

# Chapter 11

## Conclusion: Mobilizing Textbooks for an Equitable Future



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**Abstract** This book examines the highly politicized and contradictory nature of school textbooks in a wide range of conflict-affected contexts. Specifically, it demonstrates that while textbooks have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding and social justice, this potential is continuously confronted by the destruction of learning materials and infrastructure during conflict and the complicit roles that textbooks have often undertaken preceding, during, and after conflict situations. Through the use of the IREC framework, this book demonstrates the overlapping role of textbooks as victim, accomplice, and transformer during and in the aftermath of social and armed conflict. This concluding chapter will reflect upon the similarities and differences in these roles in the variety of cultural, geographic, and economic contexts described in the previous chapters. It will close with a description of the emergent implications of the chapters' analysis for scholars and practitioner stakeholders interested in analyzing, creating, and using textbooks for peace.

**Keywords** Education stakeholders · Ethnicism · Peacebuilding · Politicization · Social inequality · Textbooks

The IREC framework was designed to capture the complexity of the multi-directional relationship between education and conflict; this collection of country case studies clearly demonstrates the intricacies of this connection, specifically examining how it plays out in the pages of a textbook. The chapters included in this book provide a glimpse into the challenges of educational provision in relation to learning materials in contexts affected by conflict. Although the chapters focus on diverse social and political contexts across three continents, the message appears consistent that, while

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education has the potential to redress inequality, its active role in (re)producing and maintaining social tensions and divisions is also prevalent. The authors' analysis of textbooks from various educational levels and subjects highlights the centrality of these documents in the formal education system, as well as their potential shortcomings in working toward peacebuilding. Additionally, these case studies point to the contradictions and difficulties in achieving national aims through learning materials and thus reveal an ongoing need to understand both the negative and positive roles of education—and textbooks in particular—in conflict-affected environments. The analysis of the different country examples should be read not as a critique of the role of textbooks but rather as an opportunity to understand the complex ways in which these materials can support or hinder social progress, especially in volatile contexts where a society might be facing additional challenges such as socio-political or economic instabilities. While the focus in this volume has been on countries in the Global South, the IREC framework can also be used to examine the role of textbooks and education in conflicts in other contexts, including Western and other Global North countries. This concluding chapter summarizes key themes that have emerged across the different chapters, and shows how, as a collection, the volume operationalizes the IREC framework and maps out the relation between textbooks and conflict as simultaneous victims, perpetrators, and/or transformers of conflict. Finally, we close with reflections on the policy and practice implications of these findings for actors who are engaged in the development, distribution, and use of national curricula and their accompanying learning materials.

## **11.1 Common Themes**

Across the different chapters, the authors point to a variety of themes that seem to influence how textbooks are developed, distributed, and used in the classroom, many of which are similar across diverse contexts. The authors' analysis of these themes highlights the complex relationship between textbooks and conflict, revealing both opportunities for change and potential for reproducing or maintaining existing inequalities in and through education in conflict-affected contexts. In particular, there appears to be a concern across all the chapters that, while there are occasions for transformation, textbooks are active in reproducing ideals that promote inequality and divisions. Furthermore, in many contexts, textbooks continue to be victimized by the effects of conflict. Some of the most prominent themes that emerged across chapters, namely ethnicized learning, the reproduction of the obedient citizen, and representations of the past, are summarized below.

