

Literacy in Pakistan: A Language Socialization Perspective

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Abstract: An important facet of Pakistani education system is socialization of students conducted through textbooks at schools. The paper argues that there is existence of a certain ideology in the texts that promotes statism, nationalism, patriotism, hate culture and islamification. The state controls the masses with the ideology that claims to benefit them by making them submissive, passive and yes menish. The texts reveal asymmetrical relations of power and dominion between the state and its citizens. Reading the text in its particular socio cultural setting one can easily decipher symbolic phenomena embedded in the texts that socialize the students into unequal relations (domination being one aspect of this association) between the state and its people who are oppressed, marginalized and persecuted in this whole process.

Key Words: socialization, ideology, unequal power relations, statism

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools function as a way of socializing students into particular forms of knowing and being in the society. Bourdieu (1986) considered school as a conservative force, determined to create receptivity among its pupils. It makes the learners ready to receive the knowledge of the dominant class in the society. The main function of schooling in any society is to enable its learners to understand the social world around them and to set collective goals for the learners as a group or nation.

Within the context of a socio cultural critical perspective the text books of Pakistans' public schools socialize the learners into supporting the dominant culture. The present research focuses on textual practices at schools in the national sphere in constructing the language experience of learners into specific patterns of socialization, which results in a collective national identity of young students. The result of such an education and the resultant socialization is that it pushes the learners away from liberation to subjugation. The state controls the socialization of its citizens through schooling, which in turns functions through textbooks and curriculum. It's their societal goal, thus it's difficult to challenge hegemonic values, beliefs and practices dominant in the

curricula.

Within this context and by using analytical tools I will illustrate how students in Pakistan are socialized into a collective national identity. For this purpose this study analyzes two lessons from Textbooks taught in Pakistan's Public Schools.

1.2 Ideology, Hegemony and Cultural Capital

Ideology is an arrangement of meanings and value systems; which stands for and works towards the interests of a particular class so as to express and control consciousness all at once. Raymond Williams defines it as mistaken interpretation of how the world in reality exists (Williams, 1992). For Zizek ideology is all about falsity, misrecognition or illusion. It operates as an invisible, blinding force. It results in an (un)conscious refusal/inability to believe or live otherwise (Zizek, 1989).

Hegemony is ideological domination. Hegemony in Apple's (1990) view is a set of organized meanings, values, commonsense consciousness and practices embedded in everyday social life. In the context of schools hegemony needs to be understood as being the product not only of the larger social system that defines the society, but also as a product of the way individual cultures are organized and constructed. Hegemony as a political and pedagogical process (Giroux 1992; Gramsci, 1995) functions as a controlling force that dominates student's ideology on an unconscious level. If one ideology or worldview controls the thinking process of an individual, it suppresses other patterns of examining reality. According to Gramsci (1995) Hegemony keeps a tight control over the society because of the way ideas are transmitted by language. The words we use are loaded with cultural meanings and shaped by dominant ideology of the time.

Bourdieu presented the concept of cultural Capital in his classic work *Distinction* (1986) in which he stated that, "*Social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds through cultural products' including systems of education, language, judgments, and values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life*" (Bourdieu ,1986 ,p.141) .These all lead to an unconscious acceptance of social differences and hierarchies, to a "*sense of one's place*" and to "*behaviors of self exclusion*" (Bourdieu ,1986,p.141).

2.1 Socialization: Schools as agents of Socialization

Socialization is an ongoing process through which a person adopts a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behavior and social skills appropriate to his social calling. It's the route by which one learns from others. Socialization stands for the constant development, inheritance and dissemination of norms, customs and ideologies, which provide one with the tools and behavior essential for participation in ones' own social milieu (Clausen, 1968).

Schools are a very important medium of social construction of knowledge; therefore, literacy is a

social process that cannot be divorced from its social context. In Pakistani context textbooks create a hegemonic discourse that reproduces social inequalities and a feeling of “otherization” among the learners. Text books not only influence learner’s beliefs and assumptions but they also determine whose knowledge is constructed in and out of school. Thus schools exercise social control through text books.

3.1 Textbooks as Ideological Discourses

Textbooks represent the central form of the curriculum in schools. They are representations of socio-political and ideological battles and compromises. Texts are social constructions of knowledge which during process of manufacture include and exclude the hopes and expectations of several groups of people (Anyon, 1979). The functions of school textbooks is ‘*tell children what their parents want them to know*’ (Fitzgerald, 1979, p.227). Hence through text analysis we can provide a context for the analysis of the interplay of history, power and cultural norms. Exploring the social nature of textbooks provides a relevant context of the dynamics underlying education and cultural politics and can be a useful tool to examine the socialization that results from such an education.

