

Textbooks for Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has properly enunciated the idea that education “shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms ... [and] promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly relations between nations and all racial or religious groups.”¹ The Convention on the Rights of the Child further explains that education should be directed to²

- development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language, and values; for the national values of the country in which the child is living or the country from which he or she may originate; and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin (Article 29 [1] [a, b, c, d]).

The question, therefore, is: Do textbooks support the full development of the human personality and promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms? In certain cases, as will be discussed below, the question may be: Whose human rights and fundamental freedoms are the textbooks privileging?

Textbooks are a major educational tool for students.³ Much of what students need to learn (basic curriculum content) is in required textbooks.⁴ Textbook content may determine the educational development of the students.

Textbook Development in General

The importance of developing appropriate textbooks is well recognized in the education sector. One report states that

several studies for the Philippines suggest that money spent on instructional materials is money well spent. When used properly and creatively by teachers, textbooks can increase the effectiveness of schooling. An early study (Heyneman, Jamison, and Montenegro 1984) showed that textbooks improved the test scores in mathematics and language for first graders in the Philippines by about one-third of a standard deviation. Moreover, Tan, Lane, and Coustere (1996) found the availability of workbooks and classroom furniture to be cost-effective inputs in increasing student achievement in both mathematics and language.⁵

At a conference, Asian and Pacific educators declared:

[A]dequate learning materials, textbooks, teaching aids, and supplemental readers are critical to education for all children. They should reflect learning outcomes and the time available of instruction in the classroom. Values and subject content should be gender-fair and reflective of the acceptance of diversity and cultural differences. Policy should fos-

ter the development and adaptation of learning experiences and materials to ensure social and cultural relevance to the learners.⁶

Limited financial and other resources, however, restrain the full development of textbooks in poor countries in general. A global survey on textbook development reports the following:

The standard of textbook provision deteriorated during the 1970s and 1980s throughout Africa and much of Latin America and Asia, and in 1990 was far below the desirable ratio of one book per pupil. Supplementary reading and other learning materials were even scarcer, and quality was often poor. During the 1990s the situation improved in some countries, thanks in large measure to external funding by international agencies, governments, and [civil society organizations] CSOs, but globally textbooks continued in short supply. Textbooks were particularly scarce in rural areas, and even where available were not always used effectively. State dominance in textbook provision proved inefficient and uneconomic. Supply of learning materials was impeded by lack of funding, conflicting government priorities, difficulties in distribution, and lack of trained personnel. The provision of textbooks in many countries still depended on cyclical infusions of external aid that concentrated on production of a commodity without building the related infrastructures.⁷

To resolve the problem, the following is recommended:

A sustainable and competitive system of providing textbooks and other learning materials requires a publishing industry that can originate, produce, and deliver the materials along commercial principles of cost recovery. Inequities will result, which can be reduced through targeted subsidies and programs of

demand-side support. But textbooks are only part of the picture. Provision of the wide range of other books needed to foster and maintain a literate society is also contingent on the emergence of a viable publishing and bookselling industry.⁸

Another report provides further support to this recommendation by stating that

drawing on the experience gained in many projects and on the basis of evaluation reports sponsored by agencies, such as the World Bank, the [Basic Learning Material Initiative] consultation agreed that a new approach was needed in textbook projects, a new approach emphasizing the development of the book sector as the only way of establishing sustainable book provision programmes in developing countries.⁹

These recommendations are especially relevant to the private publishing industry in establishing a sustainable textbook development system, especially for public schools. The textbooks' affordability may be questioned. Private institutions (nongovernmental organizations [NGO]), however, can prepare good textbooks, but since these institutions are not business entities, they may not have sufficient funds to do so.

In the Asia-Pacific, textbook preparation and distribution follow a variety of systems. A survey describes the situation as follows:

Most countries report that a government agency is responsible for the provision or approval of textbooks, e.g., Fiji, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Sri Lanka. In some countries schools select textbooks published by the private sector e.g. Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, while in others they select from an approved list e.g., Fiji, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines.¹⁰

According to this survey, textbooks are either provided by the government or purchased by parents. The survey further reports:

Many countries provide textbooks free of charge. In some cases, students can keep the books at the end of the year, while in other countries they are only on loan and must be returned, e.g., Lao PDR, New Zealand,

and the Philippines. Governments generally tend to provide textbooks to children during the years of compulsory schooling, but expect parents to assist in funding textbooks in the upper secondary, non-compulsory years.

