

Kinnari Pandya

Finland has one of the best education systems in the world. In this interview, Hannele Cantell, Associate Professor, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences and Education Psychology, University of Helsinki, and a schoolbook writer, talks about textbook development, and the role of textbooks in Finnish schools.

What role do textbooks play in the Finnish education system?

Historically, textbook use has undergone a change. Earlier, education in Finland was highly textbook- and teacher-oriented, but this later came under criticism. Some schools and teachers trusted phenomenon-based teaching, in which a concept or phenomenon is explored from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Sometimes, phenomenon-based teaching overtakes learning of school subjects and tries to find answers to problem-based questions, such as “Why is there heavy rain during summer?” In this approach, the Internet became the main source of knowledge, causing problems, such as the absence of understanding of concepts of subjects/disciplines and structure in learning. In recent years, there has been a turn back to subject, content, and concepts. In Finland, schools get money for their pedagogical needs from the government, which is also meant for

Develop thinking skills...

... is what textbooks ought to do, says Hannele Cantell, Associate Professor, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences and Education Psychology, University of Helsinki, Finland



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textbooks that schools can choose and buy. The problem is that to save money, some schools don’t buy textbooks. Where there are no textbooks, only the Internet, we have noticed that children don’t learn enough. My suggestion, therefore, would be to make good, high-quality textbooks, and not to rely only on technology, especially the Internet!

What, according to you, should textbooks contain?

A skeleton of the important concepts and main knowledge to be learnt. Teachers should create “the muscles around the bones”; i.e. all activities, pedagogical exercises and tasks. While each teacher’s style is different, textbooks ensure that every student has a similar opportunity to learn the basic concepts. Textbooks ought to connect to questions and creativity. Developing thinking skills is the key focus in Finnish textbooks, which focus on the interaction between knowledge and thinking. Readers’ age is a critical component while designing them. Textbooks don’t work in isolation; we offer teachers pedagogical background materials and teaching materials to go with the

textbooks.

These are essential aspects of quality schoolbooks/textbooks that any country striving for quality education would ensure. What matters is the extent to which these elements and principles are practised while developing textbooks, and preparing teachers to use the material in the same spirit and intent with which it is developed.

What are some key principles followed in designing and developing textbooks in Finland?

A group comprising teacher educators, subject and pedagogical (university) specialists and teachers from

schools plans, develops and writes textbooks, exercise books and teachers’ materials. All texts and visual materials are peer-reviewed. The writers also design the pictures, maps, and so on. Everything is age-oriented. The newest research should be seen in textbooks. For example, new knowledge and concepts about climate change and loss of biodiversity come from university researchers, and pedagogical expertise comes from teacher educators. They understand, for example, how to deal with environmental anxiety. Describing only the problems can be socially and emotionally harmful for children; it is important to also write about the

possibilities of solving some problems and encouraging students to act. The school teachers’ role is to keep us focussed on classroom realities and the age group the book is meant for. Everyone writes and comments; it’s an ‘equal’ process. All classrooms have a diverse range of learners. Inclusion is a critical aspect of ensuring learning for all. How can a textbook take care of this? In Finland, we collaborate with language planners (those who check if the language is correctly written). Often, we also ask Special Needs education experts to



comment on the drafts so that the texts are easy to read and understand. Visuals are important because many children/students have difficulty in reading very long texts; younger children can learn from pictures. The content of pictures is also planned carefully. Choosing pictures for a textbook has to be done responsibly. For example, if you have space for only one picture of Europe, Finland or India, what kind of picture would you choose? It is good to split the text into smaller chapters and to use meaningful subtitles. For example, compare these: a. Muscles b. Muscles make us move. The latter includes the chapter’s main point. It gives the slower learners an idea about the chapter. But the first does not convey anything. In addition, it is good to have an abstract in a chapter as well as main/key points. Also, we have thinking questions and small ideas for student activities in every chapter. So, the textbook, in a way, is also an exercise book for students. Views expressed are personal

The writer is Faculty at Azim Premji University

SCHOLARSHIPS

Charpak Bachelor's Scholarship
An opportunity offered by the French Government to Indian students who wish to study in France. **Eligibility:** Open to Indian nationals or OCI card holders who are 23 years or younger at the time of application and have completed secondary school in India and have applied for a Bachelor's degree starting on September 1, 2024. Applicants should not have studied in France earlier. **Rewards:** € 860 a month plus benefits **Application:** Online **Deadline:** April 1 www.b4s.in/edge/CBSS3

British Council Scholarship for Women in STEM
An opportunity offered by the British Council in partnership with universities in the U.K. **Eligibility:** Open to females who hold a Bachelor's degree in STEM subjects and have secured admission to a pre-selected PG programme at a

participating U.K. university and demonstrate a need for financial support/ socio-economic need. Applicants must meet the English language proficiency requirements. **Rewards:** Full tuition fees, living stipend, and benefits **Application:** Online **Deadline:** April 30 www.b4s.in/edge/BCSM1

The University of Birmingham India Outstanding Achievement Scholarships
An opportunity offered by the University of Birmingham. **Eligibility:** Open to Indian citizens with a full-time offer for a UG programme at the University of Birmingham; meet the specified academic conditions of their offer; are capable of paying tuition fees not covered under the scholarship; and have sufficient funds to cover the full cost of living at Birmingham's U.K. campus. **Rewards:** A one-time award of £4,000 **Application:** Online **Deadline:** April 30 www.b4s.in/edge/UBIA1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Women in STEM

Progress has opened applications for the 2024 Progress Software Akanksha Scholarship for Women in STEM in India.

