

Cultivating Detached Elites: National Identity and Citizenship in Elite School Textbooks in Pakistan

Arjumand Rauf
University of Management and Technology, Lahore.
arjumand.rauf@gmail.com

Yaar Muhammad
Associate Professor
GC Women University, Sialkot.
yaar.muhammad@gcwus.edu.pk

Abstract

This study explores how national identity is presented in 13 elite Pakistani school history textbooks by examining micro-components of national identity. Findings reveal striking disparity in fostering national identity, presenting a shallow understanding of the country's history and moral values, lacking discursive devices to connect learners with the "imagined community." Textbooks introduce constitutional principles and political institutionalization in a dissociated and idealized manner, contributing to obliviousness of Pakistan's civic culture among the privileged youth. They focus largely on ancient history and heritage, failing to cover current issues and achievements. The textbooks encourage passive or obedient citizenship, serving elites' interests by perpetuating existing social and political structure. There should be a dedicated effort to align national and global perspectives, supported by a progressive, humanistic approach to foster enlightened citizenship and a vibrant, functional Pakistan cherishing diversity and harnessing youth idealism.

Keywords: *National Identity, Citizenship education, Elite schools, Textbooks, Pakistan, Qualitative content analysis*

Introduction

Pakistan offers an insightful case to analyse the mechanism of national identity-making through educational curricula. Although the state accorded central importance to the promotion of national integration and coherence, the country's structure presented major hurdles. The institutionalised politicisation of ethnic identities and the absence of agreement on the meaning of nationhood made the consensus on even foundational narratives beyond reach. The complexity of national identity-making becomes apparent in the figures that dominate the Pakistani context. In its constitution, the state consistently promotes national integration and coherence as one of its major goals. In the Pakistani political landscape, complicated by intensely assertive ethnic identities and deeply divergent understandings of national identity, building these shared grounding narratives scarcely seemed plausible (Jaffrelot, 2015; Waseem, 1994). Consequently, national identity has remained a deeply contested issue, even after seven decades (Durrani, 2007).

Apart from intergroup conflicts, Pakistani society reflects sharp disparities in terms of social stratification and parallel educational systems that define distinct social classes (Khan, 2022; Rahman, 2004). Elite English medium schools in Pakistan represent the most privileged class in the country (Shamim, 2011). These schools portray a stark difference in resources, quality education, and graduates' life chances compared to affordable public schools (Rahman, 2004; Rauf, Muhammad, & Saeed, 2021). Most elite school graduates acquire leadership credentials and eventually assume powerful positions in state institutions (Shamim, 2011). In such a socially stratified but interdependent society, the curriculum for students from elite English-medium schools needs thoughtful appraisals in terms of national identity creation.

In Pakistan, public schools follow a centralised national curriculum designed by the provincial and federal Textbook Boards. By contrast, private elite English-medium schools enjoy the autonomy to choose alternative curricula, including international curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge Assessment International Education (Shamim, 2011). However, research exploring national identity creation and citizenship education has focused entirely on public schools' national curricula (Arshad et al., 2020). No study has examined elite schools' curricula regarding national identity formation and associated citizenship constructs. This research gap indicates the marginality of the issue in policy discourse, as textbooks used in elite schools reproduce global elites detached from local contexts (Kenway, 2018; Maqbool & Cremin, 2022). This qualitative study aims to fill this gap by examining national identity representations in elite school history textbooks in Pakistan. It explores how the micro-components of national identity are translated into civic culture, societal culture, heritage, allegiance, and patriotism.

Literature Review

National identity construction through curriculum

Nations inculcate national identity in citizens to foster patriotism and national unity and differentiate themselves from other groups (Smith, 1991). It provides self-definition to nations by highlighting a unique shared culture, values, history, and destiny (Guibernau, 2004). Constructivist scholars posit national identity as fluid, multifaceted, and socially constructed through narratives advanced by institutions such as education, media, and family (Anderson, 2020; Gellner, 2008). Billig's (2015) terms this ideological control for identity construction through symbols and routines as 'banal nationalism.'

Among various apparatuses, the school curriculum plays a pivotal role in national identity construction concerning the selection, interpretation, and transmission of cultural narratives (Apple & Apple, 2004; Banks, 2008). Textbooks enjoy a privileged position in the curriculum as they "legitimise a specific selection and interpretation of a group's history and destiny" (Hjukse, 2022). Through the glorification of ancient civilisations, struggles, victories, triumphs, and heroes, textbooks provide shared memories and values that define the national community (Wertsch, 2002; Wertsch & Rozin, 2001). However, this selective appropriation of the past in textbooks often conceals controversy and divisiveness. Fundamentally, textbooks put

forth knowledge claims by elements representing dominant groups that exercise ideological control over identity formation processes ([Apple, 2014](#)).

Many multicultural societies worldwide face challenges in fostering inclusive national identities among youth ([Wodak, 2009](#)). Deep politicisation of collective identities and conflicting notions of nationhood explain such contestations in diverse societies ([Carretero, 2011](#)). Furthermore, issues such as migration flows, ethnic nationalism, and globalisation have complicated the advancement of national identity in the curriculum over time ([Kiwan, 2007](#)). As beliefs and values underlying national identities define citizenship orientations in each nation, this area requires thoughtful appraisals for curriculum development ([Banks, 2008](#)). However, as [Yemini \(2017\)](#) argues, policy discourse on national identity formation often ignores complex sociopolitical contexts, power dynamics, and multidimensionality.

