In this context, it is important and necessary that the template which should be used to judge the utility of curricula and textbooks is of how much the spirit of inclusiveness and the truth of Indian cultural heterogeneity permeate their content. There can be no escaping that fact that Indian education would have to meticulously and

Teacher Sign: _____

visibly shake off any tendency to allow the dominance of any communal impulse. It should not allow the presence of the majority cultures and their group preferences to submerge and further marginalise the disadvantaged and marginal communities. This would result in a dangerous erosion of pluralism, diversity and cohesion - principles critical for egalitarian citizenship and common nationhood embedded in our constitution.

No textbook is perfect. It is rather difficult, if not impossible for any one textbook to cater for the diverse needs of your learners, the aims of your syllabus, the constraints of your situation and your teaching style. A textbook will be a compromise between what you need and what is available. No commercial book will ever be perfect fit for a language program. Bearing these facts in mind and the fact that the selection and use of a particular textbook is a major educational decision which has immediate implications for the quality of student learning, it can easily be appreciated how important textbook evaluation is. There are many features of textbooks, some which are unknown to the authors, which have

a significant impact on their target audience. Such features can have positive or negative impacts on learning. Textbook analysis is a means by which these features can be identified and hence the effectiveness of textbooks be established.

Methods of Textbook Analysis

Three basic methods can be discerned in the literature on textbook analysis and evaluation.

1. The Impressionistic Method:

It is concerned with obtaining general impression of the material.

As Cunningham's term 'impressionistic overview' suggests, one form of this is wide-ranging but relatively superficial. It is also possible to gain an impression of a book by looking rather more closely at representative features, such as the design of the unit or a lesson or more specific features such as the treatment of particular language elements.

2. The Checklist Method

This method, in its most literal sense, is a checklist of a list of items, which is referred to for comparison, identification or verification. The checklist has 4 advantages.

- > It is systematic, ensuring that all elements are deemed to be important, are considered.
- > It is cost effective, permitting a good deal of information to be recorded in a relatively short space of time.
- > The information is recorded in a convenient format, allowing for easy comparison between competing sets of material.
- > It is explicit and, provided the categories are well understood by all involved in the evaluation, offers common framework for decision making.
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3. The in-depth method

The in-depth method techniques go beneath the publisher's and authors' claim to look at, for instance, the kind of language descriptors underlying assumptions about learning or values on which the materials are based on deeper sense, whether the material seems likely to live up to the claims that are being made for them. While such techniques have the virtue of ensuring that the selection process is more considered affair, they may also have certain advantages.

- 1. Representative of samples
- 2. Practicality
- 3. Time and expertise required.

Analysis of Textbook of Social and Political Life - II - Class VII

The vision of the book is to build awareness among learners about the current social, political and economic issues. It aims to develop the learners ability to, critically understand and analyze social and political issues in keeping with the tenets of the Indian constitution. This would help learners to assimilate the values enshrined in the constitution, as well as their importance. Further, it helps learners to understand the notion of equality in Indian democracy. Efforts have been made to understand the concepts of gender discrimination, caste and other related social issues.

Analysis in Light of Reflecting Sensitivity To Caste and Class

The book presents different issues existing in society. Chapter one discusses the concept of equality and, to understand this concept, the story of 'Kanta' has been used to describe how Kanta feels equal to her boss while voting, as her boss waits for his turn, but feels unequal in the hospital, where she has to wait in a queue, but her boss does not.

Inequality has been discussed with the help of the autobiography of Om Prakash Valmiki. But, what exists in the present times and the students' lives is missing. The Chapter six, 'Understanding Media', aims to establish a link between means of communication and technology and business tycoons. It also tries to develop an understanding of the role of the media, by discussing its role in developing an understanding regarding equality, brotherhood and so on, as these are our fundamental rights. It discusses the negative and positive aspects of media, but, it does not talk about

the issues of the accessibility of the media for people from the lower 187 economic class. Only the middle, urban class is the focus of the chapter. A historical perspective and local means of communication such as the 'Chopra' and so on, are completely missing. The pictures used in the chapter of a laptop, a person talking on the phone, playing with guitar, PVR and so on, are only related to upper and middle class life. Ignoring the economically disadvantaged is inappropriate.

