

Why DOP is disruptive, transformative, innovative and futuristic

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I would like to put DOP in perspective and show that it is disruptive, transformative, innovative and futuristic and is at variance with prevalent assumptions related to language, pedagogical postulates, learning outcomes, textbooks, teaching-learning strategies and assessment. Obviously, several dichotomies can be discerned in the context of DOP. This paper deals with one of these dichotomies namely, the dichotomy of textbooks versus reading materials. Let me explain what this means.

Textbooks versus reading materials

Textbooks carry the whole baggage of teaching and testing; teaching implies transmitting information contained in the textbooks and testing is conventionally construed as checking the ability of the learners to recall and reproduce the textbook contents. The very design of a textbook proclaims that it is an autocratic tool, a weapon in the hands of authority, which imprisons the learners in an unreal world that does not connect to the real world outside the classroom. Textbooks are designed for teaching. Teachers take pains to “deliver” their contents to the learners as best as possible, without any transmission loss; they cannot leave out anything. The design and the contents of the textbooks get insulated against all kinds of intrusions by virtue of board examinations and periodical tests that are conducted religiously under surveillance. The state machinery has to ensure that the non-achievers are to be eliminated just like how the services of the unsuccessful workers are to be terminated in a factory set up. This being the prevalent situation, it hardly matters whether the learners like the design and contents of the textbooks or not; nor does it really matter whether the textbooks help learners face challenges in real life especially, in the digital era that we live in; today a stupendous quantum of information is available on our fingertips. The inherent despotism of the textbooks denies space for the individual learner to make choices from a plethora of reading materials that connects her emotionally and ushers her to further explorations of the world outside. Unless we break the unhealthy

nexus between TBs and Exams whatever we say and do camouflaged as quality initiatives in education will not change even an iota of the system.

The modular transaction as proposed in DOP (cf. Anandan 2006; 2016) envisions a shift in the textbook paradigm in the sense that grade-wise textbooks will get replaced by stage-wise Evolving textbooks (ETBs) that enable the learners to produce a proliferation of various genres of oral and written discourses. This creative process engages both teachers and learners meaningfully. All the written discourses will get elevated to the status of children's literature. Let me illustrate this point with the help of a lesson taken from Grade 2 of NCERT text book.

There are three reading passages in unit 1:

1. Poem - First day at school -The anxiety of a child as he goes to school for the first time
2. Poem - Brush your teeth - Tips on hygienic practices
3. Story - Haldi's adventure - a little girl meets a giraffe and rides on the giraffe
4. Poem - The paddling- a child's excitement in paddling a pool

Each passage entails a package of activities. Consider for example the activities that accompany the story 'Haldi's adventure'.

Activity 1: Reading is fun

Where was Haldi going?

Why did Haldi stare at the giraffe?

How did she reach school?

Activity 2: Let's talk

How do you go to school?

What do you wear to school?

Have you ever seen anything strange on your way to school? Talk about it.

Activity 3: Say aloud

paddle saddle cradle

down clown sound round

school pool rule cool tool

Activity 4:



Find the shapes

What

and colour them.



Activity1 checks comprehension; activity2 targets free responses; activity 3 sensitizes the learners on a few rhyming words and activity 3 ends up as a colouring activity. None of these activities focuses on the production of any discourse though activity 2 has the potential of getting a discourse output.

The modular transaction as envisaged in DOP addresses the lacunae in the textbook in two ways (Cf. My concept note on 'Generating the contents for digital learning').

1. By embedding the fragmentary input (consisting of de-contextualized language elements) in specific discourses and elevating the output to the level of nameable discourses.
2. By creating slots for the free production of discourses both orally and in writing as the output of each of the transaction modules.

Let me enumerate the oral and written discourse that can be easily constructed by virtue of interaction based on the first picture given in the textbook:

1. Picture description generated as a whole class activity
2. A description of Smiley, the giraffe (individual & group activity)
3. A concept map on Haldi's specialties and its presentation (group activity)
4. A description of Haldi (individual activity)
5. Enacting a sequence of events that may have taken place before Haldi met the giraffe
6. Developing the script related to this part of the story (Whole class activity)

7. Writing the script related to what has been depicted in the picture and the related passage (group activity)
8. Writing a narrative leads to the next part of the story
9. Drawing and coloring cartoon figures of Haldi and the Smiley
10. The conversation between Haldi and Smiley
11. Making a model of Smiley's head and describing the model
12. Each activity mentioned in the textbook will get elevated to the production of nameable discourses (description, narrative, etc.)

All these discourses are constructed around the theme depicted in the first picture given in the lesson. There will be similar discourses that can be generated around the next picture given in the textbook. Thus the total number of discourses that can be generated from the lesson 'Haldi's adventure' will be more than 30. All these will be extended reading materials that sprout from a single reading passage. Note that there are three more reading passages (poems). By applying DOP to these passages we will get at least ten discourses from them. These will add to the extended reading materials. The written discourses generated through classroom process may have errors in them (cutting across syntax, morphology, writing conventions and layout). These errors will be eliminated through editing, a process that has its own protocols. All the edited versions, the discourses written by students and the extended reading materials that get evolved through classroom process will be displayed at the reading corner, let's call it as Our Reading Corner (ORC), which will serve as the classroom library. Please have a look at Appendix 1 for the extended reading material that can be developed related to the first part of the reading passage.

In order to achieve this goal we will have to redesign the textbook contents as a series of ETB's (process sheets) that may be of the following types:

1. A theme-picture (taken from the TB and other sources) and a few key phrases, and a set of questions that lead to the construction of a discourse
2. A text (the reading passage taken from the TB) with illustrations and a set of interactive questions that can generate a discourse
3. A passage for editing (spotting errors and eliminating them) with the help of a few questions

In the place of the 4 reading passages given in unit 1 of Grade 2, there will be 30-40 written discourses that cut across various literary genres all generated through classroom process. When we integrate language with subjects such as EVS/Science, Social science, Mathematics, and other subjects the number of children's literature that can be produced with the involvement of students will increase exponentially.

Eventually, the concept of textbooks will disappear and only evolving textbooks or process sheets will remain. These will be developed on 21 century themes such as global awareness, financial, economic, business & entrepreneurial literacy, environmental literacy, health literacy, civic literacy, cross-culture and heritage literacy, media literacy and technology literacy. A wide range of flexible and adaptable life and career skills such as critical thinking & problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation and design thinking. will have to be catered to.

Appendix: Specimens of extended reading materials that can be generated from Unit 1, Grade 2: