Sex – sexuality education Personal development for the prevention of discrimination and violence(SEXED)

Gender and sexuality stereotypes in textbook images

by

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Brief description

The present training unit helps teachers analyze stereotypes based on gender and sexuality in textbook images. In the first activity participants are invited to explore images of school textbooks with the help of questions to be used as guidelines to recognize any prejudices, stereotypes and bias. These guidelines will also help participants select illustrations for the follow-up task. In the second activity participants are asked to work with the chosen images in groups to identify symbolic meanings in textbook illustrations and reflect on their purpose and meaning.

Expected outcomes

- ✓ Participants will be able to use content analysis to evaluate illustrations in teaching resources and recognize gender and sexuality stereotypes and biases.
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify symbolic meanings in textbook images regarding gender and sexuality and discuss their purpose, meaning and effect.
- ✓ Participants' will be ready to look at things from different perspectives. (A_EPIST_3)
- ✓ Participants' will be able to act against discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices. (S_HR_3)

Activities

Title of activity	Duration	Methods/techniques used
Activity 1: Does bias matter?	90 minutes	Icebreaker, short input, guided textbook image analysis, group discussion, debriefing
Activity 2: How to break stereotypes	60 minutes	Group discussion, poster presentations, plenary discussion
Activity 3: Evaluation	20 minutes	Plenary discussion guided by questions to evaluate the training session

Background and context

According to research data, students spend as much as 80 to 95 percent of classroom time using textbooks (Blumberg, 2007, p. 6). As teachers make a majority of their instructional decisions based on the textbook, the evaluation of its content and images is highly important as these are decisive in reinforcing or deconstructing gender and sexuality stereotypes. The present training unit was developed in Estonia to help teachers analyze stereotypes based on gender and sexuality in textbook images. The session was piloted within the framework of a course on Multicultural Education with a group of 18 in-service teachers many of whom are often involved in writing textbook reviews.

The target audience is teachers or trainee teachers of learners aged 6-10, 10-14, 14-19 and adults.

Activity 1: Does bias matter?

Duration: 90 min

Expected outcomes
- ✓ Participants will get to know each other
- ✓ Participants will become aware how labels we attach to people change our behavior towards them
- ✓ Participants will be ready to look at things from different perspectives. (A_EPIST_3)

Methods/techniques used
- ✓ icebreaking role-play,
- ✓ short presentation,
- ✓ guided analysis of textbook images,
- ✓ group discussion,
- ✓ creating posters,
- ✓ debriefing discussion

Resources
- ✓ Prepare a set of typed labels with a positive adjective on each such as *friendly, helpful, smart, generous, loving* etc. A more challenging alternative is to generate a list of mixed labels, such as: *Tell me I am right, Flatter me, Ignore me, Criticize me, Treat me as a sex object, Interrupt me, Tell me I am wrong, Treat me as a helpless person with nothing worthwhile to say, Talk to me as if I were a macho, etc.*
- ✓ Seeing ourselves as others see us – Icebreaking activity. P. B. Pedersen, 110 Experiences for Multicultural Learning, 2004, Washington D.C., pp. 44-45.
- ✓ Blumberg, R. L. Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to gender equality in education. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007. Education for All by 2015: will we make it? UNESCO, 2007.

Procedure

Step 1 (3 min)

Arbitrarily assign these labels to participants and attach a label to each person's back (or their forehead) so that they will not know what their own label says. Instruct the participants not to tell others what their label says.

Step 2 (7 min)

Divide participants into groups of 6 to 8. Engage the groups in a discussion for about 5 minutes, and ask all participants to treat others in the group according to their labels. At the end of 5 minutes, have each participant guess what is on his or her label. If the group members do not know each other, this is a good time to introduce themselves.

Step 3 (10 min)

After they have guessed, have the participants peel of their labels and read them. When each participant has had a chance to see his or her label, return to a large group for discussion. Encourage participants to convey to the group how they felt about how others were acting towards them. Questions that might guide the discussion include the following:

- Did you feel helpless when you wanted to change how others perceived you?
- Did the other group members seem simplistic in their judgments?
- To what extent did you find it uncomfortable to treat others according to the label?
- How accurately did you interpret the way others acted towards you?
- Do you think you are really wearing a label that you cannot yourself see?

Step 4 (10 min)

Explain the aims of the session and give a short overview of the main concepts. You can put the main ideas on slides and project them or give them out on a handout (see Appendix 1).

Step 5 (10 min)

Participants read and discuss with a partner the handout "List of guidelines for the evaluation of textbook images" (see Appendix 2) and adapt it to their own needs and interests.

Step 6 (30 min)

The pairs get a textbook to analyze. The task is for the pairs to select the images they think are reflecting gender and sexuality stereotypes and reinforce prejudices.

Step 7 (5 min)

Pairs show one selected image to the whole group and give a one-sentence justification why they think the image reinforces gender and sexuality stereotypes.

Step 8 (15 min)

Questions to guide the debriefing discussion:
- What have you learned from this activity? How important is it to take action on the basis of what you have learned?
- How do gender and sexuality stereotypes appear in the textbooks?
- What surprised you the most?
- What affect do the books/images have on the society? Young children? What message are we giving? How do you think that minority groups feel when they look at textbooks only featuring the majority population? What role models do they have?

Tips for trainers
- ✓ Have 4 or 5 "critical" textbooks ready for analysis. It may be interesting to compare what variety of approaches there is for different age groups.
- ✓ Make photocopies of images for the following session.

