TEXTS IN TEACHING - LEARNING SCIENCE AND DIRECTED ACTIVITIES RELATED TO TEXTS - VIEWPOINT FROM CHILD RIGHTS

[1]Phuong Anh Pham, [2]Minh Phuong Hoang

[1]Primary Education Department, Ho Chi Minh City University of Pedagogy
anhpp@hcmup.edu.vn
[2]Tran Hung Dao Primary School
mphuongcd@yahoo.com.vn

Abstract

Child-friendly school model was established with the purpose of making schools become the best places for Child Rights implementation. In other words, factors involving in educational process have to be child-friendly and meet the children's needs. Therefore, texts for teaching and learning Science, a teaching aid supporting children's learning, need to be considered in the viewpoint of Child Rights to ensure that Child Rights are recognised and satisfied as chidlren interact with texts during learning process. Reality shows that designing, editing and using texts in teaching and learning Science in primary schools still focus more on consolidating and widening knowledge rather than pay attention to enhancing other advantages for students. This article analyzes merits primary students gain when they interact with texts in Science and gives some recommendations for the creation, adaptation and use of texts in teaching Science for primary students based on advancing Child Rights.

Keywords: Child Rights, texts, teaching science, primary education.

INTRODUCTION

Participation in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 has prompted the government and people of Vietnam to implement various activities to reinforce the rights of children in the society in which child-friendly schools are seen as a concrete proof. To ensure that students can get their rights, this concept requires changes, developement both in terms of people (teachers, parents, ...) and other elements of the educational process (curriculum, organizational forms of teaching, teaching methods, teaching means ...).

In Vietnam, due to the existence of a single textbook for each subject, so to speak textbook is one of important teaching facilities in the process or approaching students' knowledge. Being an element of textbook and other teaching materials, text for teaching Science in textbooks plays an significant role in students' learning process. In fact, text for teaching Science in textbook are pretty good in consolidating tasks and providing knowledge to students. However, the intention to improve other benefits for students through teaching text in Science is not really clear. The article analyzes the pros that elementary students get when exposing to text for teaching Science in Vietnam via perspective of children's rights; thereby, raising some notes in the construction, compilation and usage of text for teaching Science for elementary students on the basis of enhancing attention of child rights.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TEXT

According to Gopferich (2006, p.62), Wades and Moje (2000), text is a united system of language; have completed content, oriented function and creayed by human to use for an determined purpose. In other words, it is a form of language to

communicate verbally, in writing (handwriting or printed), with graphical system to convey meaning to the viewer.

There are several ways of division texts based on a variety of criterias. This leads to different perspectives on teaching by text - the factor which decides extension or limitation the educational opportunities for students in the classroom. In teaching, Wades and Moje (2000) claimed that besides texts and graphic systems, text also includes speech material used in class [(1)]. No matter of its form, according to Alterio (2012), text can be divided into two categories: ① **Information text** is written for the purpose of conveying information about the natural world and society; consisting of two main types depending on the structure: *narrative structure* includes biography, autobiography, memoir; e*xpository structure* includes print feature and caption, and caption, table of content, index, diagram, glossary, and table. ② **Literary text** performs mainly aesthetic functions, written for the purpose of storytelling or entertainment, besides that, also contains political and religious information; includes three genres: fictional narratives (short stories, novels, myths/fables/tales), poetry (sonnets, limericks, haiku, free verse), drama (comedy, tragedy, melodrama, farce). While literary text exists in the forms of title, chapter index, illustrations, bold print, continuous text, paragraphing, dialogue, informational text exists in the forms of title, table of contents, index, photos, captions, diagrams, glossary, date line (periodicals), bold print, headings, sub-titles.

In the process of teaching, according to Clandfield (2005), text is assigned one, two or three tasks at the same time depending on the objectives and contents of teaching*: a pure object-oriented language* for students and teachers in the process of learning to manipulate language, literature with concentration on exploring the basic elements such as grammar structure, vocabulary, language, rhetorical methods*; a mean for the transmission of information* to the reader to focus on exploiting reading comprehension, analysis, synthesis, anticipating the reader's information; *an object as a springboard for imagination, creativity, critical thinking and independent thinking of students.* With such importance, the selection, and organizing interactive activities with text are significant to ensure students' access to knowledge and skill development through the text.

