

Extract from the Shareef Commission Report

TEXTBOOKS

1. The textbook is and will probably remain the most commonly used teaching aid in the schools of the world. It represents, in abbreviated form at least, the knowledge the student in each class is expected to master as a basis for acquiring additional knowledge and skill. Although the importance of textbooks varies from one country to another it is universally recognized as a basic teaching tool. It is given particular importance in those countries where additional reading material is not widely available to school children and where teachers are not highly trained. Unfortunately both of these circumstances prevail here at the present time. We must, therefore, give careful thought to the means by which excellent textbooks can be made available to our students in sufficient numbers and at a reasonable price.
2. The provision of textbooks adequate both in quality and quantity has been a problem that has concerned educational authorities of the sub-continent for many years. These problems have been both educational and administrative in nature, and it would be well for us to understand clearly the difficulties involved before suggesting a solution.
3. To begin with it should be recognized that textbooks are not masterpieces of literature nor of creative scholarship. They are not expected to expound new theories nor the results of the author's original research. Rather, a textbook of high quality attempts to present the material encompassed with the syllabus of a course in a manner and a language that can be easily comprehended by a child of the class for which the book was written. Moreover, it is built upon what the child has learned previously and is a preparation for what he will be expected to learn at the next level. Ideally, the reading of the textbook does not represent the sum total of classroom instruction. Rather it serves as the thread of continuity and the central focus for the learning that is expected to take place.
4. The nature and purpose of the textbook have certain implications for its construction. Normally the several talents required for the production of a first-rate text are not to be found in a single individual. For this reason the process through which a textbook is created is generally one which requires the combined efforts of a number of specialists. A textbook team would include a highly qualified and experienced teacher from the class level for which the book is intended. He would bring to the process his ideas as to how the material can be organized and presented most effectively, based upon his understanding of children of this age and his experience with the problems of teaching them. The second member of the team would be the subject specialist who would be responsible for the accuracy and the relative importance to be attached to the materials to be included. The actual writing would be entrusted to one capable of expressing himself simply and lucidly in the vocabulary and style within the comprehension of the students the book is intended to reach. Finally there must be someone who can enhance both understanding and interest through pictures, drawing maps, charts and other illustrative material designed to spotlight central ideas and to clarify difficult concepts. The work of this team should be such as to produce a final product which will interest and stimulate the pupil.
5. It is important that such a team be able to draw freely on the ideas and techniques that have been used by textbook writers not only in this country but in other parts of the world so as to present materials effectively to students of different age levels, backgrounds, and abilities. This assumes that they will have available a large sample of books that have been produced both at home and abroad, abstracts of research in the field of textbook construction, the observations of teachers reported in periodic literature on problems of instruction, research studies on the learning process, and a small but sound reference collection in the disciplines commonly taught in the schools.
6. The central problem here, then, is one of bringing together competent groups of specialists who are interested in preparing textbooks; providing them with facilities that will permit them to produce material that are both accurate and educationally sound; selecting the very best of those that are turned out; and editing those selected so that they comprise from the first to the last class an integrated and progressively learning experience.
7. The next important problem is how the educational authorities can ensure the production of books that are suitable in quality and setup and are readily available in the market throughout the year at a price within the means of the average students. This problem has been a matter of serious concern to our educational authorities for a long time.
8. Two methods have generally been followed for the prescription and production of textbooks. The first is where the appropriate educational authority lays down syllabuses for the different stages of education and also prescribes textbooks for the different classes. Authors and publishers are invited to submit books. These are sent for review and an assessment of their merits. On the basis of such a review books are selected and prescribed. In some cases there is a single textbook for the entire area for which the syllabus is meant; in others a number of books are approved and the school authorities are free to select any of these. In theory, the authors and publishers are free to compete in the open market and the headmasters and teachers are free to select the books. Books are generally not selected on merit, and the pressure of administrative officers and the temptations offered by publishers influence the decision of the reviewers or the selection of books by the school authorities.
9. According to the second method, the appropriate educational authority lays down the syllabuses but does not prescribe any book. In this case, anyone can write a book and in practice a number of books are thrown on the market by various writers and publishers. The books are not reviewed or judged by any competent authority, and school authorities are subjected to pressure from departmental officers or publishers and seldom select the book on merit alone.

