



Peaceful Dispositions Built-in English Language Textbook and Teachers' Guide at the Elementary School Level in Pakistan

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Abstract

In many countries, school curricula have been seen and used as a source of indoctrination for specific theoretical and ideological beliefs in the next generations. In Pakistan, many research studies during the late twentieth century informed that textbooks were being used for the indoctrination of war-based ideological beliefs as well as some content was found to be hateful to other cultures. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the curriculum planning wing of the Central Ministry of Education in Pakistan adopted the UNESCO framework for including peace education in mainstream school curricula. In recent years, elementary school textbooks and teachers' guides were redesigned, and new content was developed for all public and private schools. In past twenty years curriculum has been revised extensively and deeply. The centralized approach to curriculum development raised questions and critiques. This article is based on one part of the larger study of peace education in public schools of Pakistan. Content analysis of textbooks for grade five was prepared using the UNESCO framework, and interviews were conducted with the reviewers and critics. This article presents an analysis of the English textbook and teachers' guide. Peace themes are undoubtedly found with identified gaps and the critics raised some significant points of concern.

Keywords

Peace Education; Language Teaching; Content Analysis; Critical Review; Peacebuilding; Textbooks; Teachers Guide.

Introduction

After home-based grooming, the school curriculum plays a pivotal role in building values and dispositions by integrating academic learning with moral and ethical education (Burns, 2019). Textbooks are the major learning materials in the classroom, and activities are also used to help teach cooperation, respect for others, and responsibility. We can then say that curricular and co-curricular activities beyond classrooms further reinforce these values, encouraging students to apply what they learn in real-world contexts, thus shaping them into well-rounded, ethical individuals prepared to contribute positively to society.

At the beginning of the 21st century, it was highlighted that a single definition of peace education could not gain universal acceptance. Bar-Tal (2002) stated that the ultimate objective of peace education in each region would be the same, but the form would vary depending on the cultural values, views of the educators, and issues at large. Although the earlier peace efforts were designed on the concept of negative peace, peace education was clearly a step towards positive peace. Castro and Galace (2008) maintained that people are a great resource for peacebuilding and creating peaceful relationship structures. In the late twentieth century, the authors highlighted that peace education has always been a part of religious teachings among all major religions known to us. Peace education beyond religions and regional boundaries provides long-lasting solutions through self-motivated behaviour change (Harris, 2009).

A more critical approach was seen after 2010 when education, specifically curriculum, was seen as a way to counter societal structural and social violence. According to Galtung and Udaykumar (2013), peace education brings a higher level of consciousness in teachers and students when they begin to ask questions regarding the content and treatment given to them, the structure of the school, the position of the school in social structure; the proper relation between poor and rich countries; or information about the weapons and war with local and global peace and violence. Bajaj (2015) and Cremin (2016), while describing peace education, agreed that peace education is a complex and nuanced field of learning, knowledge, and practice. It focuses on preparing learners with knowledge, skills, and capacities to pursue peace and non-violently respond to conflict. Today, peace education is particularly future-oriented, preparing students to envision and build more preferred realities (Jenkins, 2020). Primary education in Pakistan mainly focuses on language literacy and numeracy more than science and social studies. Language teaching is a part of the core curriculum at elementary schools across country.

Conceptual Framework

In 1986, the 6th International Colloquium on Brain and Aggression was organised at the University of Seville, Spain. An international team of scholars supported by UNESCO (Spain) drafted a scientific statement, the Seville Statement on violence, which claimed that violence is not an innate behaviour and, hence, peace is possible. This statement was later adopted by UNESCO in 1989 at the 25th General Conference Session held in Paris. In a further ten years, UNESCO developed a model that offers a straightforward framework for curriculum developers to identify and integrate peace concepts into their educational materials. This structured approach enables teachers to pinpoint peace-related themes within the curriculum easily. It was finalised and offered in 2001 in the following form:

Figure 1. Sources of Peace (UNESCO, 2001, p.11)



UNESCO's framework elaborated that the main function of education is to promote peace and development through educational, scientific, and cultural relationships between people and the world. According to this framework, education for peace and nonviolence enhances the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that reflect and inspire values. UNESCO dedicated the decade from 2001 to 2010 as the International Decade of Peace and Non-violence for Children. UNESCO (2015) further provided guidelines for helping member states strengthen peace education and prevent conflict in the education system. The guidelines emphasised that peace education includes knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be developed through training for cultivating a culture of peace based on human rights.