### ***11.1.1 Ethnicized Learning***

Several of the chapters highlight the ongoing challenges that ethnic tensions pose to education and the different ways in which the curricula reflect these biases. In some countries, problematic accounts of ethnic diversity are explicit within the curriculum, revealing a passive accomplice role of the state in promoting or affirming these accounts. As described in Vanner, Kovinthan Levi, and Akseer's chapter analyzing South Sudan's Grade 4 textbooks, the assumption of a homogenous population in South Sudan is so strong that the curriculum requires a Christian Religious Education course for all students, despite significant religious diversity within the country. The chapters describing textbooks in Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Burundi show that the manner in which ethnic differences are addressed (either directly or indirectly) usually benefits those in positions of privilege and power. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Halilovic-Pastuovic's analysis of the TSUOR system of learning revealed that ethnic differences shaped the development, distribution, and teaching of education and thus normalized ethnic segregation. Dunlop's examination of Grade 7, 8, and 9 social science textbooks in Burundi, as well as Akseer's examination of Grade 4 and 5 social studies textbooks in Afghanistan, indicate that the national governments have taken a passive approach to addressing historical ethnic tensions. A vacuum in knowledge and understanding is created by avoiding an explicit acknowledgment of the active role of ethnic politics in conflict. It is then up to the individual learner, and the community they live in, to fill this vacuum. These gaps in knowledge are often filled with harmful narratives of the other which, as described in Dunlop's chapter on Burundi and Skårås's chapter on South Sudan, has created challenges as community narratives often reinforce tensions and asymmetrical relations between groups. In the case of Afghanistan, as described in the chapters written by Nazari and Akseer, the lack of acknowledgment leaves it up to the learner to make sense of ethnic differences, thus creating a potential to reproduce existing accounts of bias toward certain minority groups. A similar omission in relation to gender inequality is evident in Shahzadeh's chapter on civic education textbooks in Jordan, where gender equality is presumed to be achieved, despite the ongoing discriminatory representation of women that the author identifies in the textbooks. Thus, the authors' analysis reveals that textbooks and, more broadly, the learning process in these contexts often do not challenge the inequality that is generated through the implicit and explicit privileging of some ethnic groups' truths over others.

### ***11.1.2 Reproducing an Obedient Citizen***

Across several chapters, authors point out that textbooks often consist of messages about citizenship that reinforce the state's authority and thus construct the ideal citizen as someone who is passive and obedient to this power. Likewise, some of the

authors raise concerns that such an appeal is often enforced through a downplaying of other essential transformative skills, including critical thinking, deliberation, and dialogue. Learners are expected to simply accept the contents of the textbooks without engaging with them in a constructive or critical manner. Kovinthan Levi's analysis of the Grades 6–9 civics textbooks in Sri Lanka found that learners are valued mainly as workers rather than as agents of social change. Similarly, Dunlop found that, in Burundi, textbooks enforce obedience, discipline, and an uncritical acceptance of the state's authority. In Vanner, Kovinthan Levi, and Akseer's chapter on Grade 4 textbooks in South Sudan, the Christian Religious Education textbook even suggests that disobedience is a betrayal of God. The emphasis on the state's authority is also present in Nazari's findings, as the civic education textbooks for Grades 8–12 in Afghanistan present the state as a totalitarian democracy that is dominant and disciplinary. As Nazari observes, this is both contradictory and concerning as the government has also expressed its commitment to a democratic society that is both constitutional and participatory. Akseer points to similar trends in the Grade 4 and 5 Afghan social studies textbooks, as messages about citizenship protection and safety are often accompanied with assertions for the need to submit to the state's power apparatuses. Kalhoro and Cromwell's chapter regarding textbooks policy in Pakistan points to some of the challenges that such biased yet authoritative accounts can create in the classroom. Specifically, their findings reveal that while some educators may disagree with such explicitly biased narratives, especially around religion, they feel constrained in challenging them for fear of retaliation. Davies (2005) explains that teachers often lack the freedom, training, and confidence to teach critically or to hold the state accountable for its actions, both of which are essential to citizenship education. There is a need, however, for teachers to engage in deliberate dialogue and critical thinking due to their potential to be agents of critical change in society (Davies, 2003). Shahzadeh's chapter on textbook development and use in Jordan points to teachers' potential agency in challenging inequitable representations in textbooks. Yet research elsewhere (Davies, 2005; UNICEF, 2019) and findings from the chapters in this book suggest that this may not be typically occurring in practice. Thus, there is a need to strengthen teacher preparation in utilizing textbooks in order to ensure values of critical thinking are materialized on the page and in the classroom (Davies, 2005; UNESCO, 2016), while acknowledging that, in some countries, the political context does not allow for this.

### ***11.1.3 The Past as a Challenge and Opportunity for Change***

A key theme across many of the chapters is that textbooks are falling short of fully recognizing the importance of discussing historical events in a manner that helps understand the present and prepare learners for a future that is based on values of inclusion, respect, and equality. Some of the textbooks show a clear commitment by the government to acknowledge previous wrongs and, more importantly, to use these past events in promoting values of peace. In the chapters describing textbooks