3.1.1 Critique of the Role that Schools Play in Socialization

Schools are not neutral enterprise and cannot be evaluated without looking at the underlying ideologies of the participants and schools’ hegemonic role as a socializing agent in the larger social context of the society. In his extensive work on Language and Curriculum Apple (1978) argues that schools serve a primary function in promoting and projecting the ideologies of the dominant and the powerful. He stresses that one consequence of this process is to maintain status quo between the powerful and the powerless. “*Schools do not control people; they also help control meaning .Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be ‘legitimate knowledge’ ---‘the knowledge that we all must have’, schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups*” (Apple, 1978, p.45). Among other things Apple (1978, p.17) also discusses the use of educational institutions and material by the dominant group ‘*to make its knowledge, knowledge for all*’.

4.1 Rationale behind the Work

The purpose of language socialization research is to examine how literary/ academic activities systematize the process of becoming an active and capable member in a community for its learners. Since schools control the socialization of its learners it’s very important to analyze the societal and ideational goals of schools in a given society. The school life in Pakistan is organized around curriculum, thus the nature of learning produced by texts is to be closely examined to ascertain how students are socialized to be active citizens of the state.

Since 1970s considerable research has been conducted on how children become communicatively and culturally competent in a society. An in-depth study of the social, cultural and interactional contexts is, therefore, necessary to examine the contextualized learning at schools that results in a particular form of socialization of its agents (learners). Bourdieu's (1986) notion of Cultural Capital and specifically institutionalized forms of cultural capital is significant here as it is also obtained through school education, where educational material provides access to the discursive resources that embody that capital.

4.2 Theoretical Construct

In order to explore the relationship between socialization and education through textual discourse this research has drawn upon two theoretical frameworks, firstly; the analysis of 1988 Education Reform Act in the UK Bowe and Ball with Gold (1992) in which they have identified three sites within which they claim that the construction and reconstruction of educational policy takes places. Secondly; Critical theory and socio cultural framework will be employed for understanding the phenomena at hand. Taking help from this comprehensive framework the present study will analyze how socialization practices are performed and legitimized within schools.

4.2.1 The Bow & Ball with Gold model

According to this model educational discourses and practices are to be analyzed as follows:

- a) *The Context of Influence*: Where the ideological and political basis of the policy is decided by government and powerful interest groups.
- b) *The Context of Text Production*: Where policy is constructed through the text.
- c) *The Context of Practice*: The professional sites within which policy and policy texts are explained by academicians.

The context of influence provides the ground within which educational activities are started and policy discourses are constructed. The context is where '*interested parties struggle to influence the definition and social purposes of education*' (Bowe & Ball & Gold, 1992, p.224). It is at this ideological, educational and political level where cultural wars are conducted and where a selective tradition is formed.

In text production, one must look for; what is the process through which textbook knowledge is constructed, what claims to truth and knowledge are offered, who are the heroes and villains, and how does the process of textual selection (i.e. inclusion and exclusion) work? Is the account presented as national history 'safe' and 'uncontroversial'?

In the context of practice, Bowe & Ball and Gold (1992) claim that policy presented via the text is

open to interpretation. The focus of the current study will be on how these factors influence the process of socialization of novices into mainstream national identity.

4.2.2 Critical Theory and Socio cultural Analysis Model

Critical pedagogy provides a comprehensive analysis of the roles that schools play in educational practices and the reproduction of various social structures. Here it will be used to define socialization of learners through text books. From the perspective of traditional educators, if schools were designed for the reproduction of an unequal social structure and for socialization of its citizens, then they are accomplishing their goal.

Critical theorists (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1983, 1992; McLaren, 1991; Weiler, 1988) have long argued that schools operate to preserve and distribute the cultural capital of the society. Schools reproduce acritical students who are socialized into appropriating behavioral norms and values adhered to by the society. On the other hand, socio cultural theories of learning (Cole, 1985; Moll, 1990; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1962) provide a means of linking socially and culturally organized activities within education. Specifically socio cultural approaches for studying psychological processes are based on the notion that higher psychological functions are first observed on the social plane, then through interaction with others in meaningful context.

Knowledge is also situated and is both the process and product of activity (Wortch and Stone 1985). If knowledge is the end and the means of legitimate participation in communities of practice, then the knowledge and the cognitive models that arise from activity necessarily reflect the values, beliefs and routine practices of the participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). Socio cultural studies have shifted attention from the individual to examining his/her activity, goals and means and even constraints that affect his participation in activity (Cole, 1985). Theories of language socialization (Heath, 1983) have identified the social nature of language learning and emphasized upon how social knowledge is acquired through participation in a community's social practices. These theories have been significant in explaining the importance of creating effective contexts for learning at schools and how socialization within classrooms and schools takes place. Socio cultural theories underscore the relationship between language development and the way activities are organized at schools.

