

Right lessons: on the lack of professionalism in the NCERT's deletions in textbooks

Wider, **transparent consultations** are needed in shaping the **curriculum**

The **arbitrary** and **surreptitious deletion** of several portions from various textbooks by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) **betrays bad faith** and lack of professionalism but, in the **prevailing** political climate, it is not **entirely** surprising. The **ruling** Bharatiya Janata Party has made the creation of a new knowledge **ecosystem** across all fields **central** to its politics. Among the key **deletions**, which the NCERT describes as **rationalisation** of syllabus, **are** references to the dislike of Hindutva **extremists** for Gandhi, a ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh after his **assassination**, entire chapters on the history of the Mughals, references to the 2002 **communal riots** in Gujarat, the **Naxalite** movement, the Emergency and discussions on social movements. History texts have been targeted **in particular**, and 250 historians from leading Indian and foreign universities have **pointed out** that those who prepared them through a process of consultation and **wide-ranging** discussions were all **kept in the dark**. These changes are not limited to school textbooks. The UGC draft **syllabus** for bachelor-level history **has** also been **altered**, “**leading to** a plainly **prejudiced** and **irrational perception** of our past”, according to the Indian History Congress. The NCERT has **sought to characterise** its failure to be transparent as an “**oversight**”, but remains **firm** on the revision.

Knowledge **expands** continuously, and syllabus revision is **essential** for a **robust** education system. What is taught to the younger generation is a collective decision of a society in which formal education is a critical part. The values and ethics of the collective are **reflected** in education, which **evolve** over time. In India, education has evolved with an aim to promote national **integration**, **critical thinking**, and **scientific temper**. As any society **matures**, it might be able to process darker **episodes** of the past with more **equanimity**. There is also the question of deciding the appropriate levels at which learners are introduced to various levels of knowledge. For all these reasons, textbooks and **pedagogy** need to be revised **periodically**. The trouble is when this exercise is **carried out** in a politically **partisan** manner, and in **disregard** of **expertise**. It **turns out** to be **toxic when strife**, not **harmony**, **is promoted** through formal education. India's growth and development depends almost **entirely** on educating its **bursting** young population with **vocational** and social skills and shaping youngsters into caring citizens of a **pluralistic** nation. They should learn history with the aim of not repeating its **tragedies in order to** build a **harmonious** future. There should be wider, more transparent consultations in shaping the curriculum at all levels.

[Practice Exercise]

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'Red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **Professionalism** (noun) – the skill, competence, and conduct expected of a professional. व्यावसायिकता
2. **Deletion** (noun) – removal, erasure, cancellation, obliteration हटाना
3. **Transparent** (adjective) – open, clear, easy to understand; not secretive or deceitful पारदर्शी / स्पष्ट
4. **Consultation** (noun) – discussion, conference, dialogue, deliberation परामर्श
5. **Curriculum** (noun) – syllabus, program, course of study, educational plan. पाठ्यक्रम
6. **Arbitrary** (adjective) – capricious, whimsical, random, chance, erratic मनमाना
7. **Surreptitious** (adjective) – covert, clandestine, furtive, hidden. चोरी-छिपे किया हुआ/ गुप्त
8. **Betray** (verb) – Reveal, disclose, tell, divulge, show accidentally प्रकट करना
9. **Bad faith** (noun) – dishonest or unacceptable behaviour
10. **Prevailing** (adjective) – current, existing, prevalent, usual, common मौजूदा
11. **Entirely** (adverb) – Completely, wholly, fully, totally, thoroughly पूरी तरह
12. **Ruling** (adjective) – governing, in charge, leading, dominant, controlling सत्तारूढ़
13. **Ecosystem** (noun) – Environment, habitat, system, community, network पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र
14. **Central** (adjective) – Principal, main, primary, pivotal, crucial मुख्य
15. **Rationalisation** (noun) – the process of organizing or restructuring something, such as a system, method, or set of beliefs, in a more logical, efficient, or coherent manner.
16. **Extremist** (noun) – Radical, fanatic, zealot, hardliner, militant कट्टरपन्थी
17. **Assassination** (noun) – Murder, killing, elimination, slaying, execution हत्या
18. **Communal** (adjective) – Collective, shared, joint, cooperative, public सामुदायिक
19. **Riot** (noun) – Uprising, disturbance, unrest, tumult, chaos दंगा
20. **Naxalite** (adjective) – Maoist, radical leftist, insurgent, guerilla नक्सलवादी
21. **In particular** (phrase) – Specifically, especially, notably, particularly, expressly विशेष रूप से

