

Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks

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Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks

Finland as an Example

Edited by

Kaisa Hahl, Pia-Maria Niemi,
Rita Johnson Longfor and Fred Dervin

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Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks: Finland as an Example

Edited by Kaisa Hahl, Pia-Maria Niemi, Rita Johnson Longfor
and Fred Dervin

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FOREWORD ONE

JARI LAVONEN¹

A textbook plays a vital role in teaching and learning. According to the latest national level monitoring in Science, altogether 79% of the teachers indicated that they use a science textbook in every lesson or almost every lesson (Kärnä, Hakonen, & Kuusela, 2012). Therefore, research on textbooks is an important area of educational research and could have several important implications to teaching and learning and, moreover, to more general topics in education, like citizenship and multicultural education.

I was honoured to have the opportunity to read the manuscript of this book. I was thinking about various perspectives while reading. I have been working as a teacher educator and researcher in educational sciences during the last 25 years. There were several interesting research findings for me, and probably for other teacher educators as well, in the manuscript. In my own textbook related research I have been analysing how the textbooks introduce science concepts through pictorial and textual information and through different kinds of representations. Furthermore, I have been interested in the contexts which are used to introduce the concepts. However, I have had a narrow view to contexts and situations used in textbooks. Through the research papers, this book introduced to me several new perspectives in textbook research—such as views related to social class, gender, sexuality, language, race and religion.

The book opened new windows to me as a textbook author. I have participated in several author teams during the last 30 years and written about 160 school textbooks, teacher guides and university level textbooks. In the author teams, we have typically discussed how the book introduces the concepts and how the book genre fits the genre of the teachers. The outcomes of the research papers in this book introduce several new viewpoints—like the aspects related to contexts, gender and race—all

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important for textbook authors to take into account while writing textbooks.

I warmly recommend this book to school teachers, textbook authors, researchers in educational sciences and teacher educators.

Reference

Kärnä, P., Hakonen, R., & Kuusela, J. (2012). *Luonnontieteiden osaaminen perusopetuksen 9. luokalla 2011*. Koulutuksen seurantaraportit 2012:2. Helsinki: Opetushallitus.

FOREWORD TWO

KAREN RISAGER¹

Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks: Finland as an Example is an excellent illustration of how a group of scholars, gathered in a department of teacher education and drawing on a range of different school subjects, can produce a forward-looking collection of articles addressing one of the most pressing issues of today's world: The role of education in promoting—or hampering—international and intercultural understanding. The central concept in the book is diversities in the plural: changing constellations of groups and/or individuals of different social class, gender, sexuality, language, race, religion etc. The book asks how visible they are in textbooks and whether we hear their voices.

One of the most important aspects treated in the book is representations of the Other, the West, the intercultural encounter. In doing so, the book redefines and expands a field that has interested teachers, educationalists and philosophers for many years worldwide: How should we deal with other nations and our own nation in textbooks in schools? Bertrand Russell, the famous British philosopher and peace activist, wrote these words a hundred years ago, in 1916, during World War I:

Every state wishes to promote national pride, and is conscious that this cannot be done by unbiased history. The defenceless children are taught by distortions and suppressions and suggestions. The false ideas as to the history of the world which are taught in the various countries are of a kind which encourages strife and serves to keep alive bigoted nationalism. If good relations between states were desired, one of the first steps ought to be to submit all teaching of history to an international commission, which should produce neutral textbooks free from the patriotic bias which is now demanded everywhere. (Clammer, 1985, p. 5)

Of course, today we would emphasise other aspects of the role of textbooks in macro-level conflicts. The world situation has greatly changed since 1916, although the legacy of especially Western colonialism in most regions of the world is still very much alive. Political and cultural

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discourses have greatly changed as well. In the contemporary world, and in the postmodern vein that is characteristic of studies of diversities and interculturality, we would emphasise that the nation is not the only cultural parameter to be examined; we have to include a wider range of intersecting parameters such as ethnicity, race, gender, religion, etc. We would emphasise that not only history, but all school subjects contribute to students' view of society and the world. And we would maintain that a textbook can never be neutral, as there will always be a perspective (or different perspectives) from which the subject matter is seen. Finally the idea of an international commission for neutral textbook production would be unthinkable. We would not consider granting any transnational or global organisation that kind of authority today.

Still, it is interesting to see how much work has been carried out by international bodies since WWI in order to organise and discuss textbook revision and to suggest how textbooks in history and other subjects can help develop international understanding and dialogue, and particularly avoid national stereotyping.

