



Pestalozzi

Training Resources

History Education (HIS)

What constitutes a good history textbook?

by

Author: Salomeja Bitlieriute- Lithuania

Editor: Pascale Mompoin-Gaillard



The Pestalozzi Programme
Council of Europe Training Programme for education professionals

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The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

Theme: Developing a critical analysis method for evaluating history textbooks

Expected outcome

- To help teacher identify criteria for choosing history textbooks.
- To raise awareness of the diversity of learners and their specific needs.
- To share experience on this topic, and develop cooperative work.

Target group

Type of training	School level / age	Subject area
In-service training	All levels	History

Brief description of the unit

Giving the opportunity to teachers to choose textbooks according their teaching goals and methodologies should be one of the democratic attributes of every educational system. This training session plan engages teachers in an analytical and comparative exercise to help them identify what criteria they should use to evaluate history textbooks and choose the history textbooks they wish to use in the classroom. This choice is a difficult task considering the variety of resources available and the different needs of student according to their age and level and learning styles. Catering to the diversity of students needs is a matter of intercultural competence. Teachers are raising questions about “which text book is better for me and why it is better?” - This unit will help them identify their own criteria for this difficult and important pedagogical choice.

Methods/techniques used

Individual and cooperative learning methods, group discussion; interpretive approach

Time 6 hours

Activity 1	▶ 60 minutes
Activity 2	▶ 120 minutes
Activity 3	▶ 120 minutes
Debriefing session	▶ 60 minutes

Warning for trainers:

This training unit is centered on pedagogical criteria for evaluating textbooks. It does not approach the issue of content of the curricula. For example, it does not question European textbooks' general disregard for "global history", inclusive of the Asian, African, South American continents, large parts of the Far East... the happenings, culture and the rich human development occurring there.

Resources

Computers with internet access or a large sample of history textbooks	
Large sheets of paper (A3), or flipchart and markers	
Video projector	
Quiz sheet	Appendix 1
Requirements for textbooks data / country	Separate file
Rubrics for requirements for textbooks handout	Appendix 2
Application in the classroom sheet	Appendix 3

Activity 1 Introduction



60 minutes

	Notes
<p>▶ General aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ To get participants to know each other <p>▶ Specific aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ To share experience on this topic, and develop cooperative work. ➢ To introduce the topic 	
<p>▶ Methods /techniques used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Ice breaking activity, group discussion 	
<p>▶ Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Quiz sheet (appendix 1) 	
<p>▶ Practical arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Set up the room for a whole group activity. 	
<p>▶ Instructions/procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Distribute quiz sheets in appendix 1. One sheet per each member of your group. ➢ Ask participants to find a partner, ask him/her all the questions on the sheet and fill in the answers. ➢ All pairs should present partners answers for the whole group. ➢ Present the goals and procedure of the session. 	

<p>▶ Tips to trainers/anticipated difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ If the group is small (less than 10 participants) adapt the ice breaker so as to allow for movement: for example, cut postcards in two and have participant find their partner that way. 	
<p>▶ Debriefing/reflecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ “Lead a discussion on the main issues and challenges concerning this topic. 	

Activity 2 Identifying criteria for good textbooks



120 minutes

	Notes
<p>▶ General aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ To help teachers identify criteria for choosing history textbooks. <p>▶ Specific aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ To raise awareness of the diversity of learners and their specific needs. ➢ To share experience on this topic, and develop cooperative work. 	
<p>▶ Methods/techniques used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Cooperative learning methods; interpretive approach 	
<p>▶ Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Large sheets of paper (A3), or flipchart and markers ➢ Rubrics for requirements for textbooks handout (appendix 2) ➢ Power point presentation on national requirements, an example from the Ministry of Education – Lithuania: See separate file “Evaluating History Textbooks_SB_Ppt” “Requirements for textbooks” , 	

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania 9-04-2003 No.452 (extract)	
<p>► Practical arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set up the room for group work. 	
<p>► Instructions/procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teachers should divide into three groups. Each group chooses a moderator and a rapporteur. ➤ Ask participants to discuss and identify the most important attributes of a “good” history textbook. The rapporteur writes the results on a flipchart or large sheet. (30 min.) ➤ Ask teachers to present their group work to the whole group, and comment their work. ➤ Briefly present an example of requirements for text books using the PowerPoint file listed in the resources above or the requirements available within your context. ➤ Invite groups to change moderators and rapporteurs. Distribute the handout in appendix 2 to the moderators only. ➤ In their groups, ask participants to compare the criteria developed during the session with the official requirements you just presented and together find the differences and similarities. The rapporteur writes these on a flipchart for each group. ➤ Groups present their posters to the whole group. 	
<p>► Tips to trainers/anticipated difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If available, you should use the national requirement from your own country or the local requirements for your district or school system. In this case : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You should make your own handout and not use the one we offer in appendix 2. - You should create your own PowerPoint file and not use the separate file we offer here. 	
<p>► Debriefing/reflecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lead a whole group discussion using the following prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“Present your own experience using official criteria on history textbooks</i> - <i>“What latitude do you have in choosing textbooks?”</i> - <i>“How can you alleviate the deficiencies in textbooks that are imposed”</i> 	

