

**Natia Gorgadze**

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

## **Textbook Analysis of the Primary Education in Georgia from Gender Perspective**

### **Abstract:**

*For many reasons textbooks are almost the only resource used for school education in Georgia. Consequently those materials which are developed for the school students have great importance not only for learning of the particular subject but for the formation of the world perception of the child through education. While primary education is the decisive period for students cognitive formation an influence of the textbooks in their gender socialisation is particularly significant. This paper explores the textbooks of all subjects taught in primary education stage in Georgia and analyses it from the gender perspective. The textbook analysis shows while based on neutral education policy towards the gender sensitiveness, gender stereotypes and bias is reinforced through the key educational resource. The analysis shows an imminent need for reforming of textbook approval role and instructions and development of gender sensitive textbook material which is based on clear understanding of benefits of gender equality.*

**Key words:** *primary education, textbooks, gender socialization, gender stereotypes and bias*

### **Introduction**

According to the scholars the "... sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations" (Sadker, 1994). In this case "different" education doesn't mean the students experience different approaches which are based on deep understanding of those particularities which the students may have from the perspective of gender differences. The authors of this conclusion argue that female students receive less quality education in comparison to the boys. Even if the international assessments as well as numerous of the researches prove that female students at a primary education have better academic outcomes than their male counterparts the differences which are observed in the classroom doesn't contribute

to progress of female students potential constantly. "In fact, upon entering school, girls perform equal to or better than boys on nearly every measure of achievement, but by the time they graduate high school or college, they have fallen behind" (Sadker, 1994).

While talking about the different education of students which is based on gender it's important to determine which aspects of education are more decisive in formed inequity. The school is one of the key socialization institutions for young generation, where perception and construction of gender roles begins as early as at primary school. (Gorgadze, 2015) Gender based socialization is also reinforced at school. "Because classrooms are microcosms of society, mirroring its strengths and ills alike, it follows that the normal socialization patterns of young children that often lead to

distorted perceptions of gender roles are reflected in the classrooms." (Marshall, 1997) while talking about the gender socialization, one should underline that gender bias isn't a general trend observed at the schools but is the complexity of the details which create cohesive interaction with students through learning materials, teachers' interaction, curriculum and classroom processes. This type of gender bias is part of the hidden curriculum of lessons taught implicitly to students through the everyday functioning of their classroom.

As mentioned gender bias is acquired implicitly through the education resources which are used in the classroom. "Using texts that omit contributions of women tokenise the experiences of women, or stereotype gender roles, further compounds gender bias in schools' curriculum. While research shows that the use of gender-equitable materials allows students to have more gender-balanced knowledge, to develop more flexible attitudes towards gender roles, and to imitate role behaviours contained in the materials" (Klein, 1985) schools continue to use gender-biased texts.

According to the researches the texts offered in the school textbooks are designed so that they fit the existing guidelines on gender and race equity for textbook nonetheless at the same time "show subtle language bias, neglect of scholarship on women, omission of women as developers of history and initiators of events, and absence of women from accounts of technological developments". (Bailey, 1992)

In Georgia the textbook is considered to be key learning-teaching resource used by the teachers. Accordingly the textbooks don't

provide students only with subject related information but have broader goal; the textbooks contain those messages which form students' socialisation patterns. Gender socialization is one of the important aspects of this implicit process. So the question what changes can be made to create a more equitable learning environment for all children require thoughtful study of those patterns which are embodied in the textbooks. Even if it has a great importance to education teachers for recognising gender-biased tendencies and providing strategies for altering their classroom instruction behaviour, the balanced textbooks are the implacable instrument supporting teachers to do so.