22. **Point out** (phrasal verb) – Indicate, show, reveal, highlight, draw attention to संकेत करना
23. **Wide-ranging** (adjective) – Comprehensive, extensive, all-encompassing, broad, far-reaching व्यापक
24. **Keep in the dark** (phrase) – Conceal, hide, withhold information, deceive, mislead अज्ञान में रखना
25. **Alter** (verb) – Change, modify, adjust, transform, revise परिवर्तन करना
26. **Lead (to)** (verb) – Result in, cause, bring about, give rise to, contribute to वजह बनना
27. **Prejudiced** (adjective) – Biased, partial, unfair, one-sided, discriminatory पक्षपाती
28. **Irrational** (adjective) – Illogical, unreasonable, senseless, absurd, nonsensical अतर्कसंगत
29. **Perception** (noun) – View, understanding, awareness, comprehension, interpretation धारणा
30. **Seek** (verb) – Look for, search, attempt, try, endeavor प्रयास करना
31. **Characterise** (verb) – Define, describe, represent, mark, typify वर्णन करना
32. **Oversight** (noun) – Negligence, neglect, inattention, omission, carelessness चूक
33. **Firm** (adjective) – Resolute, determined, unwavering, steadfast, unyielding दृढ़
34. **Expand** (verb) – Increase, enlarge, extend, broaden, develop विस्तार करना
35. **Essential** (adjective) – Necessary, crucial, vital, indispensable, important आवश्यक
36. **Robust** (adjective) – Strong, sturdy, durable, resilient, tough मजबूत
37. **Reflect** (verb) – Indicate, show, demonstrate, reveal, express दिखाना
38. **Evolve** (verb) – Develop, progress, advance, grow, mature विकसित
39. **Integration** (noun) – Unification, amalgamation, merging, combining, blending एकीकरण/ एकता
40. **Critical thinking** (noun) – the ability to analyze and evaluate information, situations, or problems in an objective, reasoned, and systematic manner.
41. **Scientific temper** (noun) – an attitude or mindset that embraces the principles and methods of scientific inquiry. It involves curiosity, skepticism, objectivity, and a willingness to test hypotheses and revise beliefs based on evidence.
42. **Mature** (verb) – develop, grow, ripen, evolve, progress परिपक्व होना
43. **Episode** (noun) – incident, event, occurrence, happening, experience घटना

44. **Equanimity** (noun) – composure, calmness, poise, serenity, tranquility
संतुलन, समभाव
45. **Pedagogy** (noun) – teaching, education, instruction, tutoring, training शिक्षा-विधि
46. **Periodically** (adverb) – regularly, at intervals, recurrently, intermittently, cyclically समय-समय पर
47. **Carry out** (phrasal verb) – execute, perform, accomplish, implement, complete कार्यान्वयन करना
48. **Partisan** (adjective) – biased, prejudiced, one-sided, partial, sectarian पक्षपाती
49. **Disregard** (noun) – neglect, indifference, inattention, apathy, insouciance उपेक्षा
50. **Expertise** (noun) – skill, proficiency, competence, mastery, knowledge विशेषज्ञता
51. **Turn out** (phrasal verb) – transpire, eventuate, result, ensue, happen सिद्ध होना
52. **Toxic** (adjective) – poisonous, harmful, noxious, dangerous, venomous विषाक्त, विषैला
53. **Strife** (noun) – conflict, discord, dissension, dispute, friction कलह
54. **Harmony** (noun) – accord, unity, agreement, concord, peace सामंजस्य
55. **Promote** (verb) – encourage, support, foster, advance, further बढ़ावा देना
56. **Entirely** (adverb) – completely, wholly, fully, totally, thoroughly पूरी तरह
57. **Bursting** (adjective) – expanding, overflowing, brimming, teeming, full विस्फोटक
58. **Vocational** (adjective) – occupational, professional, trade, work-related व्यावसायिक
59. **Pluralistic** (adjective) – diverse, multi-faceted, inclusive, heterogeneous बहुलवादी
60. **Tragedy** (noun) – disaster, calamity, catastrophe, misfortune, adversity दुर्घटना
61. **in order to** (phrase) – for the purpose of, with the aim of, so as to ताकि
62. **Harmonious** (adjective) – congruent, compatible, in agreement, balanced, cooperative सामंजस्यपूर्ण

Summary of the editorial

1. Arbitrary and surreptitious deletions in NCERT textbooks indicate bad faith and lack of professionalism.
2. Ruling Bharatiya Janata Party focuses on creating a new knowledge ecosystem across all fields.
3. Key deletions include references to Hindutva extremists, Gandhi, Mughal history, 2002 Gujarat riots, Naxalite movement, Emergency, and social movements.
4. 250 historians from leading Indian and foreign universities criticize lack of consultation and transparency.
5. UGC draft syllabus for bachelor-level history also altered, leading to a prejudiced perception of the past.
6. Syllabus revision is essential for a robust education system, but it should not be politically partisan or disregard expertise.
7. Indian education aims to promote national integration, critical thinking, and scientific temper.
8. Textbooks and pedagogy need periodic revisions for appropriate knowledge introduction and societal evolution.
9. India's growth depends on educating the young population with vocational and social skills, and shaping them into caring citizens.
10. Wider, more transparent consultations are needed in shaping the curriculum at all levels.