In Pakistan, national identity has remained fractured owing to its peculiar circumstances ([Jaffrelot, 2015](#); [Waseem, 1994](#)). At Pakistan's inception, Muslim nationalism advanced to foster national integration between diverse ethnic groups in the newly established state after the partition of British India ([Talbot, 2009](#)). However, after independence, nation-building policies could not achieve consensus over the formulas of national identity and citizenship requirements among groups holding conflicting notions ([Waseem, 1994](#)). Both ethnicity and religion have been politicised by political forces over time, which has complicated national identity advancement through top-down policies ([Ahrari, 2013](#)). Furthermore, the centralised education system and textbooks became entangled in identity politics, which barred the critical appraisal of collective identity issues in the curriculum for decades ([Durrani, 2008](#); [Rosser, 2003](#)). Consequently, Pakistan continues to suffer from identity-based conflicts despite being envisioned in the name of Islam and Muslim nationalism seven decades ago.

Linking national identity and citizenship education

Citizenship education focuses on nurturing participatory, responsible and patriotic citizens owning allegiance to the political community and its underlying principles ([Kymlicka, 2003](#)). Thus, citizenship education and national identity share deep linkages concerning fostering belongingness and political loyalty towards the nation-state ([Banks, 2008](#)). However, over time, citizenship education has expanded in scope by incorporating global perspectives and shared human values along with duties towards national states ([Torres, 2017](#)). Global citizenship education, human rights education, and education for sustainable development sometimes confront nationalist projects that have advanced through the curriculum over broader commitments to the world community ([Torres & Bosio, 2020](#)). Therefore, the interplay between national and global perspectives remains one of the most contested discourses in citizenship education ([Myers, 2006](#)).

In culturally diverse states, national identity construction through citizenship education becomes further complicated owing to the contesting of cultural, religious, and ideological notions between groups ([Carretero, 2011](#)). Especially in post-colonial states confronted by ethnic nationalism, minority issues and migration concerns simultaneously foster national integration, and managing diversity remains a challenge ([Banks, 2008](#); [Kiwan, 2007](#)). Moreover, the concepts of elitism, social stratification, and power relations have been used to explain how

national identity construction and citizenship orientation occur in the curriculum (Apple & Apple, 2004; Kenway, 2018). Therefore, in planning the curriculum in relation to identity issues, it is crucial to carefully examine multifaceted contexts in diverse societies.

To generate a commitment to the state ideology and form the national identity, citizenship education and social studies have been used in Pakistan historically (Rosser, 2003). However, in academia, most of the debates centre on secular-nationalist and religious-nationalist projects, which compete with each other in the textbooks designed by different political regimes over time (Durrani, 2008; Nayyar & Salim, 2003). Recently, new complexities were revealed by education research, which examines nation-building and citizenship education in Pakistan in terms of global influences and ethnic issues (Arshad et al., 2020). However, education research on how the notion of national identity construction and elitedom are collectively used, especially by unequal social status and dual education system, remains the least discussed. As elite graduates eventually take over governance in the future, this area requires thoughtful deliberation in terms of an equitable future.

Elite schools: identity formation in privileged enclaves

Elite schools cater to a privileged minority by providing quality education and access to privileges, consequently reproducing elites across generations. Elite school graduates often gain leadership credentials for powerful local and global positions (Courtois, 2017). Researchers argue that such schools foster mindsets and attitudes that reinforce social hierarchies and global inequalities despite claiming meritocracy (Kenway, 2018). Furthermore, elite schools' ethos, reflecting isolation from local contexts and validation from global elite networks, complicates identity issues for graduates concerning emotional attachment to their homelands (Ball, 2012; Howard, 2013). Researchers note that elite school curricula predominantly focus on Western canons while ignoring indigenous histories and perspectives, especially in post-colonial contexts (Kenway, 2018; Sarangapani, 2003). Such neglect of local realities for identity advancement may widen faultiness upon graduates' future local governance (Dei & Kempf, 2013).

In Pakistan's context, Rahman (2004) argues that English medium elite schools represent the most privileged class, where quality education, resources, and cultural capital starkly set them apart from minimal opportunities for marginalised groups in affordable public schools. However, both systems remain deeply interdependent, as most elite graduates pursue higher education abroad before occupying local governance positions (Shamim, 2011). Researchers note that the isolation of powerful groups reinforces oppressive structures by desensitising them to people's issues (Pease, 2021; Reeves, 2018). The autonomy of elite schools in choosing international curricula has resulted in their identity formation processes having the least studies in terms of emotional connectivity and obligations to Pakistan. This peculiar terrain emphasises the need for such an analysis of elite school textbooks on the growth of national identity and citizenship education.