UNESCO (2023) highlighted the importance of global citizenship and peace education, stating that learning to read, write, and count are tools that open windows to the world. Given pressing national and global issues that transcend borders, literacy alone may not be enough to make sense of the situation, realise dreams, and find meaning in life. What young people see through this window and how they respond to it largely depends on their educational values, content, and context. Global Citizenship Education (GCED) explores these elements to help learners of all ages become civil, respectful people who can adapt to a rapidly changing world amidst its most complex challenges and threats. UNESCO promotes GCED in all subjects and areas of life to educate knowledge, skills and attitudes promoting tolerance, respect, and a sense of common belonging to the international community, with the ultimate goal of ensuring human rights and peace.

Contextualization

Pakistan is one of the countries where the major indoctrination of young minds was rooted in curriculum planning during one dictatorship after another. It has been declared a security state, and the narratives of regional conflict and glorification of wars in the textbooks were made evident in earlier research studies (Ahmar, 2016). Having intolerance and an extremist mindset can be severely dangerous for internal peace and social harmony. Pakistan has been in the war against terror for many years, and the indoctrination of a radical mindset has already harmed generations. After 9/11, Pakistan faced alarming security challenges, turbulence, and violence. The educational institutes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained at risk of terrorism for many years (Abbas et al., 2016). The research studies highlighted the crucial role of peace education in addressing the prevailing violence and conflicts in society highlighted the crucial role of peace education in addressing the prevailing violence and conflicts in society. Hina et al. (2018) maintained that education is portrayed as a critical tool for human transformation and transmission, playing a central role in socialisation and empowerment. By providing knowledge, skills, and values, education empowers individuals to contribute positively to society and reinforces the civilization's sense of peace and solidarity. According to them, the significant challenges faced by Pakistan were terrorism, interfaith and intra-faith conflicts, corruption, and governance issues.

In recent years, researchers have emphasised the importance of integrating peace education into curriculum and teacher training programs to equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote peace and reduce conflicts within their classrooms and communities (Ahmad, 2020). The reports underscore the need for peace education to enrich social and cultural values, foster peaceful coexistence, and address contemporary challenges related to violence and conflict. In a detailed content analysis of textbooks in grade five, researchers found varying degrees of integration of peace themes across different subject textbooks. While some textbooks, such as Urdu, English, and Social Studies, demonstrated a better alignment with peace themes, others, like Science and Mathematics, lacked integration of these themes (Ashraf & Huma, 2020, 2021). The intersection between policy, research, and practice in the context of peace education for countering violent extremism (CVE) in Pakistan; the role of non-governmental initiatives in promoting peace education for CVE in Pakistan and other such initiatives play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of violence, conflict, and extremism in society, complementing government efforts in education and security (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021). Content analysis of English textbook at middle school level also highlights the presence of peace building content, yet the infusion approach does not make all themes explicit enough for the teacher and child to unpack the deep meanings at certain points (Rizwan, Huma, & Hanif, 2025)

During 2019 - 21, the curriculum for primary schools was revised with the help of subject specialists selected from across Pakistan. Many public and private sector institutions and organizations were also involved in this process. It was titled "Single National Curriculum" in part of a political campaign, and it was mentioned in the news and political rhetoric that the new curriculum is going to bring "uniformity in education" at all schools. Thus, the curriculum planning meetings were held in the capital city, Islamabad, while representatives from all regions were invited. Two provinces, i.e. Sindh and Baluchistan, initially resisted because, after the 10th constitutional amendment, the provinces had the right to plan their own curriculum. Once the curriculum was finalized, then, the textbooks were also developed with the same centralized approach. Specified textbook publishers were given licenses, and all others were cancelled. The review process of the new curriculum documents was not yet completed, and teachers training for the new curriculum was in

progress when textbooks were quickly printed and delivered to schools. All the public and private schools were then forced to adopt the new textbooks. Initially, the textbooks were delivered to federal government schools, then to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab more recently.

