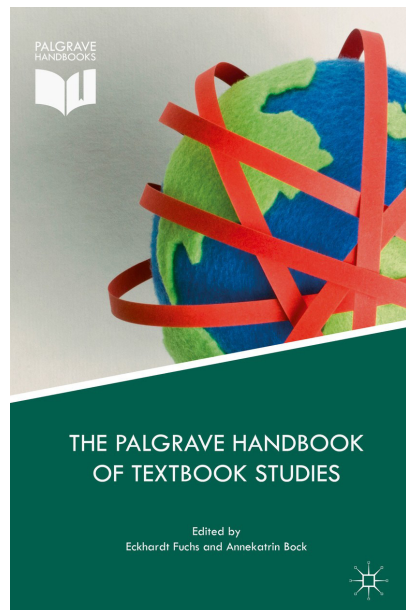


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Eckhardt Fuchs and Annkatrin Bock (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York: 2018; 432 pp.: ISBN: 978-1-137-53141-4

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Textbooks and textbook-oriented studies are generally caught between two areas of research: publishing and education. Printed textbooks have played a vital role in the Western education system, at least until the beginning of the twentieth century, having been deemed the main source of knowledge. As a consequence of educational textbook usage, children and young adults established regular reading habits, but the many social, cultural and technological changes of the last century mean that textbook use, content, format and production have changed significantly. The present essay collection offers a much-needed insight into the field of textbooks, which it also broadens with vital input from social studies and the humanities.



The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies consists of 30 essays, assembled and edited by two established researchers in the field, both affiliated with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI) in Braunschweig, Germany. Eckhardt Fuchs is a historian and has been the director of the Institute since 2015. His research interests lie in globalisation processes related to education, European education policy, the history of transnational education relationships, the global history of textbook revision and the history of teaching materials (GEI: Prof. Dr Eckhardt Fuchs, n.d.). Annkatrin Bock is head of the Media in Schools research team at the Institute and is best known

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for her research work in educational media and school and classroom, as well as in reception and appropriation in media and communication studies. Dr Bock's recent work focuses on digital transformation and the change in learning culture (GEI: Dr Annekatriin Bock, n.d.).

The 36 contributors to this volume come from various fields connected to textbook studies, including publishing, digital media, education, curriculum studies, history, geography, linguistics and discourse studies, social anthropology and sociology. The editors thus succeed in producing a diverse and comprehensive volume, shedding light on textbooks from a variety of angles and discussing the historical, methodological, political and other dilemmas in the field.

As the editors explain in the *Introduction*, textbook studies are a substantially diverse area of research that demands an exploration of the common ground between the chapters' perspectives. They outline that "the conceptual focus revolves explicitly around textbook-related research questions informed by a cultural studies perspective" (p. 2) and further clarify that the field "centers on approaches from sociological and cultural studies, such as memory studies, sociology of knowledge, discourse theory, and media theory, alongside those drawn from the social and educational sciences" (ibid).

The book is arranged in four main parts, opening with an insight into the history, theory and methods of textbook research (Part I, Chapters 2–4), before continuing with a focus on the context in which textbooks are produced (Part II, Chapters 5–12), textbook content (Part III, Chapters 13–26), and the use, effects and practices of textbooks (Part IV, Chapters 27–29). The editors characterise Parts II to IV as "production, product, and reception" (p. 3). The book is rounded out with a conclusion, Part V, which contains reflections on future directions. Due to the length and complexity of the Handbook, not all of the chapters can be discussed here. Instead, the content of the four sections will be outlined and the chapters considered important for the conceptual framework of this issue of the CEPS Journal will be described.

Part I, entitled *History, Theory, and Methods of Textbook Research*, consists of three essays that focus on the origins and development of textbook studies through to the present. The first two chapters, *History of the School Textbook* by Steffen Sammler and *History of Textbook Research* by Eckhardt Fuchs and Kathrin Henne, are complementary in that they both discuss the transformation of school textbooks since the early modern period. Both pieces indicate the important conceptual turn that occurred in the last century when textbooks, initially considered books to be used in schools as well as in other situations, became an exclusively educational medium produced solely for school use. Additionally, technology has advanced considerably in the last decade, impacting both textbook usage in

schools as well as the field of textbook research. The third essay, *Theories and Methods of Textbook Studies* by Annekatrin Bock, accordingly turns the reader's gaze to the methodological approaches to the multifaceted and manifold concept of textbook studies. Bock argues that the methodology of textbook research long had a reputation of being one-dimensional, focused solely on content analysis, but has expanded immensely in the last decade by using different approaches, such as narrative theory, interviews and computer-aided analysis. By outlining these numerous methods, both marginalised and established, the author paves the way for future research in the field. This first part of the Handbook could be seen as a prolonged introduction, since these three essays provide insight into the history, complexity and diversity of textbook research.