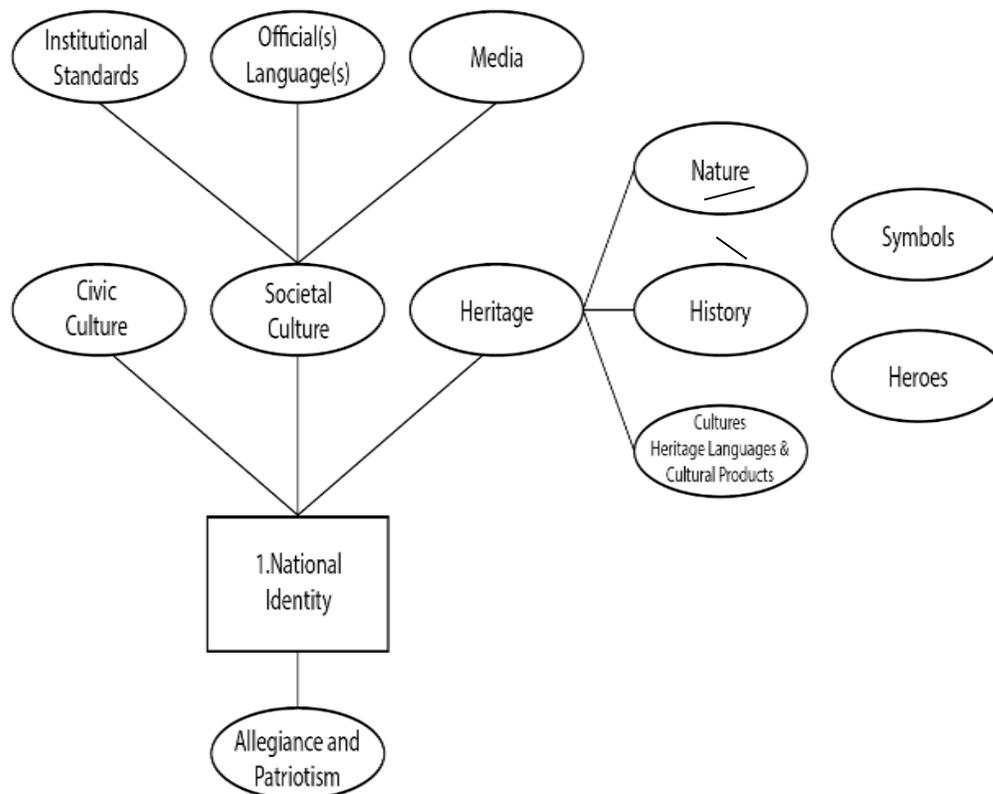
This study examines elite Pakistani school textbooks that may develop nationalism. National identity construction through education aims to foster belongingness and political commitment towards the nation-state. However, collective identity advancement has become complicated because of global influences and persistent conflicts in diverse societies. Linking

citizenship education with national identity projects intends to nurture patriotic and loyal citizens; however, global citizenship discourses sometimes confront them. Furthermore, the notion of elitedom also influences identity formation processes and future governance patterns.

In Pakistan’s context, highly privileged elite schools remain detached from broader issues while remaining deeply embedded in the social fabric. Their textbooks need a thoughtful appraisal of identity advancement for youth who will soon gain authority over policymaking. This qualitative study aims to fill this research gap by examining national identity representation and citizenship orientation in elite school textbooks.

To analyse national identity as a part of citizenship education, the present study uses the framework Gagnon and Pagé (1999), which divides the macro component of national identity into four micro-components: civic culture, societal culture, heritage, allegiance, and patriotism. Societal culture consists of institutional standards, official languages, and the media. Heritage includes nature, history, symbols, and cultural products.

Figure 1. National Identity and its micro-components adopted from Gagnon and Page (1999)



Methods and Materials

Data were analysed using the approach developed by [Elo and Kyngäs \(2008\)](#) for qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis was deemed most suitable for this study because, through a systematic process, it allowed making valid inferences “from the text to the underlying context” and is suitable for dealing with the comparatively large amount of textual data ([Mayring, 2014](#)), which was necessary for this study with many books to analyse. This qualitative approach is useful for identifying messages and underlying assumptions of the text regarding citizenship education ([Chu, 2017](#)). Purposive sampling was used to select textbooks, grades, and schools, as it ensures that the selected sample is best suited to answer the given research question ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#)).

Textbooks are considered the most suitable documents for this study because they are the most influential weapons of soft power that are used to break and/or construct prototypes of society. History textbooks are also included because history subjects mainly contribute to citizenship education ([Muetterties, 2022](#); [Santisteban & Bravo, 2018](#)). [Delgado-Algarra and Cuenca-López \(2020\)](#) believe that citizenship education and history education have some shared principles and purposes. Both aim to enhance learners’ sense of participation, commitment to society, and historical consciousness. Moreover, [Nokes \(2019\)](#) believes that citizenship education deprived of historical underpinnings is useless, and history serves as the most important branch of knowledge that intends to inculcate social, cultural, and political awareness in learners.

We chose history textbooks for grades 6-8 and the International Baccalaureate Middle Year Programme (MYP) because students are likely to build their understanding of national identity during these years ([Schulz et al., 2016](#); [Torney-Purta et al., 2001](#)). Table 1 shows the selected books and their respective keys.

Table 1

Books selected for Qualitative Content analysis

School	Classes	Key	Book Title	Writer	Year	Publisher	Designed Specifically for American /IB/Pakistani Elite Students
Lahore Grammar School	6	HIF	History in Focus Book 1	Teresa Crompton	2004	Peak Publication	Pakistani Elite
Lahore Grammar School	7	MWH	My World History	Frank Karpel, Kathleen Krull, Grant P Wiggins	2012	Pearson	American
Lahore Grammar School	8	THCP	The History and Culture of Pakistan	Nigel Kelly	2014	Cambridge	Pakistani Elite
Beacon House TNS	6	MWH	My World History	Frank Karpel, Kathleen Krull, Grant P Wiggins	2012	Pearson	American
Beacon House TNS	7	MWH	My World History	Frank Karpel, Kathleen Krull, Grant P Wiggins	2012	Pearson	American
Beacon House TNS	8	HBC	History by Concepts	Jo Thomas, Keely Rogers	2018	Hodder Education	Pakistani Elite
Beacon House TNS	8	IBS	IB Skills Individuals and Society	Sally Hirsch Thomas Triller	2014	IB Publishing	IB
New Lands	6	IAS1	Individual and Societies Book 1	Paul Grace	2016	Hodder Education	IB

New Lands	7	IAS2	Individual and Societies Book 2	Paul Grace	2016	Hodder Education	IB
New Lands	8	HCP	The History and Culture of Pakistan	Nigel Kelly	2014	Cambridge	Pakistani Elite
New Lands	8	PHCL	Pakistan-A Historical and Contemporary Look	FN Bajwa	2002	Cambridge	Pakistani Elite
Atchison High School	6	OHP1	Oxford History for Pakistan Book 1	Peter Moss	1997	Oxford	Pakistani Elite
Atchison High School	7&8	PHCG	Pakistan History, Culture, and Government	Nigel Smith	2007	Oxford	Pakistani Elite
LACAS	6	UH1	Understanding History Book 1	Ismat Riaz	2013	Oxford	Pakistani Elite
LACAS	7	UH2	Understanding History Book 2	Ismat Riaz	2013	Oxford	Pakistani Elite
LACAS	8	UH3	Understanding History Book 3	Ismat Riaz	2013	Oxford	Pakistani Elite

