

Pedagogy and Socialization: Adversarial Nuances in a Ghanaian English Textbook

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Abstract: The school system is one world of revelation for many children. It is often an ecosphere where many things, good and bad, are learned and unlearned. In Ghana, the average primary school children are between the ages of 11 and 12 and are in their formative years where the binaries of good and evil are established, internalized, and tried. This warrants the investigation into how narratives in school textbooks in Ghana introduce adversarial binaries in terms of gender, age, character, and identity socialization in primary school children. Pivoting on Joseph LeDoux's theory on consciousness and emotions and through a narrative inquiry where the narratives in the textbooks are the raw data, a selected primary school English textbook for primary six is analyzed to reveal the shades of rivalry and their perceived implications. The narrative structure and the connotations of the narratives are used to predict the stories' effect on the learner's perceptions of gender, culture, character, and identity. The study reveals that children's literature is a veritable research arena because the content of the selected textbooks for school use provides fertile fodder for the possible imbibing of conflictual stereotypes in children during their formative years. It concludes with the need to pay absolute attention to the content of approved school textbooks for children with the view of eliminating untoward adversarial nuances. The study recommends that better scrutiny in selecting textbooks for use in Ghanaian schools to prevent unintended socialization of school children.

Keywords: Socialization, Children's Literature, Textbook, Pedagogy

1. Introduction

As much as the very early stages of pregnancy deserve crucial attention because it is the preparatory stage for the development of the child, every other stage in a person's life deserves ample attention. Many of the problems contended with in adult life emanate from neglecting other stages of life. Children between the ages of 10 and 12, according to The National Resource Centre for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, Hunter College School of Social Work [14], are in the transitional age, otherwise referred to as the early adolescent ages. As a vital age bracket for migration from childhood to adulthood, it is essential that the appropriate socializations are enforced. Georgieva [10] indicates that socialization is the "overall personality formation through the acquisition of knowledge, norms, and values by an individual, through mastering the material and spiritual environment, language and types of communication" (63).

The world of literature in school textbooks, therefore, sets an "interplay between learners' understanding of the world and the literature selected for and read by children as a result of current curriculum design" [Bingle [3]]. The power of school textbooks implies that child development milestones must be marked and monitored. Child development is globally measured by universal milestones. According to the Hunter College document [14] referred to earlier, essential milestones in the areas of physical, emotional/social, and intellectual/cognitive development must be achieved through avenues of socialization such as school, church, mosque, and home:

Youth in this age range learn to extend their way of thinking beyond their personal experiences and knowledge and start to view the world outside of an absolute black-white/right-wrong perspective. Interpretative ability develops during the years of early adolescence, as does the ability to recognize cause and effect sequences (2).

The extract suggests that by instinct, children in their early

adolescent years are ready to understand and absorb lessons on binaries and adversaries in terms of right/wrong; black/white; cause and effect. How then do school textbooks construct perceptions of gender, nature, moral, economic, and cultural binaries in these young adolescents? Ullah & Skelton [16] posit that representational disparities and nuances of discrimination in school textbooks are very impactful on the life choices of children as well as their sources of motivation. Hence the need to pay attention to textbook content. For instance, Campbell [4] argues that textbook content needs better scrutiny because they feed the development of self-esteem and identity through the gender role models depicted in them. The assertion of needful scrutiny is further corroborated by Griffith [11] who opines that school curricula are very powerful in their ability to orient learners towards a particular line of career and other crucial paths in life. However, whereas the content of textbooks plays an important role in the socialization of children, many publications on school textbooks for children, especially in the sub-Sahara have focused on the production, distribution, and general availability of textbooks in Sub-Saharan basic schools. Even though curriculum planning involves a broader spectrum, curriculum reform hardly occurs with changing textbooks. As a case in point, a UNESCO-commissioned study on school textbooks, a Global Education Monitoring Report [15] confirms the inadequacy of textbooks in Ghana and countries in the Sub-Sahara after curriculum reforms. Elsewhere a study by Grossman and Thompson [12] revealed that teachers sometimes advised learners to cut down their use of textbooks because of their poor quality and content. They noted that such teachers rather encourage learners to create worksheets that suit them better. This implies that there is not enough research attention paid to the content of children's literature in their textbooks despite the effect textbook content may have on a learner. Thus, this paper demonstrates through textual analysis, how children in the age bracket of 10-12 are socialized through school textbooks on adversaries and adversity. Through the critical review of the literary narratives in a government-prescribed primary six English Language textbook for primary schools, the study examines nuances of adversarial socializations in a basic school primary six English textbook in Ghana. The selected text is authored by Afari Assan and Peter K, A, and Arthur.