Purpose of the Study

Curriculum planners, teacher trainers, and textbook developers acclaimed that the new textbooks and teachers' guides are more inclusive than before and that this content will help develop better citizenship. This study aimed to identify the peace content within the newly developed textbooks and teachers' guide of English, and exploring the perspectives of the content developers as well as the analysts. The major research question was – which Peaceful Dispositions are built-in English Language Textbook and Teachers' Guide?

Methodology

This article is based on one major part of a larger study in which content analysis of the textbooks was done using the framework analysis technique. UNESCO framework for peace education was used to identify the themes and subthemes of peace content in the textbooks. It is the same framework adopted by Pakistan's curriculum planning and development teams. The authors of the textbooks validated the identified materials with the coding sheet. Two subject specialists who had reviewed the textbook and teachers' guide before implementation, and one analyst who analyzed the curriculum and textbooks was interviewed for further analysis.

Major Findings

In the first phase, a coding sheet was used to identify the peace content in the English textbooks for grade 5 and teachers' guide. Initially, the ten themes of the UNESCO framework were identified in the textbook. More than 100 quotes were coded and categorized throughout the lessons and exercises in the two textbooks. The initial analysis showed that the themes are spread out in the lessons, and one cannot specify one lesson to serve one theme, but a cluster of themes are addressed in various lessons; the other dimension of this finding is that themes are broken down into smaller messages which cannot be linked and addressed coherently while teaching through these textbooks.

Findings under each theme are generated from coding and elicited interviews. Although many phrases and paragraphs were coded for these themes, here we present only a few sentences and phrases as verbatims with our findings.

1. Positive Thinking

The content under this theme included stories to foster a positive mindset in children. According to the framework, positive thinking is a fundamental trait of peaceful individuals, and it involves cultivating a positive outlook that enables children to value themselves and life in all its forms. Additionally, it helps them develop respectful and appreciative attitudes toward others. This concept of self-empowerment aids children in developing positive attitudes toward themselves, their country, and humanity as a whole. The quotes and passages within this theme were identified as areas where students could develop positive self-concept and hope for the future.

"She flew her first aircraft at the age of ten in the U.A.E." p. 27

"The frog splashed around happily and swam croaking about as if he had done a good deed."
p.68

"Today is a bright and shiny day." p. 80

Within this theme, the content was also identified as a place where students learn to value the things and people around them. This helps them to realize that life goes on in an interdependent mode.

"History is filled with wonderful examples of role models—men, women, and children who teach us to be great mothers, fathers, teachers, friends, students, etc."p.26

"The days passed so quickly, but we were glad that we had restored our farmhouse to its original condition."p.38

It is broadly addressed in the introductory chapter of the teachers' guide and then also included in chapters 4,5, and 6 where the learning contents, student learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods are elaborated. Especially in the assessment section, it elaborates it to a deeper level where it states:

These include attitudes, values, motivation, social relationships, classroom environment and concept of one's own academic ability. Positive, well-developed, affective traits motivate students to learn effectively in the long run. In addition, they learn to analyse themselves and refine behaviors and dispositions. p.80

2. Be Compassionate-do no Harm

The content under this theme aims to instill empathetic qualities such as love, kindness, and friendliness. These qualities are crucial for addressing and responding to the violence present in society. Under this theme, the content was labelled, where students directly learned about empathy and kindness. This helps them realise that they need to understand other people's problems and be helpful.

"She travelled to various parts of Pakistan with the aim of rescuing patients suffering from leprosy." (Dr. Ruth Pfau) p. 27

"Write a paragraph on 'How Should We Take Care of Our Pet Animal'." p.145

Under the same theme some of the quotes were also selected that can help students develop friendliness. This content provides learning opportunities for promoting trustworthiness and companionship.

"The frog invited the mouse to come along and see the wonderful underwater world." p. 67

"We packed it in colorful wrapping paper. We went to Sara's house and gave her the gift. She was surprised to see the gift." p. 109

It is important to notice that students are given the opportunity to reflect in the forms of questions like:

"Are you a good friend? Think about yourself and then tell." p.67

"How can you be a good friend to someone?" p. 67

Within the teachers' guide it is stated in the preface as:

This curriculum endeavors to build a nation that takes pride in its religious and national beliefs and values and at the same time inculcates respect for religious and cultural diversity in the society and the world at large.