TEXTS IN TEACHING - LEARNING SCIENCE AND DIRECTED ACTIVITIES RELATED TO TEXTS - VIEWPOINT FROM CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Kinds of text for teaching Science within from Children's Rights perspective.

Table 1. Kinds of text in Science Textbooks (from grade 1 to grade 5)

Kinds of text	***Forms of text***	1	2	3	4	5
Informational text	Title	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Table of Contents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Index	0	0	0	0	0
	Photos	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Captions	0	0	0	0	0
	Diagrams	0	0	✓	✓	✓
	Glossary	0	0	0	0	0
	Date line	0	0	0	0	0
	Bold Print	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Headings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Sub-titles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Literary text	Title	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter Index	0	0	0	0	0
	Illustrations	0	0	0	0	0

The result in Table 1 shows that the text in Science textbooks just includes only information text, excluding literary text. Furthermore, informational text of those teaching material exist is mainly in the title, table of content, photo, diagram, bolding, heading and sub-title. Moreover, the structure of informational text in Science textbook just includes expository structure

[(1)] In the framework of this article, we only consider the corpus in the Science textbooks in Vietnam in view of children's rights. That means, this article does not analyze the speech corpus used in the classroom.

and excluding narrative structure which includes biography, autobiography, memoir.

Picture 1. Table of content in Science textbook

Picture 2. Table in Science textbook

Considering other aspects of text forms of child rights perspective, it can be seen that authors was conscious in creating opportunities for students to have access to various forms of text, and spectacularly paying attention to the types that students will be exposed to mostly in daily life. This factor ensures the implementation of article 29 of the Child Rights: "Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full." In other words, thanks to being exposed to various forms of text in Science textbooks, students are sufficiently equipped with knowledge and skills to integrate into society and promote the potential in themselves. In fact, when working with different forms of text, sstudents have skills to work with texts so they can enrich knowledge and accomplish the future text-related tasks. Moreover, table 1 also implies that the authors of textbooks also ensured medium comlexity level for students during the process of working with text. To be more specific, diagram just appears solely from grade 3 through grade 5, to ensure that learning is appropriated with psychological, physical and cognitive abilities of children.

However, documents in textbooks exist in three forms which are statements, questions, memorandum information as bullets. That means students lack the environment to become familiar with essays structured as paragraphs. This restricts them from training reading skill and approaching information in form of completed essays which later they will be applied to a lot of the learning process as well as daily activities.

Picture 3. *Memorandum information* in Science textbook

In addition, the text in Science textbooks in Vietnam consists only informational text, excluding literary text. Hence, in a certain aspect, students have not yet had many

opportunities to acquire knowledge and scientific skills through a literary text, and art alongside informational text. Additionally, in term of informational text, as mentioned, besides expository structure, text of Science textbooks has not really existed in narrative structure includes biography, autobiography, memoir. This somewhat limits the participation rights of access to information and materials from various sources. (Article 17, Convention on Rights of the Child)

Directed activities related to text – The viewpoint from child rights perspective

In Science textbooks, students' interactive activities with text are demonstrated mainly through a system of questions. Accordingly, these questions often exploit students' life experiences or explore the possibility of interacting with the text to help students independently gain knowledge. Statisticing questions which are assigned to show students' interactive ability with the text, the writer obtained data as Table 2:

Table 2. Kinds of questions in Science Textbooks (from grade 1 to grade 5)

Kinds of questions	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Closed question	304	52.96
Open question	270	47.04
Sum	**574**	**100**

The figures in table 2 indicates the number of open questions in textbooks is approximately equal to the number of closed questions. That means the questions help students not only focus on solving learning tasks, respond to comments and views of teachers but also reinforce opportunities to express their opinions. In other words, the existence of nearly 50% of open questions in textbooks provides students chances to present personal ideas and feelings about their study, ensuring the implementation of *"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds"* (Article 13, Convention on Rights of the child). With questions like: *"What you, family and locals should and should not do to protect the air environment?" (*Bui, PN & Luong, VT 2009, p.80), *"Press a treetop (okra, sweet potatoes ...) but do not separate it from the body. How is the tree after few days? " ?" (*Bui, PN et al.2008, p.80)students are motivated to share with teachers and friends their personal thoughts on a wide range of daily life issues. Furthermore, thanks to answering these questions and receiving feedbacks from teachers as well as classmates, students enrich their knowledge, develop the potential of their own. And since then, they have learned how to listen and ability to debate on the basis of their obtained knowledge, experience as well as respect opinions of those around, towards the ultimate development of the personality, intellectual talents of children. (Articles 12, 13, Children's Rights Convention).