Part II, entitled *Textbooks in Their Context*, comprises eight chapters covering an array of topics relating to the social context of textbooks, from their publishing and authorship to their role in the education system in general and in particular areas, namely, the social sciences and the humanities, as well as science and geography. This section also addresses textbook quality by stressing the importance of both criteria and evaluation. Although the educational perspective is incorporated in the historically and methodologically engaged Part I, the connection between textbooks and education is even more apparent in Part II, which highlights the societal conditions around the production of textbooks and the decisions over their substance, the knowledge included in them. In the chapter *Textbooks and Education*, Eugenia Roldán Vera sheds light on the importance of social context in the process of textbook production, which is inherently connected to its content. Textbooks have changed considerably since the nineteenth century, when they played a crucial role in providing pupils with common representations of the past, thus building uniformity in the self-perception of nations. The atrocities of World Wars I and II triggered analysis and wider consideration of the role of education in the generation of conflict, and this had a considerable impact on textbook research and on understanding the role of textbooks in contemporary societies. Later developments brought additional challenges, such as the multiplication of knowledge sources and digitalisation. The latter is discussed in Christoph Bläsi's *Educational Publishers and Educational Publishing*, in which specific features of textbook publishing across disciplines in several Western and developing countries are explored.

The third part of the book, *Textbooks and Their Contents*, is the most extensive, containing 14 essays that build on the dynamics between context and content. As highlighted by the editors, Part III is intrinsically divided into three subsections, with the first focusing on national, transnational and regional identities, as well as on representations of class, race, gender and sexual

orientation in textbooks. The second set of chapters puts a spotlight on textbook representations of the historical and cultural issues of religion, nationalism and the Holocaust, colonialism, socialism and, more generally, dictatorship and war. Sylvie Guichard's impactful *War in Textbooks* is cited in many of the Handbook's other chapters because it demonstrates how fundamentally textbook content was affected by the two world wars. The third section in Part III deals with political and economic concepts, such as human rights education in Patricia Bromley and Julia Lerch's *Human Rights as Cultural Globalisation: The Rise of Human Rights in Textbooks, 1890–2013*) and the climate crisis in Tobias Ide's *The Environment*.

Part IV, entitled *Textbook Use, Effects, and Practices*, centres on the usage of textbooks by different users in both formal and informal education. As mentioned above, textbooks were originally just books used in schools and other places, but they gradually transformed into specifically educational materials or tools. As Thomas Illum Hansen explains in *Textbook Use*, this development led to textbooks being used by students as well as by teachers. Today, textbooks remain the most regularly used learning materials. As several other authors in this Handbook note, Illum Hansen explores the emergence of digital textbooks and other digital teaching materials, referencing a systematic review of 16 open educational resource studies and concluding that there is little difference in the learning outcomes of digital and paper-based learning materials. Although students prefer printed textbooks to digital versions, they perceive their quality as comparable. The differences between reading (in general rather than specifically textbooks) on screens or on paper has been increasingly researched over the last several years, and meta-study findings suggest the opposite of Illum Hansen's first argument and affirm the latter (Singer and Alexander, 2017; Delgado et al., 2018; Clinton, 2019). Reading on a screen differs from reading on paper; it is harder to read long-form informational text on a screen because we remember less and it is more exhausting than reading from paper (Stavanger Declaration 2019). This topic relates to digitalisation, but it is also very closely connected to the complexity of content in books and textbooks, which leaves room for future studies.

The Handbook's conclusion is called *New Directions*, or Part V, and is written by Barbara Cristophe, Annekatrin Bock, Eckhardt Fuchs, Felicitas Macgilchrist, Marcus Otto and Steffen Sammler. It outlines the key trends presented in the Handbook and points out the central shortcomings of the field. The authors acknowledge the already significant broadening of the range of theoretical approaches to textbook studies, which has led to the area being "well enough grounded to make significant contributions to theoretical debate in several areas" (p. 414). Furthermore, they remark on the significant changes

in the perception of textbooks, which are now studied as complex media rather than simple transmitters. This closing chapter also underlines possible ideas for future research, such as expanding into geographical regions that have been neglected in certain respects and inventing methods for analysing different teaching materials, especially in relation to digital textbooks and open resources.

The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies sheds light on the development of textbook-related research, focuses on the importance of the social conditions in which textbooks are produced, and analyses the role of teaching with school textbooks in the process of achieving educational aims. It shows how the field of textbook studies has been established over time and how interconnected it is not only with education studies, but also with many disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities. The collection identifies many pressing questions relating to textbook studies, some of which are briefly outlined above, and leaves room for further reflection and analysis. For example, the severe reductions and changes in what students learn at school over the last few decades has become a burning issue, impacting how and to what extent we access the social stock of knowledge. It has also severely affected textbook production and usage. Whether future research focuses on historical or methodological perspectives or on another area of textbook studies, this Handbook provides a comprehensive review of existing theory and research and is therefore a vital contribution to a field that has had troubles in the past, but has recently laid its scholarly foundations.

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