The table below provides the system of textbook distribution in several countries.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Government provides</i>	<i>Free loan</i>	<i>Rent</i>	<i>Parents purchase</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Australia		Some primary and secondary		Some primary and secondary	
China				Primary and secondary	
Fiji	Primary		Secondary	Secondary and some primary	7 and 8, and junior secondary—books provided by special projects.
India	Government school			Private schools	
Indonesia	Primary school (government schools only)	Lower and upper secondary		Lower and upper secondary	Depends on schools.
Japan	Primary and lower secondary			Upper secondary	
Lao PDR		Primary education	Lower secondary	Upper secondary and private schools	
Malaysia		Income-based loan scheme		Monthly income lower than \$400 eligible for textbook loan	Monthly income lower than \$400, textbooks are free.
New Zealand		School loans			
Philippines		Public schools		Private schools	
Republic of Korea	Primary school			Secondary (low cost)	
Sri Lanka	Primary and lower secondary			Upper secondary	(No prescribed textbooks for upper secondary; supplementary materials only).
Thailand					
Uzbekistan				Primary and secondary	
Vietnam		Some primary		Secondary and some primary	

Note: The data in this table were collected in 1998. Data from the US, United Kingdom, France, and Germany are omitted.

Textbook development systems seem to be well entrenched in many countries in the region, raising the question about the way the textbooks are written. Educational policies, curriculums, and, in certain cases, the political environment may determine what textbooks may contain. The situation in the region during the last few years shows various factors, which may determine the content of textbooks.

Textbooks on History

In recent years, history textbooks have been linked to controversies that extend beyond the confines of the education system. The controversies are not only national in character but extend to relations between states, reflecting unresolved international disputes.

The presentation of historical events in the textbooks is affected by notions of national identity as well as by ideological perspectives. Race is also a factor in certain cases.

These controversies involve deep-seated beliefs held by certain sections in society as well as by those given the authority to write or approve the textbooks. Views about preserving national identity, developing national pride, or characterizing neighboring countries in a negative light figure prominently in the controversies.

The issues affecting history textbooks in particular and national educational policies in general impact on human rights.

Preserving National Identity

Protests have been held in several Asian countries against education reforms that are seen to promote change in national identity. The protests note the influence of schools in spreading new ideas, which can take root in the consciousness of the future leaders of the country. Religion is a common issue in these disparate protests.

Education reform in Thailand became controversial when Buddhist institutions protested

what they perceived as a threat to Buddhism by the new education law. As one newspaper report states:

Thousands of Buddhists rallied in front of [the] Government House... condemning proposed educational and religious reforms as threatening to marginalise Buddhism in the country.

Representatives from Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University, the Buddhism Promotion Centre of Thailand and the Buddhism Protection Centre, along with hordes of practitioners in white dress, gathered at 7 a.m. and demanded to hand their grievances directly to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.¹¹

The protesters want Buddhism to become a

...mandatory subject in the new curriculum for Buddhist students and the number of credits for it must not be fewer than in the current curriculum... adding that Buddhism should be promoted to play a vital role in serving society as well as the country.

In Malaysia, the 2001 government-issued guidelines on what constitute an Islamic state met with protests from the non-Muslim Malaysians. The government published *Malaysia Is an Islamic Country*, which reportedly stipulates that:

...Malaysia is being governed and defended by Muslims, and certain Islamic laws are already in force. The manifestations of Islam had also been evident in Malaysia going by the injection of Islamic values in the civil service, the prevalence of mosques, madrasa religious schools, Islamic banks, Islamic insurance, and so forth.¹²

A newspaper report says that due to protests by non-Muslim Malaysians, and in the wake of the defeat of the Taliban in Afghani-

stan in January 2002, the government was forced to withdraw the 25-page booklet from circulation. The protesters express fear that “the multi-racial country which tolerates many faiths would be turned into an Islamic state.”¹³ Another report says that the government did not mean to offend non-Muslims and thus withdrew the booklet.¹⁴

