

Evaluating the Quality and Educational Impact of the Grade 5 Social Studies Textbook Under the Single National Curriculum in Rural Primary Schools of Galiyat, Abbottabad

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the standards, appropriateness, and pedagogical usefulness of the Grade 5 Social Studies (Urdu version) textbook of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board according to the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020, and rural settings specifically. The study took a qualitative research design guided by the textbook quality framework by UNESCO (2017) and in line with the SNC 2020 requirements. The data was gathered using the systematic conceptual content analysis of the chosen textbook chapters, semi-structured interviews with Grade 5 teachers, and in-depth group discussions with students of government primary schools in rural Abbottabad. As the results suggest, the textbook meets the requirements of the core subjects of civic, historical, geographical, and environmental topics that are required by the SNC, but the indications are that it cannot be used with rural students due to various obstacles. According to the teachers and students, most examples are urban-centric, there are complicated and abstract ideas in the language, visual materials are scarce or inadequately connected with the text. These aspects suppress understanding and valuable interaction, especially in the rural areas where exposure to additional learning materials is low. Comprehensively, the textbook does not address the minimum thematic standards of the SNC, but it does not have the contextual relevance, simplification age-appropriate and sufficient to support the pedagogical aspect. The paper concludes that conceptual clarity, contextual alignment and instruct ability need to be significantly revised to be more useful. The results have valuable implications to curriculum developers, textbook boards and policymakers who want to enhance the learning outcomes in the rural primary education.

Keywords: Single National Curriculum, primary education, Grade 5 Social Studies, student learning outcomes, pedagogical strategies, rural schools

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INTRODUCTION

Single National Curriculum (SNC) is a Government of Pakistan initiative, which aims at enhancing consistency, quality and equity in education in Pakistan (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MoFEPT], 2020). One of the key elements of SNC is the creation of standardized textbooks that help to provide the students of all socio-economic statuses with equal learning opportunities (MoFEPT, 2020). Although the SNC is meant to minimize the differences between the privatized and the state school systems, the outcome mainly relies on the quality, readability, and relevance of the textbooks applied in classrooms (Shehzadi et al., 2023). In rural areas like Galiyat in Abbottabad, there is a tendency to lack digital resources, additional learning materials, and learning curriculum support systems in schools (Carrete-Marín et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2019). Consequently, instructors are using textbooks as the only source of daily instructions. This renders the quality of textbooks as one of the most crucial determinants to the learning performance, student involvement and acquisition of key skills like civic awareness, critical thinking, among others (Arshad et al., 2020; Carrete-Marín et al., 2024). The textbook on Grade 5 Social Studies is specifically important as it exposes the students to the major concepts involving citizenship, geography, history, and governance (Arshad et al., 2020; Shehzadi et al., 2023). Unless the content is age oriented, well organized or fitted to the real classroom situations, it might impede and not facilitate learning (Shehzadi et al., 2023). Thus, it is necessary to consider whether there is the real necessity of the SNC textbook to satisfy the requirements of the rural learners and teachers. Although the Single National Curriculum has a lot of objectives, there has always been an issue of whether the use of standardized textbooks meets the needs of the real classroom setting, especially in rural schools.

With these issues, the following problem statement outlines the key problems in regard to the effectiveness of the SNC-aligned Grade 5 Social Studies textbook in the rural classrooms. Single National Curriculum (SNC) aims to offer equal and quality education throughout Pakistan; it, however, relies on the level of quality and utility of the textbooks designed based on the guideline. In rural settings, such as Galiyat, Abbottabad, schools are not very equipped in digital tools and additional materials, which means that they have textbooks as the main resource to deliver instruction. Misaligning textbook material with the level of comprehension of students, the realities of teaching or realities in the classroom can undermine the learning outcomes of students. Despite the fact that the Grade 5 Social Studies textbook is made to help build civic knowledge, conceptual understanding, and critical thinking, there are still issues of concern regarding the clarity, relevancy, inclusivity, and practical relevance to teachers. This research study is an attempt to assess whether the textbook facilitates meaningful learning or restrains it in rural classrooms.

