

Imagining India: The Pedagogical Construction of the Idea of India in NCERT English Textbooks

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Abstract

India is a country of historical, linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity. Educational policies such as the National Education Policy (2020) and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2023) envision school curricula that reflect this plurality. Textbooks are key pedagogical resources that translate these policy commitments into curriculum materials. Yet, how these commitments are reflected in English textbooks remains underexplored. This paper examines how school-level English textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), India's national textbook body, and prescribed for Classes V-X construct the idea of India and position its different regions within that construction, with particular attention to Northeast India. The study employs qualitative textual analysis of lessons, poems, prose passages, illustrations, and language learning activities in these textbooks. It analyses how people, places, cultural practices, and historical figures are presented, with respect to their visibility, position within the lessons, and the range of contexts in which they appear. Northeast India is examined as a critical case to understand how a region with a historically distinctive position within the country is incorporated into this pedagogical construction. The analysis indicates that the idea of India is constructed through selected people, places, cultures, and histories drawn from across the country. However, different regions occupy different pedagogical positions, resulting in differences in their visibility, narrative centrality, and thematic breadth. The paper contributes to discussions on English language education, curriculum, and textbook studies.

Keywords: Curriculum; Education Policy; English Language Education; Northeast India; Regional Positioning