Practice Exercise

[Editorial Page]

- What is the primary aim of India's evolving education system?**
 - To promote the ruling party's ideology
 - To promote national integration, critical thinking, and scientific temper
 - To focus only on India's ancient history
 - To disregard expertise in shaping the curriculum
- What is the potential issue with carrying out textbook and pedagogy revisions in a politically partisan manner?**
 - It promotes harmony and understanding
 - It ensures only the positive aspects of history are taught
 - It promotes strife and disregard for expertise
 - It encourages transparency in the revision process
- Which of the following statements cannot be inferred from the last paragraph of the passage?**
 - Education plays a crucial role in shaping the values and ethics of a society.
 - Textbooks and pedagogy should be revised periodically to keep up with evolving knowledge.
 - Political partisanship and disregard for expertise have no impact on the quality of education.
 - Wider and more transparent consultations are required in shaping the curriculum at all levels.
- Which of the following statements is INCORRECT based on the last paragraph of the passage?**
 - Syllabus revision is essential for a robust education system.
 - India's growth and development depends almost entirely on the education of its young population.
 - Wider, more transparent consultations are needed in shaping the curriculum
 - Textbooks and pedagogy should remain the same over time.
- What tone is reflected in the passage regarding the deletions and alterations made in textbooks by the NCERT?**
 - Appreciative
 - Neutral
 - Critical
 - Supportive
- Which of the following statements cannot be inferred from the passage?**
 - The NCERT has deleted various portions from textbooks without proper consultation.
 - The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party aims to create a new knowledge ecosystem across all fields.
 - The Indian History Congress supports the changes made by the NCERT.
 - The passage suggests the importance of wider, transparent consultations in shaping the curriculum.
- What is a **synonym** for "arbitrary" as used in the passage?
 - Random
 - Deliberate

- C. Predictable
D. Consistent
8. What is a **synonym** for "surreptitious" as used in the passage?
A. Brazen
B. Covert
C. Overt
D. Conspicuous
9. **What idiom best describes the aim of teaching history to students according to the passage?**
A. Out of sight, out of mind
B. Every cloud has a silver lining
C. Turn over a new leaf
D. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater
10. What is an antonym for "transparent" as used in the passage?
A. Obvious
B. Clear
C. Opaque
D. Visible

Comprehension

Last Friday, the government increased the returns on some small savings schemes for the first quarter of 2023 by 20 basis points to 110 basis points, or 0.2 to 1.1 percentage points. These will kick ____**1**____ for eight of the 12 small savings schemes where small investors park their household surpluses through banks and post offices. A similar selective hike was ____**2**____ for the previous quarter too, after a long 27-month pause in small savings rates, but the range was minimal at 10 to 30 basis points and only applied on five schemes. In the latest review, the highest rate hike of 1.1 percentage points has been granted only for one-, two- and three-year time deposits. For other schemes, the increase is more nominal — 40 basis points for senior citizens and monthly income schemes and just 20 basis points for the National Savings Certificate and Kisan Vikas Patra. Returns on the popular long-term savings ____**3**____, the Public Provident Fund (PPF), have been left unchanged at 7.1%, prevailing since April 2020 when they were slashed from 7.9% at the ____**4**____ of the pandemic. Neither is there relief for those investing in the Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2015 to ____**5**____ families to invest in the education of girl children and save for their marriage expenses, under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign.

11. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1.**
A. off
B. In
C. on
D. at
12. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2.**
A. promoted

- B. entailed
C. seemed
D. effected
13. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3.**
A. avenue
B. iteration
C. conception
D. contestation
14. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4.**
A. screening
B. juncture
C. onset
D. Intent
15. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5.**
A. avert
B. presume
C. craft
A. encourage
16. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**
P. As the night advanced, Swami's fears deepened.
Q. The most haunting was how his friend Mani had seen the devil in the banyan tree.
R. He began to think of all the ghost stories he had heard in his life.
S. Mani's face had gone white as a ghost before he had fainted.
A.PRQS B.QRSP C.SPQR D. PQSR
17. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**
P. One takeaway from this is that merely paving the way for campuses of prestigious foreign universities may not be enough to retain talent in the country.
Q. At a time when the government is embarking on far-reaching reforms in the higher education sector, including instituting enabling measures for foreign universities to set up campuses in the country, data compiled by the US State Department and the non-profit Institute of International Education provides interesting insights.
R. An analysis of the data in this newspaper reveals that an increasing number of Indian students studying in the US are staying back after their degree to join that country's workforce.
S. In 2021-22, nearly 35 per cent of the 1.99 lakh Indian students in American universities enrolled in the Optional Training Programmes that allow foreign students with F-1 visas to join paid or voluntary work for up to three years in the US.
A.PRQS B.QRSP C.SPQR D. PQSR
18. **Select the most appropriate word for the given group of words.**
Medical Examination of a body
A. Vulnerable
B. Postmortem

- C. Quintuplet
 - D. Analgesia
19. Select the most appropriate word for the given group of words.

One who tells what will happen in future

- A. Euphonious
 - B. Shuttle
 - C. Seer
 - D. Imperialism
20. **Parts of the following sentence are given as options. Identify the segment that contains a grammatical error**

That day when they brought back for the last time there were many old-timers who were shocked and frightened.

- A. for the last time there were
- B. shocked and frightened
- C. That day when they brought back
- D. many old-timers who were

Answers

1. B 2.C 3.C 4. D 5. C 6. C 7. B 8.A 9.B 10.C 11. B
12. D 13.A 14. C 15. D 16. A 17.B 18.B 19.C 20.C

[Practice Exercise]

Explanations

1. B) To promote national integration, critical thinking, and scientific temper.
Explanation: In the second paragraph, it is mentioned that education in India has evolved with an aim to promote national integration, critical thinking, and scientific temper. The other options do not reflect the primary aim of India's education system as stated in the paragraph.
2. C) It promotes strife and disregard for expertise.
Explanation: In the second paragraph, it is stated that the trouble arises when textbook and pedagogy revisions are carried out in a politically partisan manner and in disregard of expertise, as it can promote strife rather than harmony. The other options do not correctly describe the potential issue associated with politically partisan revisions.
3. C. Political partisanship and disregard for expertise have no impact on the quality of education.
Explanation: The last paragraph of the passage emphasizes the importance of education in shaping society and the need for periodic revisions of textbooks and pedagogy. It also highlights the potential negative consequences when this process is carried out in a politically partisan manner and with disregard for expertise. The passage suggests that such actions can be toxic and promote strife instead of harmony in the education system. Therefore, statement c cannot be inferred from the last paragraph, as it contradicts the passage's main point.
4. D. The correct answer is D, as it contradicts the passage which states that "textbooks and pedagogy need to be revised periodically." The other statements are in line with the information provided in the last paragraph of the passage.
5. C) Critical
Explanation: The tone of the passage is critical as it refers to the deletions and alterations made in textbooks by the NCERT as "arbitrary and surreptitious," "betraying bad faith and lack of professionalism," and "politically partisan." It also expresses concern about the negative impact these changes could have on India's education system and the future of its young population.
6. The correct answer is C. The passage states that the Indian History Congress described the changes in the UGC draft syllabus as leading to a "plainly prejudiced and irrational perception of our past," which implies that they do not support the changes made by the NCERT. The other statements can be inferred from the passage.
7. A. Random
Explanation: In the context of the passage, "arbitrary" refers to something that is done without any particular logic or reasoning, making "random" the most appropriate synonym.
8. B. Covert

Explanation: In the context of the passage, "surreptitious" means something done secretly or without the knowledge of others, making "covert" the most suitable synonym.

9. D. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater

Explanation: In the context of the passage, the aim of teaching history is to learn from past mistakes and build a harmonious future. The idiom "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" best describes this sentiment, as it conveys the idea of preserving the valuable lessons of history while avoiding its negative aspects.

10. C. Opaque

Explanation: In the context of the passage, "transparent" refers to a process that is open, easy to understand, and without hidden intentions. The antonym "opaque" best captures the opposite meaning, as it suggests a lack of clarity or openness.