Eligibility: Women residing in India and in the first year of a UG programme in Computer Science Engineering (CSE), Computer Science Information Technology (CSIT) or related course. **Last date:** April 12. <https://bitly.ws/3fd5m>



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I finished B.Com. in 2017 and have been preparing for the UPSC and other government exams. I don't have any work experience. I would like to do an MBA/PGDM from a reputed institute. Which course or college should I consider? I am also interested in photography. Are there any media-related MBA courses? Vivek

Dear Vivek, Start preparing for entrance exams like CAT, XAT, and MAT for institutes like the IIMs, XLRI, FMS (Delhi University), SP Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR), Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM), and others. Some reputed programmes accept candidates with no or limited work experience. Look for those that accept fresh graduates. Consider specialisations in media, communications, or advertising that align with your interest in photography. Mudra Institute of Communications (MICA) and Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC) offer specialised courses in media-related management. Check the eligibility criteria, course structure, and placement records. Highlight your interest in photography in your application and SoPs. Articulate your career goals, explain the gap in your resume, and highlight how an MBA aligns with your aspirations. Connect with alumni and professionals in the field, attend webinars and open houses to gain insights into their programmes.

I have joined a three-year

Find your way

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This career counselling column may help

LLB programme in Delhi. What other courses can I pursue alongside for a better CV? V. Chaudhary

Dear V. Chaudhary, Start by enhancing your verbal and written communication skills. Join public speaking clubs, workshops or courses that focus on effective communication. Improve your legal research skills and writing abilities. Take online courses or workshops focused on legal research methods, drafting legal documents, and writing opinions. Develop your ability to analyse complex situations, think critically, and solve problems. Engage in debates, participate in moot court competitions, and practice case studies to sharpen these skills. Courses or workshops in negotiation skills and mediation techniques can help with dispute resolution and client counselling. Learn a foreign language, if you aim to specialise in international law or work in a diverse legal environment. Consider certifications in specialised areas such as IPR, corporate law, human rights law ... Familiarise yourself with software and technology used in the legal profession through courses on tech tools, e-discovery, or legal research databases. Explore courses in public policy, management, or business law to broaden your understanding of interdisciplinary aspects. Try internships, clerkships, or volunteering at law

firms, legal clinics, or NGOs for practical experience. Attend seminars, conferences, or workshops, join professional associations, and build a strong network within the community.

I am in Class 9 and have decided to do PCB in Class 11. What are my options after school? Kurup

Dear Kurup, Your options include MBBS (Medicine or Surgery), or BDS. In alternative medicine, you can try courses such as BAMS, BHMS, or BUMS. Today, B.Pharm., BPT. are also lucrative fields. A B.Sc. Nursing or General Nursing and Midwifery course also offers options in healthcare. If you want to become a veterinarian, you can try a B.V.Sc. or Bachelor's in Animal Husbandry. Other options include B.Sc. in Biology, Biotechnology, Microbiology, Biochemistry, Botany, Zoology, Genetics, or specialisations in Environmental Science, Agricultural Sciences, Marine Biology, or Wildlife Biology. You can opt for Master's programmes in Biological Sciences, Biotechnology, Bioinformatics, and consider doing an M.Phil. or Ph.D. for a career in research and academia Across the Allied Health Sciences, courses include Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT), Radiography, Optometry, Speech Therapy, or

Occupational Therapy. You can combine an interest in biology to explore fields like Bioinformatics, Biomedical Engineering, Forensic Science, or Nutrition and Dietetics.

I am in Class 11 Humanities stream. I like both Economics and Political Science. Can I do both subjects for graduation? What are my job opportunities? Anavadya

Dear Anavadya, Many universities offer a double major in Economics and Political Science. With pure Economics, you can be an Economist, a Financial Analyst, a Market Researcher/Analyst, a Policy Analyst or a Banker with Finance roles. With pure Political Science, you can be a Political Analyst, an International Relations Specialist, a Political Researcher, a Journalist or a media person. A double major will give you a versatile skill set that includes critical thinking, research abilities, data analysis, and an understanding of socio-economic and political systems. This opens a wide range of careers in both public and private sectors, research organisations, think tanks, international organisations, academia, media, and more. Before choosing your courses, explore the specific programmes and their curriculum. Engage in internships, extracurricular activities, and networking opportunities to gain practical experience and explore your interests further.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

Despite the importance given to multilingual education, it is not easy to implement. Here are a few strategies that may help