The manual further elaborates on the theme in Chapter 1 i.e. introduction; as well as, 2, 3, and 5 which provide details of strands and benchmarks as well as teaching and learning methods. Yet there is nothing mentioned about this theme in chapters 4 and 6 that include details of the learning content, student learning outcomes, and assessment. Two subthemes – *kindness and friendliness* are only mentioned in the preface and introduction but are not addressed further in any section.

3. Discover Inner Peace

The content under this theme was found on resolving personal psychological conflicts and finding peace of mind. The content also included ways to understand oneself and the thought process, manage emotions like anger, and learn techniques to calm the mind. It also addresses the spiritual needs of children and offers experiences that foster inner peace. It builds upon understanding the self and identifying inner conflicts. The content in the English textbook had some lessons marked and labelled for this theme as well,

"None other can support my smile." p.14

"He always wanted to buy all these things but never had enough money." p. 76

"Now I understand the importance of sharing and sacrifice." p. 109

This theme also includes content that may help students learn to control emotions, especially anger and aggression.

"Ali felt sorry for his lies and greedy behaviour." p. 77

"Ali was feeling sorry for his behaviour." p. 79

Further, this theme builds upon the content of spiritual healing found in English textbooks.

"Allah loves me more than anything." p. 14

"Why does the poet want more love from Allah?" p. 16

"Ali thanked Allah for showing him the right path." p. 79

This is the most neglected theme in the teacher's guide. Astonishingly it is not mentioned anywhere else but in the learning contents and SLOs where it links with the content already mentioned above. Thus, teachers cannot seek any further elaboration regarding this theme from the manual.

4. Learning to Live Together

In today's increasingly polarized world, children need to learn how to live together with different and diverse people. This will be done by teaching them to work harmoniously in various groups. This theme can include subtopics such as sharing and mutual help: building trust, group responsibility, leadership, and followership. Learning cooperation helps reduce egoistic and

competitive tendencies in children. Reviewing the content of textbooks, we found this theme in the lessons where students learn to share and help others. Under the same theme, the content was coded for team and trust building as well as taking responsibility and leadership. It is important to notice that maximum content was coded for these subthemes, and the same theme was also identified in the exercises. Only a few examples are quoted below.

"Ayesha was patient with Azlan's behavior, and she shared a book with him to help him finish his part." p. 2

"The group members asked him about his part of the project as time was running out." p.2

"Due to her efforts, the disease came under control in 1996." (Dr. Ruth Pfau) p. 27

"Arfa Abdul Karim Randhawa became the pride of our country when she was only nine years old." p.27

"Get students into pairs and ask them to share some information and instructions from a tourist guide." p.48

"Do you share your things with others? How?" p.108

The teachers' guide addresses this theme in chapters 1, 3, and 5 i.e., Introduction, progressive grid and methodologies. Yet it is missing in the standards, benchmarks, learning outcomes, and assessment. This gap shows that the theme is not valued enough, although it is one of the key themes of peace building

5. Respect Human Dignity

"Respect Human Dignity" is grounded in the principles of human rights, duties, and justice. It aims to cultivate an awareness that acknowledges and respects both one's own rights and the rights of others. As per the framework of Peace under UN recommendations this theme included the universal values and human rights as well as the balance of rights and responsibilities to maintain justice in society

"The teachings and life of Hazrat Muhammad are examples of patience for the entire mankind to follow." p. 3

"History depicts that whenever females get suitable circumstances, they perform well and achieve their goals." p. 26

"Protect the rights of others." p. 95

This theme is found evident in all sections of the teachers' guide but the subtheme of balancing rights and responsibilities is completely missing from all sections of the manual; while justice is much elaborated and valued.

6. Be your true-self

This theme emphasises the strength of character, honesty, and directness in expressing one's needs, feelings, and thoughts without undermining others. Developing these skills is essential for resolving conflicts and engaging in effective social interactions. The labels under this theme were identified as truthfulness, honesty, and being straightforward.