In the following section I will unpack two lessons from the books used at Pakistani Public schools to illustrate how socialization takes place at schools. Both the books have been published and endorsed by Sindh Text Book Board and are widely used at public schools for educational purposes.

5.1 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1.1 Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai

This text is from Secondary Stage English, for class IX (Appendix, A). The lesson is supposed to be a biography. The purpose of a biography is to celebrate heroes and create role models for the imitation of the learners (a form of socialization).

Sufis represent a mystical interpretation of Islam. Gidwani (2009) believes, they transcended the Hindu-Muslim divide. However, Shah Latif has been projected as a Saint not as a Sufi poet, which he actually was. The lesson begins with a reference to Islam, '*Islam is the religion of peace*', this unambiguous reference to Islam contributes to the normalization of beliefs about Islam and its history in the community and leads to the creation of a *shared knowledge* in the Pakistani community. It's also exclusionist in nature as Islam has been presented as the religion of peace, thereby making all other religions appear less peaceful, violent or inferior. The (ab) use of biography to highlight the merits of Islam as a religious and political system is worth noting here. The first paragraph of the text highlights Islam and Islamic personalities, whereas the second paragraph discusses local personalities thus building a sense of *national identity* among the readers. Most of the text discusses the influence of Muslims in the region (political aspect of Islam) and provides skeletal information about Shah Latif who is introduced in third paragraph in the text.

5.1.2 Sainthood

Sainthood is a religious concept that requires formal canonization of the individual and it closely relates with Catholicism. However, this trait has been altogether ignored. Shah Latif has been dubbed a saint through a gradual shift in the meaning of the terms as the text presents the term 'saintly men' that refers to the followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who spread Islam. The word saintly men is then replaced in the text by 'these holy men', whose chief merit was to convert non-Muslims to Islam. This is historically inaccurate as Shah Latif was anything but a religious person. He spread the message of love, peace and harmony irrespective of the religious affiliations of the people in his time and age.

5.1.3 Socio cultural Teachings

In addition to the religiously oriented description of Shah Latif the text also presents certain socio cultural beliefs and practices as norms, so as to make the learners internalize such values as their own for practice. For example in the fourth paragraph Shah Latif's wife is portrayed as being 'noble' and 'good'. These judgments of Propriety and Normality project the kind of women the

society approves of. The author then states that Shah Latif '*showed kindness*' to his wife and '*lived at home for many years*'. The purpose of including this information is that the writer wants to imply that staying at home in youth is quite acceptable (when he was twenty). What is implied here, however is, that one should turn '*more and more towards religion and devotion*' in older age. The text then discusses how this devotion implies giving up a '*normal domestic life*' for a life of seclusion and piety. Hence, the text positions the readers as to appraise the qualities of a marriageable woman and what a person is expected to do in youth and in mature age.

5.2 MAKING OF PAKISTAN

This text is included in Pakistan Studies for classes IX-X, published by Sindh Text Book Board (Appendix, A). The text is about the formation of Pakistan but it includes various Muslim Movements in the subcontinent. It starts with the assertion that, 'Muslims ruled the subcontinent for more than one thousand years. However when they deviated from the golden principles of Islam their power and influence declined, It's noteworthy that history in Pakistani textbooks starts with Muslim rulers and movements. They ignore Hinduism as part of Pakistani heritage and an attempt is made to create an Islamic ethos. History is written within the framework of ideology in Pakistani texts. Patriotic and nationalistic version of history is thus created. An attempt is also made at promoting the culture of violence, hate and religious intolerance. The text under analysis makes the following statements:

While discussing the Movement of Syed Ahmed Shaheed Barelvi the writer describes the movement's aims as follows:

- a) To preach Oneness of Allah (Tauheed)
- b) To preach Jihad.
- c) To protect Muslims against acts and ideas that is contrary to Islamic values.

The text shows Sikhs as disloyal and blames them for the defeat of the Jihad movement, whereas the fight of Muslims against Sikhs has been described as a heroic one. Jihad has been defined as (holy war) in the lesson. The text on the whole, characterizes the following three characteristics:

- a) Factual inaccuracies and omissions
- b) Religious and ethnic prejudice
- c) Glorification of war especially holy war.

The purpose of these maneuverings is to impose a certain worldview of the nature of Islamic State and Pakistani nation upon the learners. The text says about the British "*They considered Muslims as their strong opponent and enemy*", and "*Muslims of the subcontinent became victim of their atrocities*". Here one can see how history is divided along communal and religious lines; no dynamics or causes are though mentioned for such an attitude of the British.