Very interestingly, the eight chapter, 'A Shirt in the Market', narrates the story of a shirt and its journey from the field to market place, has been shown beautifully. In this story, the chapter helps students understand equal benefits are not given to all the people working and contributing towards making a shirt. This difference has been used to highlight the differences in the poor and rich in society. How the poor are exploited has been presented with the help of the story of a cotton farmer. The chapter talks about the inequality prevalent in the market which gives it human rights based perspective. It raises several questions about the state and its policies and

draw the learner's attention to the aspect that, through a proactive role, people can prevent exploitation.

Chapter ten, 'Struggle for Equality' again shifts to social equality. Issues of inequality have been discussed with reference to Jawa Rahi, in Madhya Pradesh, and concerns of the people's human rights have been touched upon. The Constitution of India has been presented as a living document. The book deals with the concept of equality with many hypothetical examples and small stories. The book highlights the issues of rights. Initially, for instance we are equal in terms of voting, but unequal in social and economic terms. But the relation between vote and food, and the relationship between vote and social life has not been discussed, which is important. Such a perspective could have been included to provide a human rights perspective to the content. Though certain relevant examples have been used, yet more are required to provide a balanced perspective.

Analysis in the Light of Reflecting Sensitivity to Health

The second chapter, introduces the state government, which is disconnected with the concepts discussed in the first chapter. At the outset, the title 'State government' and the contents, which deal with the issue of 'health services' are not related to each other. Though it can be said that the health services are taken care of by the respective state governments, the title 'State government' gives the impression that the chapter is about the functioning of the three organs of the state government, viz. state legislature, state executive and state judiciary, but the chapter only discusses health services. Health has been seen as a part of fundamental rights and has been protected with the help of the story of 'Hakim Shukh'. However, the chapter does not talk about the right of an individual to approach the court to protect his rights.

Analysis in Light of Reflecting Sensitivity To Gender

The chapter, 'Growing up Boys' and 'Girls', discusses the notion of gender bias. It discusses the socialisation of boys and girls and the specific behaviours expected from them. Some questions have been raised, in the beginning of the chapter, such as, is the growing up of boys and girls the same, across different societies? How do responsibilities, at an early age, prepare them for their future roles as men and women? Why is work done by women considered less important and valuable than men? The chapter elaborates upon these questions. Such questions are quite important, as far as equality of men and women are concerned and raising such questions gives the text a human rights based perspective. The examples of Tonga Island and Madhya Pradesh provide good context to the context. However, there is an absence of optimistic examples. Such examples should have been taken where educated women have changed the scenario and challenged the

existing biased practices. The story, 'My mother does not work' emphasised that women work a lot at home, which is correct. The story also implies that men cannot work at home a lot of time. Showing that men cannot work at home, with examples, strengthens the pre-conceived notion that men cannot work at home. Such examples need to be avoided. Instead, examples, where men are shown to be working at home, could be more effective, as far as gender equality is concerned. This chapter seems to only highlight the problem of gender bias. Some opposite examples, such as that of Chalpa Chavala and so on should have been included, as they can provide an ideal image for girl students.

The book discusses the differences that exist in the professions for men and women and the role of education has been highlighted to deal with such differences. Raising certain issues, such as why specific professions are considered appropriate for women, stereotypical thinking about women and so on, give the content a human rights perspective based. The example of Laxmi Lakra, Ras Dundari, Pandita Ramabai

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and Rohya Sathawat Harkin are really motivating and inspiring. Campaigning has been presented as a tool for the formulation of certain laws, such as the law against physical violence - 2006, sexual harassment at the work place - 1997 and so on.

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Analysis in Light of Reflecting Sensitivity to Peace

There are very few instances where concept of peace has been dealt but there are some indirect references to the peace here and there. The book talks about the need of the Constitution in a democratic nation. To establish the need of Constitution, by giving certain examples from different parts of the world such as South Africa, America, regarding racial and other kinds of discrimination, but no examples have been taken from India to prove the need for a constitutional democracy. The argument given for the importance of a Constitution is that, in a democracy, the decisions are taken with certain rules and these rules form the Constitution. This method of representing the need of a constitution is not wrong, but is incomplete, and needs to be rethought. To protect the rights of minorities is, also, a reason to have the Constitution, so that a peaceful life can be ensured for the people. Certain thought-provoking discussions have been given, such

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as the last speech of Dr Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly in which he said that we will be politically equal but will be socially and economically divided. There will be one person, one vote and one value but, socially, the value of a person will be different in many aspects. The book provides a rationale of why there is a need for power sharing. It says that diversities are spread all over the world and we do celebrate that but, sometimes, it becomes so vast, that we have to have a way out, to maintain peace and for this, power sharing is the best possible way.