10. This system has created vested interests among education officers and publishers and has vitiated the moral atmosphere of educational institutions. At the time of prescription of books or at the beginning of academic session when books are introduced in schools, there is brisk canvassing by publishers, followed by complaints against officers for holding "benami" shares in the book trade from those whose books have not been selected. Allegations are made against administrative officers for having ordered transfers of headmasters, inspectors, and teachers under the influence of booksellers.
11. The publishers and booksellers resort to still other malpractices. At the time of new admissions and a artificial shortage is created so that books can be sold at black-market prices, and there is a general complaint that boys are forced to buy "cram" books in addition to the textbooks.
12. The procedure for the prescription and publication of textbooks has been examined by a number of committees from time to time, and various measures have been adopted for removing corruption and malpractices. Unfortunately, these have yielded only limited benefits and the experiments undertaking so far have fallen of the central objective of providing an adequate number of first-rate textbooks at reasonable prices. We have failed to bring together the kinds of talent that are required in textbook writing. Most of our books have been written either by subject specialists who lack an understanding of the vocabulary of school children and are ignorant of the problems involved in teaching them, or they are produced by classroom teachers, whose grasp of the subject is imperfect.
13. There is no doubt that some publishers have made a genuine effort to improve quality and presentation of their textbooks. Equally, there are many reviewers, teachers, headmasters and officers who have done their work with honesty and integrity. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a large number of textbooks lack the necessary quality, and that corrupt and unethical practices prevail on a large scale, forcing upon students inferior books at high prices. As a result our educational programme, which under present circumstances is heavily dependent upon textbooks, has been seriously and unnecessarily handicapped and the cause of national progress correspondingly affected.
14. In considering the nature of the problem and the weakness of the past experiments, we are convinced that Government must play an active and central part in the production of school textbooks. At the same time due care must be taken to prevent the abuses that have crept into the system in the past. As general principles, we are convinced that an adequate solution of the textbook problem requires that authors receive sufficient remuneration for their efforts to encourage them to write yet their reward should not be of such dimensions as to induce them to employ dishonest means to secure the selection of their works; printers, publishers, and booksellers must be kept out of unwholesome competition with each other over the selection of textbooks. And education officers must be prevented from having an unauthorized financial interest of any kind in this trade.
15. We do not wish to enter into a detailed discussion on procedure but it appears to us that the education authorities will be well-advised to have textbooks prepared under their own direction by Board of Editors. Texts should be invited from authors, not from publishers; they should be reviewed by specialists on the subject, and on the basis of such review a few texts in each subject should be selected for each class. The copyrights of selected text should be acquired and these manuscripts should be used by the Board of Editors as a basis for preparing textbooks to be finally prescribed, published, and used by the students. The copyrights of the published books should also belong to the education authority and the editors and authors should be paid reasonably well in order to attract the best talent, to this work. As regards printing and publication, the educational authority may preferably assign these tasks to publishers on specified conditions relating to sale price, printing paper, etc. As the quality of textbooks and the cheapness of price are vital considerations, the education authority should select only those publishers or corporation of publishers who have sufficient resources in the way of printing press, technical staff and distribution organization. The education authority may itself undertake printing, publication and distribution of a certain number of books if this is considered necessary for keeping prices low and for producing books of good quality in respect of paper, illustration, and general presentation.
16. We feel that it is essential that textbook libraries should be established by education authorities for the use of persons interested or engaged in textbooks writing and publishing. These libraries should maintain wide samples of textbooks used in other countries, with relevant translations, periodical literature containing articles relating to school publications, and reference material relating to the several disciplines included in the school curriculum.
17. We believe that, as part of the re-orientation of education towards the objectives envisaged in this Report, the work of prescription and preparation of textbooks should be undertaken through a Central Textbook Board. This Board should have the following functions:-
 - 1) Prescription of syllabuses for Classes I to XII, in accordance with the recommendations made in the relevant chapters of our Report.
 - 2) Preparation of Textbooks.
 - 3) Arrangement for the printing of textbooks either exclusively through private publishing houses or partly through its own resources and partly through private publishing houses.
18. The Board should be a representative one, but to be effective it must be small. It should be autonomous and work through sub-committees operating in the sphere of each education authority, e.g. the Board of Secondary Education and the Department of Education. The Board would eventually support itself through the sale of books but would certainly need a loan in its initial stages. Apart from the textbooks, the Board should also be charged with the responsibility of producing from its own resources:-
 - a) Reference and research material bearing on the problems of curriculum, schemes of studies, preparation of textbooks, and the like
 - b) Guide books for teachers.
 - c) Supplementary material related to the textbooks in use in schools.