The selected textbooks were converted into readable PDF documents for use in NVivo software. First, through deductive content analyses, the data were labelled under existing categories. In the second stage, coded units that did not fit the prevailing categories of the consulting framework were used to create their concepts based on the principles of inductive content analyses (Kyngäs, 2020). The codes were assembled using higher-order labels. This was performed by splitting the codes into similar or dissimilar higher-order concepts (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). During this phase, the codes were mostly grouped under headings, such as the pre-partition and post-partition codes of Pakistan. The next phase facilitated the reduction in data until saturation was reached (Lindgren et al., 2020). The findings are presented in narrative form with the support of recording units from textbooks (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

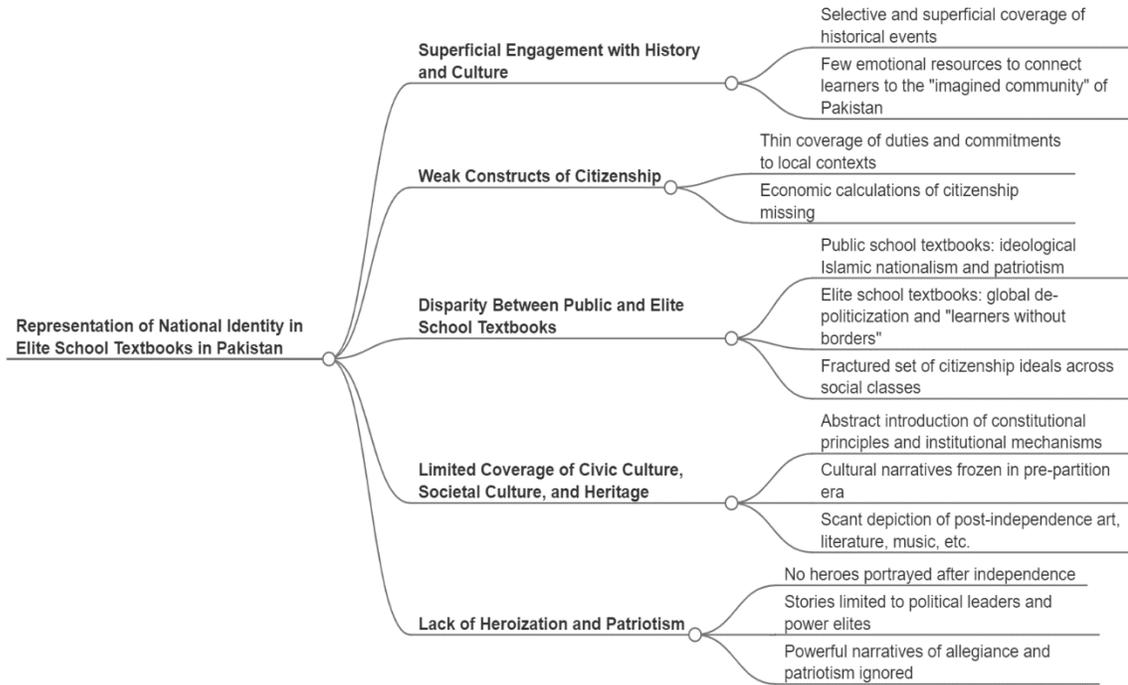
Results

Among the selected books, eight books were published for Pakistani students, keeping in view the Pakistani context and history. Four books were published for IB students and one book, My World History, was published for American students. Books published for IB students and American students do not have any explicit content regarding the national Identity of Pakistani students.

The selected framework divided the concept of national identity into four sections: civic culture, societal culture, heritage, allegiance, and patriotism. First, civic culture provides details of the founding principles and values in the constitution or any other charters and bills governing society (Gagnon & Pagé, 1999). This section focuses on the details of the components that are

part of the constitution, law, and order that help regulate the functioning of a country and may contribute to developing national identity in students. Under the account of civic culture, Pakistani students studying IB books and My World History were informed of the details of the US Constitution and its branches (MWH, p. 24) and the Bill of Rights in the US (MWH, p. 26), Rome's Constitution (MWH, p. 370), the Constitution of Seventeen Articles (MWH, p. 551), the History of Constitutions of the Five Nations in North America (MWH, p. 610), and the English Bill of Rights (MWH, p. 849), The Charter Oath in Japan (HBC, p. 20), Key Points of Meiji Japan Constitution (HBC, p. 21), and the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution (HBC, p. 142). Nothing about Pakistani civic culture is mentioned in these books.

Figure 1: A visual representation of themes generated from qualitative content analysis



In the books specifically designed for Pakistani students, the role of the constitution in both the pre-partition and post-partition eras was informed in detail. The founding principle that laid the foundation of Pakistan was also mentioned in the theory of the ‘two nations.’ A brief explanation of this founding principle was given: “The two distinct groups, Muslim and Hindu, were so different and lived separate lives from one another that they were really like two separate nations even though they lived in the same land” (PHCG, p. 42).