"Hazrat Muhammad was called Al-Saadiq for his honest nature." p.3

"Hazrat Muhammad was called Al-Amin." p.3

"Hazrat Muhammad was called Al-Amin." p.3

"I just love it," said the unkind frog." p.68

"I get up late in the morning." p.81

"I want to save money. What should I do Dad?" p.110

The theme is much more visible in sections 1, 4, and 6 of the teachers' guide – i.e. Introduction, learning outcomes and assessment but completely missing in standards, benchmarks, progression grid and teaching-learning methods.

7. Develop Critical Thinking

"Developing Critical Thinking" is identified as an essential intellectual skill that aids in problem-solving and decision-making. Critical thinking is crucial for citizens in a democratic society, as it involves analyzing, being concerned, and problem solving by considering different perspectives, exploring alternatives, and applying logical reasoning.

"Why is good sleep important for good health?" p.55

"Why do you think moral values are important for us?" p.77

"What is the message of the poem, in your opinion?" p.87

"What are reasons for climate change? Share your opinions." p.47

"What do you eat to keep yourself healthy?" p.55

"Write about an incident in your life in which you felt disappointed. "Describe it in your own words. How did you deal with it?" p.82

Within the theme of critical thinking the subthemes of analyzing the situation and problem solving are addressed across all sections of the teaching manual, except in the progression grid; while the sub construct of "being concerned" is totally missing in the teachers' guide.

8. **Resolve Conflict Non-violently**

This theme encompasses essential skills for conflict resolution, including conflict analysis, negotiation, active listening, and seeking alternative solutions. The content under this theme helps students realize that we can have differences of opinion and that it is important to understand the other person's perspective in a conflicting situation.

"The people of Taif refused to accept the message, but he remained patient and continued to pray for their guidance." p.3

"Use appropriate expressions in conversation to offer and accept an apology." p.26

"Let's write a complaint to the seller about this issue so we can get the right parcel." p.127

"Explain to students that offering and accepting an apology is important." p.19

"Explain to students how we can keep ourselves safe from viral diseases." p.56

This theme is completely missing in the teachers' guide, which is astonishing and worrying at the same time.

9. **Build Peace in Community**

The content under this theme offers children the chance to engage with social realities, understand people's problems, and collaborate with them. Teachers can assign various peace-building projects within the community to support this theme through exposure to social realities, understanding people's problems and working with them for peace building

"Women have always played a very important role in this world in all times." p.26

"The school had invited Dr. Haroon to talk about personal hygiene and raise awareness about COVID-19." p.55

He quickly ran to Mohsin's house, who was in a sad mood after the loss of his money." p.77

"We all became excited, but we noticed that Sara was not happy." p.108

"Hazrat Muhammad always spread the message of love and peace." p.3

"Their positive qualities are helping us to build a strong nation." p.26

"We should take care of one another." p.109

The theme has been addressed and evident in sections 1,2, and 5 which are introduction, standards and benchmarks, and teaching -learning; but missing in sections 3,4, and 6, which are progression grid, learning outcomes, and assessments.

10. **Care for Planet**

Caring attitudes towards the planet are a global educational necessity for both children and the wider population. The health of the planet directly and immediately impacts the destiny of humanity. It is not just to be included in the textbook content rather schools can organize various engaging activities, projects, and assignments under this theme. Codes used for identifying this theme in textbooks were Life on Earth (ecosystem), Environment Pollution, and Healthy and Safe Life

"Look at the first picture. It shows that trees are home to many animals. On the other hand, trees provide humans with oxygen. Trees utilize carbon dioxide to reduce air pollution." p.36

"Have you ever planted a seedling or convinced anyone to help you plant one?" p.36

"I am the earth I am your home, but you destroy My skin and bone." p.47

"Explain the feelings of the Earth in your own words." p.49

"Always remember that looking after yourself is very important!" p.57

"How can we save our environment?" p.98

This theme is much elaborated in the preface and introduction section of the teachers' guide but then remains missing in the standards, benchmarks, and progression grid; yet appears in detail in learning outcomes but disappears again in teaching-learning and assessment sections. This gap highlights the weakness of the infusion approach again and again.