19. Throughout this Report the responsibility for drawing up syllabuses and for the prescription of courses has been laid on the education authority concerned, namely, the University, the Board of Secondary Education, or the Department of Education for class I to VIII. This inherent responsibility should rest with them. However, as new objectives for education are now being laid down by this Commission, it is necessary to provide for a transition period, giving a certain responsibility to a special Board constituted by the Ministry of Education but comprising members from the Provinces also. The Board should mainly deal with questions of policy as laid down in paragraph 17, and it should have the power to enforce those policies. The actual work would be undertaken by a Textbook Committee to be constituted for these purposes within each educational authority, but these must function directly under the guidance of the Central Board and within the policies laid down by us.
20. As the textbooks are prescribed by the various authorities, they will also collect certain fees which would form a part of their own reserve fund. A portion of these fees would be made available to the Central Textbook Board. With these funds, the Board should undertake the further responsibility of production of literature mentioned in paragraph 18 or such other textbooks required for higher education.
21. Any unauthorized financial interest an officer of an educational authority, the Education Department, the board of Secondary Education or the University may have in textbook publishing or sale should be declared to be a penal offense.
22. We believe that if the measures suggested above are taken, the central objective of providing all our students with first-rate textbooks at reasonable prices will be achieved. At the same time the suggestions should serve to encourage these most capable of preparing textbooks to devote their time and energy to this most important task. While protecting both the student and the public, our plan would be adversely affect the private book trade in the performance of its legitimate functions.
23. We do not wish to leave this subject without pointing out that the future training of our teachers and the reconstruction of the curriculum, syllabuses, examination, and instruction methods should work steadily to lessen the total reliance on the textbook in the educational process. The importance of the textbook will decrease as the quality of instruction increases. Although the textbook will probably continue to have its place in the schools, we hope that it will take its place alongside wide use of the school library and other resources.
24. We do not propose any special arrangements for the preparation and publishing of textbooks to be used at the university level (that is, after Class XII). At the degree and post-graduate stages few textbooks, if any, prescribed. Books are usually suggested for reading, and in most cases these are foreign publications. The number of students in any case is small and there is little chance of malpractice. We hope that the universities will make a careful selection of books suggested for reading and safeguard the interests of students by arranging the supply of these at cheap rates. We believe, moreover, that special facilities, including import licenses, should be provided for the import of advanced books on all subjects so as to make available to university teachers and students the results of the latest advances in their disciplines. The applies to the import of journals in which the results of the latest researchers are usually published.
25. We would also like to add that the use of notes and key books by students has done incalculable harm to our educational standards. The publication, printing and sale of notes and key books should be made a penal offense. In addition, any publisher, printer, or booksellers dealing in notes and key books, which would become illegal material, should be permanently debarred from the printing or selling of textbooks on behalf of Government and the educational authorities.
26. We would further suggest that at the beginning of the academic session each school should, for the general information of the students and the public, make known the various books and the number and type of note books which will be required by the students from time to time during the year. This measure is necessary to avoid an excessive burden on the parents in purchasing textbooks and exercise books.
27. We would recommend yet another measure both to save parents money and to ensure that every pupil in the class has the required textbooks. This is the establishment of the textbooks libraries in schools from which the textbooks may be loaned to the students for the term or for the academic year. If the books are provided with good bindings at the start, which are covered by a protective manila paper cover when borrowed, they can be used by successive classes of pupils for perhaps three or four years. This arrangement can be financed either by having funded textbook fee, payable along with the tuition fee, based on the average cost of books to pupils of the class in question or by requiring the students to deposit the cost of the books issued to them, with a refund at the end of the term according to the condition of the book when it is returned. In either case the student should have to pay the cost of damage or loss, but should with reasonable care of his textbooks be able to share their cost with students in preceding or following classes.

TEXTBOOKS SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. a) The textbook is the most important teaching aid and must be prepared with the utmost care to make it suitable for comprehension by a child of the class for which it is meant (1).
b) A good textbook is the result of team work between :
 - teacher of the class concerned,
 - a subject specialist,
 - language specialist, and
 - and artist for illustrative material (4)
2. Textbooks should besides being of good quality, be available throughout the year at reasonable prices all over the area for which they are meant (7).

3. At present, the textbooks used in our school are of poor quality; their supply at reasonable prices is not ensured and malpractices of various types prevail in their selection, prescription and distribution. Accordingly, the preparation, printing and distribution of textbooks need to be regularized (12, 13).
4. Textbooks should be prescribed in all subjects upto class XII.
5. The appropriate education authorities should undertake the preparation of textbooks and acquire their copyrights (15)
6. (i) The printing and publishing of textbooks should be controlled by the education authorities in respect of price, paper, format, and illustrations, they may print and publish textbooks themselves, or through publishers, or partly by themselves and partly through publishers (15).

(ii) The printing and publication of textbooks should be assigned only to such publishers or corporations of publishers having sufficient resources in the way of presses, technical staff, and facilities for distribution to ensure production of books of good quality at the most economical prices (15).
7. Textbooks libraries should be established by education authorities. These libraries should maintain a wide sample of foreign textbooks, periodical literature containing articles relating to school publications, and reference material in the several subjects included in the school curriculum (5).
8. The responsibility for drawing up syllabuses and prescribing courses is normally that of the education authorities. However, to realize the national objectives of education laid down in this report, the Ministry of Education should set-up a Textbook Board. It should be a small and autonomous body with representatives from the Provinces and should also through textbook committees operating within the sphere of each education authority (17, 18, 19).
9. The responsibility of the Textbook Board should be:
 - i. To frame the syllabuses according to the recommendations made in this Report; and
 - ii. To lay down policy for the preparation, printing and publication to textbooks (17-18).
10. The Textbook Board should receive a portion of the income from the sale of textbooks and use these funds for the publications of (i) reference and research material, (ii) guidebooks for teachers, and (iii) supplementary material relating to textbooks (20).
11. The beginning of the academic session, each school should notify students and parents of the various books and the number and kind of copybooks which will be required by the students from time to time during the year (26).
12. So far as books at the University level are concerned, the universities should continue to deal with them (24).
13. The unauthorized interest of an officer of an education authority, department of education, board of secondary education, or university in the publication or sale of a textbook should be made a panel offense (21).
14. The publication, printing, and sale of notes and "key books" should also be a panel offense (25)