In order to address the challenges identified, the current research paper outlines the following objectives, which are aimed at evaluating the quality, relevance, and pedagogical value of Grade 5 textbook in Social Studies as part of the Single National Curriculum.

- To assess the quality and relevance of the Grade 5 Social Studies textbook under the Single National Curriculum.
- To measure student learning outcomes and engagement related to the textbook content.
- To explore teachers' perceptions of the textbook's usefulness and challenges in its implementation.

- To identify gaps that may hinder student learning and propose improvements to enhance textbook quality.

To address these objectives systematically and with a focus, the study will be directed by the following research questions:

- How effectively does the Grade 5 Social Studies textbook support student learning in rural schools under the SNC?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the textbook's clarity, usefulness, and challenges in classroom implementation?
- Which aspects of the textbook engage or hinder students' learning and understanding?
- What improvements can be made to enhance the quality and educational impact of the textbook?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review includes a critical review of the available literature on Social Studies textbooks, curricula and how it influences learning among students basing its argument on Grade 5 under the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan. The review addresses four questions, evaluating the quality and relevance of the textbook, the perceptions of teachers and students, the gaps in the contents, and improvements in the curriculum. The literature brings out its major themes such as clarity of the content, developmental suitability, pedagogical support and classroom implementation especially in rural areas where textbooks remain the major teaching tool. The theoretical basis is presented by the guidelines of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017; Pingel, 1999), and the Single National Curriculum (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MoFEPT], 2020) that provides the criteria of textbook assessment and curriculum alignment.

Theoretical Literature of the

The theoretical framework to be used to assess textbooks revolves around quality concepts, relevance, and usability. UNESCO (2017) defines the quality of the textbooks in terms of clear language, sequencing of the content, and correspondence with the developmental and curricular goals. According to the Single National Curriculum (MoFEPT, 2020), textbooks are supposed to offer not only the factual knowledge but also the organized exercises and guidance in instruction to facilitate the comprehension. Such constructs inform the evaluation of the functionality of textbooks in the rural schools where the learners usually do not have access to additional learning materials. In addition, Jaiswal (2019) and Munikwa (2024) indicate that aligning learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessments (a principle known as constructive alignment) enhances student engagement and academic performance. They argue that evaluating textbooks or instructional materials in isolation is insufficient; instead, coherent instructional design, scaffolded learning, and high-quality content are essential for effective learning and achieving intended educational goals.

Quality and Relevance of Content

Jamil et al. (2024) analysed the Grade 5 Social Studies Single National Curriculum textbook and found that while it provides a thorough account of history, geography, and civic knowledge, most tasks and activities remain factual. The study notes that the textbook offers minimal pedagogical support and limited developmental suitability, making it challenging for students to engage with the material critically. Bahrudin (2016) examines the relationship between textbook readability and students' reading comprehension, arguing that texts that are too linguistically complex relative to learners' proficiency hinder comprehension; the study concludes that appropriate readability levels are essential for effective learning and understanding of textbook material. Ali and Karim (2022) observe that social studies teaching in Pakistan is largely dominated by textbook-based instruction and traditional methods. Due to limited professional training and inadequate pedagogical support, teachers often rely closely on prescribed texts, which reduces flexibility in adapting teaching strategies to students' diverse learning needs. The MoFEPT (2020) report on the Single National Curriculum points out that content is not enough but there should be systematic exercises and teacher guidance to help in converting content into learning outcomes. All these studies put forward the idea that textbooks are rich in content but there is still need to improve their clarity, developmental suitability, and pedagogical assistance.

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions

Ali and Karim (2022) highlight that in Pakistan, social studies teachers often rely heavily on textbooks and follow content closely due to limited professional training. This reliance restricts teachers' flexibility and can affect student engagement, emphasizing the importance of including both teacher and student perspectives when evaluating textbook effectiveness. Van de Pol et al. (2015) argue that students' understanding, and engagement depend on the clarity and responsiveness of instructional support. They show that when scaffolding is tailored to learners' needs, students demonstrate greater effort and achievement. This highlights that textbook exercises alone may not be sufficient, especially in classrooms where material is challenging or students require additional guidance. Participatory and learner-centred approaches are suggested by UNESCO (2017), and it is important to note that teacher-mediated learning contributes to increasing the understanding of students.