A Malaysian government pilot project to create “Vision Schools” that merge three different kinds of vernacular schools—Malay, Chinese, and Tamil—into one unit also faced protests. The government is concerned about the lack of cross-race and/or ethnic group interaction among the students. It is feared that this situation will affect national integration. Vision Schools will have common facilities such as a canteen, playing field, and school hall, although each school will continue to teach in their respective vernacular mediums. The protests come from Chinese-Malaysians who fear the loss of Chinese identity. They argue that the Malay schools, which are given the status of national or “Malaysian” schools and preferential treatment, will dominate. They fear that this will lead to a gradual conversion of the Chinese and Tamil schools into Malay schools.¹⁵ The Chinese-Malaysian objection is based on the argument that historically “the government’s ultimate objective is to have only one medium, and that is Malay.”¹⁶ The ruling political party, United Malays National Organization, is reportedly always making it clear that Malaysia is “first and foremost a Malay nation, and an important symbol of nationhood like education must be Malay-based.” The issue has become a “sensitive” one, at least according to one local police head. A meeting of Chinese educators belonging to the United Chinese Schools Committees’ Association, also known as *Dong Zong*, to discuss this issue was reportedly stopped by the police on grounds of lack of permit to discuss a “sensitive” issue.¹⁷

In Singapore, the government regulation disallowing the use by students in public

schools of any garment other than the school uniform is meeting protests from Muslims. They argue that wearing *tudung* (traditional Muslim head scarf) is in line with their religion and thus should not be banned. The government, however, argues that “school uniforms unify children and... scarves can divide Muslim students from other students.” Some Muslim parents argue that “the rule is discriminatory and forces girls to go against the tenets of Islam.”

The new thrust of the Indian government to teach school children about “Indian ethos, Indian culture, Indian religion and a new, corrected version of history that restores primacy of place to Indian civilization”¹⁸ raised protests from Indian educators, historians, and NGOs. They accuse the government of “saffronizing” the Indian society to the prejudice of Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and other minority groups. The move to change the thrust of the education system is supposed to be in line with the agenda of Hindu groups to promote India as *Hindutva* or a Hindu nation. Some of these groups are accused of attacking theaters showing the movie *Water* by Deepa Mehta for violating Hindu values (in January 2000), threatening to attack young people and shops to stop the buying or selling Valentine’s Day cards (in February 2000), launching a public campaign against Muslim heroes in Indian movies (in June 2000), promoting the teaching of Vedic rituals and astrology in the universities (in June 2000), and destroying the Babri Masjid mosque to build a Hindu temple in its place (in 1992). Several Christian church workers were killed or injured by suspected Hindu fundamentalist groups during the 1990s. The issue continues with petitions filed with the National Human Rights Commission as well as in court to stop the government from revising history textbooks under the new guidelines, which promote the idea of *Hindutva*.

Education, religion, and culture are indeed closely linked in these cases. They have become

national issues rather than a purely sectoral matter.

Maintaining National Pride

Projecting national pride seems to be a major objective of history textbooks, by cherishing the “glorious past” of the country, for example. In doing so, however, textbooks may project other countries or people in a bad light, as in Japan.

The Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, a group of Japanese historians, was formed to rid the country of “masochistic history.” The group argues that Japanese history textbooks are biased against the country and excessively self-denigrating.¹⁹ The group aims to restore national pride among the Japanese people. It drafted a history textbook that drew protests within Japan as well as from its neighbors (China and the Koreans). Despite the protests, however, the Japanese government approved the textbook’s printing after ordering some revisions.²⁰ The textbook justifies the Japanese military interventions in Korea, China, and other countries in Asia during the first half of the 20th century as a means to save them from Western colonialism. The Chinese and Korean protesters strongly disagree with this view.

The Chinese government sent formal protests to the Japanese government asking that the textbook be disapproved. One report lists the objections to the draft textbook as follows:

- The textbook uses the term “anti-Japanese movement” to describe China’s popular resistance to Japanese militarism in the 1920s. The textbook contends that the resistance movement was “radicalized” under the influence of the violent Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in order to justify atrocities committed by the Japanese military.
- The textbook says Manchuria benefited economically from investment by Japanese heavy industries whereas, in fact, Japan

plundered resources on a vast scale and forced the migration of people. The textbook also fails to mention the Unit 731 experiment of live prisoners of war in Manchuria.