The books informed students that the protection of fundamental rights, religious rights, and social rights of minorities and poor people were part of the constitution (e.g., THCP, p. 121). The explanation of these civic values remained at the abstract level; what fundamental and religious rights are and how justice can be ensured, or the role of legal bodies at both provincial and national levels in enacting these rights, was not explained. The books also failed to provide details of any other charter, Islamic values, human rights bills, laws, or principles that govern Pakistani society. However, concrete information was given about how the constitution was altered and the national assembly was dissolved; elections were rigged several times to satisfy the political leadership of Pakistani elites like Muhammad Ali Bogra, Gulam Muhammad (THCP, p.124), General Ayub Khan (THCP, p. 126), Yahya Khan (THCP, p. 133), Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (THCP, p.143), General Zia-ul-Haq (THCP, p.148).

Many believe that one of the components of a nation’s national identity is the most important aspect of societal culture. Societal culture is a common public behaviour that distinguishes the members of one society from another (Gagnon & Pagé, 1999). It is composed

of their common public behaviour and ways of thinking, living, and thinking. Society is often shaped and formed because of the influences, beliefs, traditions, and habits of the majority (Gagnon & Pagé, 1999).

One of the books specifically designed for Pakistani students highlighted that the “Pakistani landscape has accommodated one of the earliest settlements of Indus civilisation in Sindh and the Potwar Plateau, in northern Punjab” (PHCL, p. 2). The book also widely acknowledged the contribution of diverse groups of “people from India, Iran, China, Afghanistan, and the Arabian Peninsula (PHCL, p. 1)” in shaping the rich culture of present-day Pakistan. Another book also recounted the arrival of Muslims in the subcontinent and their role in shaping the culture of Pakistan (UH6, p. 59).

Societal culture also includes education. The situation in the education sector is discussed in detail in the pre-partition era. Little has been discussed about this sector in the post-partition period. The books started in the Mughal era when education was a priority for rulers. It provides the historical imprints of Dars-i-Nizami, the name still used as a syllabus in present-day Pakistan (UH7, p. 68). The books explained in detail that “The Mughal emperors encouraged education by setting up libraries and universities, schools and seminaries, grants to scholars and teachers.” (UH7, p. 69). The books also stated that before British rule, “every village in India had a school” (UH8, p. 10), but then Lord Macaulay’s “famous ‘Minute on Education’ was put into action and literacy was reduced to just 10 per cent in areas making up Pakistan and 30 per cent in India.” (UH8, p. 10)

Although the low literacy rate and poor state of education have been some of the biggest issues in Pakistan, nothing notable has been mentioned in the books from the seventy years of history of the post-partition era. Only two books published for O-level students provided a short account of the unattended education sector. Both books informed about this sector under the head of reforms taken during the Bhutto (THCP, p. 146) or Ayub (THCP, p. 131) era only.

The concerned framework also includes the economy under this micro-component of societal culture. Students were informed that due to the administrative, legal, and order strategies of the Mughals, “India came to be known for its fabulous riches and wealth, which attracted people from far-off lands” (UH2, p. 66); during British rule “Economically, India came to be tied more securely to British industrial needs and markets” and “making the colonial powers rich at the expense of the colonies” (UH2, p. 82).

The 1947 partition did not benefit Pakistan from India economically. Pakistan was not given its fair share of the assets of the former united India (THCP, p. 98), and it was mainly comprised of states that were underdeveloped and had little industry (THCP, p. 112). The explanation of the country’s economic situation after independence remains highly dependent on foreign aid. The United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom provide loans to develop their industries (THCP, p. 131). Finally, the industry is improving rapidly, and Pakistan is still increasingly dependent on foreign aid (THCP, p. 131). China granted Pakistan an interest-free loan of \$800 million (THCP, p. 182), and Canada gave \$40 million to develop a railway in Pakistan (THCP, p. 184).

Under the head of the official language, books describe the emergence of the Urdu language in the following words: “Urdu emerged and grew as a language during the Delhi Sultanate. It started as a mixture of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and Sanskrit in the army camps of the sultans” (UH6, p. 86). The textbooks also narrated the issue of Urdu as an official language in the post-partition era. “The Constitution of Pakistan envisages Urdu replacing English, the use of English continues in official and commercial correspondence” (PHCG, p. 47), and “it was also accepted that for the following twenty years, English would remain the actual official language” (PHCG, p. 136). The students were also briefly informed about the use of the other four languages, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, and Pushto in Pakistan (PHCG, pp. 47-48). Many other indigenous and local languages are ignored in textbooks.

The framework indicates that one crucial element of societal culture is the media (Gagnon & Pagé, 1999). To some extent, national newspapers mirror ideological and political trends in that society. It includes media, especially print media, that focuses on national news, mostly daily. None of the books exclusively include content regarding national dailies or any other form of media devoted to national coverage. However, *The History and Culture of Pakistan* by Nigel Kelly includes three images of Dawn Newspaper reporting three events. The first one is the creation of Pakistan (THCP, p. 92), the second is When Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was hanged (THCP, p. 150), and the third image of dawn newspaper showed the headline “Zia dies in plane crash” (THCP, p. 157). The other book for O Level students, *Pakistan History, Culture and Government*, by Nigel Smith, under the heading “source,” showed extracts from different books, newspapers, radio broadcasts, and reports from all different parts of the world. An extract from a broadcast by Ayub Khan on Radio Pakistan on 8 October 1958 (p. 139) and President Yahya Khan in a radio speech to the people of West Pakistan (p. 155) was mentioned. The most cited source was the New York Times. In O-level books, under the heading of sources, most of the coverage of foreign media is displayed.

According to the selected framework, another micro-component of national identity is heritage, which is further divided into nature, history, cultural products, and heroes (Gagnon & Pagé, 1999). The information under the head of nature includes national parks, buildings, and natural resources. Not much was mentioned about the national parks. However, the book *Pakistan History, Culture, and Government* by Nigel Smith showed images of the following buildings as “Some Landmarks of Pakistan” (PHCG, p. 146). Not enough has been mentioned regarding Pakistan’s natural resources.