in Afghanistan, for instance, Nazari and Akseer found that both the civic education and the social studies textbooks acknowledged the negative repercussions of previous conflicts by encouraging values of peace and stability. However, this message is carried out passively through an omission of direct discussions of the different types of conflict and their impact on Afghan lives. Moreover, as Nazari points out, the textbooks do not provide any direction in how its messages of peacebuilding can be enacted by learners. Similarly, the Sri Lankan civics textbooks analyzed by Kovinthan Levi gloss over the role and impact of ongoing conflicts in society and instead focus on a generalized articulation of peace and tolerance not directly related to ongoing tensions in the country. In Burundi as well, Dunlop found that the content of some chapters in the Year 8 and 9 textbooks omit details pertaining to the political history of some of the groups, reinforcing the power and legitimacy of Hutu majority over Tutsi minority. These findings are concerning as they point to a contradiction between the respective governments' stated national aims for peacebuilding and inclusion and what happens in their classrooms and learning materials. Yet the chapters also highlight the potential for textbooks to transform social barriers and inequities, acknowledged by the respective governments who have turned to teaching and learning materials as a site for transformation. Collectively, the authors suggest that the possibility of achieving the government's goals for peacebuilding could exist in part through direct and critical engagement with conflict in government-approved textbooks.

These themes highlight not only the commonality but also the complexity of utilizing textbooks to promote peacebuilding, justice, and equality in contexts affected by conflict. The IREC framework provides further insight into how education can be affected by social tensions and, consequently, can become a victim, accomplice, or a transformer of various forms of violence. The chapters included in this volume reveal that textbooks can simultaneously take on all of these roles to varying degrees, and also that these roles are interconnected. The next section provides a detailed overview of how the education system via textbooks and learning materials has been victimized by conflict, while concurrently assuming roles as an accomplice and as a transformer.

## **11.2 Textbooks Within the IREC Framework**

As a collection, the chapters strongly demonstrate that textbooks do not fall clearly into any one of the three roles identified in the IREC framework, but that they frequently are situated simultaneously in multiple spaces. That said, in the examples outlined in the chapters, textbooks tend to contribute to the accomplice role most prominently, which should send a stark warning to those who see education as inherently contributing to peace and social development.

### ***11.2.1 Victimization***

The chapters demonstrate that textbooks are victimized by conflict in a multitude of ways. While there is evidence in the broader literature of direct attacks and destruction of learning materials by militarized groups (Knuth, 2006), in these chapters, victimization tends to be more indirect or symbolic. These victimizing effects can still have a palpable influence on students and teachers who are dependent on textbooks as essential learning materials. Throughout this volume, there is evidence of ongoing or recent conflict victimizing textbooks in two main ways: (1) through lower government textbook development and production capacity, which leads to the inability to produce and distribute sufficient quantity of textbooks or to the production of low-quality textbooks, or (2) through the removal or exclusion of potentially transformative elements as a response to political considerations and ideologies of dominant or powerful groups. Low government capacity arises primarily as a result of a sustained diversion of government funds from education to conflict. The diversion is seen in the chapters on South Sudan, where low government capacity resulting from decades of conflict has so curtailed the availability of textbooks that teachers often teach without any approved textbooks, particularly at the secondary school level as described in Skårås's chapter. Consequently, they either resort to bringing in their own resources or teaching without any such materials. The impact of lower capacity on textbook quality is also evident in Kovinthan Levi's chapter on Sri Lankan textbooks, which are rife with spelling and grammatical errors. In Khaloro and Cromwell's chapter on textbooks in Pakistan, there is evidence of intentions to move toward including more transformative content, such as references to the accomplishments of individuals who are religious minorities, but these were removed in response to political backlash and, consequently, the textbooks were not revised at all and the policies designed were not implemented. Their chapter also provides another example of symbolic victimization, as teachers demonstrate an unwillingness to challenge or even discuss controversial elements of the curriculum out of fear of violent or professional repercussions. The chapters thus highlight how victimization of textbooks via conflict occurs not only through the destruction of the textbooks themselves, but also through the deterioration of the content, the prevention of revisions to include more transformative content, and widespread limitations in their accessibility, all resulting from conflict.