In the years immediately following WWI a number of organisations called for revision of textbooks (Crammer, 1985, p. 6ff), among them the National Union of Public School Teachers in France and the Colonies, the German Association of Radical School Reformers, the Seventh Congress of the German Pacifists, the Japanese Association of Teachers, the Workers' Association of Britain and the Netherlands Teachers' Association. Many textbook surveys and inquiries were carried out. In 1922 the International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) was formed as a part of the League of Nations, and among its achievements was the Casares Resolution, which provided that if a National Committee found an objectionable statement in a foreign textbook, it should notify its counterpart in the other country, pointing out suggested changes. This work resulted in a Declaration on the Teaching of History that was officially adopted by the League of Nations and signed by a number of countries, including Finland (but none of the Great Powers signed) (Ibid., p. 11). Beside this multilateral work, bilateral projects were also set up, not least a collaboration between teachers in Germany and France. Their work on an agreement concerning history textbooks on Alsace-Lorraine was postponed, however, and later stopped in the years 1936–37. Other collaborative projects that should be mentioned, are those initiated by the Norden Associations (Foreningerne Norden).

After WWII, UNESCO was created in 1946 as a continuation of the ICIC. Among its first achievements in the area of textbook research is the Model Plan from 1949 (Crammer, 1985, p. 30), which sets out six principles for

textbook elaboration: accuracy, fairness, worth, comprehensiveness and balance, world-mindedness, and international cooperation. A large number of multilateral and bilateral projects on textbooks in history, geography and social studies have been carried out since then, many of them organised by the International Textbook Institute in Brunswick (Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung, Braunschweig), an important textbook research centre and library related to UNESCO and the Council of Europe. Another significant piece of work on behalf of UNESCO is an international project undertaken by the Finnish Commission in 1983 focusing on issues in relation to the cold war (Ibid., p. 43).

Since the 1980s UNESCO has taken up the challenges of the cultural turn (Pingel, 2010). The educational focus is no longer only on real and potential conflicts between states (nations), but also on intra-state issues, and more generally problems and potentials related to culturally diverse societies. The focus is on learning how to live together. As regards to textbook research and revision, UNESCO calls for a multi-perspectival methodology, including minority perspectives.

UNESCO is engaged in textbook research because it has a role in international relations as regards to initiatives for reconstruction and reconciliation. Scholarly research in universities does not have to have this aim; it can have other agendas such as critical analysis and theoretical, methodological and philosophical development.

This book on *Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks* is an innovative piece of scholarly work that opens up discussions across different subjects. Some of these subjects may not have been studied before from a textbook analysis perspective. The subjects treated in the book are mother tongue education (ABC books in Finnish as the majority mother tongue), home economics, religious education, geography, history, social studies, and Holocaust education (at an international school). The collaborative work touches on common problematics: the representation of diversities and interculturality in textbooks. However, otherwise the methodological and theoretical references are diverse: quantitative and qualitative studies, various discourse studies, studies of images, rhizomatic reading, intertextual method, grammar-of-culture approach to narrative analysis, gender performativity, otherness, (post)colonialism and the concept of the West, intercultural encounters, antiracism education.

As the editors and authors rightly emphasise in the Introduction, it is important that there is a constant dialogue between publishing companies, editors, practitioners and researchers. Innovation on the textbook market requires that novel ideas concerning for example learning about diversities and interculturality can circulate in the whole production process, through

to practice in the learning space, and ultimately to the feedback from students and others involved. Does the textbook promote or hamper international and intercultural understanding?

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FOREWORD THREE

CULTURE IN TEXTBOOKS

ADRIAN HOLLIDAY¹

This book quite rightly places textbooks at the centre of intercultural education and the wide range of issues that surround it. These issues become clear with the break from the modernist, positivist view that culture is a solid, physical, geographical place which can be objectively characterised by exclusive values and behaviours. In the postmodern view culture is by contrast socially and ideologically constructed and the modernist positivist picture is revealed to be the basis of a naïve Self and Other politics. In this politics, whenever ‘culture’ is invoked there is a hidden sense of opposition to other ‘cultures’ as superior or inferior. It is thus increasingly argued that talking and making claims about culture is a ‘nice’ way of insinuating race—that there is a neo-racism which hides beneath everyday talk of culture. I am not alone, through my grammar of culture (Holliday, 2013), in arguing for how this neo-racist implication connects in complex ways to almost all aspects of how we construct and engage with culture. (I am of course delighted to see the grammar being used so well in Schatz & Niemi’s chapter.) This point is made by a number of the chapters; and it is good to see a book which both recognises and spells out in detail the ideological politics of culture.