Gaps in Content and Learning Outcomes

Ahmed et al. (2023) conducted a content analysis of primary-level English textbooks under Pakistan's Single National Curriculum and found that most activities focus on lower-order, factual skills rather than higher-order thinking. The study also noted that the sequencing of tasks and exercises was inconsistent, limiting coherence and instructional support. These findings highlight structural and instructional gaps in textbooks that can reduce their usability and effectiveness for student learning. Both the Single National Curriculum report (MoFEPT, 2020) and UNESCO (2017) emphasize that textbooks must combine organized instructions, contextual examples and scaffolded learning. Mujahid et al. (2024) highlighted that rural teachers in Pakistan face large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient instructional materials. These constraints force reliance on traditional, teacher-centred methods. As a result, students in rural classrooms receive minimal instructional support, which can hinder effective learning outcomes.

Curriculum Improvement Recommendations

Ali and Karim (2022) suggest that social studies instruction could be enhanced by incorporating more student-centred and contextually relevant teaching strategies, which would increase engagement and complement the existing textbook-based approach. Van de Pol et al. (2015) demonstrate that scaffolded instructional support positively influences student achievement when it is contingent on learners' needs. According to UNESCO (2017) and the Single National Curriculum report (MoFEPT, 2020), the strategies to use to ensure that textbooks can deliver intended results are teacher training and participatory learning strategies.

Research Gaps

Although the literature on Social Studies textbooks is rather vast, a number of the gaps exist. The majority of the works adopted content comprehensiveness/teacher problems; little emphasis has been on student-level feedback particularly in rural schools. The interaction between students, textbooks, and teacher facilitation, as well as the use of textbooks as the main source of instruction, is rarely studied. Also, there is a lack of empirical research that would determine the efficiency and use of suggested pedagogical practices. These gaps identify the necessity of the current research that examines the effectiveness of Grade 5 Social Studies textbook in rural settings, both in regards to student engagement and classroom realities.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative project design was used as the study was supposed to discover the educational value of the textbook through personal experiences and interpretations. The design did not measure the numbers but relied on opinions, reactions of the teachers and inner design of the textbook. In this way, the textbook on SNC Social Studies became more comprehensible, topical, and useful. The project incorporated three main components:

- Gathering the information on teachers with semi-structured interviews
- The mini-focus group discussions (mini-FGDs) were used to collect student views
- A systematic content analysis of SNC textbook

Together, these components created a comprehensive picture of the textbook's strengths and limitations. In order to obtain rich and meaningful data, the study employed two main qualitative instruments, namely, the teacher interviews and student mini-FGDs, along with the systematic textbook review.

Teacher Interviews

Six semi-structured interviews were held with government school teachers in Nathia Gali in the field of Social Studies. Purposive sampling was used since the participants had first-hand experience in teaching the SNC Grade 5 textbook. The interviews involved the perceptions of teachers about:

- clarity and load of textbook content
- alignment with learning outcomes

- usefulness of illustrations, examples, and activities
- difficulties experienced while teaching different units
- practical suggestions for improvement

The semi-structured format ensured essential topics were covered while giving participants space to share their experiences freely.

Student Mini-FGDs

Small groups of Grade 5 students were informally discussed in mini-focus group discussions. The discussions were to get to know:

- which topics students found easy or difficult, how well they understood textbook explanations
- their engagement with pictures, stories, and activities
- their interest levels and learning preferences

Students' voices helped highlight how the textbook functions from a learner's perspective, which is critical for evaluating its overall effectiveness.

Textbook Review

A structured checklist was used to review the Grade 5 Social Studies textbook. The review focused on:

- conceptual clarity and age-appropriateness
- organization of content
- alignment with SNC learning outcomes
- cultural and gender representation
- balance between narrative text, visuals, and activities
- relevance of content to students' daily life

This review helped assess whether the textbook supports meaningful learning in its current form.