These are perspectives that encourage bigotry, prejudice and discrimination towards other nations and even the state's own citizens. The material is arranged in such a way as to encourage the students to marginalize certain groups and be hostile to other religions and social groups. There is a great emphasis upon the ideological basis of Pakistan. The text asserts "Pakistan's idea of a state was an ideological one". Under the heading "*Responsibilities of Citizens of an Ideological State*", some interesting demands are made of an ideal, for example:

- a) They should lead their life in accordance with the teachings of Islam.
- b) Every citizen of an ideological state should be loyal and patriotic, ready to sacrifice for the state.
- c) They should honor the laws of the state and cooperate with the law enforcing agencies.
- d) They should participate in activities that promote national integrity, honor and progress.

5.2.1 Purpose behind the text: Indoctrination of young minds

The text suggests as if Pakistan were made for Muslims alone so other social religious groups have no rights. The ideology of Pakistan is to be internalized as faith. The text aims to nurture in students a sense of Islamic identity and pride in being Pakistani. National culture according to these texts is, culture based upon the principles laid down by Islam. Thus, Muslims living in any part of the world form one nation based upon their shared beliefs whereas non Muslims by default form one nation, even though they may be Pakistani nationals. The Social Studies text has an overwhelming Islamic content and more or less repeats the same material that is produced in Islamiyat texts. These texts create a Monolithic image of Pakistan as Muslim only state and Pakistanis as Muslims only. Hence, other religions, sects and ethnicities are excluded from the national identity.

5.2.2 Emphasis on Ideology

An excessive emphasis is laid upon ideology which is a post independence phenomenon, created and devised by forces which were initially inimical to the creation of Pakistan to sanctify their politics. The Quaid e Azam never used the word 'Ideology of Pakistan', it was not known to anybody till 1962; a solitary member of Jamaat -I-Islami used it when the Political Parties Bill was being discussed. Upon being questioned by Chaudhry Fazal Ilahi what was ideology of Pakistan, he replied it was Islam (Nayer, 1998).

5.2.3 Hate Material

The text directly and indirectly teaches hatred of non Muslims especially Hindus and Sikhs. The same book under analysis says, 'The design of the Hindus to hold supremacy over the Muslims on the basis of their majority was very clear. They wanted to keep Muslims backward in all fields of life.' At another point, the term 'selfish designs of Hindus' has been used for the same purpose

of maligning the Hindu community. In discussing pre partition history a lot of facts have been distorted and misinterpreted for the very reasons. Learning in schools is not about self discovery but about rote learning of time honored local knowledge. Resultantly, such texts pollute the intellectual as well as social atmosphere of the country a great deal and are derogatory to the multiethnic and multilingual population of Pakistan. Textbooks in Pakistan have been used to mould students, especially in schools, in a particular religious cast. History has been turned and twisted to serve the purpose. Since partition was on the basis of religion, the Pakistan government thought that the advent of Muslim rule in India was the best period from which the history should begin. This was done long ago after the death of Qaide-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah who did not want to mix religion with the state. The texts are full of self-serving half truths.

5.2.4 Glorification of Jihad and Militarism

The theme of Jihad is a popular one in Pakistani textbooks .The text under review eulogizes Jihad and urges young students into taking the path of Jihad for the sake of the state and to uphold supremacy of their religion. A feeling is created among the students that if they are members of a Muslim nation, then in accordance with the teachings of Islam , they must be truthful to the State, be Patriotic and become self-sacrificing Mujahids (religious warriors).Having been born in the spirit of Jihad Pakistani citizens have to keep their Jihadi tone and spirit alive.

6.1 CONCLUSION

Pakistani text books drive the learners far away from Secularized Modern Education. Less balanced, less questioning and less critical students is the result of the socialization that takes place through outdated, inhuman and twisted curriculum and textbooks. As Pakistani schools have a culturally and linguistically diverse population, these texts foster behaviors that constitute the learners' emerging identities as 'silent subjects'. However, the content and language used in government endorsed textbooks as exemplified above do not provide access to globalized ways of producing knowledge. Hegemonic ideologies underpin the knowledge produced in schools through such textual practices. The texts have been contextualized to achieve ideological goals. Such textbooks promote conservative reading of Islam, history, biography and political science. The views expressed in the texts are developed as 'cultural capital' for the students to aspire to. The understanding of the world that the students form in schools can become their worldview for life and isolate them from having meaningful interaction with others for a life time.

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Appendix:

List of textbooks analyzed in the paper:

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. Secondary Stage English Book One, For class IX ,Sindh Text Book Board Jamshoro. Sh.Shaukat Ali & Sons, Urdu Bazar, Ext.M.A.Jinnah Road, Karachi.

Making of Pakistan. Pakistan Studies For Classes IX-X. Sindh Text Book Board Jamshoro. Azam Sons Karachi.