Activity 2: How to break stereotypes

Duration: 60 min

Expected outcomes
- ✓ Participants will apply the knowledge gained in the previous activity
- ✓ Participants will have explored (unconscious) intentions and symbolic meanings behind textbook images
- ✓ Participants will be able to act against discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices. (S_HR_3)

Methods/techniques used
- ✓ group work: creating posters
- ✓ poster presentations
- ✓ plenary discussion

Resources
- ✓ Copies of images (possibly but not necessarily from previous session)
- ✓ List of guidelines for evaluation of textbooks images (Appendix 2)
- ✓ Large sheets of paper (one for each group), markers, scissors, glue

Practical arrangements
- ✓ Participants will need space to draw and create posters.

Procedure

Step 1 (10 min)
Pairs join into groups of 4 and groups are going to create posters, using images from the previous session (or other images provided by the trainer). They will divide a large sheet of paper into two columns. In the first column they glue copies of 'Stereotyping images'.

Step 2 (30 min)
Groups discuss the symbolic meaning or the hidden messages behind the selected images and the possible ways of breaking gender and sexuality stereotypes. In the second column 'How to break stereotypes' the trainees draw symbolic pictures or fill it with keywords that describe how the image could be turned into a tool that helps to break stereotypes.

Step 3 (10 min)
Posters are presented to the whole group.

Step 4 (10 min)
Questions to guide the debriefing discussion:
- What ways of thinking are promoted by the images we analyzed?
- What labels are usually attached to the people and actions we see in textbook images?
- What other possible ways of thinking might there be which are not shown in these examples?
- What related important issues have we not discussed but should come back to?
- How will this topic help you – as a teacher and as a textbook writer or reviewer– to meet the needs of a diverse student population?

Tips for trainers
- ✓ Support the participants during the process of creating posters with creative ideas and encouraging words if necessary.

Activity 3: Evaluation

Duration: 20 min

Expected outcomes
  ✓ Participants will become aware of the outcomes of the session
  ✓ Participants will be able to critically review what they have been through
  ✓ Facilitator will learn what seemed most beneficial to participants and what to change in the session next time.

Methods/techniques used
  ✓ Individual work
  ✓ Group work to incorporate everyone's views
  ✓ Gallery

Resources
  ✓ Pen, paper, markers, A4 or A+ sheets for posters

Practical arrangements
  ✓ The room has to be set up for group work with sufficient space to walk around.

Procedure

Step 1 (10 min)
  Participants take notes individually in response to the questions below:
  • What have you learned during this training session?
  • How will it impact your work as a teacher?
  • How do you evaluate the methods used in this training unit?
  • What did you like most about this training session and what should be changed about it?

Step 2 (10 min)
  Participants get together in groups of 4 and make a drawing/sketch that incorporates everyone's feedback.
  Posters are pinned to the wall and everyone can walk around to take a look and comment.

Tips for trainers
  ✓ Time management during the activity should be clear and strict.
  ✓ Take care of learners' individual needs and equal participation.

References:

Blumberg, R. L. Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to gender equality in education. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007. Education for All by 2015: will we make it? UNESCO, 2007.

Kalmus, V. What do pupils and textbooks do with each other? Methodological problems of research on socialization through educational media. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 2004, 36, 4, pp. 469–485.

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Richards, J. Teaching More Than English? Gender Roles in English Language Textbooks. *Soorollid õppekirjanduses.* Ed. by J. Mikk. Tartu, 2002.

Táboas-Pais, M.I. & Rey-Cao, A. Gender Differences in Physical Education Textbooks in Spain: A Content Analysis of Photographs. *Sex Roles*, 2012, 67, pp. 389–402.

Appendices

Appendix 1

SLIDE 1 – RESEARCH FINDINGS
The research findings show a noticeable imbalance between male and female representation in which the male model is clearly predominant. Textbook images portray males and females in stereotypical roles and depict certain activities as more appropriate for one gender or the other. These findings further highlight the need to increase awareness regarding the image content in textbooks and the necessity to work in order to overcome traditional gender stereotypes connected with gender and sexuality.

SLIDE 2 – THE TECHNIQUE FOR STUDYING IMAGES
Many authors (Richards 2002; Kalmus, 2004; Táboas-Pais & Rey-Cao 2012) refer to **content analysis** as a perfect technique to analyze textual or visual material that involves identification, counting and interpretations of aspects of content which the researcher assumes to be significant.
Coded variables are: visibility of men and women, the roles that men and women were ascribed, the activities they were participating in, the power relationship/status of actors depending upon their gender and sexuality.

Appendix 2

List of guidelines for evaluation of textbooks images (Source: Richards, J, Teaching More Than English? Gender Roles in English Language Textbooks. In *Soorollid õppekirjanduses.* Ed. by J.Mikk. Tartu, 2002).

How do the textbooks construct and reflect societal beliefs, values and meaning systems surrounding the notions of gender and sexuality?
What is represented in the images?
How is it represented – what meanings and associations are conveyed in the images?
Did you pick out any dominant themes or issues you felt were important?

Checklist for a quantitative analysis of images:

Can you count the examples for some or all of the criteria below in the textbook you wish to evaluate?

- The overall visibility of men and women in the textbook

- The roles that men and women were play in the images
- The activities that men and women are depicted as participating in
- The evaluation of men and women and their actions
- The power relationship and status of the actors depending upon their sex

Checklist for a qualitative analysis of images:

Can you explore some (or all) of the questions below in connection with the textbook you wish to evaluate?

- Who is the target audience of the textbook and to what extent has the author considered the users' needs?
- What emotions and characteristics are ascribed to males and females?
- Who are the exemplary persons in the book and what makes them ideal?
- Do the captions use masculine subsuming language to describe a person?
- Could the author have used different examples/language to make the same point?
- Are there contradictions between the captions and the images?
- Do the images present normative/conservative or progressive examples of gender roles?