### ***11.2.2 Accomplice***

The accomplice role of textbooks features strongly in each of the chapters in this volume; in most chapters, it is the most dominant of the three roles, even as the accomplice elements are often situated alongside stated goals of the textbooks to be transformative through the promotion of peace and democratic citizenship. This contradiction is pointed to in Kovinthan Levi's description of Sri Lanka's Grades

6–9 civics textbooks and Nazari’s description of Afghanistan’s Grades 8–12 civic education textbooks. In most of the contexts described in this volume, the textbooks reproduce an inequitable status quo through practices that include images and text that reconstruct limiting stereotypes, tokenistic representations of the other, or the presentation of the dominant group’s narrative through the exclusion of other groups and their narratives. Perhaps most strikingly, Halilovic-Pastuovic’s description of the TSUOR policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina depicts the complete segregation of ethnic groups within the school system. This segregation is reinforced in the example she provides of a geography textbook, which includes only geographical information about the neighboring state of Croatia, as the textbook is designed for use with teachers and students who are ethnically aligned with Croatia, with no geographical information regarding the country of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the textbooks are being used.

Shahzadeh’s description of Jordanian civic education textbooks illustrates how gender inequity can be reinforced through the marginalization of women’s images, stories, and perspectives from the main text, further indicating that, when women are mentioned, it is in a way that reinforces traditional notions of womanhood. Shahzadeh’s textual analysis is complemented by interviews with education officials involved in textbook development, demonstrating how the textual marginalization of women reflects the attitudes of some education officials that women’s stories and perspectives are not worthy of inclusion, all the while ascribing to a narrative that gender equality has already been achieved in Jordan. Similar practices that prioritize men’s narratives and representation, while presenting women in conventional and stereotypical roles, are present in Akseer’s chapter describing Afghanistan’s Grades 4 and 5 social studies textbooks, Nazari’s chapter describing Grades 8–12 civic education textbooks in the same country, and in Vanner, Kovinthan Levi, and Akseer’s chapter describing Grade 4 textbooks in South Sudan.

Other forms the accomplice role takes in textbooks include the omission of conflict or minority ethnic groups, or the inclusion of ethnic groups in a tokenistic way. Many of the textbooks examined in the chapters take a sanitizing approach to describing a country’s social situation that states their goals and values of peace, unity, and equality. Unfortunately, they then do not acknowledge the conflict, war, and marginalized experiences of women and minorities in their society, undermining their own stated goals and values. In Vanner, Kovinthan Levi, and Akseer’s chapter on South Sudan, for example, the Grade 4 textbooks they describe make one brief reference to some damage done by decades of civil war, but also describe historical battles in glorifying terms and repeatedly depict men and boys brandishing weapons. Without addressing these realities, including forms of inequity that contributed to ongoing or past conflict, the textbooks suggest these problems do not exist or, at least, do not need to be addressed. In multiple chapters, including Kovinthan Levi’s chapter on Sri Lankan textbooks and Nazari’s chapter on Afghan textbooks (both describing civic education textbooks), conflict is either not addressed in the textbooks or is presented as something that happens externally to the country. Not only are marginalizing experiences of minority groups usually excluded as well, but achievements of individuals from minority backgrounds are often absent. In Dunlop’s chapter describing

Grade 7, 8, and 9 social science textbooks in Burundi, Tutsi narratives are excluded, for example by mentioning only Hutu leaders in government as if Tutsi leaders had never existed. Khaloro and Cromwell describe how, in Pakistan, efforts to include examples of prominent leaders and innovators from minority Muslim sects, such as Dr. Abdus Salam, the first Pakistani to win a Nobel Prize, led to such hostile reactions that the proposed changes were never made. Even when minority groups are mentioned in textbooks, it is not necessarily in a transformative way. Kovinthan Levi describes how, in the Sri Lankan civic education textbooks analyzed, descriptions of the Indigenous community, the Veddas, are included but in a stereotypical and demeaning way and without including their name, effectively minimizing their importance in contemporary Sri Lankan society.