Interviews of Subject Specialists

Two subject specialists validated the coding sheets and labels before the interviews. These were the reviewers of the language textbooks. During the interviews, subject specialists mentioned that through

language teaching, we not only develop communication skills, but narratives and stories in the books present diverse perspectives and historical contexts that foster empathy, critical thinking, and a sense of justice. They further acknowledged that during the content review, they retained stories, poems, and essays highlighting themes of hope, resilience, and optimism while they excluded anything countering the message of peace. The stories were based on characters that show positive mindsets and events that motivate and inspire students. They informed that various quotes of religious and other personalities used in the lessons were reviewed, and they ensured that these emphasized positive thinking, good behaviors and dispositions like patience, kindness and tolerance. According to them, it is very encouraging that the books developed under the new curriculum focus on themes of positivity and people who have made significant achievements through a positive outlook; even the passages used for comprehension exercises contain messages of kindness and positive attitudes. The exercises in the books also provide opportunities that encourage students to reflect and think critically for problem-solving. Prompts for creative writing also ask students to describe how an imaginary character overcame a challenge or write about their dreams and goals. Yet the teachers are not prepared to use effective strategies and pedagogy to fully unpack these themes in classrooms. The teachers' guides were prepared in hurry, and trainings were not conducted in all districts. The manuals are there in some districts while others never received these.

Interview with a Critic

The curriculum analyst interviewed was the one who had been writing in various newspapers and blogs regarding the new curriculum. They saw the whole process of development of a new curriculum as a politically motivated move, aiming to gain favor with certain voter bases rather than genuinely improving education. According to Them, peace education needs to be built upon inclusivity, and according to him, there are major concerns that the textbooks do not adequately address the needs of diverse student populations, including those from different socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, and linguistic groups, especially religious minorities. They stated that he had repeatedly raised this point in various forums about language textbooks, including much religious content. The schoolteachers have no other option for non-Muslim students at primary school but to teach religious content during the language learning period. Under Article 22 of the Constitution of Pakistan, teaching religious content to children of minorities is against the law. They maintained that neither all cultures of Pakistan can be represented in one textbook, nor can the values of multiple cultures be represented. Various regions of Pakistan have their own rich history and culture, which never got due space in the textbooks, and no textbook can be fit for all in a diverse country like Pakistan. They also showed concerns over the quality of content as well as the intellectual and logical progression that should be there from one grade to another and from the beginning of the academic year to the end. According to them, the scope for critical thinking, creative writing, and developing effective communication skills needed for an inclusive and peaceful society are not aimed in this content. They acknowledged that the new books maintain better content with respect to gender parity but also showed dissatisfaction over the inclusion of multiple perspectives regarding equity and equality of genders in society.

Conclusion

It is important for us as researchers to dig deeper to identify the roots of the peace narrative in the textbooks. It was interesting to see the implicit and explicit messages of peace spread out in almost every lesson in textbooks and guides, but the points raised by the critic are also important to consider while developing textbooks. Language learning is not simply a technical and mechanical process. Rather, it influences communication skills as well as dispositions. Teachers and students, while using specific textbooks, go through a process of knowing and developing beliefs. The choice of words, phrases, and construction of sentences and paragraphs are other levels of discourse analysis that are needed for a critical analysis of the content. Another big question is whether teachers can identify these codes and cues without training and clear instruction on how to unpack them in classrooms when the messages and themes are hidden within lessons. With these questions, we moved forward to further analysis of teachers' training manuals and modules, where the gaps could be clearly identified in the axial coding under the same framework. Themes are infused but not taken up cohesively and collectively. Some of the themes are highlighted more than others, while some of the themes are incomplete as the subconstructs are completely missing. This raises much concern on how the infusion approach was adopted and how is it ensured that the infused message of peace is delivered and received through this process.

Recommendations

Although this study at large enabled the researchers to design modules for teachers' preparation, yet based on the analysis presented here, it is recommended that themes of peace education are required to be infused with a clear and wholistic approach. It should not only be in the lessons related to Islamic perspective but also in other lessons. Teachers should be explicitly informed and then these themes are to be connected in a better way in teachers' guides.

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