This book also makes it clear that it is not just cultural comparison which is problematic. The textbooks that are looked at are all within state education. As such they by default serve the education system, which is partly there to socialise young people into the norms of the society, sometimes, indeed, explicitly teaching its ‘civilisation’. In this role, textbooks might therefore be expected to work to establish histories and perceptions of Self and Other which position the society favourably on a world scene.

We must all have experienced this nationalistic socialisation first hand. It is very clear to me, now, after considerable thinking and research about

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the issue, that throughout my education I was taught that my ancestors were the Greeks, then the Romans, and that the age-old enemy was the despotic East, then the despotic Catholicism of the not-too-distant South. In this history, somehow, the clever, fair, game-playing, problem-solving, ingenious, plucky, inventive, thrifty, always honest Protestant ethic, which was strongly Self, started with the Greeks in their defeat of the Persian Empire and their mythical theft of the Golden Fleece from 'corrupt' Colchis. Even the myths of ancient Greece were made to resonate so strongly with who I was. It was clear to me as a child that the same spirit which few brave Spitfires against Nazism could also educate the world. And there I was, at 23, doing just that as a British Council English teacher in Iran. All of this I can now trace straight back in my mind to reading aloud Greek myths around in class, the importance of 'mental arithmetic', and a focus on the corruption of Pharisees and Philistines in Bible stories.

This book looks at how Finnish school textbooks in a range of subjects operate in just this sort of way, not only through explicit content which compares cultures, but also through more interpretable associations and imagery which perpetuate the ideologies and discourses of nationhood. My recollections above are from the 1950s and 1960s when I knew of little attention to minority communities and globalisation. In many ways this process of socialisation was inevitable because it was largely about the internalisation of the written and visual images which surrounded me. While we had an empire which spread across the world, to a schoolchild in the north of England it was an exotic domain which resided largely in the adventure books I read outside school. On the other hand, no-one, in school or out, would have dreamt of offering an alternative image of the Colchians, Persians and Philistines, or of representing the vast and distant populations of empire as intelligent problem-solving people just like me, instead of as exotic imaginaries.

There was no justification for cultural Othering then. But in a modern world, where people are moving with greater frequency and speed than ever before, both physically and electronically, the impact and dangers of such Othering are instant. The need to act against it is urgent. A Syrian friend, now in her 50s, told me recently how she had lived through the civil war in Lebanon, a series of Arab-Israeli wars, and the political conflicts that have constantly plagued where she lives. But she says that what particularly troubles her now, as her country is torn apart, is that it is no longer clear who the enemy is.

In many ways the enemy for all of us is what prevents us from recognising each other as human beings with diversities that enrich rather than threaten. *Diversities* is thus significantly placed in the title of the

book. Textbooks should no longer simply fulfil the function of presenting national narratives, discourses and ideologies. Neither should the aim merely be to help our children understand better a foreign Other. As it is clearly stated in Paavola and Dervin's chapter, diversity is all around us and part of our everyday lives, and, indeed, is within all of us. Every opportunity must be made to bring this message home. To satisfy nationalist objectives, appreciating these diversities has implications for internal as well as international peace.

Another purpose of textbooks is therefore to educate; and it is significant that this book does not stop at critiquing the images that other the 'foreign', but also goes some way to laying out what a better purpose should be. In some cases there is evaluation of how far some of these images can be used differently to increase the awareness of school pupils regarding cultural diversity and Othering. It is perhaps important to note that I did not myself become fully aware of the Othering impact of the narratives and images in my own education until much later in life after a long personal struggle with the issues. Part of this awareness has been due to becoming informed of the power and provenance of the images and narratives to which I had been exposed. It may well be, therefore, that not only pupils, but also textbook writers, the ministries that approve them, and certainly the teachers who teach them, need a lot of critical discourse awareness of the material they are working with. Nevertheless, this will never be enough, because none of us are fully aware of all the hidden meanings of the images and narratives that surround us. It is also important to note that it is not only the images of others that we need to be careful of, but also how we project ourselves—the Self which precipitates our definition of the Other.

It becomes clear therefore that the school textbook is at the very core of a many-faceted set of issues and factors connected with the politics of cultural representation. Partly because of the location of Finland and its particular history, this takes in the complicated question of what is the West, the non-West, and the meanings which different parties bestow on these concepts. Another great strength of the book is the excellent literature reviews on what amounts to an extensive area of critical scholarship with regard to textbooks and the representations of culture, gender and race.