- The textbook only contains a brief mention of the Nanjing Massacre and says the nature of the massacre is still subject to debate to this day, thus casting doubt on the historical facts in Nanjing and the conclusions of the Tokyo war crime trials.
- The textbook insults the resistance launched by the Chinese Communist Party, calling it “a strategy designed to take over the government.” It covers up the true nature of the war of aggression launched by Japanese militarism and blames the war on the Chinese Communist Party’s protracted fight against Japan.
- The textbook asserts that the war between Japan and China was the result of isolated events such as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, ignoring the fact that Japan had planned full-scale military aggression from the early 1930s.
- The textbook refers to the Great East Asia Conference (November 1943) to project a misleading image that the aggression Japan committed in Asia had the support of the people of various Asian countries, whereas in fact the people who attended the conference were leaders of puppet regimes.
- The textbook mentions the imposition of Japanese language education and forced worship at Shinto shrines in countries under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, whereas far crueller atrocities were committed under Japanese colonial rule.
- In discussing the verdicts passed by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the textbook contains statements that cast doubt on the tribunal’s legality.²¹

The Koreans share many of the objections of China. Korean protesters emphasize the distortions in recounting the history of Japan’s

occupation of the Korean peninsula at the turn of the 20th century, and the World War II (especially relating to the Korean “military sex slaves”).

The Japanese government countered that it already examined the textbooks, including the controversial one, and did not find them inappropriate. It also argued that Japanese law does not allow it to dictate to schools what textbooks they should use, but it did request the authors to revise certain portions of the textbook. The Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform and the publisher made 137 revisions.²²

Ironically, the Korean Gender Equality Ministry is criticizing the Korean textbook *Kook-Sa* (National History), published by the Korean Ministry of Education, for making no direct reference to the “Japanese military sex slaves.” It wants the government to state that the “comfort women” were taken by “force or fraud” and suffered “sexual abuse.” It is reported that textbook authors “appeared to avoid the issue because it was so shameful for Koreans, and they were also concerned about its sexual content.”²³ But it is also asserted that the Korean Ministry of Education does not hesitate to discuss the “comfort women” issue in the history textbooks.²⁴ Textbooks also do not mention Koreans who worked for the Japanese government and security forces during the 1910–1945 colonial rule. Some were influential officials in the successive military governments of Korea.

Another history textbook (written in Japanese and Korean) being used in a Korean high school in Osaka, Japan, contains the following:

Imperial Japan pillaged our country and instituted a cruel, repressive colonial regime. This went beyond acquiring food, resources and labor, and developed into a policy of obliterating the Korean people from the face of the earth.²⁵

The newspaper report states that the

...harsh conditions under Japanese rule until 1945 are explained in detail [in the textbook], as are stories of Korean nationalists who resisted and led failed rebellions during the 1920s.

But the textbook skips over the 1930s and World War II, and the next section begins with Korean Liberation Day—Aug. 15, 1945. This section ends with words of pride, noting that Korean culture has proved resilient against Japan’s attempt to stamp it out and a Cold War that still divides the peninsula.

A pro-Seoul association of Koreans in Japan manages the high school using the textbook. The Korean schools managed by the pro-Pyongyang association use another history textbook, which has broadly similar content (as far as the pre-1945 history is concerned).

While the two groups have political differences, they agree that “one of the purposes of teaching history is to instill a sense of ethnic pride in their students and ensure that they understand their heritage.”²⁶

A social studies textbook for fifth year in the elementary level in Punjab province, Pakistan, provides another example of projection of national pride:

Importance of Pakistan’s location in the Muslim World:

Pakistan is an important Muslim country. It occupies the central position in the Muslim world. To the northwest of Pakistan, lie the Middle East countries and the Muslim countries of Africa and in the east, are the Muslim countries of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia. The spread of Islam in South Asia took place first in those areas now form the part of Pakistan.