The development of teachers for gender sensitive instruction doesn't solely imply changing of their attitudes and expectation towards the students based on sex differences but also means teachers' good understanding of and awareness on those aspects which conceptualize the textbooks from the gender-sensitive or biased perspectives. Accordingly those six attributes which are considered as important for development of gender equitable curriculum should be well – reflected in the textbooks. Namely, the textbooks should be "inclusive, accurate, affirmative, representative, and integrated, weaving together the experiences, needs, and interests of both males and females". (Bailey, 1992) Moreover, the gender-fair textbook entails existence of refined aspects which are translated in the content of the texts, supporting illustrations, complimentary materials and are reflected in qualitative and quantitative features of the learning materials. "We need to look at the stories we are telling our students and children. Far too many of

our classroom examples, storybooks, and texts describe a world in which boys and men are bright, curious, brave, inventive, and powerful, but girls and women are silent, passive, and invisible." (McCormick, 1995)

### **Country background**

The textbook approval rule is based on the basis of the Minister's Order. In the past years the order was re-issued several times and the changes reflected in the different versions of the textbook approval included contextual and procedure related amendments. The textbook approval rule which is still in force is dated of February 25 2011 №30/n and indicates that the book will not be assessed if it contains discriminative and/or discrediting elements in terms of sex. The procedure on classification does not explain though what signs or elements can be considered discriminative or discreditable in the book. None of the components in the assessment criteria annex includes article that would oblige the author or publisher to consider that the book is developed for both female and male students and all the preconditions that have impact on the assessment must be considered in the gender context as well. Based on inadequate readiness of authors and publishing houses, vagueness of the procedure of classification and neutral nature of the curriculum from the gender point of view, protection of gender balance and gender correctness became impossible considering the given explanations.

### **Research Methodology**

The research is based on deep analysis of the textbooks. In particular, out of 69 approved

textbooks in primary school, 17 books have been selected through the stratified random selection principle and analysed. Stratification was made based on the three parameters: (a) all the subjects of primary school; (b) all the grades (I-VI grades); (c) all the publishing houses whose products are approved for the usage in primary education level.

At the same time the textbook approval rule was learned from the light of gender equality. The document analysis includes the examination of rule for approval and annexes where the details about the specific requirements stated through rule are explained.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used for implementation of gender analysis of the textbooks. Quantitative indicators of representatives of female and male have been analysed in illustrations. Number of characters by gender in the education materials has also been analysed with quantitative method.

Qualitative method was used for analysis of the illustrations, texts and tasks. Several types of indicators have been elaborated for qualitative analysis: (a) characters and characteristics of men and women; (b) activity; (c) roles (social, political, cultural, etc.) (d) function; (by qualitative patterns and positioning of the heroes in fiction).

Also, analysis of each book was conducted in terms of the given information on gender equality: how well is the education material discussed in terms of gender and how well does it contribute to acquisition of theoretical knowledge by students re gender issues and elaboration/enhancement of positive attitudes towards gender equality.

**Main findings**

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the books prove that the textbooks of primary school contribute to establishment and enhancement of stereotypes on gender roles, more specifically:

- Big part of books don't reflect the gender equality issues;
- Don't enhance positive attitudes of students on gender equality;
- Learning material in books include the stereotypes related to gender roles and functions in large quantities;

- Don't incorporate gender sensitive vision at the primary grades of the school.
- Description of the used methods and criteria for analysis of textbooks

**General analysis of books**

The research shows that majority of authors are women and constitute 74%, as for the illustrations – the research revealed that in 55% of the illustrations only men are reflected, number of women - is 23%, while the rest 22% falls at the representatives of both sex.

**Table: Gender correlation of authors and illustrations in the analysed books**

	Illustrations			Illustrations %		
	Man	Woman	Both	Man	Woman	Both
<b>Book I</b>	17	7	0	70%	30%	0%
<b>Book II</b>	18	12	11	44.%	29%	27%
<b>Book III</b>	59	7	19	70%	8%	22%
<b>Book IV</b>	45	3	9	79%	5%	16%
<b>Book V-VIII</b>	104	63	44	49%	30%	21%
<b>Book IX</b>	28	9	33	40%	13%	47%
<b>Book X</b>	48	7	28	58%	8%	34%
<b>Book XI</b>	45	48	23	39%	41%	20%
<b>Book XII</b>	87	35	35	54%	24%	22%
<b>Book XIII</b>	68	29	35	52%	21%	27%
<b>Book XIV</b>	55	34	28	47%	29%	24%
<b>Book XV</b>	90	32	18	64%	23%	13%
<b>Book XVI</b>	58	25	9	63%	27%	10%
<b>Book XVII</b>	92	93	55	40%	40%	20%
<b>Total</b>	814	414	347	55%	23%	22%

Below is given the analysis by the subject/subject matter in following the above described quantitative-qualitative parameters. The analysis proves the findings and conclusions revealed in illustrations and content aspects.