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INTRODUCTION

FRED DERVIN, KAISA HAHL,
PIA-MARIA NIEMI
AND RITA JOHNSON LONGFOR

“We couldn’t do without it.” (Teacher)

“It’s a very democratic media in that it can be used by anybody.”
(Publisher)

“It is trustworthy.” (Publisher)

“Yes, this year would have been a complete catastrophe without a book.”
(Teacher)

(Excerpts from Katri Grenman, 2010)

These quotes, from the context covered in this volume, the Nordic country of Finland, underline the importance that textbooks play in education. Omnipresent and canonical, textbooks “provide expertise, are timesavers, and provide security for both teachers and students in outlining content, scope and sequence” (Eisner, 1987, p. 12). In addition to their subject-specific contents, textbooks can contribute to intercultural and global education. According to Kramsch (2013), “Textbooks are crucial instruments in the shaping of the future citizenry of a nation or of the global community to which these citizens will belong” (p. 24). Yet the way this is done can be problematic as textbooks are sometimes perceived to be ‘tyrannical’ (they can exercise too much power in a classroom), biased and controversial (Jobrack, 2012; Lowen, 2009). The risk of producing or reproducing stereotypes and prejudices about the self and other is real and needs to be addressed when researching/talking about textbooks.

Looking beyond the surface level it quickly becomes obvious that textbooks are far from neutral. The way they are written, published and used usually derives from “the official knowledge a society wants its children to acquire” to prepare for the life to come (Williams, 2012, p. 1119). As Fleming (1989–1990) pointed out over two decades ago, besides providing information and knowledge, textbooks can promote “ethical

models” and “patriotism” (p. 7). The narratives, facts, people, events but also rules, norms and behaviours represented in textbooks often reflect the values and ideologies promoted by the nation-state. As states define the curricula and make decisions concerning schooling—in some countries the production of textbooks is monitored—they remain the main actors of education in our postmodern societies (Pingel, 2010) and remain extremely relevant objects of research.

In addition to political agendas, economic aspects play an important role in textbook production. While financial profit may not be the first or only reason for creating a textbook from the authors’ perspective, most of the times publication processes are restricted by several financial interests. For the publisher a textbook is an investment, and the outcome needs to be a product that sells. A team of authors usually works with an editor appointed by the publishing company. Although the authors have the main responsibility for creating the content by writing the texts, designing exercises, and choosing photos for illustration, the company editor has the power to decide on what gets printed or not. The authors can thus never be sure of what will make it to the final version of the textbook.

In order to make sure that the book is sellable it is often important that the book is not too controversial or ‘different.’ One of the editors of this volume, Fred Dervin, has published several textbooks and he has often witnessed ‘censorship’ during the editorial meetings. The editors have justified their viewpoints by referring to what the “teachers wanted” or to the fact that the students “are not interested in that” or “would not understand.” Thus the way of seeing schools, other educational institutions and private people not only as users of the textbooks, but also or even primarily as consumers who usually have to pay to gain access to the book, is an essential part of textbook publishing.

Purpose

Most scholars from the field of textbook studies suggest that textbooks should reflect current societal and political changes. Instead of recognizing *diversity* as a character mainly applicable to immigrants, most societies have started to openly recognize a multitude of *diversities* that have previously been ‘hidden’ or marginalized. Groups and/or individuals of different social class, gender, sexuality, language, race, religion, etc. are increasingly visible for example in the media. However, how visible are they in textbooks? If they are visible at all, how are “they”/“diversities” represented? Can one hear their voices? What are they made to do/not to? What kinds of tools do the textbooks give to students to reflect on and

encounter diversities and similarities in different contexts? The idea of diversities is sometimes perceived as a sensitive subject in Finland—like in most countries—and can lead to strong ideologies and a lack of self-reflexivity and criticality. It is thus a central educational issue that will also be of interest for readers outside Finland.

The purpose of this collected volume is to propose multidisciplinary research into textbooks, taking the Finnish context as an example. In a country like Finland with a population of 5 million people—a country that continues to be constructed as ‘homogeneous’ in spite of increased immigration (Derwin, 2013a)—what place do diversities occupy in textbooks? This book sets out to explore this important question. In general very little is known of the “social and political lessons of school textbooks” that are taught and acquired (William, 2012, p. 1120). In fact these are not always included in teaching and learning or they are (re)interpreted: “rarely is textbook content simply accepted, absorbed, and then regurgitated by learners” (Ibid.).