The content analysis of the selected text is conducted to unearth the nuances in the selected text is done from the perspective of the LeDoux theory of consciousness and emotions which indicates that:

As one becomes more emotionally experienced, the states become more differentiated. Fright comes to be distinguished from startle, panic, and terror, and dread is distinguished from concern, wariness, and edginess. Because the labeling process is imprecise and depends on individual learning and interpretation, each person may use the terms a little differently [LeDoux [18]].

This theory affirms Jean Piaget's schema claims that emotional schema development depends on language and acculturation. The implication is that nobody is born with

feelings but instead it is the culmination of social verbal experiences that carves children's fear triggers and responses. Drawing from LeDoux's theory, this paper examines the perceived implication of adversarial-induced fear in learners who use the Primary Six English textbooks for Ghanaian basic schools selected for this research. The study also argues that the discourse of fear needs to be managed properly in children's literature lest they create a permanent phobic schema that could mar decisions taken by children even in their adult age. Strouse et al. [19] aver that one of the key aims of educational books is their ability to help children to create a body of knowledge that is generalizable and transferrable to the real-world context. They explain learning and transfer of learning as key functions of learning books for children:

By learning, we refer to the child's ability to recognize or recite information presented in a book. By transfer, we refer to an ability that goes beyond such learning: the ability to apply newly acquired information to new exemplars or contexts (2).

Based on this argument, the selected text is examined to identify how adversarial discourse content in the text nurture fear and adversarial emotions in children.

2. Gender in the Adversarial Context

The issue of gender inequity and inequality remains core to the myriad of social problems that exist in the world today. Durrani [8] argues that much research work has been invested in gender inequality in terms of access to education but not much attention has been paid to how both textbooks and school curriculum, in general, can promote inequality and inequity in the construction of gendered subjects. The argument underpinning this statement is that young people are particularly impressionable hence the need to pay attention to the nuances of the content of the textbook. A study revealed that Pakistani textbooks, as a case in point, are highly gendered. The study cites female icons talked about as helpless, tolerant, pious, and domesticated figures whose role is to care for their husbands [Durrani [8]; Ullah & Skelton, [16]]. Such textbooks portray stereotypical gender-ascribed roles such as cooking, cleaning, washing, etc. [UNESCO [17]; Durrani [8]; Ullah & Skelton [16]]. In the primary six English textbooks under study, gender stereotypes are also nuanced. The first section of the English textbook (p. 1), for instance, opens with a poem meant to teach rhymes and central themes:

When a lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy?
What art can wash her guilt away?
The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from everyone,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom-to die (Oliver Goldsmith).

In the Oliver Goldsmith poem cited earlier, though the objective is for teaching end rhymes, the connotational

content presupposes a gender adversarial relationship between men and women. The scales of balance are tilted in favor of “men” as many in number against “women” as few. Men are categorized and presented as a danger to any woman. The woman is therefore cautioned. In LeDoux’s adversarial theoretical context, fear and heightened emotion are predominant weapons for breeding hatred. Fear that breeds hatred is apparent in this poem when fear of men is instilled in the “woman” as she is warned to beware of men. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska [7] reveals that indeed, language in terms of vocabulary and semantics shapes the emotions of children from as early as 10 to 12 years of “childhood through to their maturity” (455). The fear and emotions whipped up by this text in children are likely to breed gender hatred.

Literature in school textbooks has the potential to manipulate identity construction in learners. What gender means, according to Taylor [20], is one of the basic lenses through which children perceive the world. The gender stereotyping of females as having feeble minds yet outwardly adorable to the pleasure of men is nuanced in the description of “woman” as “lovely” yet “foolish” in Oliver Goldsmith’s poem mentioned earlier. The foolishness of the female in the poem is emphasized in the idea that she only realizes her folly when it is too late, she has already been preyed upon. There is also the reinforcement of gender stereotyping in the portrayal of men as wiser and women as fools, men as predators, and women as prey. Essentially, there is the notion that in this adversarial context, it is the woman who is a loser and who feels guilty and the man, a winner, and a victor:

What charm can soothe her melancholy?

What art can wash her guilt away (1).