**Subject group Georgian language and literature**

In total, 4 books have been analysed in this subject group that don't greatly differ from each other by correlation of illustrations, gender distribution of authors and content indicators, gender balance and correct

representation. For example, in total, 90 works are presented in the first book, out of which 73 works belong to 38 men authors, which is 81% of the total number. 13 works belong to 7 women authors (14.5%), while 4 is folk creation (4.5%). The materials given in the books are mostly built on the information re activity, adventures, emotions and attitudes of men heroes/characters. Accordingly, it intensifies among students perception of men as a dominant gender. Small number of women heroes we meet in the books, as a rule, are of secondary/minor character. Tasks and exercises attached to texts and poems also inadequately include type of information or activity to neutralize the sharply masculine content of the given material. The grammar part is of masculine inclination. We meet some attempts of the authors to achieve gender balance through materials divided into rubrics. Though, the attempts are fragmental and similar “shift” of works intensifies the content and vision enriched with masculine inclination even more.

In total, Georgian language books are distinguished by extremely incorrect and unbalanced format and content from the gender perspective.

### ***Subject matter of Social Sciences (Our Homeland)***

The decorations of the both discussed books mostly reflect illustrations of men’s portraits or their activities. As for the historical characters, despite the prevalence of men, women from different epoch with historical or religious background and workload are presented: e.g. Saint Nino (Enlightener of Georgia), Queen Nana (first Christian Queen), Sidonia daughter of Abiathar (like-minded

person of Saint Nino), mother of King Parnavaz, Queen Tamar, Rusudan (aunt of Queen Tamar), Elene Akhvlediani, Medea – Daughter of Jason (from the Greek myth on Argonauts).

Books are divided in rubrics and in some cases this is quite interesting and represents one of the methods to achieve gender balance. For example, the introduction of one of the books “What and when will you study from this book” explains the meaning of the history to the student: (history) knowledge helps us to better understand our country, who were our ancestors, who we are, what we can be proud of and what is out-dated and needs to be buried with the past“; this enables the students to critically think about their own historical experience and existing traditions in the society, develop their critical thinking re the historically established roles and relationship models of women and men. Though, on the other hand, this chapter clearly underlines that different traditions and culture spread in Georgia are of masculine character. In some cases, traditions that include similar firm stereotypes are delivered to students in such a way that they don’t discuss and evaluate them from the perspective of modern values. We meet multiple cases in the books when analysis of the given information from a right perspective depends only on the competences of the teacher. While teaching with this book, responsibility for the results is fully attributed to appropriate pedagogical approach.

### ***Subject group, Georgian as a secondary language***

Books from level 2 through 5 have been analysed in this regard. Thanks to the authors we can say that the correlation of authors, the

content and illustrations are more or less balanced. Woman in family and profession related activities are represented as an independent person and full-pledged partner of a man. Woman's gender roles and functions are diverse and non-stereotypical. Mother and father often watch TV, go to shops. Woman is not only a housewife, but she is also a doctor, teacher and policewoman; tailor Beso is a man, girls are engaged in sports. Girls and boys in illustrations and texts are not given in separate pictures, but they interact with each other and make friends.

Despite the fact that according to quantitative indicators, man and boy more often fall at the centre of the attention of the authors, we may say that the book is dominantly free of gender stereotypes and the woman, girl is not hidden, does not carry secondary/minor character.

### ***Subject matter of aesthetics***

The texts and additional materials in the visual and applied art books directed at development of art skills are provided in a similarly interesting way for both gender students. Positive is the fact that the reproductions reflect both gender and their lives in a balanced way. Reproduction illustrations are more or less balanced, though; the decorations of the book give gender segregation by professions and activities: boys play football, mother takes her girl with a balloon to the zoo, man is a painter, doctor, and woman is a teacher. As long as authors are free in choosing the illustrations, it should not be too difficult for them to develop a stereotype free gender roles while working on the gender sensitive book. We meet Saint Nino, Saint Marine, Queen

Tamar, Ekaterine Chavchavadze, and Queen Elisabeth in the texts. In one of the books, only once we see Elene Akhvlediani's illustration, though none of the texts mention this intelligent painter. The book consists of the part "This is all my country" that incorporates texts of historical character. It would be good if the book paid more attention at the folk fine and applied art that would have outlined the merit of women authors in development of traditional art and is a significant inheritance of cultural history actually.