This volume is of interest for students in educational sciences, pre-service teachers and in-service teachers of various school subjects, teacher educators and novice researchers in the areas of subject didactics, multicultural/intercultural education, educational leadership, curriculum and policy. The authors examine how textbooks are written, constructed and arranged, revealing hidden agendas and ideologies. They base their studies on one or more of the aspects of curricular biases proposed by Sadker and Sadker (1982): *invisibility* (who is represented, who is not?), *stereotyping*, *imbalance and selectivity* (an issue is interpreted in one way only), *unreality* (e.g. illusionary depiction of a place), *fragmentation* (inserts separating the discussion from the main narrative in a textbook), *linguistic bias* (political in/correctness), and *cosmetic bias* (illusions of equity in how people are represented).

Why Finland?

Finnish students’ success in international comparisons of student assessments (such as the PISA) in the last decade has been celebrated at the national level and remained a topic of interest internationally. Finnish students’ performance has been among the best in all the domains in each PISA cycle, albeit on the decline in the latest one (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013). According to Niemi, Toom, and Kallioniemi (2011), there is no single explanation for the success. Rather, the successful performance of Finnish students seems to be attributable to a web of interrelated factors having to do with a comprehensive pedagogy,

students' own interest and leisure activities, the structure of the education system, teacher education, school practices and the 'Finnish culture' (Ibid., p. 3).

Many of the "pedagogical tourists" who have ventured into Finland to witness its 'miraculous education' (Dervin, 2013b; Niemi et al., 2011) are often surprised by the following fact concerning textbooks shared by a Finnish publisher: "When I have talked with colleagues from other countries, they have been wondering about the way that in Finland the state doesn't approve school books, but there's free competition. They have been asking how the teachers are supposed to be able to choose their material themselves" (Grenman, 2010, p. 23). The national core curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, FNBE, 2003, 2004) and school-level curricula give the framework for what teachers need to teach and cover in each subject at each grade level. The teachers are, however, free to choose the material (including textbooks) and methods they use. Textbook authors are often teachers themselves (or sometimes university lecturers) and thus textbook users usually trust that the textbook is written according to the curricula. Textbooks commonly come with a teacher's guide that further aids the teacher in selecting teaching methods and activities for lessons.

Finland has two major textbook publishing companies that belong to larger companies (*Sanoma Pro* and *Otava*; see Dervin, Hahl, Härkönen, & Layne in this volume). There is competition between these two large textbook publishers and smaller-scale publishers (for example *Tammi*, *Edita*, etc.), and depending on the subject, new textbooks come on the market every few years. Competition is, however, important for ensuring the quality of textbooks. The economic situations of the school and the municipality it is located in also play a role in the question of how often textbooks can be replaced with newer ones. While textbooks are free to all students in pre-primary and basic education (grades 1–9) and paid for by taxpayers, in upper secondary education (for students of the ages 16–19) textbooks need to be paid for by the students themselves or their parents. The recycling of textbooks by selling and buying used books in the upper secondary school is common, though not always possible because of new editions. If a student is not planning on writing the matriculation exam on a particular subject at the end of the upper secondary school, s/he may not feel a need to hold on to the textbook after a course is finished. Thus it can be sold further to keep down the expenses. Like in many countries, e-textbooks have started to 'invade' the Finnish market and this will undoubtedly have an impact on both the market and use of textbooks in the near future.

In spite of all the fame that Finnish education has recently received, it does not mean that there is no room or need for development. The increase of technology in schools and students' homes (and teachers' lack of knowledge and abilities thereof) has raised new needs for both teaching methods as well as materials. The changing forecasts for the types of jobs and work available and necessary in the future as well as the ever-increasing intercultural encounters even online demand new kinds of preparedness, skills and knowledge that students ought to develop during their school years. These changes and the reality of growing numbers of students not responding to and engaging with traditional styles of teaching are only some examples of the challenges that the school faces today. The way textbooks are designed to tackle these challenges—and rather turn them into opportunities—is a topical question that needs to be addressed in research.