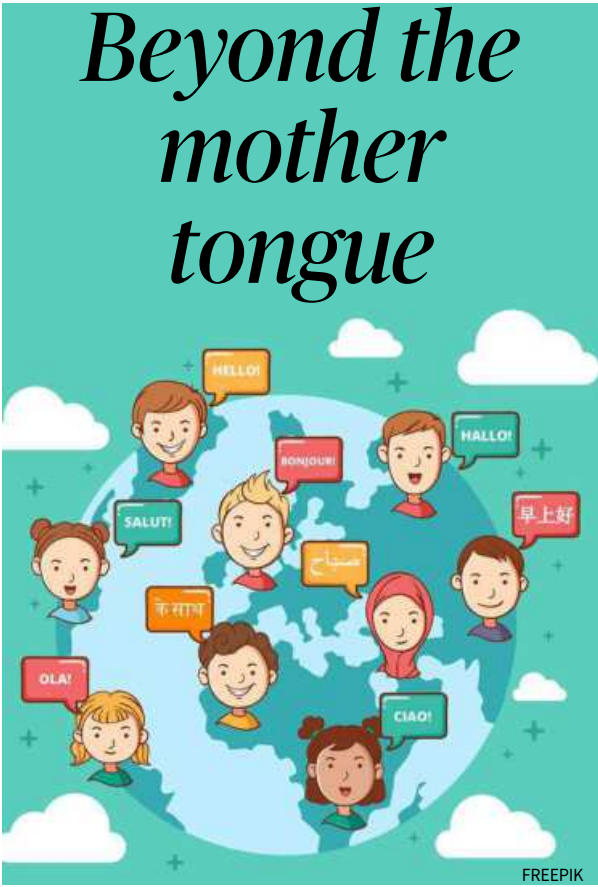
Gauri Puranik

India, with its rich cultural diversity, has 22 Scheduled Languages and 19,500 other active languages, each with its own unique cultural value. This multilingual culture is central to India's education system and resonates in classrooms where students navigate learning and studying, often in two different languages. Embracing multilingualism in education fosters inclusivity, offering profound learning experiences for all.

Scholar David Graddol expands the essence of multilingualism beyond language learning. He sees it as a cognitive asset, empowering individuals to thrive in a globally interconnected world and highlights its role in enhancing cognitive flexibility, creativity, and problem-solving, emphasising how multilingualism cultivates critical skills. Research consistently illustrates its cognitive benefits, showing that proficient multilinguals have better memory, attention, multitasking abilities, and skills such as critical thinking and decision-making.

Due to its perceived economic value, the demand for English language is expanding in India. *Future of English: Global Perspectives*, a recent research publication, stresses that

Embracing multilingualism is not merely an educational endeavour; it is a commitment to inclusivity and diversity.



while English will continue to be a global lingua franca; in India, the focus will rightly be on local languages as a medium of instruction, especially at primary level, and English will be taught as a subject. The introduction of English, taught as a subject alongside the child's mother tongue, can enable children to learn and grasp the language better.

This is also reflected in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which acknowledges the importance of local languages and their role in providing a more holistic and effective learning experience, especially in the early years. The NEP has placed multilingualism at the heart of its vision for inclusive education by advocating for a multilingual curriculum that incorporates mother tongue instruction, English, and other foreign languages.

This is a direct response to the growing recognition of the importance of language in education. Language is not merely a means of communication; it is a tool for thought and a

lens through which we perceive and understand the world around us. By promoting multilingualism, the NEP seeks to empower students to develop a deeper understanding of diverse cultures, foster a stronger appreciation of their linguistic heritage, and acquire the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly globalised world.

While its benefits are profound, the implementation of a multilingual approach in Indian classrooms is not without its challenges. The sheer diversity of languages spoken across the country, coupled with the varying levels of proficiency among students, poses a significant hurdle. Furthermore, balancing the use of languages in classrooms and ensuring standardisation of teaching across linguistic variations present challenges that demand innovative solutions. To effectively implement a multilingual approach in Indian classrooms, several strategies can be adopted: **Research:** There is little

evidence in terms of longitudinal research available that can inform robust strategies to implement multilingual practices in a highly multilingual country like India. There is a significant opportunity for sector experts, educators, linguists to collaborate with government and policymakers to enable such research. This can also contribute to the development of effective policies that support multilingual education initiatives.

Teaching material: The creation of quality resources such as textbooks, supplementary material and digital resources tailored to the specific linguistic needs is crucial to support effective instruction.

Teacher training: Training programmes – whether pre- or in-service – should emphasise multilingual pedagogy and equip teachers with the necessary skills such as developing proficiency in multiple languages including English, understanding the principles of multilingual instruction, and employing effective teaching strategies.

Assessment: Developing standardised assessment tools that evaluate students' proficiency across multiple languages to ensure fairness and equity is important.

Community engagement: Involving parents and the wider community in supporting multilingual education initiatives can foster a supportive learning environment and promote linguistic diversity.

Embracing multilingualism is not merely an educational endeavour; it is a commitment to inclusivity and diversity. By empowering students with the linguistic tools to navigate a multilingual world, India's education system can foster a generation of individuals who are not only academically proficient but also culturally enriched and globally competent.

The writer is Head of English Programmes India, British Council.