Musical works of women composers (Meri Davitashvili, Rusudan Sebiskveradze, Inola Gurgulia, Ia Kargareteli) are used in the music manuals and training activities. Against this background, it is incorrect not to include their photo-portraits like those of the men composers – Grieg, Laghidze, Tsintsadze, Shuman, Beethoven, and Chaikovsky. It is worth noting that among all the studied music manuals, photos that reflect activities of both genders (24%) are comparatively higher in this book. Though, it less integrates the gender. There are lots of illustrations that establish stereotypical vision on gender roles: a boy is riding the bicycle, reading a book, is naughty, throws stones at the birds; a girl is with a butterfly catcher, or with kerchief on her head brings dinner to the men working in the cornfield, lulls her dolls to sleep, teaches them (no boy doll among them). In one of the texts the aim of which is to teach the song "Sun inside and sun outside" to students is followed by an ethnographic notifications regarding the birth of a son. If the authors want the future generation to know their own faulty traditions, then they should provide particular assessments to

similar content texts that should not be presented in a neutral form (only as a bare text). In another book, while talking about the Pandora box, emphasis is put on the incorrect behaviour of Pandora. The picture of a woman, who is guilty and spreads all the evil is even intensified with associations of the Eve in the Bible. Actually, the books designated for the 9-year-old children shall not display woman in this form. The connection of this myth to the music, the issue to be studied and the purpose of the lesson are absolutely vague.

### ***Subject matter in mathematics***

Based on the quantitative analysis, illustrations are more or less balanced, though qualitative analysis outlined unequal visions on the importance, opportunities and roles of gender. In the tasks and subsequent illustrations, the roles and functions of married and unmarried and young women are demarcated. Men work, calculate faster, mend the fence, go to concerts and travel. Women eat cakes, play with balloons and water flowers. Tasks, home-works and illustrations associated to the sports, where only boys are involved are in surplus in this book. In the tasks and illustrations, boys and girls are isolated from each other and exist independently.

Economic status, income, professional activity and position of man and woman are different. Even the gifts given by parents to children develop the segregated vision. Boys are given money and precious gifts; at the same time, girls are given money-wise insignificant, gender stereotype associated presents. Girls often lack money to buy books, while on the same page, a task tells

about a man - doctor, he checks 1000 people, flies abroad, takes a loan in the amount of 8365 GEL from the bank (has high salary), buys furniture at the cost of 2697 GEL and 4125 GEL cost motorboat.

Analysis of the mathematics manual is worth noting. The authors are free in their choices to balance gender roles and correctly demonstrate the activities, functions and interests of men and women. The attempt of the authors to balance gender correlation and reproduce the content stereotypes makes us think that the authors are not ready to develop the gender balanced books. In the book, voluntarily appears a vision, according to which the book consumer for authors is mainly a boy. The book unconsciously creates and enhances stereotypical vision on gender advantages and less importance, which undoubtedly finds reflection on student's consciousness in terms of gender stereotypes.

### **Suggestions for Change**

#### ***Rules for the textbook approval***

In compliance with the discriminatory and discrediting character of the aspects that define diversity in the main document of the rule of textbook approval, along with withdrawal of the book from the evaluation process, an annex shall necessarily clarify the criteria that define this irrelevance in the textbook.

Besides the cases when the aspects defining the diversity are absent in the main document of the textbook classification procedure, shall be necessarily underlined the need of consideration of those aspects, while the annex shall sharply define which quantitative and qualitative criteria provide basis for

inclusion of gender related issues in a balanced way (in terms of content, illustrations and competencies).

The expert teams working on the subject programs shall develop a special guidebook that will enable the team working on the textbook to get familiar with the content parameters set for gender sensitivity and detailed instructions on reflection of gender sensitivity in the textbook.