The research group behind this book project, Education for Diversities (E4D) from the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Helsinki, has a duty to look into 'multicultural education' in the Finnish context. Multiculturalism and discussion around diversities in education are fairly recent in Finland, and work on different aspects of education is needed. This is particularly relevant in times like ours when Finland is suffering like most countries in Europe from repeated economic crises that have led to anti-immigrant, xenophobic and racist discourses in the media and on the street. Of course we do not want to contribute to the widespread and untenable idea that "Finns (or the people of another nation) are racist." Generalizing about a whole people does not make sense. Racism is an unstable notion that needs to be discussed and deconstructed. Dealing with diversities of any kind in schools often produces differentiation and hierarchization in spite of teachers' professionalism and goodwill to treat students fairly and equally (Riitaoja, 2013). Teachers seem to lack tools to analyse and detect discourses that create othering (Layne & Lipponen, 2014).

While the literature on textbook research in Finland concerning subjects such as chemistry (Vesterinen, Aksela, & Lavonen, 2013), mathematics (Chung, Lin, & Pai, 2014) and English language education (Kopperoinen, 2011) is plentiful, research on diversities in Finnish textbooks is scarce. One rare example can be found in Bromley and Mäkinen's (2012) study on civic education textbooks. The authors note: "The specific groups that are represented in textbooks, and how they are depicted, are also influenced by power and dominance relations in society. Many groups remain excluded in textbooks, such as gays and lesbians, which appeared in just a handful of the 154 contemporary textbooks we

examined, or the Roma in Finland, who are mentioned rarely despite existing in large numbers” (Bromley & Mäkinen, 2012, p. 47).

Diversities in Textbooks Globally

This section reviews research on diversities in textbooks in other countries. But before, we take a short detour via Asia and Africa to show to our reader that the elements of *invisibility*, *stereotyping*, *imbalance and selectivity*, *unreality*, *fragmentation*, *linguistic bias*, and *cosmetic bias* (Sadker & Sadker, 1982) are also present in these ‘non-Western’ contexts. The idea that Western countries, like Finland, easily essentialise and discriminate against the Other, is widespread in research (Modood, 2013). Our message here is that these phenomena are universal and we have not chosen the Finnish context to either accuse or point our finger at Finnish teachers, textbook authors or publishers.

In the summer of 2014, controversy was created when a blogger based in Hong Kong wrote about a chapter entitled “Living in Hong Kong” in a textbook published in the Special Administrative Region of China. The blogger mentioned a ‘fill-in-the-blank’ task entitled “racial harmony” that included a sketch of a dark-skinned Filipina saying: “I am a Filipino. I am a domestic helper in Hong Kong,” a British man: “I am an English teacher”; a Japanese woman: “I have a sushi restaurant in Hong Kong,” a Chinese woman: “Shanghai is my hometown” and an Indian boy: “I study in an international school.” Other comments found in the textbook included: “Most countries in the north are developed, wealthy and free while southern countries are poorer, with lower education levels, a lack of technology and more political censorship.”

The following excerpt is from a novel entitled *Messages from Finland* by a foreign student from Sierra Leone (Sesay, 1997). The student recalls one of the textbooks he used for geography in his home country:

It was through this book that I first learnt about Scandinavia and of Finland. By then I could have been somewhere between 12 or 14 years old. During that time, when we learnt about these regions, little mention was made about the fact that these places were industrialised and well advanced, in fact, apart from few explanations such as the advanced techniques of protecting or measuring the weather, it never crossed my mind that people here [in Finland] were educated and they live in good houses. If this place were really so cold, with so harsh winters, then, the immediate reasoning was that life must be primitive indeed. This is true, because our geography teacher had always focused more or less on explaining about the climatic conditions up here. They wasted no time

talking about whether there was electricity or skidos (sic) or whether even aeroplanes dared to come here. On coming to Finland, it became evident that this rather detached form of education I had received about the ‘Tundra Regions’ was virtually similar to the kind given to Finnish kids about Africa, whereby their teachers only concentrated in telling them about the hazards of famine, the primitive countryside, and pervading misery and lack. (p. 22–23)

So be it in Hong Kong or Sierra Leon, textbooks can reveal political and relational aspects that tend to treat the Other with stereotypes and biases.

