

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING TEXTUAL MATERIALS GENDER INCLUSIVE

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The education system in India relies on printed textual materials that are largely accessed by students and teachers across the country. These materials are in the form of textbooks, exemplar materials, workbooks, supplementary readers and many more. For concept clarification and better understanding of disciplines at different stages of education, a variety of participatory pedagogical approaches are embedded in different materials. They are mainly handbooks, training materials and modules for teacher educators and teachers to be adopted and adapted in diverse classroom contexts.

NCERT views gender as an integral issue cutting across all disciplines at the school stage. The important mandate of the Department of Gender Studies (DGS) is to review textual materials from a gender perspective. Several studies on evaluation of textual materials have highlighted an element of gender bias and/or stereotype is generally visible in the selection of themes, content portrayal and visual depiction. There is also a tendency on the part of authors to overlook the contributions made by women in different fields. Further, even when women's contributions are reflected, they are mainly shown in caring and nurturing roles. New and emerging professions taken up by women are rarely reflected. On the other hand, men are shown in all decision-making and in leadership roles. This kind of portrayal is also reflected in the use of adjectives and pronouns, in the choice of themes and narratives, in different subjects offered at the school stage. This phenomenon leads to the perpetuation of qualities being associated with masculinity and femininity.

For translating the principles of equity and equality as mentioned in the Constitution and National Policy on Education 1986, there is a need for making textual material gender inclusive.

In this context, the Department of Gender Studies has already made efforts to develop gender inclusive materials. They are:

- i) Evaluation Tool for Textbook Analysis from a Gender Perspective in English, Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit. The tool is available as an open source on NCERT Website.
- ii) Reports of Textbook Evaluation of NCERT and States of U.P. and M.P. at the Elementary Stage from the perspective of gender bias and stereotypes.
- iii) Published Training Materials for Teacher-Educators on Gender Equality and Empowerment-
 - Volume I: Perspective on Gender and Society
 - Volume II: Gender and Schooling Processes
 - Volume III: Gender and Women's Empowerment

The three published volumes attempt to instill gender consciousness in the society, family and in the entire schooling ethos.

While going through various materials, the Department of Gender Studies, NCERT has felt that gender concerns have not been integrated in a meaningful manner in textual materials. Therefore, there is a need to provide guidelines to all those involved in the development of curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and other related materials. These guidelines are suggestive in nature, can be adopted and modified as per the need:

Guidelines

Before selecting the themes at various levels of school stages, the author team may like to deliberate upon the following questions-

- How do we promote Constitutional commitments related to equity and equality in the construction of knowledge of different subjects?
- How do we instill among children the notion of valuing the work done by women?
- How do we promote critical thinking?
- How do we encourage questioning of power relations?
- How do we bring structural changes to achieving quality and equity concerns in education?
- How do we promote awareness about changing roles of women in contemporary times?
- How do we reflect on learning to live together?
- How do we weave human values related to gender justice, harmony and peace?
- How should conflict resolving strategies be built?
- How do we highlight diversity and differences?
- How do we handle inclusion and exclusion?
- How do we avoid stereotyping the behavior of men in the society?
- How do we weave the concern for transgender?

Suggested Methods for Making Themes Gender Inclusive

A) CONTENT

- Priority needs to be given to themes reflecting equal contributions of both men and women to the society.

- Characters selected in different subject areas should reflect both men and women's achievement in a balanced manner
- Gender stereotypes related to portrayal of men and women in different fields should be avoided
- Continuity and change in projecting different roles acquired by men and women need to be highlighted
- Gender neutral themes related to objects and the natural habitat should try and avoid masculine and feminine traits related to them
- Use of language that is inclusive, (*wherever needed*) may be considered such as -they, them, us, we, you, yourself, he/ she, his/ her, himself/herself, people, our etc.
- Adjectives used in languages need to avoid stereotypes e.g. beautiful girl, silly girl, strong boy, intelligent boy, naughty boy.
- Usage of gender inclusive terms wherever needed can be used:

Mankind	-	Human kind
Story of Man	-	Story of Humans
Policeman	-	Police Officer
Chairman	-	Chairperson
Fireman	-	Fireperson, Firefighter
Waiter	-	Server
Businessman	-	Business Executive
Brotherhood	-	Kinship
Manning	-	Staffing
Manpower	-	Human power

- Women role models in the past and present need to be embedded in different domains of subjects at the school stage. The authors may, in their narratives, focus more on trials and tribulations of selected role models in the journey of their achievement.
- In case, customary practices are mentioned, identifying the reason for its existence, geographical region of its spread and its impact need to be discussed. Its presentation

should also raise critical questions of its continued existence and preventive measures and laws designed for its discontinuance (e.g. child marriage, enforced widowhood, dowry and witch-hunting)

- Indicators on gender can be included, to discuss the status of women and men, transgender, in society particularly in relation to education, literacy, demography etc., with suitable explanations. Such information could also be graphically represented.
- Diversities of case studies of women's contributions from different walks of life can be utilised wherever appropriate to reflect on women's empowerment.
- Human values related to gender equality can weave into content presentation related to different subjects
- Thoughts of Eminent Indian Thinkers on Women can be highlighted wherever needed
- Tokenistic representation of women in visual, content and exercises should be avoided
- Male stereotypes to be addressed
- Gender and technology need to be reflected in appropriate places
- Demystifying superstitions and beliefs that hinder rational and logical thinking
- Concern for transgender needs to be highlighted

B) VISUALS

- Cover, and Back pages and fillers of textual materials need to be gender inclusive
- Message on gender sensitivity can be included in different spaces of materials where ever appropriate such as inside of cover and back pages
- Visuals need to be related to the theme of the discipline
- Visuals and illustration may depict characters in new and emerging roles to avoid stereotypes
- Picture portraits of personalities can be given lesser degree of importance than the pictures showing their active roles or activities they have been involved with
- In the context of women, new and emerging roles adopted by them need to be focused upon

- Data related to Gender concerns, especially disaggregated data on demography, education, violence, workforce participation should be graphically or diagrammatically represented to promote better understanding
- There is a need to portray women in unconventional roles to address stereotypes
- Gender inclusive visual story boards can be selected.

C) EXERCISES

- Need to be designed for all children.
- More application based activities need to be designed.
- Philosophy of continuous and comprehensive evaluation needs to be translated through suggested context based activities, in the form of projects.

REFERENCES:

1. MHRD. 1986. National Policy on Education, New Delhi.
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