The annex on the classification procedure of the textbook shall give detailed description of all the criteria that will give basis for evaluation of the gender stereotype-free textbooks; this regards to the content and quantitative side of illustrations, main textual and additional materials of the book;

Textbook evaluation expert teams shall be adequately informed and trained for the evaluation of each textbook by specific criteria and gender sensitivity indicators.

Team of textbook developers that includes authors, illustrators and painters, also publishing houses and editors shall get introduced to the training programs in gender-sensitive indicators or to specially elaborated guides before the textbooks are developed to ensure the team is qualified and well-informed.

It is recommended to include psychologists, gender and gender education specialists in the development of evaluation criteria and indicators of textbooks as well as their evaluation process.

If textbooks include mandatory education materials that are stereotypical from the gender perspective though valuable in terms of other aspects, the subject standard guidebook shall necessarily provide these additional materials through the attached

tasks, teaching methods or questions that will help students to develop critical thinking and properly consider gender equality issues.

### ***Language use***

These are some examples of changes that need to be introduced in routine language use:

- Substitute the more specific “female” and “male” for the universal “he,” depending on the context.

### ***Representation***

How women are represented also need to be changed. Instead of constantly seeing them as nurturing and caring, they could be seen as active, responsible and empowered members of public society portraying as doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc. This would not only compensation gender prejudice but also present society realistically. Women’s economic, political and cultural productive role, as opposed to their reproductive role, should also be displayed adequately. Moreover the realm of life which refers to unpaid and unrecognized labour of household economies—cooking, washing, housekeeping, looking after animals, etc. and which is predominantly performed by the women along with the paid economic activities in their workplace active should be emphasized showing the role and function of women in the socio-economic development of the country.

Lessons based on popular heroes or personalities should better represent women. Examples could also be used of women who have excelled in politics, science, sports, or in professions that we conventionally associate only with men, such as law, surgery, etc.

Since the school is a main social agent for the Georgian society for many economic and political reasons it necessary to make significant steps for making textbooks well-recompensing gender imbalance, which alters the society and culture. The gender balanced textbooks doesn't mean revision of icon of females but also review of the males representation in the materials. The gender balanced textbook mean that the males like a females don't live in a narrowly defined world of violent masculinity. One of the options for re-formation of the attitudes and combat of the existing perceptions can be representation of boys in those situations where their sensitiveness, gentleness and caring nature is emphasized.

## **Conclusion**

While resolving gender bias in the textbooks, we don't only strive for creating inclusive educational environment based on equity and equality but at the same time we reform society in large where women and men are perceived as equal and non-separate members of society. Gender relations aren't a physiological norm but are social construct, where those ways that women and men perceive each-other are filtered through socially constructed lenses. Teachers declare that in their instruction ability of the students are determinates of their success and future opportunities and the education privileges can't be based on sex differences. The gender-correct textbooks, free of stereotypes and bias makes possible to female students to reveal their education opportunities in full expanse and thus contribute to more quality, inclusive and responsive education in the country.

## REFERENCES:

- Amott, 2006 - Amott, M., Gender equality and difference in education: Affirmative and transformative pedagogic approaches in *Theory and Research in Education*, 4 (2), pp. 131-150, 2006
- Bandura. 1999 - Bandura. A., Social cognitive theory of personality, In L. Pervin & O. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Publications, 1999
- Bloomberg, 2008 - Bloomberg, L. S., (2008) Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to gender equality in education, Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008
- Feinberg, Soltis, 2010 - Feinberg W., Soltis, F.J., (2010) *School and Society*, (pp. 68-75), Teachers Collage Columbia University, New York and London, 5th edition, 2010
- Gorgadze, Gorgadze, 2015 - N., Gender Aspects in Primary Education of Georgia, in *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3 pp. 110-123, 2015
- Khomeriki, Javakhisvili, Abramishvili, 2008 - Khomeriki, I., Javakhisvili, M., Abramishvili, T., *Gender Equality Issues in Instruction of Social Sciences*, Saimedo, 2008, pp. 11-17, 27-31
- National Curriculum of Georgia, 2016 - National Curriculum of Georgia, 2011-2016; Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Retrieved from the web-site <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=3929&lang=geo> on October 18, 2014
- Sadker, 1999 - Sadker, D., *Gender Equity: Still Knocking at the Classroom Door: Educational Leadership*, Vol 56 April 1999.