Activity 3 Evaluating textbooks: an “hands on” activity



120 minutes

	Notes
<p>▶ General aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ To help teacher evaluate history textbooks. <p>▶ Specific aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ To raise awareness of the diversity of learners and their specific needs. ➢ To share experience on this topic, and develop cooperative work. 	
<p>▶ Methods/techniques used: Cooperative learning methods, group research</p>	
<p>▶ Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Computers with internet access or a large sample of different history textbooks 	
<p>▶ Instructions / procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Give each group different examples of history textbooks (OR have them research textbook materials on the internet) and ask them to highlight good history textbook criteria in the materials. (1 hour). ➢ Ask the rapporteurs to present their conclusions to the whole group (40 minutes) ➢ Moderate a discussion the findings (20 minutes) 	
<p>▶ Tips to trainers/anticipated difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The trainer should go around in groups and help participants in their research. If you are working through the internet, you should prepare beforehand some links to resources and textbooks. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You may also introduce the documents listed in the references below. ➤ In different context, teachers can have the choice of their textbooks and in other cases they do not have this choice and must use the mandatory textbook for their academy. It is very important that you have a good representation of the situation to adapt this activity to you trainees' situation. 	
<p>▶ Debriefing/reflecting – Follow up activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“How will this activity help you to chose the textbooks you wish to use?”</i> - <i>OR “How will this activity help you to adapt the use you make of the mandatory textbooks that you use?”</i> 	

Activity 4 Follow up activity



60 minutes

	Notes
<p>▶ General aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To help teacher apply what they have learned to their teaching. 	
<p>▶ Methods/techniques used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual work 	
<p>▶ Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Application in the classroom” sheet in appendix 3 	

<p>▶ Practical arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Set up the room for individual work.	
<p>▶ Instructions/procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Ask the teachers to individually fill in the “Application in the classroom” sheet in appendix 3, hand it in when they are done.	
<p>▶ Tips to trainers/anticipated difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Provide support to each participant with one/one attention in this activity: suggest new ideas and validate and support their suggestions. Make sure the answers are precise and clear.	
<p>▶ Debriefing/reflecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Review with the students what they have learned, using the following questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>“What are the most important criteria to evaluate textbooks?”</i>- <i>“What are the best ways to improve the use of the textbooks you use in your practice?”</i>	

Evaluation and assessment

Review with the students what they have learned, using the following questions:

	Notes
➤ Did you feel comfortable with this activity?	
➤ What are the 3 most important things you learned during this 6 hour session?	
➤ What will this change in your way of using textbooks in your teaching?"	

References

- Council of Europe with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig (Germany), (2000), The European Home: Representations of 20th Century European history textbooks by Falk Pingel, available at: http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_cooperation/education/history_teaching/history_in_the_20th_century/the_european_home/!EEUROPH.PDF

- Useful links
 - Lithuania:
 - http://www.sviesa.lt/lt.php/knygu_katalogas/359;book;11801
 - <http://www.briedis.eu/KatalogasUzsakymai/index.php?fuseaction=RodytiKategorijasS&StambesnelD=29&lsplestine=0&langp aram=LT>
 - http://www.kronta.lt/?sub_id=1&cat_id=6&book_id=25

 - South East Europe:
 - Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe, http://www.cdsee.org/publications_history_see.html

 - Franco/German initiative:
 - Histoire/Geschichte Franco-German High School History Book; Ernst Klett Verlag, 2006-2007. Information available at: <http://www.goethe.de/lns/jp/lp/prj/wza/defr/en2281618.htm>

 - Image of Islam in history textbooks:
 - http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1158658341671&pagename=Zone-English-Euro_Muslims%2FEMELayout

Appendix 1:

Activity 1

Quiz sheet

Name and surname _____

Job position _____

Region _____

Adage, used very often	The last travel	Favourite topic for conversation	Favourite textbook
Hobby	Favourite meal	Expectations from seminar	Family

Appendix 2:

Activity 2

Handout

From “Requirements for textbooks” by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania 9-04-2003 No.452 (extract). Available at: http://www.smm.lt/teisine_baze/docs/isakymai/2003-04-09-452.htm

Rubric	0	1	2	Achieved
REQUIREMENTS FOR TEXTBOOKS 1: Subject-matter				
1.1. Subject accuracy.				
1.2. Using modern concepts, theories and interpretations.				
1.3. Clear concepts, theories, law descriptions.				
1.4. Selection validity of the materials, presenting in textbooks.				
1.5. Tolerant assessment of gender, age groups, minorities.				
REQUIREMENTS FOR TEXTBOOKS 2: Pedagogical				
2.1. Coherence with curricula.				
2.2 . Age appropriate.				
2.3. Respect for diversity: teaching and learning.				
2.4. Methodological approaches for different learning styles.				
2.5. Project learning for students to work independently.				

2.6. Developing creativity.				
2.7. A variety of visual materials.				
REQUIREMENTS FOR TEXTBOOKS 3: Psychological				
3.1. Language style and readability for different students' age groups.				
3.2. Materials orientated on student's life experience and context.				
3.3. Reasonable and universal use of visual materials.				
3.4. Coherence with other textbooks in the same contexts and age groups.				

Appendix 3:

Activity 3

Application in the classroom sheet
How will I plan my own topic with teachers?

1. Is this topic interesting for teachers? Why?

2. If you answer is “yes” on first question, please, describe the activities which you will use on your own topic and why?

3. Please, describe the possible problems you foresee when realising the lesson.

4. In which ways do you plan to solve those problems?

5. What activity or idea is the most interesting and attractive for you in this lesson?

6. What you would like want to change and why?

Thanks for your answers.