Pakistan and the World:

Pakistan has established good relations with almost all the countries of the world. Pakistan has always supported the cause of world peace. Pakistan has always raised a voice

against the violation of basic human rights in any part of the world and supported the principles of providing food, shelter, clothing, good health facilities and pleasant environment to the people. Pakistan is prepared to render every possible help to the poor countries.²⁷

Another social studies textbook for the seventh year mainly discusses the Muslim world in terms of the history of spread of Islam, countries where Islam is the major religion, natural resources of these countries, and economic activities of Muslims.²⁸

Bias Against Certain Groups

Another aspect of the textbook controversy refers to the representation of “others”—foreigners and minority groups in the country. A booklet aimed at raising human rights consciousness of students in Osaka prefecture, for example, was discarded by the prefectural government after protests were raised. The local Korean association and the prefectural education board complained that “a cartoon in it would reinforce Japanese prejudice against Koreans.”²⁹ The cartoon depicts a Korean mother asking her son, who cannot get a job because he used his Korean name, “Why don’t you use your Japanese name while seeking a job?” The prefectural education board opines that this cartoon may violate its own “guidelines...revised two years ago to create an environment in which Korean minorities can use their real names freely.”

A newspaper report says that the Burmese/Myanmarese government issued a new fourth-grade textbook portraying the Thais as lazy and servile:

The Education Ministry in Myanmar introduced a 12-page history textbook supplement for the 2001–02 academic year in state-run schools that reopened Monday [June 4, 2001]. One section of the book says: “Thai

people are given to fun and appreciation of beauty. They are disinclined to self-reliance and hard work.”³⁰

A Thai historian, according to the same report, thinks that the textbook will have a lasting impact.³¹ He and other experts also agree that “Thailand must also set its own house in order to stop portraying its neighbors in a negative light in its textbooks and movies.”³² The Thai government decided not to take further action on the issue after the visit to Burma of the Thai Prime Minister. One high official in the Ministry of Education instead said:³³

Historians agree [that] history books of each country were based on the information available. It’s hard to establish the facts. Some parts are not facts. But readers can differentiate between facts and opinions in such statements as those which accuse Thais of being lazy...

The Punjab fifth-year elementary social studies textbook in Pakistan, after discussing the 1948, 1965, and 1971 wars between Pakistan and India, states: “India is our traditional enemy and we should always keep ourselves ready to defend our beloved country from Indian aggression.”³⁴

In another vein, Rubina Saigol argues that the Punjab civics textbooks³⁵ premise Pakistani citizenship on counterposition to India. Citing the way India is mentioned in the textbooks, she writes:³⁶

The consistency with which India is constructed as Pakistan’s moral opposite Other is amazing since it seems to run through virtually every chapter. Pakistani citizenship, constructed as male, Muslim adult, seems to depend heavily on India (and often the ‘West’) performing the roles of Others, outsiders or enemies. India’s ‘looming, menacing’ presence seems an essential ingredient of Pakistani citizenship.

In Sri Lanka, the ongoing issue of Singhal-Tamil coexistence has its impact on textbooks. A Sri Lankan human rights organization reports that the “traditions and culture of the Tamils and Muslims were being hidden and distorted in the textbooks in the Tamil medium. Textbooks in the Singhala language contained sentiments discrediting the Tamils.”³⁷

It further reports that the Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union asserts that “it is impossible to teach Tamil medium through texts prepared by Singhala educators and translated into Tamil.” To resolve this issue, the teachers’ union wants Tamil and Muslim teachers to prepare texts in Tamil language.

In India, textbooks produced by Hindu groups in states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are said to make school children grow up “with prejudice and hatred towards the minorities, and in total ignorance of [India’s] rich pluralistic and composite heritage.”³⁸ The following are examples of texts that promote communal bias:

- Our land has always been seen with greedy eyes... This story of invasion and resistance is our 3000-year-long Gaurav Gatha. When this proud tradition began is difficult to say because no books were written at that time...but we believe that the first man was born in this land (Gaurav Gatha [GG], for class 4, Shishu Mandirs, p. 8).
- To our ancestors these marauders were like mosquitoes and flies who were crushed (GG, p. 9).
- Lakhs [thousands] of foreigners came during these thousands of years but they all suffered humiliating defeat... Mughals, Pathans and Christians are today some of these people (Itihaas Gaa Raha Hai, for class 5, Shishu Mandir schools).
- The words that have their roots in Arabic, Persian, English, Urdu and other foreign languages are known as foreign words, for example, table, school, bazaar, train, kalam, laatein, kameez, dava, ameer, copy, zahar, etc. (Sachitra Hindi Vyakaran Aivan Rachna, p. 11).