11. Kick in (phrasal verb) – Come into effect or operation लागू होना

12. Effect (verb) – To implement, bring about अमल में लाना

- Promote (verb) – encourage, advance, support, foster, boost बढ़ावा देना
- Entail (verb) – involve, necessitate, require, demand शामिल होना
- Seem (verb) – appear, look, sound, feel, appear to be प्रतीत होना

13. Avenue (noun) – method, approach, course of action मार्ग, वीथि

- Iteration (noun) – Repetition, restatement, reiteration, recapitulation पुनरावृत्ति
- Conception (noun) – idea, concept, notion, perception, thought अवधारणा
- Contestation (noun) – contention, disputation, argument प्रतिस्पर्धा

14. Onset (noun) – start, commencement, beginning शुरुआत

- Screening (noun) – Inspection, testing, diagnosis, checking जाँच
- Juncture (noun) – Stage, crisis, interval, moment, point in time मोड़ /समय
- Intent (noun) – intention or purpose इरादा

15. Encourage (verb) – promote, stimulate, support, foster, urge प्रोत्साहित करना

- Avert (verb) – prevent, avoid, ward off, stave off, deflect टालना
- Presume (verb) – Believe, assume, guess, deduce, imagine, suppose, postulate अनुमान करना, मानना
- Craft (verb) – Make, create, construct, produce, manufacture तैयार करना/ बनाना

16. PRQS

As the night advanced, Swami's fears deepened. He began to think of all the ghost stories he had heard in his life. The most haunting was how his friend Mani had seen the devil in the banyan tree. Mani's face had gone white as a ghost before he had fainted

17. QRSP

At a time when the government is embarking on far-reaching reforms in the higher education sector, including instituting enabling measures for foreign universities to set up campuses in the country, data compiled by the US State Department and the non-profit Institute of International Education provides interesting insights. An analysis of the data in this newspaper reveals that an increasing number of Indian students studying in the US are staying back after their degree to join that country's workforce. In 2021-22, nearly 35 per cent of the 1.99 lakh Indian students in American universities enrolled in the Optional Training Programmes that allow foreign students with F-1 visas to join paid or voluntary work for up to three years in the US. One takeaway from this is that merely paving the way for campuses of prestigious foreign universities may not be enough to retain talent in the country.

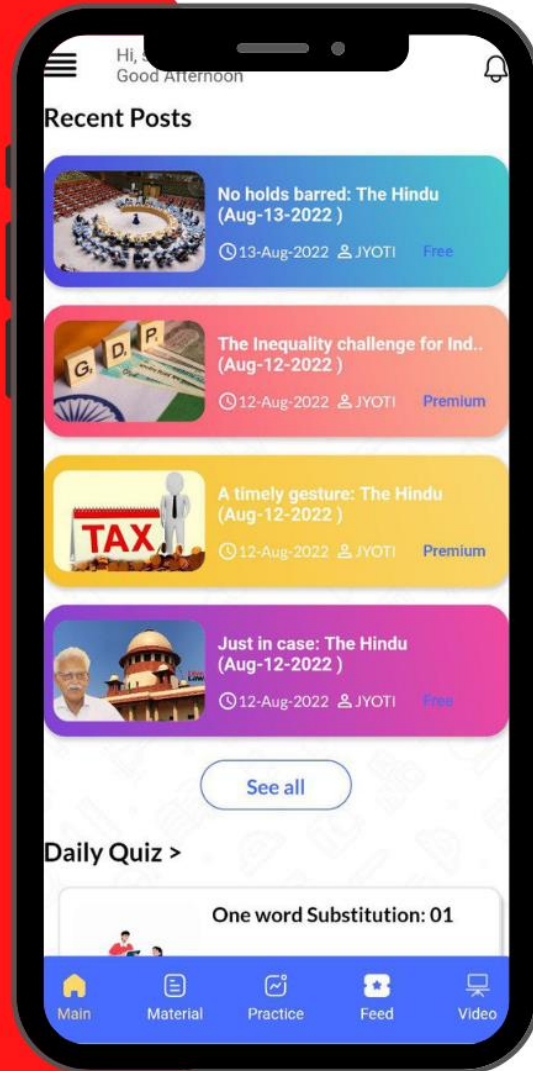
18. **Postmortem** – Medical Examination of a body शवपरीक्षा

- **Vulnerable** – Open to injure or criticism कमजोर
- **Quintuplet** – Five children born at the same time एक साथ उत्पन्न पाँच बच्चे
- **Analgesia** – The loss of ability to feel pain while still conscious पीड़ाशून्यता, पीड़ानाश

19. **Seer** – One who tells what will happen in future ऋषि

- **Euphonious** – Sounding pleasant श्रुतिमधुर
- **Shuttle** – Go back and forth आगे-पीछे चलाना-फिराना
- **Imperialism** – Policy of extending a countries and influence साम्राज्यवाद

20. 'brought' के बदले 'were brought' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'brought' एक Transitive verb है जिसका subject 'they', 'doer' नहीं है बल्कि 'receiver' है, और यदि subject 'receiver' हो तो verb passive होता है।



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