Textbooks may also describe minority groups in negative ways, without recognizing similar tendencies or histories among majority or more powerful groups. For example, in Akseer's chapter on Afghan Grade 4 and 5 social studies textbooks, an ethnic minority leader who temporarily banned schools during his nine-month rule in 1929 is mentioned as hindering social progress, while the much longer and more recent banning of girls' education by the Taliban is not mentioned. This contrast results in the demonization of the minority ethnic group's leader while avoiding criticism of the more dangerous and politically powerful Taliban. Textbooks are essential learning materials, yet these chapters collectively demonstrate their highly political nature that often reinforces an inequitable status quo and reflects the prevailing ideology of the government and other influential groups. Skårås's chapter on South Sudan, however, illustrates that the absence of textbooks creates a vacuum in which harmful and divisive narratives that may exist in the community have no counterbalance without official textbooks that promote transformative elements. Textbooks should thus be treated as highly valuable yet cautiously and critically engaged with, as they require sincere intentionality and political will to remove accomplice elements and replace them with transformative ones. One way that national governments or international donors can encourage diverse perspectives within textbooks is to use a multiple book option. Many of the contexts described here in which the accomplice role is dominant use a single book option, forcing one narrative that often excludes or diminishes marginalized groups. A multiple book option, by contrast, facilitates diverse perspectives and leaves room for more localized levels of education stakeholders to select the textbooks they wish to use. There is a risk, however, as presented in Halilovic-Pastuovic's chapter on TSUOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that different ethnic groups may each choose textbooks that exclusively present their own narratives, pointing to the importance of including diverse perspectives in all approved options.

### ***11.2.3 Transformer***

Textbooks across the chapters all contain some degree of transformative content, although it is often surface level and overshadowed or contradicted by the more



prominent elements of the accomplice role. Nazari's chapter on Afghan secondary school civic education textbooks, for instance, demonstrates these contradictions by describing the prescribed appreciation for human rights—including women's rights—and democracy, even while still demonstrating an affinity for the values of authoritarian and totalitarian governance and depicting women exclusively in traditional roles. Kovinthan Levi's chapter on Sri Lankan textbooks similarly points to the government's stated values of diversity and multiculturalism, despite an overarching discourse that promotes the dominant ethnic group and excludes more diverse and alternative narratives. Vanner, Kovinthan Levi, and Akseer's chapter identifies that the Grade 4 textbooks in South Sudan contain language that explicitly encourages acceptance of newcomers to the community in spite of difference. Dunlop's chapter describing textbooks in Burundi is possibly the most transformative example among the chapters, outlining the relationship between the textbooks and the peace accords and reflecting a multidirectional relationship between education and peace. Her chapter underscores this relationship by noting that the role of education in contributing to past conflict is recognized within the peace accords, while also identifying the presence of messages directly from the peace accords within the textbooks. Dunlop observes that the moves toward transformation within the textbooks may be small, but that the clear and intentional focus on advancing justice, human rights, and equality via active engagement with these concepts illustrates how even passive components can be important steps in a transformative direction if they continue to be built upon going forward. Khaloro and Cromwell's chapter on textbooks in Pakistan demonstrates that this intentionality must be accompanied by strong political will in the face of hostile resistance, otherwise the intended transformative policies and discourses may never result in actual textbooks for students and teachers to use.

Some chapters demonstrate a different transformative dynamic, where the textbooks themselves do not contain strong transformative elements and may even be taking on an active accomplice role, but there are indications of students or teachers using the textbooks or even challenging them in transformative ways. In Shahzadeh's chapter on textbooks in Jordan, for example, she describes teachers' practice of tweaking the language in the textbooks to make it more inclusive, while in Halilovic-Pastuovic's chapter on Bosnia-Herzegovina, she describes students leading protests against the segregated TSUOR system. These examples remind us that textbooks do not exist in isolation, but rather can be adapted or responded to by the students and teachers who use them. This again, however, requires strong will in the face of likely resistance. Teachers' agency and ability to engage critically with the textbooks and use them to provoke participatory dialogue with their students could be greatly enhanced through quality professional development geared toward critical pedagogy, yet this recommendation is ambitious in several of the contexts described here, due in part to low capacity derived from sustained conflict and fear of backlash or reprisal. We return then to the value of beginning by embedding small steps toward transformation within the textbook content and supporting educators as much as possible to take these up and expand upon them within their classrooms. In both of these initiatives, there lies a significant role for international donors, civil society,

and other stakeholders in holding national governments accountable for designing and distributing textbooks with ever more transformative roles.

None of the chapters describe textbooks as falling neatly or clearly into just one of the IREC framework's roles; all demonstrate that textbooks simultaneously straddle at least two roles and several, such as Kalhoro and Cromwell's chapter on Pakistan and Kovinthan Levi's chapter on Sri Lanka, illustrate how textbooks can be situated across all three roles. Even Skårås's chapter on South Sudan, which describes the absence of available secondary school textbooks and is perhaps the starkest example of the victimized role of textbooks in the collection, indicates that this absence creates pedagogical spaces in which the accomplice role can flourish but also where transformative opportunities created by local narratives that differ from national ones could be taken up. While the IREC framework as applied in this book thus illustrates the potential for textbooks to occupy each of the three different roles, it more poignantly highlights the consistent co-existence and contradictions of these roles, both in relation to textbooks and to education systems more broadly.