Data Analysis Techniques

The study employed two analytical methods, thematic analysis of the interview and FGD data and content analysis of the textbook.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to process the qualitative data collected by interpreting the qualitative data of the teachers and students in accordance to the six-step model presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process included:

- Familiarization: reading and re-reading transcripts and FGD summaries

- Initial Coding: identifying meaningful statements related to clarity, relevance, difficulty, and student interest
- Theme Development: grouping codes into broader categories
- Theme Review: checking coherence and consistency
- Theme Definition: refining and naming themes
- Reporting: linking themes to research objectives in the findings chapter

This method was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to capture complex subjective experiences in a systematic and organized way.

Content Analysis of the Textbook

In addition to thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis was applied to the textbook. This involved:

- Developing a coding framework based on curriculum requirements, pedagogical principles, and learning outcomes
- Reviewing the textbook chapter by chapter, focusing on clarity, accuracy, representation, and relevance
- Categorizing content under themes such as age-suitability, inclusivity, conceptual accuracy, and activity quality
- Interpreting patterns to evaluate how well the textbook supports student learning

Content analysis allowed objective evaluation of the textbook itself, complementing the perceptions gathered through interviews and FGDs.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical research methods. All the participating teachers were informed about the consent. The involvement of the students was voluntary and the discussions were conducted in a respectful and non-intrusive way. The anonymity of the teachers and students and the name of schools ensured confidentiality. All information was stored safely and used only to get academic benefits. These steps avoided privacy, protection and disrespect to any of the participants.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Findings from Content Analysis (Objective 1)

The Social Studies Grade 5 textbook was undertaken using ten criteria, namely, factual accuracy, conceptual clarity, balanced perspectives, and representation, values and citizenship, pedagogical quality, readability and age appropriateness, cultural relevance, and alignment with SNC themes, as well as likelihood of achieving SNC SLOs. Results indicate that there is a wide range of variation between the six chapters.

Factual Accuracy

Dates and fact statements were generally accurate but there were multiple gaps and omissions which made the statements less clear. Chapter 4 (History) did not mention dates of such cultural periods like the Gandhara Art and students were not able to develop any chronological perception. The map of Pakistan (Pg. 74) in Chapter 5 (Geography) was also antiquated and vague, and this compromised accuracy in the physical geography.

Conceptual Clarity

This was one of the biggest drawbacks of chapters. The complicated terms like parliament, federalism, judiciary were introduced in chapter 3 (State and Government) without simplifying the descriptions or breaking them down step by step. Likewise, Chapter 6 (Economics) introduced the meaning of GDP, inflation, demand-pull and cost-push inflation (Pg. 102103) that were way beyond Grade 5 understanding. Chapter 2 (Culture) was the only one with comparably clear explanations with examples that people can relate like Chappal Kabab and harvesting crops.

Balanced Perspectives

The book was too biased, with a low degree of criticism. Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 discussions on national identity and government structures respectively were one-dimensional and descriptive only. Chapter 4 showed historical events without recognizing other cultures or regional input. There is no chapter that prompted the student to reflect on other interpretations, argue out ideas, or analyze evidence, which are some of the main skills emphasized in SNC.

Representation

One of the weak points was representation. The use of illustrations was limited and more often they could illustrate males, which was less gender inclusive. The regional diversity was also misrepresented, and the local cultures were barely mentioned, with the exception of some isolated examples presented in Chapter 2. Only the appearance of minority groups were indirect or absent. Visuals in the field of geography and history (where representation is particularly critical) were tiny vortices of mainstream narratives.

Values and Citizenship

Values that were covered in the textbook encompassed cooperation, respect and national identity especially in Chapter 1 and 3. Nonetheless, the treatment was superficial and rule-oriented but not inquiry oriented. As an illustration, responsibilities like payment of taxes were stated without clarifying the reasons why taxes are an issue to a society. Citizenship education was left theoretical and not a way of modelling the democratic participation or promoting moral thinking.

Pedagogical Quality

Pedagogical design was insufficient to support active learning. Exercises were predominantly low-order tasks (copying, listing, defining). Higher-order thinking; comparison, reasoning, evaluating, and analyzing was nearly absent. Several tasks were poorly designed, including the Mind Map of Human Rights in Chapter 1 (Pg. 9), which lacked examples or scaffolding. Activities titled *Work*

for Me to Do or Let's Do Something New! (Chapters 4 and 6) were vague and instructionally weak. Chapter 5 attempted skill development using the BOLTS framework for maps, but its effectiveness was undermined by the poor-quality map provided later in the chapter.

Readability & Age Appropriateness

Readability concerns were found throughout the book. Sentences were technically dense and vocabulary difficult, particularly in content-heavy chapters such as 3, 4, and 6. Layout issues were evident: long text blocks, minimal visuals, inconsistent spacing, and overcrowded pages. The absence of child-friendly examples in several chapters made the text cognitively demanding for Grade 5 readers.

Cultural Relevance

Content showed limited linkage to student's lived experiences. Only Chapter 2 consistently used local and relatable examples (food, clothing, cultural practices). In contrast, Chapters 3, 5, and 6 centred national level or abstract content far removed from the everyday lives of rural or low resource learners. The reliance on an Internet link in Chapter 4 further disadvantaged students without digital access.

Alignment with SNC Themes

The textbook covered major SNC themes such as citizenship, culture, history, geography, and economics. Thematic alignment was mostly surface level. Many themes were mentioned but not explored deeply or interactively. For instance, SNC emphasizes inquiry, participation, and problem solving but none of which were consistently supported by the textbook.

SNC SLO Achievement

The likelihood of achieving SNC SLOs was limited. SLOs requiring understanding of government processes, exploration of cultural diversity, interpretation of maps, and application of economic concepts were inadequately supported due to lack of age-appropriate explanations, weak activities, minimal scaffolding, insufficient visuals, and abstract, theory-heavy content.

Thematic Analysis of Teacher's Interviews (Objective 2 & 3)

Theme 1: Textbook Relevance & Suitability

Appropriateness to Students' Age and Mental Level

In general, teachers stated that the textbook is age-oriented to a certain degree. Some of the respondents explained that it was very well suited to Grade 5 children (Participant 5), but others partially agreed (T1). Despite its general appropriateness, participants were keen to note that there are certain areas that the book should be improved upon (Khurram Zaheer).

Relevance to Daily Life

Several teachers underlined that the book is closely related to the real-life situations. As an example, T5 Iqbal remarked that the book is about home, school, and environment 70-75%. T2 described that there are some lessons, which arouse interest and curiosity. However, some teachers mentioned lack of relatable examples, which leads students to ask “Why are we studying this?” (T1).

Content Difficulty and Abstractness

Teachers stated that abstract subjects like human rights, government, citizenship, weather, climate, and civilization are challenging among students though this is mostly applicable (T2; T1). Poor understanding was also caused by regional ignorance in historical content (Mehtab).

Theme 2: Language & Accessibility

Simplicity of Language

The participants mentioned that the book has easy vocabulary and it consists of short sentences (Participant 3) that aid in understanding.

Difficult Vocabulary and Comprehension Challenges

On the contrary, some teachers have noted that there are hard words in some of the chapters (T1; T3). Complex sentences with long words have to be explained repeatedly, which presents a disadvantage to weak students.

Teacher Support for Language Understanding

This is one of the ways teachers make up by giving examples of the hard words that take place in everyday life (T3). This emphasizes the necessary high involvement of teachers in order to be understood.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Support & Engagement

Visual Aids and Learning Support

Maps, pictures, and diagrams are some examples of how visuals can be used to help students understand abstract things (T 6; T4). Nonetheless, this issue was pointed out by nT5ous teachers as a lack of visuals that made things difficult to visualize (T1). Activities and real-life examples improve understanding (T5).

Activity-Based Learning

There was a common agreement among the teachers that utilizing group work, map-making, cultural, as well as environmental activities, enhance student engagement (T3; T4). Locating places in maps, analysis of pictures are activities which engage learners (T4).