The second component is history, which includes symbols and founding myths. A national symbol is any entity that considers and reveals itself to the wider world as a national community. The following symbols are used in books published for Pakistani students: A ‘Minar’ in Lahore was later built on the spot where the Muslim League meeting of 1940 took place to commemorate the resolution. Given “the enthusiasm with which the Resolution was received by the Muslim population at large, there was little doubt that the Muslim League was now the voice of the Muslim community” (PHCL, p. 125).

Cultural products include works of art and architecture, cultural media, and languages that form part of society’s heritage. The content of the books acknowledged the historical

diversity, rich culture, and traditions of Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Persians, and Muslims from Arabs in different fields (PHCL, p. 2). The books also acknowledged the rich contribution of personal civilisation in shaping present-day culture. The books continued that “a few terms of Persian poetry, Qasideh, Maslow, Ghazal, and Ruba’i, are also used in today’s Urdu language. The contributions of Ferdowsi, Hafez, Saadi, Omar Khayyam, and Maulana Rumi” (UH7, p. 26) have also been cited.

The books also informed about the great Urdu poets like Asadullah Khan Ghalib, Mir Taqi Mir, and Sauda (UH7, p. 67). It was stated that “the Persian style of architecture and design was also adopted by the Mughals” (UH7, p. 67). And these “Mughal influences are still alive in Pakistan, where miniature painting thrives as an art form among local artists” (UH7, p. 67).

The books acknowledged the contributions of Khwaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali to calligraphy. Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb’s aesthetic abilities in art and paintings Humayun’s mausoleum, fortresses at Lahore, Jahangir’s tomb at Shahdara in Lahore, Shalamar and Nishat gardens in Kashmir, a large garden named Shalamar in Lahore all were presented as “the splendour and magnificence of the Mughal Empire” (UH7, p. 71).

The contribution of this region to Sufism is also discussed. The books state that Sufis “spread the message of Islam through peace” and “their simple and appealing lifestyles made thousands of converts to Islam.” The books mentioned the contribution of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Baba Farid Ganj-E-Shakar, Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya, (UH6, p. 88) Nizamuddin Aulia, (UH6, p. 88), Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Syed Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi, (UH7, p. 76), and Shah Waliullah, (UH7, p. 75) Mujaddid Alf-I-Sani, (UH7, p. 74)

Pakistani students were very well informed of the rich contributions of their ancestors in various fields. Students can develop a sense of appreciation, achievement, and ownership of the rich heritage of their ancestors in the fields of art, architecture, literature, poetry, music, education, and law. However, no single achievement in any of the fields was mentioned after the birth of Pakistan. All books remained mute regarding the contributions of writers, philosophers, poets, religious scholars, and artists who have worked in Pakistan.

Another sub-component of national identity refers to attachment to and loyalty to the community. This important segment of national identity has not yet been addressed in textbooks. Like many other previous topics, this topic has also been discussed mostly in the context of pre-partition, and not much was mentioned regarding allegiance and patriotism in present-day Pakistan. For example, the concept of loyalty was introduced during the Mughal era of Babur (PHCL, p. 36), Jehangir (PHCL, p. 45), and Aurangzeb (PHCL, p. 52) managed to win a war of succession through loyal troops. The efforts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in the form of “the Loyal Mohammedans of India” were also mentioned, where he “defended the Muslims from the British accusation that they were disloyal” (THCP, p. 37).

Discussion

Broadly speaking, textbooks, particularly history textbooks, are used to develop the concept of national identity in students. The discourse of the textbooks is used to draw the

boundary lines for “us” versus “them” or “self” versus “other.” These boundary lines are imagined with the help of the text that develops a sense of belongingness through the use of languages like “we,” “homeland,” and “our” (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Wodak, 2009). Moreover, the content of national identity must establish an association with stories, everyday culture, historical events, rituals, national symbols, triumphs, and damaging defeats (Wodak, 2009).

The present research identifies that history textbooks published for Pakistani elite students strictly lack this discursive strategy. They failed to develop a sense of belongingness in the students towards the community that could encourage them to be a member of an “imagined community” and differentiate themselves from “others.” Historical events, national symbols, heritage, and civic culture were presented as factual or baseline information, keeping students insensitive and dispassionate towards the state (especially after the independence of Pakistan). However, the findings of previous studies that were mostly inclined towards the Pakistan studies books published for the public sector state that the Islamist or nation-statist concept of national identity remained dominant, hence binding Identity with Islam (Durrani et al., 2020; Muhammad & Brett, 2015; Qazi, 2021; Shaikh, 2022; Yaqian, 2011). This stark contrast demonstrates the cognitive dissonance in the social capital of the country, with certain implications. The elites taking leadership roles may appear less inclined towards Islamic values, and the masses may take the role of pawns to safeguard the power elites in the name of Islam.

First, the public sector facilitates its students with theocratic discourse to cultivate Islamist and nation-statist concepts of national identity. Second, there is a group of elite private students who are informed about the history and culture of Pakistan without espousing their sensitivity and warmth towards the state. Cognitive dissonance regarding national identity is not limited to these two factors. The findings of this study also pointed out another school of thought that permeated the students. Pakistani elite students enrolled in international baccalaureate programs are kept ignorant through history textbooks about their national identity. Rather than focusing on local identities and issues, the content of these books reflects a supranational curriculum and intends to develop “learners without borders” (Davy, 2011, p. 1). International Baccalaureate (IB) programs try to develop an international mindset (Whitmarsh, 2022). Exploratory research states that international mindedness is pervasive but not a subject in the curriculum. International mindedness is a perspective that embodies IB philosophy. International mindedness is a mindset that the IB encourages to be embodied in each school’s teaching approaches and philosophy rather than having a dedicated curriculum (Castro et al., 2013).