The impression of gender conflict in the poem is strident in the second stanza of the poem which suggests the womanist proposition of the extermination of men who oppress women. The stanza proffers “woman” wringing the bosom of a man as the only means of covering or hiding her shame and guilt. The indication is that gender conflict and love relations begin with the man’s deception and a fatal reaction by the woman. The notion of wrong to betray and right to punish, and the cause of betrayal and the effect of the dead is imbibed and men as adversaries of women guzzled by the young primary six readers. The diction: folly, melancholy, betray, away, stoop, and die are all indications of various degrees of oppression and resistance that form part of the repertoire and tempers of fear and emotions in the young reader. Such a reader will invariably grow up to mimic the adversarial images and speak the adversarial language as an adult. According to Adichie [2], the effort towards addressing the issue of the single story can be enhanced with the exploration of literature’s influence on the sociocultural socialization of learners using school textbooks. The text may indeed expose the young adult to the reality of the adult world, especially by the summary of the subject matter and theme the Primary Six textbook provides:

Looking at the whole poem, it talks about the folly of love that binds together, the shame and guilt, as well as other

attributes such as the betrayal of love. (2).

What the summary fails to do is to teach the reader whether what the adversary does is right or wrong and why the actions in the poem must not be repeated. From this perspective, it could be said that the didactic essence of literature is not applied purposively. Gender must not be pitched against each other but carefully crafted in children’s literature for the appropriate impact as posited by Flanagan [9]:

“If we are to encourage children to see masculinity and femininity not as inherently binarism and oppositional, but as relational and fluid, then writers, readers, and critics need to be aware of how particular genres are gendered, of how narrative discourse can be used to privilege particular models of gender and how texts endorse or interrogate dominant cultural constructions of gender.”

Another story of adversarial interest in this study is *The Tiger and Kid*. This narrative is slated for a reading-aloud lesson in the Primary Six textbook for the English Language and is another example of what Flanagan [9] cautions against in content creation for children’s consumption. In this narrative in the Primary Six textbook under study, an adult tiger threatens a kid (baby goat). The beginning of the story not only set the background but also introduces the gender conflict where the adversarial context is set between a tiger, personified as male with the personal pronoun “he” and the nanny goat and her kid, both personified as female “she”. The tiger’s abuse of the kid and her mother who was not even there epitomizes the disregard the tiger as a male has for the goats who are both females. Children who read this textbook are likely to cram the subjugation of females by males.

A more staking gender rift is evident in a poem slated for a listening and comprehension lesson in the book under study:

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more

Men were deceivers ever

One foot in the sea, and one on shore

To one thing constant never

(William Shakespeare).

The goal of this poem in the textbook is to teach rhymes. However, akin to *The Goat and the Kid* story mentioned earlier, the poem may breed a gender war that makes females feel vulnerable to males. In the text, the former is warned not to trust the latter, males are likely to feel superior as they are presented as having the capacity to outwit females. A girl in such a Primary Six class may forever struggle to trust a man in a relationship later in life. Words such as “deceivers ever” (11) in the textbook heighten the incorrigibility of men and how long women have suffered and must continue to endure the deception of men, ever since.

The antagonism between females and males is also emphasized with a narrative meant to caution young girls about avoiding teenage pregnancy. The narrative enlists the disadvantages of teenage pregnancy to females and justifies why it should be avoided at all costs:

Getting pregnant while in school creates many unpleasant problems. Firstly, a girl’s schooling is certainly disturbed. In fact, some pregnant schoolgirls never go beyond where

they stop. Secondly, few pregnant schoolgirls ever get responsible men to marry them. Thirdly, girls whose bodies are not yet fully grown before pregnancy become unhealthy; so, do their children; these become weak and sickly. (37).

The didactics in this excerpt is indispensable to healthy female development. What is questionable is why the text blames parents and their teenage girls for the rise in teenage pregnancy with the reason that parents ought to teach their teenage girls how to take good care of themselves. The statement seems to absorb boys and adult men who impregnate teenage girls from all blame, and this sets the tone for a gender conflict between males and females. This form of adversarial socialization connotes the girl child's vulnerability and the male's superiority.

The introduction of gender stereotyping is also reinforced in the character composition in this textbook. In Section 3, the narrative for a Reading lesson centers on a conversation between two characters in the kitchen. The characterization of females in the kitchen and the absence of males in the kitchen reinforce the stereotype that the kitchen is for females. The scenario is akin to the concerns of Ahmed [1] contends that in India, the government is working hard to ensure the elimination of all forms of sex stereotypes and gender biases that permeate school textbooks. However, he adds, school textbooks continue to depict females drawing water and laboring in the kitchen by cooking or cleaning somewhere in the house. With traces of gender stereotyping in school textbooks, young readers, especially males, are likely to grow up to practicalize this gender pigeon-holing of females. Females themselves will then have to live the rest of their lives resisting such socio-cultural confinement as they may become too conditioned to challenge the status quo or circumvent the confinement.