- India is described as a Vedic nation on the basis of Vedic texts (Madhyamik Gadya Padya Sanchayan Chapter 4, for class no. 10).³⁹

These texts support the idea that India’s indigenous people are Aryans and, thus, that their culture (Hindu) is the original culture of India. All other cultures are foreign cultures. This view negates the archeological findings in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa (in the Indus Valley, Pakistan) about earlier non-Aryan cultures that flourished in South Asia 4,000 years ago.⁴⁰

A group of Indian educators decided to file a protest with the Indian National Human Rights Commission about the “undemocratic, non-secular” manner of preparing textbooks by the government. The group urges that the project be discontinued to revise existing textbooks, ostensibly not those produced by Hindu groups identified with BJP. The commission in turn issued a notice to Ministry of Human Resource and Development and National Council for Educational Research and Training to file a reply to the petition.⁴¹

The fact that these controversies are happening almost at the same time says much about the current situation of Asian societies. Even as the economic crisis that started in 1997 continues, people are looking not only for economic but also for social and cultural security.

Bases of Protests

The protests against and criticisms of national educational policies and textbooks raise a list of human rights education issues:

- the role of the education system in perpetuating what is perceived to be the dominant character of a country;
- the role of textbooks in maintaining discrimination against certain social groups, and people of other countries;
- the need for truthfulness in presenting history in textbooks; and
- the use of scientific methods in weeding out myths in history textbooks.

The Indian educationists' protest against the new educational policy as unjustly promoting Hinduism to the prejudice of other religions and cultures in India partly rests on the constitutional requirement of developing "scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform" among the Indian populace. Thus, the idea that Indian civilization is Aryan is seen as a distortion of scientific archaeological findings, and a myth.

The need to use scientific methods in developing history textbooks was raised in early 20th-century Malaysia, then under British rule. British educators promoted the scientific approach in producing textbooks, and the clear distinction between fact and fiction⁴² to ensure that myths, legends, and "stories" are not presented as history.

Beyond the issue of an unscientific approach to developing history textbooks are the human rights problems that occur thereby. As the examples discussed show, distorted history leads to discrimination against sections of society or people of neighboring countries. Explicit negative statements about another country such as those found in the Burmese/Myanmarese and Pakistani textbooks may become the basis for developing a discriminatory attitude among school children in Burma/Myanmar toward Thais, and among Pakistani school children toward Indians. Considering the media projection of the problems between these countries, the textbooks strongly reaffirm the animosity between them.

Textbooks can also project gender bias against women, violence against people and the environment, as well as wrong sense of history (Eurocentrism, for example).⁴³

Many Asian countries have enough problems with social discrimination or enmity with people in other countries, and textbooks should not promote these problems. To do so goes against the very essence of education as seen through the framework of human rights instruments.

It is important, therefore, to review and revise textbooks to clarify and resolve issues.

The Japanese history textbook case provides one way to solve intercountry problems. A joint research project by Japanese and South Korean historians was created to not only assure a scientific approach but also a proper interpretation of facts and figures.⁴⁴ This project is patterned after the European experience in dealing with the Holocaust. Germany agreed to work with its neighbors in writing their related histories.

A clear set of human rights-based guidelines may also be used in writing history textbooks. Textbook analysis as well as development can benefit much from a human rights perspective.

Human Rights Principles

Human rights principles cited in international conferences on education, in critiques of the current education system, and in comments issued by United Nations human rights bodies can be used to develop or revise textbooks. The following are some useful guiding principles:

- Values and subject content in textbooks and other learning materials should be gender-fair and accept diversity and cultural differences (Asia and Pacific Regional Framework for Action: Education for All-Guiding Principles, Specific Goals and Targets for 2015).
- Textbooks and other teaching materials should "present issues in a fair and balanced manner which reflects the aims and objectives of education, as set out in article 13 (1) of the Covenant, the [Economic, Social and Cultural Rights] Committee's general comment No. 13 and general comment No. 1 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child" (Concluding observations of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee on Japan country report, 24 September 2001).⁴⁵
- In the handling of "historical events in modern and contemporary history involving neighboring Asian countries, due consideration shall be given from a standpoint

of international understanding and cooperation” (Japanese government’s textbook screening panel, 1982, citing the criteria for textbook screening).⁴⁶