Support for Teachers

Other teachers reported that the textbook needs more resources and teacher-directed interventions to address blank areas (T3). Lack of teaching materials minimizes the lesson effectiveness.

Theme 4: Content Relevance & Practicality

Real-Life Connection

According to teachers, real-life examples (such as maps, environment, cultural clothing and everyday behaviors) make the material relevant (T2; T3).

Curriculum Gaps and Overloaded Content

There is too much information in some of the lessons and can be simplified (T5; T3). Gaps were seen in the absence of comparison between the past and the present and small local examples (T1).

Abstract or Complex Topics

Grade 5 level is inaccessible to economic concepts, historical dates, and sophisticated geography (e.g., time zones, International Dateline) (T5; T1).

Theme 5: Student Engagement & Participation

Interest in Visual and Story-Based Content

Visual, story-like, and short texts are attended to by students (T3). They are very interested in lessons that are concerned with culture and history (T4).

Activity-Based Engagement

Activities such as map reading, picture analysis and group work have high levels of engagement (T4). Nonetheless, the reader loses interest in the case of lengthy paragraphs and challenging vocabulary (T1).

Partial Understanding and Recall Issues

Other students are able to memorize the visual or basic material but unable to do their own explanations of the environment and history (T1). Dates in history are quite hard to memorize.

Theme 6: Student Understanding & Application

Visual/Practical Learning Effectiveness

Lessons are best remembered when they have visual materials, practical work or even real-life scenarios to help the student (T1; T3).

Civic and Environmental Application

Civic education such as cleanliness, traffic regulations, respect is put to instant use in school (T1). Environmental teachings bring about practical activities like planting of trees (T1).

Ability to Explain in Own Words

When taught on the basis of tangible examples, students can describe such aspects as provinces, cultures, citizenship and cultural diversity (T1; T5; T2).

Difficulty With Advanced Concepts

Economic terms and technical geography are hard to memorize, and they are difficult to learn by students (T5).

Theme 7: Usefulness for Teaching & Lesson Planning

Support for Lesson Planning

Teachers stated that the book is useful in planning, particularly among new teachers (T3; T2). It promotes systematic courses in culture, citizenship and history (T5).

Development of Skills

Textbook builds geographical, social and critical- thinking (T4). Tasks like reading the map are helpful in developing the skills.

Limitations in Planning and Time Management

Long chapters and big class sizes make it impossible to complete the lesson that lasts between 30 to 40 minutes (Mehtab; T2). There are certain lessons that cannot be completed within one period.

Theme 8: Challenges in Teaching

Time Constraints

The respondents all said that they had limited time in which to cover long chapters, in particular, citizenship, government, and resources (T1; T3; T4).

Difficult Vocabulary

It becomes hard in teaching when complex words have to be explained nT5ous times (T1; T6). Challenging headings make the students less interested (T2).

Complex Topics Beyond Grade Level

Grade 5 does not support advanced vocabulary and technical geography terminologies (T5).

Resource Limitations

They complained that teachers did not have charts, maps, models and multimedia (T1; T3). Small-sized maps do not promote comprehensiveness (T4).

Context Mismatch

Cities provide examples that the rural students find it difficult to associate with (T3). Independent activities and long writing are the areas that students have difficulties with (T2).

Theme 9: Textbook Improvement Suggestions

Enhancing Maps, Pictures, and Visual Aids

It was recommended that teachers include interactive maps, real images of culture, clear images, and colorful designs (T1; T3; T2).

Simplifying Language and Including Glossaries

The hard words are supposed to be simplified or they are supposed to be supported with glossaries and picture dictionaries (T3; T4).

Adding Learning Outcomes and Clear Lesson Structure

It was suggested by the participants that clear learning outcomes should be presented at the beginning of every lesson (T3; T2).

Increasing Activities, Projects, and Modern Learning Tools

Teachers recommended the inclusion of mind maps, quizzes, group projects, digital materials, local context activity, and cultural interviews (T1; T4).

Improving Content Quality and Curriculum Coverage

Teachers suggested to simplify economics subjects and refresh cultural and environmental examples and increase the quality of printing (T5; T2).