The gender conflict that perches males as the stronger of the two genders is reinforced in Section 3, a narrative that talks about energy sources. In this narrative, a man running energetically is used to depict an object in motion and the power exerted. Using a male picture is subtly associating males with energy and power. The imagery affirms feminist concerns about schools being factories where through government-approved textbooks teachers shape gendered learners [Wood, 23] This perception of gender rating is affirmed by Kramer [13] who like Ahmed [1] posits that female characters are often depicted as nurturers; and often depicted as mothers, nurses, and kitchen helpers in children's books in general. All the perceived nuances, though unintended may have lasting repercussions on young children's minds hence the need to address gender presentation in school textbooks for children.

3. Age in Adversarial Context

Akin to gender relations, one of the hubs of adversarial thrives in the arenas of age and generational variances. Often, adults oppress children but how are children supposed to respond? How are they to navigate the threats of their

older adversaries? What are the lessons learned? These are some of the education and information that literature is expected to use its didactic capabilities to teach in school textbooks. The need to pay attention to the nuanced content impact of literature in school textbooks is still relevant with the persistent concern that "many professional discussions around selection focus on the quality of texts in terms of their usefulness in teaching the mechanics of reading or language skills, or even their economic viability, without acknowledging the inherent hegemonic discourses found in all narratives" [Wyse, Jones, Bradford, and Wolpert [24]].

In the *Tiger and Kid*, a story for reading aloud lesson in the Primary Six textbook for English Language Studies, an adult tiger referred to as "Father" by a kid (baby goat) threatens the kid. The tiger also refers to himself as old when he chides

"Don't you have respect for old age? Don't you know that even my youngest son is older than you? (6)

The tone of the adversary is set in the perceived autocratic and disdainful insinuation in the tiger's questions and accusation of the kid for muddying the water meant for public drinking: "Hei, you nasty kid, why have you made the water dirty". The diction "Hei" is usually used for calling people of low social class, servants, slaves, etc. Thus, this choice of word by the tiger connotes a sense of master-servant relations where the tiger has no regard for the kid perhaps because of the age difference. Adversity imposes fear on the weaker opponent according to the fear and emotions theory by LeDoux [18]. This fear is epitomized in how the kid "trembles" at the chiding of the tiger when he says, 'shut up!'. But for the timely intervention of the hyena, the tiger would have eaten up the kid. A story like this sets up an adversarial framework between the elderly and the young in the minds of the young adolescent textbook user.

The adversarial atmosphere is also embedded in Passage B which also meant for a Listening and Comprehension lesson. Asma, a young boy seeks the help of his uncle to further his studies, but the uncle turns him down. The whereabouts of the boy's parents is not declared. However, if even if they were alive and could not help him that is why he goes to the uncle, then this narrative might be socializing youngsters to think that their adult relatives are wicked, parsimonious, and selfish. This already sets a psychological antagonistic contest between the old and the young school textbook user. The perception of antagonism may be further heightened as the reader is not told why the uncle is unable to support the young boy on a good venture such as furthering his education. Literature in school textbooks must be scrutinized to ensure that they appropriately socialize their users.

4. Man and Nature in an Adversarial Context

The conflict between man and nature has captured the attention of many writers and critics alike. This interest is underpinned by the fact this relationship is an integral aspect

of the socialization processes of children. Young children adopt some roles and attitudes that appeal to them [Tsao [21]] in their school textbooks. Children's literature in school textbooks, with their pictures and narratives, also provides evaluation benchmarks for learners to assess their own actions, beliefs, and emotions [Mendoza & Reese [22]] in relation to their relationship with nature. Hence the need to create appropriate perceptions about nature in the literature of school textbooks. Unintended perception may creep into school textbooks.

In the *Dog and Hen*, a narrative for Listening Comprehension in the selected textbook, there is adversity in the camp of the animals who think that their master, Nyimpa (meaning human) is treating them badly:

I scratch all day for my food. I lay eggs for Nyimpa (man) and his lazy children and my chickens are at their mercy. They grow only to make the family fat. Look at where I sleep... what have I done? Why should I suffer such bad treatment... (28)?