Research on the presence (and absence) of diversities in textbooks is rich internationally. Four trends seem to have emerged since 2010: 1. Analyses of the representation of diversities; 2. Diversity and citizenship in textbooks; 3. Language and culture in English textbooks; and 4. The use of textbooks to develop intercultural competence/empathy. In what follows, a very selective presentation of recent studies is proposed:

1. The first trend is represented by three studies published in 2011, 2013 and 2014. In Moore (2011) the author concentrates on the construction of indigenous students in Australian textbooks. The study shows that they are positioned negatively, i.e. “at risk,” “disadvantaged” and “other.” In “*Textbook as a contradictory melting-pot*”: an analysis of multicultural content in Korean textbooks, Youngdal Cho and Yunkyong Park (2013) observe how multicultural content is covered in elementary and secondary schools in Korea through the analysis of 52 textbooks in social studies, ethics and Korean language. The study shows clear signs of inaccuracies, distortions and stereotypes as well as Korean-ethnic centredness. Finally, Schuermans (2013) focuses on the representation of racial classifications and cultural diversity in fifty geography textbooks in Flanders (Belgium). Again the results prove to be disappointing with several examples of misrepresentations of the Other.
2. Citizenship education is a minefield for researching diversities in textbooks. In their article entitled *Identity, diversity and citizenship: A critical analysis of textbooks and curricula in Irish schools*, Faas and Ross (2012) explore the role of textbooks in developing citizenship and the conception of Irish identity. They note discrepancies between the progressive rhetoric of policy documents and the content of textbooks, where Others are excluded. In a similar vein but with more nuanced results, Moon (2013) analyses 60 civics textbooks in the Republic of Korea. He demonstrates how these textbooks increasingly

- discuss the rights of diverse groups and the need to empower these groups to address problems of social inequality. However hegemonic discourses of national homogeneity still remain.
3. In her studies on Japanese English language textbooks Mieko Yamada (2010, 2011) examines how attitudes to other races and ethnicities are constructed. Yamada discovered that while ‘national’ diversities are presented in the textbooks, nothing is said of diversities within Japan.
 4. Finally in *Learning empathy through school history textbooks? A case study*, Katalin Eszter Morgan (2014) explores how empathy is mediated in textbooks dealing with the topic of “nineteenth century race theories leading to genocide” in South Africa. The author shows that one of the textbooks relies on primary textual sources, presents different perspectives as well as diversity and shows how personal, individual choices play a role in the unfolding of the narratives about the past—thus leading to further empathy.

Suggestions

We, the co-editors as well as the authors, would like to make the following suggestions concerning researching diversities in textbooks. First of all it seems more and more essential that research on textbooks is systematically included in the training of teachers-to-be and that they are trained to be critical towards their contents in relation to diversities (treatment of people of different genders, social classes, races, ages, religions, etc.). This should also lead them to pass on these critical skills onto their students. As textbooks will be more widely available in digital format in the future, it means that people will have more opportunities to carry books with them and (maybe) to read them and thus to reflect further on who is represented in the textbooks, how and why.

We recognize that one main challenge for the future is putting more emphasis on societal issues and their dimensions in teacher education. However, the end of a period of teacher education does not mean the end of learning one’s trade. In-service seminars focusing on textbooks and the representation of otherness should be systematically organized and offered to teachers teaching at all school levels. Textbooks change every 5–10 years (depending on the subject one teaches) and systematic analyses are a must. We recommend that teacher educators or teacher trainees select ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practices identified in textbooks that they may want to share with their colleagues, trainees and why not—family and friends. Finally, constant dialogue between publishing companies (editors), practitioners and researchers is needed. Researchers should refrain from

being overly critical and negotiate meanings and critiques in a slow process. It is important that we researchers pass our results onto publishers and discuss them with editorial teams.

About the Volume

The chapters of this book investigate the issue of diversities in textbooks from multiple perspectives, disciplines, school levels and content areas that are approached with various methods. Together the chapters provide examples of ‘diverse diversities’ (Dervin, 2014) but also hidden ideologies and the dichotomies of ‘us’ and ‘them’/‘other’ that can be found in textbooks when looking beneath the surface of texts and illustrations. The chapters and their methodologies also serve as examples of tools that can be used for analysing discourses in textbooks in order to expose bias, stereotyping and othering. In addition the studies aim to help develop teachers’ and students’ abilities to encounter diversities and similarities in ways that enhance their sensitivity, self-reflexivity and criticality.

A graph of the education system in Finland (Appendix 1; *Finnish education in a nutshell*, 2012) is provided to help the reader to acquaint him/herself with the school levels and become better oriented when reading the different chapters that discuss textbooks situated at the different levels. Basic education in Finland comprises nine years, from 7-year-old students to 16-year-olds (FNBE, 2004). It includes the primary (or elementary) level that covers the first six grades which are usually taught by class teachers. The three last grades of 7–9 make up the lower secondary level where different subjects are taught by specialists educated as subject teachers (the Finnish education system and teacher education are described in detail in Niemi et al., 2012).