Theme 10: Alignment with SNC

Coverage of Core Areas

The respondents indicated that the textbook is consistent with SNC goals of nationality, society, ethics, diversity and environment (T1; T3).

Age Appropriateness

The book is mostly age-related, and it meets SNC objectives (T4; T5).

Areas Needing Improvement

The educators stressed that economics and certain subjects in geography should be revised in age-related manner (T5). There is low engagement because of non-lively content (T1).

Expanded Historical and National Content Suggested

There were even teachers who proposed renaming the book to Pakistan Studies and adding more information about Pakistan Movement, national heroes, wars and patriotism (T2).

Mini FGD / Discussion with Students & Teachers

The mini FGD, consisting of six Social Studies teachers gave us a comprehensive picture of the classroom reality and the interaction of students with the textbook. Teachers admitted that only a quarter and a half of the students can learn lessons completely without additional support. Stories, illustrations, and practical examples are some of the supplementations given by teachers during the lessons. They said that geography and economics lessons should be re-taught, visual aids are insufficient, maps are old, and that students in the villages have trouble with city situations. Teachers would ask to have story-based units and project-based activity, explicit SLOs, stepwise activities, and high-quality pictures to enhance SNC alignment.

Discussion

Results of thematic analysis and mini FGD show that teachers believe that the textbook is partially useful in promoting learning among the students. Some of the chapters are relatable and engaging, especially those that tackle the culture, the environment, and the day-to-day behaviours, but other chapters are abstract, dense, and cognitively challenging. According to the participants of the FGD, only 20–30% of students understand all the classes without any additional help, in particular, economics, government, and the more advanced chapters of geography. This is consistent with the prior literature (Jamil et al., 2024; Bahrudin, 2016), which states that textbooks are usually beyond the cognitive abilities of Grade 5 students, especially in rural schools. The teachers have to be very dependent on additional explanations, stories, visual expressions, and practical illustrations in order to seal this gap. This dependency represents a paramount issue that the literature has found, namely the inadequate assistance of textbooks, which is highly content filled, but lacks the necessary pedagogical support in terms of learning transformation (UNESCO, 2017; Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MoFEPT], 2020).

The textbook analysis showed there were lapses in the factual accuracy which include failure to provide historical dates, incomplete dates in the timelines, and outdated maps in Geography chapter (Pg. 74). These loopholes restrict the capacity of students to develop proper chronological and spatial knowledge. The conceptual clarity proved to be the key weakness, especially in the chapters on State and Government, Geography, and Economics, which presented sophisticated terms e.g. federalism, judiciary, GDP, inflation without providing age-appropriate explanations and scaffolding. According to the teachers in the FGD, they found themselves at times re-teaching such subject areas, which validated the fact that understanding is very specific to the intervention of the teacher. This finding is reminiscent of UNESCO (2017), Munikwa (2024), and Jaiswal (2019) which reiterate the usefulness of scaffolded learning and guided practice in textbooks to make sure that the students can meaningfully interact with the content. Chapter 2 (Culture) was found to be comparatively understandable and efficient as it has considered the locally applicable examples (food, clothing, cultural practices), which proved that contextualized learning increases the understanding.

Within findings, there was always poor representation. The thematic analysis and the evaluation of the textbook identified examples, which were urban based, few female figures, little mention of

the local cultures, and almost no mention of the minorities. The teachers noted that rural students have problems relating to urban oriented material. These findings are supported in the existing literature. Ali and Karim (2022) also note that the relevance of the content to the engagement is vital and especially in rural schools where textbooks are the main source of instruction. Chapters 3, 5, and 6, devoted to government, geography, and economics, were especially unrelated to the realities of the students, whereas Chapter 2 was effective because of the relatable examples. This is a significant focus on the alignment of culture and context in the textbook, which is underlined by UNESCO (2017) standards and SNC (MoFEPT, 2020).