...Certainly, you aren't at all treated well. But what about me? I stay awake to watch our master's house so that he and his family may snore in peace. I roam about in the forest to find him meat. And what's my share? Bones and leftovers from his table. (28)

The antagonism that the two animals feel for their master instantly puts man in the quarters of an unfair master who has no regard for those who help him. Indirectly, it is perceptible that children who read this text are socialized to take better care of their domesticated animals. Unlike the other stories that offer no caution but a blunt conflict between two parties like William Shakespeare's poem discussed earlier, this story offers some reasons for how a man treats his animals as the animals make a mess of the clean beds that are given to them when they visit God to complain about man's treatment. This act by the animals makes them understand why they don't need the clean sheets they asked for to sleep on. However, there are no explanations for the bad meals the animals get from their master. Such a story teaches the young reader that man is an adversary to animals just as in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The perceived lesson is for man to try and treat nature with some respect and for everyone to look into themselves to find out how they contribute to the problems they have. Even on the animals' way to see God, reveals that other "wild animals attacked them" (29). This metaphorically implies that it is not only people who are not of one's kind and stature that have a contest with you, but the world is a place where people who share status are likely to oppose each other's effort towards making life better. Such a story presumably cautions the textbook users about the reality of not having everybody liking what you do but it inherently puts some fear and wariness in the children about his/her fellow man and things in nature.

A similar master-servant antagonistic relation is epitomized in Unit 11 Section 1, where a storytelling lesson shows, three dogs tricked by the housefly to attack their master. It is only when they realize that the housefly had lied about their master eating a good dish without them that they

turn their anger to the housefly instead. Once again it is appreciable that since this story sets the accusatorial contest between the master and his animals, it serves a didactic function of the need to verify before reacting. This means that sometimes, adversarial content in children's books can be used to teach appropriate lessons. Zarefsky [25], for instance, argues that it is important for opposing views to verify and confront each other as depicted in this Primary six English Textbook under study with the reason that it teaches children to arrive at the most appropriate judgment. In Zarefsky's view, argumentations are not entirely bad or adversarial because they drive people to yield better reasons behind their actions. Children of early adolescent age certainly need to learn not to act hastily but they also learn to think critically about issues and proffer better arguments.

The struggles of life and the battles of the African child in search of survival in a very perilous world are projected as a context of adversity that a child reader may perceive after reading the literature in the selected textbook. The title of the narrative for Reading on page 52 "Save Child Workers" connotes the lurking of adversity all over the world of children. Poverty as grave adversity is once again centralized in this narrative. Young people carrying heavy loads of money, begging on the street for themselves, and for their parents who force them to, are all presented as embers of adversity.

The adversarial relationship between man and nature seems to be quite visible in this textbook. The narrative of Unit 13 also presents the young adolescent reader who engages with this text with a very hostile relationship between man and animals. The plot shows events without causality such that Adu is pounced on by a leopard in the narrative. Though there are other human characters, they could only shout his name a little too late. Questions such as how Adu wronged the leopard are not answered. There is rather a foregrounding of enmity between man and animals and the young readers are socialized to nurse a perception and emotion of fear reiterated by LeDoux [18] fear animals. It is graspable that the Primary Six textbook users may foster a dislike for animals and essentially, kill them on-site before they kill. For such apparent nuances that yield fear, emotions, animosity, and disdain amongst children through literature in school textbooks to be averted, this study agrees "a more inclusive policy needs to be developed which will break down cultural stereotypes and the implicit messages inherent in the hidden curriculum" [Carrington and Kelton [5]].

5. Conclusion

The essence of research into children's literature cannot be over-emphasized noting that children's socialization heavily depends on their environmental experiences. School textbooks, undoubtedly, give pupils the opportunity to experience a wide environmental world needed for them to develop culturally. Pupils also develop cognitively, socially, and psychologically through the components of Literature embedded in their textbooks. Ideologies that govern adult life

and choices are often crafted through literary contents in school textbooks for children, especially in the English Language classroom. Inappropriate connotations in literature in school textbooks may breed emotions, fear, and hatred amongst others that can mar gender relations, man and nature relations, and splinter co-existence in the world. The world of school textbooks, without a doubt, opens a veritable world of research. This vast spectrum deserves more study to eliminate the nuances of adversity and how these nuances, as emulated earlier, influence the highly diverse thematic span of children's literature in textbooks, and the social and cultural value that children's literature, in general, must teach. Due to the gullibility of children, it is essential that the literary content of school textbooks for children need to be carefully examined for appropriate content.

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