In the first two chapters of this volume the authors peruse different ABC books that, besides being textbooks that help children to learn to read, are important representations of the current society and times surrounding the children. **Heini Paavola** and **Fred Dervin** investigate how multiculturalism is constructed in textbooks and for what reasons a certain multicultural content is chosen in ABC books in different eras. The authors take a closer look at three recent ABC books to see how they bring up multicultural topics and how the books represent and help develop students’ different (multicultural) identities.

In a similar vein, the chapter by **Tuija Itkonen** and **Martina Paatela-Nieminen** discusses the production of othering in ABC (e-)books. Their study looks at the ways the notion of the Other has changed along the

years and discusses the role technological advancement has played in encountering diversities. The authors apply an intertextual method to analyse the multimodal entities created in both print-based visual and digital learning materials that combine text and illustrations. The chapter presents a rhizomatic, open-ended way of learning critical thinking that will help foster awareness from the local to the global and understand a plurality of meanings.

Some of the subjects whose textbooks are studied in this volume may be quite particular to the Finnish school system. One of these is home economics which is taught to all students in grade 7 in basic education and offered as an optional subject in grades 8 and 9. In their chapter **Sonja Anttila, Jouni Leskinen, Hanna Posti-Ahokas and Hille Janhonen-Abuquah** examine the role of gender in home economics textbook illustrations. Quantitative and qualitative methods are combined to analyse the illustrations and to peruse the ways female and male are portrayed in them. The study shows how agency is portrayed through a heteronormative conception of gender. The authors first analyse the family roles, ideals and values brought forward in the illustrations and then problematize what is missing from them. Anttila et al. critique the lack of diversity found in performing gender and they warn that the gender equality traditionally attached to compulsory home economics education may not be realized.

Another particularly Finnish subject is religious education as a compulsory school subject. Students take part in religious education according to their memberships in religious communities. The majority of Finnish people belong to the Lutheran church and therefore the majority of students also take part in Lutheran religious education. If a student belongs to another religion, s/he is entitled (under some conditions) to be taught religious education in that religion. If this is not possible, the students from the religions that are minorities in Finland participate in secular ethics instruction. Students who do not belong to any religious community also take part in secular ethics. It is in this context that **Monika Schatz** and **Pia-Maria Niemi** discuss the relation of intercultural and interreligious education. In their study Schatz and Niemi analyse textbook exercises used in lower secondary Lutheran religious education to teach about world religions. The study problematizes the way ‘us’ and ‘them’ are created and reproduced in the exercises. The authors urge teachers to pay attention to silent ideologies and stereotypes in interreligious education.

Aminkeng A. Alemanji, Rita Johnson Longfor and Edda Óskarsdóttir set their study in an international school in Finland and they bring up Holocaust education as an alternative approach to antiracism

education. In their chapter the authors tackle the sensitive issue of teaching about the Holocaust in secondary education. They use the term *racism* to include all forms of discrimination and, with two focus groups including students and their teacher, they discuss how a textbook on Holocaust education could work as a valuable tool for antiracism education.

In her chapter, **Pia Mikander** analyses the concepts of the ‘West’ and ‘Western values’ to examine how these concepts are used and what meanings are given to them in textbooks of geography, history and social studies (grades 5–9). She shows how the concept of the West and Western values are used in discussions about the ‘other’ and how the concept of Western values is used in describing today’s world and the future in textbooks. Like all the other authors in the volume, Mikander suggests that constant dialogue between practitioners and researchers is key to influencing the direction change will take. She makes it clear that textbooks should ask critical questions, not provide statements that consolidate old stereotypical views of the world.

In the final chapter, **Fred Dervin, Kaisa Hahl, Anu Härkönen and Heidi Layne** study two textbooks made for an optional upper secondary history course that promises to teach students about intercultural encounters. The authors take a critical look with a discourse analysis method to see how the textbooks treat different others and how Finnishness is portrayed in them in order to find out how intercultural encounters are in fact approached. The textbooks are supposed to help the students to develop critical thinking about alternative worldviews. However, the authors question how well the textbooks are able to meet this aim when the chapters tend to give contradictory and incoherent images of the other and self at the same time.

We hope that this volume will work to catalyse advances in research and intervention in (teacher) education and contribute not only to more adequate approaches to diversities in the use of textbooks but also to more sensitive and ethical practices. As hinted at several times in this introduction, the era of e-textbooks is nearing and by developing critical tools to examine how diversities are used, perceived and constructed in teaching materials we can—maybe!—make a change in the future.

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