Thematic analysis and findings of the FGD continuously indicated poor pedagogical support on the textbook. Most activities, however, concentrate on low-order cognitive skills that include copying, listing, and defining. There is a significant lack of higher-order thinking skills analysis, evaluation, and problem solving. Other exercises, such as the Mind Map of Human Rights (Pg. 9) and the Work for Me to Do in Chapter 4 and 6, were not very clear and scaffolded. Equally, Chapter 5 of BOLTS was compromised by low quality maps. Teachers have affirmed that the textbook lacks active and enquiry-based learning, and so it needs a lot of supplementations. This is one of the possible limitations identified in the literature: textbooks usually present the content in isolation without an integrated instructional design or scaffolded tasks (Jaiswal, 2019; Munikwa, 2024; Bahrudin, 2016). The present results support the idea that textbooks should strike the right balance between content and practical pedagogical assistance, particularly in the rural schools. It was pointed out by teachers that visuals, stories and practical activities are very important as they motivate students to engage. Lessons that had clear illustrations, stories, or practical tasks were done best and less focus and retention was observed on the lesson that had thick paragraphs, abstract explanations, and new words.

This correlates with the textbook review and the literature. Bahrudin (2016) observed that the cognitive ability of the Grade 5 students in the rural setting is too low to handle the text-heavy and linguistically complicated materials. This especially posed problems to students who had difficulties with dates in history, structures of governments and economic concepts. The best teachings were based on the everyday life of the students like in the Culture chapter, which validates the recommendation of contextualized learning by UNESCO (2017).

Teachers reported multiple challenges that hinder effective textbook implementation:

1. Time constraints: Long chapters were not possible to be discussed during 30–40 minutes.
2. Difficult vocabulary: Instructors kept describing complex words.
3. Resource limitations: Maps, charts, multimedia, and huge images were poor or obsolete.
4. Context mismatch: Urban-based content reduced understanding of rural students.
5. Student readiness: Students had difficulties with independent work and complex tasks.

The results are consistent with Ali and Karim (2022), who reported that textbook use among teachers is much, and there is a lack of pedagogical support in the texts, which impairs the learning process. The thematic analysis also indicated that teachers have to put a lot of effort to transform a textbook material into a lesson that could be easily accessed.

Though, the textbook addresses the main themes of SNC citizenship, history, geography, and economics alignment is superficial. It is not usually accompanied by activities that facilitate

inquiry, participation, or problem solving. Teachers said that students can hardly achieve SLOs in map interpretation, cultural diversity, learning government processes, or economic concepts application because:

- Lack of age-appropriate explanations
- Weak activity design
- Insufficient scaffolding
- Abstract content

CONCLUSION

Grade 5 Social Studies textbook is a simplistic text in terms of thematic content and is consistent with the objectives of SNC, but not pedagogically established and designed appropriately to cater to the needs of the aged. Learners have difficulties with abstract content because of poor comprehension, whereas educators have to struggle with inadequate scaffold, old-fashioned illustrations, and badly designed exercises. The textbook lacks proper representation of such cultural and regional diversity that is why it is not relevant enough. To ensure meaningful SLOs, effective learning needs to be made clearer, with examples, interactions, better teacher support, and context.

Recommendations

- **Content Improvement:** Simplify abstract topics, reduce content overload, include relatable examples from all provinces, and enhance visuals, maps, and infographics.
- **Pedagogical Enhancement:** Incorporate scaffolded, inquiry-based activities, guided questions, vocabulary boxes, and formative assessments.
- **Teacher Support:** Provide comprehensive guides, worksheets, and training to facilitate activity-based and story-oriented teaching.
- **Curriculum Alignment:** Field-test textbooks before approval, establish continuous feedback systems, and ensure lessons clearly state learning outcomes.
- **Digital Integration:** Include online references, multimedia links, and interactive exercises to engage students with modern learning tools.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future studies may consider bigger and more heterogeneous provincial samples, investigate the effects of reform textbooks on learning outcomes over time, and determine the training requirements of teachers. Best practices and innovations could be spotted by a comparative study with international Social Studies textbooks. Research on how to combine digital materials and practical exercises in rural schools would give some insights on the successful implementation of the curriculum.

Competing Interests

The authors declared no known competing interests.

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