### **11.3 Implications for Policy and Practice**

The chapters presented in this book all indicate that education and conflict are intertwined in complex ways that may not be easily conducive to promoting learning that encourages unity, justice, or peacebuilding. While raising these concerns, many of the authors also maintain that such transformation is possible through further efforts and commitment not only at the national level, but also at local and international levels. This section outlines potential implications for stakeholders at each level who may be engaged in facilitating the development, distribution, or use of learning materials in conflict-affected contexts.

#### ***11.3.1 International Level***

The role of international actors is rarely at the forefront of analysis in these chapters, yet their undeniable influence, both positive and negative, remains evident. In some of the country contexts described in the chapters, the international community provided important support in ensuring that students remained in and/or returned to the classroom and learning as much and as quickly as possible. In Halilovic-Pastuovic's Bosnia-Herzegovina chapter and Nazari's Afghanistan chapter, for instance, the international community played vital roles in ensuring that peacebuilding processes also focused on education. Similarly, the Pakistan chapter highlights efforts by the international community to ensure that the national curriculum advocated values of inclusivity and peace. These examples, however, also indicate that, while the international community often shows strong initial commitment, their role can fade during the subsequent development, production, provision, and use of learning materials.

There is a need, therefore, for these actors to work to sustainably support national governments in achieving their educational aims, specifically those that promote equality, justice, and peacebuilding. It is necessary for international stakeholders to recognize that this is likely to be a long-term process that, like many of the chapters point to, can play out over years or even decades. Many donors prefer quantifiable metrics that are easy to report on, such as the number of textbooks produced or distributed; however, supporting the development, adaptation, review, approval, production, and distribution of learning materials, particularly when using a multiple book option as recommended above, requires a lengthy commitment and may be more challenging to account for in terms of outcomes. These essential processes have the potential to materialize recognized best practices among international actors regarding the centrality of textbooks in fostering sustainable development, global citizenship, peace, and human rights (UNESCO, 2017). As Bentrovato (2017) notes, the United Nations has recognized the peacebuilding role of textbooks, either directly or indirectly, as an important part of transitional justice. Policies referencing the role of textbooks in peacebuilding include the United Nation's *Impunity Principles* (UNHCR, 2005a, Principle 2), which calls for a recognition of "[a] people's knowledge of the history of its oppression" and *Reparation Principles* (UNHCR, 2005b, Principle 22a) which mandate that an accurate understanding of violations is included in "educational material at all levels." Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2016) also focuses on how countries should mainstream values of global citizenship and sustainable development in their curricula, which can also include a monitoring mechanism on "globally comparable data on textbook contents" (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016, p. 295). While these are important steps forward, the case studies in this book show that the implementation of these principles faces ongoing obstacles as countries appear to be engaging either knowingly or unknowingly in promoting teaching materials that contain harmful biases.

### ***11.3.2 National Level***

The different chapters repeatedly point to the problematic role that national government officials can play in creating curricula that are biased and maintain or exacerbate existing tensions and inequalities, as well as some examples of transformative and inclusive steps they have taken. Further attention needs to be given by national governments (or provincial or state-level governments where textbook decision-making is decentralized to lower levels) to the ways in which it develops and distributes teaching and learning materials to ensure that there are no contradictions to national commitments toward peacebuilding. This endeavor requires capacity development for educators, so that these stakeholders are better equipped with skills to teach values of peace and justice, including the ability to facilitate dialogue, consider multiple perspectives, and de-escalate conflict in the classroom. It also requires the willingness to recognize the potential for education to perpetuate existing conflicts and take

intentional steps to counter these influences, even when it may be politically unpopular. Evidence from the chapters shows that government officials can infuse textbook material with content that is biased and promotes dominant narratives. For example, Shahzadeh's chapter on civic education textbooks in Jordan describes an interview with one government official involved in textbook development who disregarded the importance of gender equality in textbooks, while others Shahzadeh interviewed criticized the biased perspectives of their colleagues that ultimately influenced the learning materials they developed.