The concept of international mindedness is crucial in fostering an understanding of different cultures, languages, and perspectives, which are essential in preparing students for a globalised world. International mindedness is introduced in the concepts of multilingualism, intercultural considerations, and global engagement by providing fluid and generic definitions of the related terms that lead to global citizenship education (Hayden et al., 2020), which, according to Jurasaitė-O’Keefe (2022), allow students to traverse from the local to the global space.

The curriculum that supports this detachment from the local to global context has certain inferences. First, Western values, ethics, and morality are considered the criteria for measuring

individual and national growth. Second, they deliberately or involuntarily emphasise their forms of citizenship, seizing local values and traditions in favour of a Western-oriented viewpoint (Torres & Bosio, 2020). This stark deviation of national identity among social capital indicates incompetency and the lack of farsightedness of higher authorities in policymaking and implementation. This dichotomy in the school of thought undermines national cohesion and strongly reflects injustice, class division, and economic inequalities that permeate Pakistani society.

The findings under the head of the national identity also reflect that students were provided with limited information regarding their civic culture, societal culture, and heritage, again without espousing their emotions towards the state. Civic culture denotes legal and founding principles, along with the political ethics peculiar to each nation. These normative values are also part of the constitution. However, only three out of 13 selected books provided information about the constitution of Pakistan, and that, too, was inadequate. Rauf, Muhammad and Saleem (2021) also reported this inadequacy, stating that elite students' understanding of the constitution of Pakistan was mostly limited to freedom of expression or freedom of opinion.

Civic policies at the provincial and local levels were ignored. The text remained completely mute regarding the mechanisms, roles, duties, and responsibilities of the legal authorities. The Islamic ideology that gave birth to Pakistan and served as a founding principle was presented as a restricted and shallow phenomenon and was often used as a political slogan. The authority and rule of the constitution remained passive and at the whim of political and army leaders. There was no orientation of democratic principles, as reflected by the constitution of Pakistan. The findings remained aligned with previous studies (Ali, 2020; Ayub et al., 2020; Muzaffar & Javaid, 2018), which stated that the textbooks represented uncritical preservation of the status quo in government, politics, and society, infusing linear, passive, and static roles of civic institutions. Moreover, civic education in Pakistan draws upon a discourse that is deeply influenced by the colonial period, which tends to make its citizens passive, obedient and loyal without questioning the higher authorities (Kadiwal & Jain, 2020, p. 7). This observation is supported by Kymlicka (2003), who indicates that such student learning does not in any way help build effective or responsible civic and/or political attitudes.

Societal culture, which reflects institutional standards, official languages, and media, remained the victim of marginalisation in the text. The explanation of institutional standards was limited to the pre-partition era. After 1947, extremely selective and hegemonic information regarding institutional standards and languages was provided, whereas the role and function of the local media were ignored. The importance, mechanism, and struggle of institutions that support democracy and help the government fulfil its duties are hardly seen in the text. Education, health, media, economics, security, and defence institutes remained in the background, giving the impression that nothing was wrong in these sectors. Students were left with an abstract view of the obligations and extensive roles these departments played in their lives. This can be interpreted as a strategy to limit students' "spirit of activism" (Swalwell & Payne, 2019, p. 129). At the same time, researchers (e.g., Bickmore et al., 2017; Paulson, 2015) were of the view that this kind of omission is done to avoid tensions or any call for a moral

reaction that may challenge dominant structures. Moreover, citizens are expected to remain faithful to the government and the work of their institutions (Weinberg & Flinders, 2018).

From early civilisation to 1947, a thick and rich explanation of heritage was provided. The positive point is that the books widely acknowledged the role and contribution of different civilisations that have left an impact on Indo-Pak culture in different eras and fields. Books published immediately after independence also presented a better picture of ancient history (Dean, 2005; Yaqian, 2011). These findings are in contrast with the findings of Durrani et al. (2021) and Muhammad (2015), who claimed that the revised text of public books did not emphasise the ancient history of Pakistan and deprived students of the opportunity to associate with Indus Civilisation and focused on a strong theocratic discourse to help students identify themselves with Islamic Ideology only. Rauf, Muhammad and Saeed (2021) state that the reason for this controversy is that national identity remained the victim of “political ideologies of the governing bodies” (p. 263).

The findings of the current study imply that elite students’ national identity was limited by their cultural representation, as Hall labelled nations as ‘systems of cultural representations’ and stressed the significance of cultural narratives in the construction of nations and national identities (Hall, 2020). Cultural diversity and the contributions of people from different religions remained frozen in the pre-partition era. Interestingly, or even strangely, after independence, nothing was mentioned regarding the status of art, literature, music, poetry, drama, architecture, and so on. This detachment undermines the rich contributions of artists, poets, writers, painters, actors, and philosophers in present-day Pakistan. The other side of the coin also discourages students from paying attention to such fields and exploring or appreciating the work of local artists (Leslie, 2021). Moreover, Sabzalian (2019) views the exclusion of indigenous culture as a contribution to developing a sense of superiority of Western culture imposed by colonisers on the colonised.

Heroisation in history involves a process in which certain individuals or events in history are elevated as hero archetypes fulfil the values and aspirations of a culture (Allison et al., 2016; Parry, 2021). In history books for elite students, not a single hero was portrayed after independence. After 1947, the books strictly confined themselves to stories of political leaders and other power elites, ignoring the struggles of the masses. Within seven decades of independence, books published for O-level students could not find a single hero that could be rewarded for patriotism or loyalty to the state. The importance of heroisation within schools in terms of national identity is closely related and has a very strong and consistent association. The significance of heroes within schools is crucial because they emotionally fill students and inspire them to aim further and one step higher. Youngsters who handle heroic actions have a strong sense of belonging to their group or society, which paves the way for patriotism and enhances critical thinking. Apparently, heroisation and patriotism are very important in terms of building or manufacturing national Identity (Zajda et al., 2017). By hushing heroes, a barrier was imposed on the national identity. By ignoring the powerful narratives of allegiance and patriotism, the books bravely delivered an implicit message that elite students may continue to serve without such qualities and emotions for the state. Hence, depriving students of meaningful cultural

representation, according to Davidson and Liu (2020), may hinder cultural associations, open-mindedness, and social responsibility.