- To “promote an understanding and awareness of the causes, consequences and evils of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” textbooks should be reviewed and amended to “eliminate any elements that might promote racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance or reinforce negative stereotypes, and to include material that refutes such stereotypes” (Article 125, Programme of Action, World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance).
- Textbooks should be “rid of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, including those which promote hatred, racism or xenophobia” (Article 6, Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination).
- Textbooks can help attain the following objectives:
 - Strengthen respect for freedom of religion or belief.
 - Encourage teachers to cultivate respect for religions or beliefs and thereby promote mutual understanding and tolerance.
 - Raise awareness of the increasing interdependence between peoples and nations and promote international solidarity.
 - Raise awareness of gender issues to promote equal opportunities for men and women.

(Article 7, Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination.)

These principles show that there are substantial international and regional enunciations of principles promoting human rights in education through the years, yet they are not necessarily reflected in the school systems. The above examples show that governmental and non-governmental institutions must put these principles into practice, especially in textbook development.

History textbooks have an important role in strengthening relationships among peoples. They can present the positive aspects of economic, cultural, social, and political relationships between peoples within, or of neighboring, countries. The recent religious riots in Indonesia and India are extreme reminders of the urgency of the task ahead.

Textbooks should be bridges for understanding human rights among peoples, not walls between them.

Notes

1. First paragraph, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, provides the following:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. It is recognized, however, that textbooks need to be complemented by other learning materials and receive societal support. As one UNESCO project, Basic Learning Material Initiative, explains:

Textbooks provide the main resource for teachers, enabling them to animate the curricula and giving life to the subjects taught in the classroom.

- The importance of books to the quality of education and rates of educational achievement has been well documented. But the goal of Education for All also involves the development of literate societies in the developing world, and cannot be attained solely by providing quality learning materials to schools. If people are to stay literate, they must have access to a wide variety of written materials and continue the habit of reading in their adult lives (Introduction, Basic Learning Materials Initiative, www.unesco.org/education/blm/blmintro_en.php).
4. National Institute for Educational Research (NIER), *An International Comparative Study of School Curriculum* (Tokyo: NIER, 1999). An edited version of this study was also published in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 3 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 1999), pp. 147-84.
 5. Asian Development Bank and World Bank, *Philippine Education for the 21st Century. The 1998 Philippines Education Sector Study* (Manila: Asian Development Bank and World Bank, 1999), pp. 31-2.
 6. *Conference Report: Asia-Pacific Conference on Education for All 2000 Assessment* (Bangkok: UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2000), p. 107.
 7. Ian Montagnes, *Textbooks and Learning Materials 1990-1999: A Global Survey, EFA 2000 Assessment* (Ontario: UNESCO, 1999), p. 1.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Basic Learning Material Initiative, www.unesco.org/education/blm/summary_en.php.
 10. National Institute for Education Research, op. cit.
 11. *The Nation*, 11 April 2001.
 12. David Chew, "In the Backdrop of Malaysian Politics—A dormant Islamic-state concept," *The Japan Times*, 21 December 2001.
 13. Ibid.
 14. "Malaysia withdraws Islam booklet," *The Japan Times*, 6 December 2001.
 15. Eileen Ng, "Malaysia 'vision schools' plan upsets Chinese, Tamils," *The Daily Yomiuri*, 28 November 2000.
 16. David Chew, "Ethnic Chinese see school plan as ploy to erode their identity," *The Japan Times*, 24 November 2000.
 17. Kevin Tan, "Police tell why Chinese education meet was barred," www.malaysiakini.com, 24 January 2002.
 18. "Hindus aiming to put primacy on Indian values," *The Daily Yomiuri*, 3 January 2001.
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 33. "No action from historians," scoop.bangkokpost.co.th/bkkpost/2001/june2001/bp20010623/230601_news25.html

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35. *Civics Textbook for Class XI* (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 1998)

36. See Rubina Saigol, His Rights/Her Duties—Citizen and Mother in the Civics Discourse,” this volume, page 154.

37. *Sentinel*, September–December 1999 (Colombo: Centre for Human Rights and Development, 1999), p. 33.

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45. *Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Japan*. 24/09/2001. E/C.12/1/Add.67.

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