Chapters describing textbook development in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka reveal that, while the government may seek to promote values of peace and equality through textbooks, the implementation of these goals is often flawed and limited in scope. Therefore, it is important for governments to expand their focus beyond surface-level aspirations and give considerable attention to how these values are embodied within the discourses of the textbooks and, ultimately, how they are experienced by students and teachers in the classroom. Such an endeavor would likely require additional resources, although these may be less than the long-term costs of the potential negative repercussions of a biased curriculum. Non-government national stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, universities, teachers, colleges, and teachers' unions could also play a significant role in supporting textbook revision or development and/or teacher professional development. Finally, as many of the chapters point out, addressing societal conflict with education alone will not be sufficient, as social divisions espoused on the pages of textbooks or in classroom discussions are most likely connected to broader social patterns beyond education; these may include long-standing social attitudes toward certain groups, genders, or historical practices of exclusion. Dunlop's chapter on textbooks in Burundi provides the strongest illustration of an intentional connection between the educational curriculum and political and social efforts toward peacebuilding. Effective implementation of educational goals that foster unity, cohesion, and peace will require this type of collaborative approach that considers the relationship between education and other socio-political and economic systems that shape learners' everyday lived experiences.

### ***11.3.3 Local Level***

Several of the chapters demonstrate the powerful role that local-level actors and stakeholders in education can play in promoting peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Notably, analysis from Shahzadeh's chapter on textbooks in Jordan reveals the powerful potential of teachers in challenging stereotypical or biased accounts in the official curriculum. A similar trend is present in Kalhoro and Cromwell's interviews with Pakistani teachers, as some took it upon themselves to teach a version of Islam that was different from the biased version included in official textbooks, even in the face of significant risk. Halilovic-Pastuovic observed that teachers in Bosnia-Herzegovina devised alternative textbook choices to use in the classroom if they did not agree with suggested selections. Additionally, the community can also

be a powerful agent for disrupting negative national narratives, as noted in Skårås's chapter on South Sudan. Expanding focus on these actors and their potentially positive role in redressing problematic teachings in the classroom, whether through the content of the curricula itself or other biases, can provide an important avenue for building positive peace. There is an opportunity for community leaders, school administrators, and local government officials to work collaboratively in building transformative learning materials, although they may need to first recognize the potential of educational materials in exacerbating or challenging inequalities. Moreover, these stakeholders can play an important role in the reconciliation process, especially in reviewing and revising curricula as recommended by UNESCO's 2016 Global Education Monitoring report. Such collaboration has contributed toward some degree of transformation in countries like South Africa (Bentrovato & Wassermann, 2018) and West Bank/East Jerusalem (Rhode, 2013), where discussions with various stakeholders over textbook revisions provided deeper insight into understanding divisive curricula. Thus, working with such differences can enable conflict consciousness through conflict participation—for example by facilitating dialogue about common ground across ethnic groups, holding the state accountable to its citizens, or the presence and effects of social inequities—which is essential for ensuring such differences are reflected in textbook content (Kovinthan Levi, this volume).

## 11.4 Conclusion

Through an analysis of the complex relationships between textbooks and conflict, this book provides a nuanced understanding of the different and intersecting roles that textbooks assume in contexts affected by conflict. It is unfortunately evident that the accomplice role is most prevalent across the diverse country contexts. Considering that researchers have for years now pointed to the potential and need to use education for transformative purposes (e.g., Davies, 2006; Galtung, 1969, 1976, 1985; Novelli et al., 2017), and thus to eliminate its role in exacerbating existing inequalities, there are still major shortfalls. Yet, many of the chapters have also highlighted the potential for education, and specifically learning materials, to challenge destructive practices through transformational elements, even in contexts where conflicts are ongoing. Collectively, these chapters conclusively demonstrate that textbooks are highly political. It is therefore imperative that education providers and their supporters pay closer attention to the contents of textbooks so that they support local, national, and international contributions toward sustained positive peace. Recognizing a symbiotic relationship between education and political peacebuilding efforts, textbooks should both reflect and be reflected in the efforts of other government departments to reduce and ultimately eliminate all forms of conflict. Finally, those investing in textbooks should not only consider their development but also ways to invest in the teachers and students who will use them through teacher professional development and in-text prompts and activities to facilitate the acquisition of skills such as critical reflection,

dialogue, and conflict resolution that will nurture and support students toward a path of peace and peacebuilding.

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