However, most of the questions in the textbook only require students share their opinions in the form of speaking. That means that other forms such as writing, drawing diagrams, painting, ... not yet intentionally compiled the textbook. That restricts opportunities for children to express their ideas in different ways. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary to mention the role of teacher's methods in ensuring participation rights of students in the process of interaction with the text system because questions in textbooks are always fixed, while each class has different types of students with specific levels, not to mention teaching conditions will not be the same in different areas. Therefore, in order to exploit the text system in textbooks, teachers should be proactive, innovative in constructing lists of questions and directed activities related to text to make sure that students are learning in an environment that maximizes the development of personality, intellectual talent; having fun while studying (Articles 29, 31, Children's Rights Convention).

SOME DISCUSSIONS ON TEXT FOR TEACHING SCIENCE AND DIRECTED ACTIVITIES RELATED TO TEXTS.

From the analysis of text for teaching Science and directed activities related to texts, it appears that text for teaching Science in Vietnam is built towards creating learning opportunities for students to maximize personality, talent and intelligence simultaneously with receiving information from different sources and expressing their views and obtaining information and transmitting it. However, the limit of forms of text partly limits participation rights of students to access to information and beneficial materials from a variety of sources, it links to a lack of convenience for children to approach different types of information. To help children get chances to practice interacting skills with different types of information, team responsible for compiling Science textbooks should initially add various forms of literary texts, such as stories, poems as well as other (biography, autobiography, memoir, glossary) to the text in textbooks. Thus, the students will be able to practice reading skill, information analizing skill and have environment to improve literature absorption skill, art besides knowledge, scientific skills.

In addition, the use of approximate number of open questions as the number of closed questions also describes intention to create the right environment to increase participation of children in receiving information and presenting their views on scientifically studying issues. Regarding directed activities related to text, because it exists mainly in the form of requesting students to speak to answer questions, textbooks have not actually created an environment for students to present their views differently such as: writing, drawing, games, ... Hence, in this case, to strengthen children's participation rights, to create opportunities for children to interact more with the text in more diversified forms, teachers must be mastered the program, content and learning objectives to be more independent in using textbooks. In other words, teacher should collect more other text which are suitable to curriculum and different kinds of students. Moreover, teachers also need to diversify directed activities related to text in textbooks (drawing, writing, games, exercises, role plays ...) to create conditions for students to receive and share information, opinions in variously.

Thus, with the discussion within the framework of this article, on the basis of what has been done in the implementation of the rights of children in elementary school under Child-friendly school model and in the compilation of textbooks and other materials for teaching Science, we hope to raise attention in composing text among educators. It is not only interest in consolidating perspective, widening students' knowledge, but also in terms of developing other benefits for the children's education and enhancing the comprehensive development of both knowledge, scientific skills and artistic intuition in the process of teaching Science; strengthening the rights to access information from different sources and the rights to present individual views and opinions in different ways. Thus, approaching text, researching Science textbooks particularly and other subjects generally become an "fascinating adventure" for students, bringing them closer to interesting in books and passion in enriching knowledge as well as educational skills.

REFERENCES

Alterio, D, Carr, J, and Lynn Miller 2012, 'Text Genre Brace Maps', Sullivan County BOCES, scboces.org.

Bui, PN, Le, TD, Doan, TM & Nguyen, TN 2012, *Natural and Social Science 1, 2, 3*, Vietnam Education Publishing House.

Bui, PN, Luong, VT 2012, *Science 4, 5*, Vietnam Education Publishing House

Göpferich, S 2006, 'Text, Textsorte, Texttyp', In: Snell-Hornby, M. et al. Handbuch Translation. 2 nd ed. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag. 61-64.

Mai Anh 2003, Child's Right, The World Publisher.

Nguyen, AD, Nguyen, TN, Nguyen, MP & Pham, TS 2012, *History and Geography 4*, Vietnam Education Publishing House.

Nguyen, AD, Nguyen, HC, Tran, VL, Nguyen, TN, Nguyen, MP & Pham, TS 2012, *History and Geography 5*, Vietnam Education Publishing House.

Wade, SE & Moje, EB 2000, 'The Role of Text in Classroom Learning: Beginning an Online Dialogue', Handbook of Reading Research: Volume III, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.