The above findings are also in contrast with the findings of books published in the public sector in which heroisation remained a prominent part of the cultivation of patriotism (Khokhar & Muhammad, 2020; Muhammad & Brett, 2015; Yaqian, 2011). This indicates that the educational sector itself undermines national cohesion and disrupts the creation of nationhood in terms of common culture or common memory for an “imagined community.”

Conclusion

This qualitative study aimed to explore how national identity is represented in the textbooks of elite schools in Pakistan. The results revealed that history and culture were selectively—and superficially—engaged in these texts, and there were few emotional resources to connect learners to the “imagined community”: Pakistan. Furthermore, the constructs of citizenship were very thin, and economic calculations of duties and commitments to the local program were missing.

The first major result is the profound disparity between the textbooks of public and elite schools in the production of national identity. Public school textbooks have been criticised for their ideological Islamic nationalism and a program of patriotism training, and one aim of this research was to see if there is an elite school answer, a global de-politicisation and the aim of “learners without borders.” The question is whether the content differs across educational systems that serve different social classes within the same community. The findings demonstrate that a fractured set of citizenship ideals does not cohere across educational systems to hold the nation together.

A striking finding illustrates the superficial handling of Pakistan’s history and normative values in textbooks taught at elite schools, clearly diminishing learners’ emotional investments. Elaborating that cultural narratives remain a requisite for identity construction, the scant historical depictions in textbooks deprive learners of meaningful cultural links with their home country. Additionally, the abstract introduction of constitutional principles and institutional mechanisms in Pakistan results in the most privileged youth lacking comprehension of the country’s civic culture. Corrupt politicians typically derive illegal profits from these educated individuals. Unfortunately, the personal growth of these future leaders takes place in the most estranged environments, which is a cause for concern among native observers. The development of these potential leaders in such disconnected settings indicates the risk of poorly acclimated actors. These diploma holders serve as a resource for the illegal gains of those who aspire to positions of power, which is a worrying trend, as the personal development of these individuals is occurring in the most unfavourable social contexts.

The text illustrates that the textbooks place heavy stress on ancient civilisations and cultural heritage rather than focusing on the problems facing the country and opportunities in education and technical fields. The textbooks merely show the culture and history of the country in a plain and simple way without making people familiar with the fact that a country is made great by its contemporary artists and heroes. This shows that publishers merely aim to produce

men and women who slap in the morning, spit on the floor in public places, and then run away to America or to their ancestors' country. Therefore, they take a nostalgic and apolitical view of the pre-partition era. The textbooks steer clear of such subjects; their lack of description goes to show that the historical consciousness of the people still moves in the old ruts, the ruts dug by British historians, the last of whom died long years ago. The available migrant possibilities further prepare the apathetic elites within the partitioned subcontinent, reinforcing the brain drain over brain gain for the homeland.

The results of the study suggest that textbooks seem to promote passive and obedient citizenship, not participatory or democratic citizenship. Moreover, the study found that textbooks promote a form of citizenship that serves the interests of the elite by maintaining the current social and political equilibrium, achieved through the careful control of the information and ideas to which students are exposed. The content of textbooks mostly delineates the political history of the country by offering only the history of the rulers. Thus, young people are citizens as law-abiding subjects but not historical drivers of the present system if there is any malfunction. Consequently, the priority is that coverage of foreign media exceeds local coverage, global recognition is granted precedence over domestic matters, or media strives to be recognised by international sources rather than being essential for the population.

Research has explained the relationship between national Identity and Pakistan's peculiar elitism. Private schools leave individuals on the ground without cultural expression as a collective action. However, Public education uses Islam as a political ideology or any non-Western perspective as an aspired ideological homeland against the rest of the world. Consequently, young generations from both systems are compelled to oscillate between local insularity and superficial Westernization.

Contrary to the ideals of public policy, the ground realities in Pakistan suggest that citizenship is a custom provided with very different meanings depending on its usage in official documents and the lived experiences of the people. The official discourse calls for homogeneous and participatory citizenship, while the identity advancement across the divisions that generations witness sharply deepens the divide. These are not the result of bad intentions on the part of individuals but a society spiralling into dysfunction. What is therefore demanded is a committed reconciliation of national and global perspectives buttressed by grounded progressive humanism through our education systems as well as graduates' practices if there is to be any significant manifestation of enlightened citizenship. This, then, is unfinished business for Pakistan, a deeply introspective call to its privileged constituents in the leadership, the educators, and the graduates; the shift in their mindsets is what forms the bedrock towards a vibrant, functional Pakistan that cherishes its remarkable diversity and harnesses the idealism of its youth.

Future empirical and conceptual investigations into the concept of citizenship and identity development need to be undertaken to transcend national boundaries in elite schooling contexts. The potential for meaningful exploration lies in ethnographic observations combined with in-depth interviews with students, teachers, and administrators, alongside a thorough examination of the curriculum. Conceptually, powerful frameworks such as post-colonial

critique and decolonising methodologies can reveal complex dynamics in specific contexts. As policy advice, our response should emphasise empowering critical educators and graduates through reflective pedagogies, service learning, and community dialogues aimed at transformative praxis. In this way, such privileged institutions could serve as vital centres of change, acting as catalysts for equitable and enlightened societies that honour both their roots and aspirations.

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