



# Unmasking racism

Guidelines for educational materials

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# SHORT SUMMARY

## Countering racism in and through education

Racist ideologies and discrimination continue to be a global problem.

They are still widespread in our societies and rooted in different channels that enable their diffusion. Racism in education materials is a prevalent issue that must be addressed.

These Guidelines intend to increase awareness and improve understanding of how racism manifests itself in educational materials and to provide guidance on how to counter this phenomenon.

Indeed, educational materials are not neutral.

They can be used to convey a particular worldview and self-perception, social values and norms as well as to underpin an existing social and political order. Textbook studies from around the world show that textbooks frequently perpetuate or condone racist stereotypes instead of promoting more inclusive and respectful societies.

This publication is aimed at textbook developers, authors and curriculum writers to support them in identifying how racism manifests itself in educational materials and ensuring that racist content is removed from such materials.

**Textbooks**  
frequently perpetuate  
or condone **racist**  
**stereotypes**



**unesco**

*"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"*

# Unmasking racism

Guidelines for educational materials

# Foreword

UNESCO's Constitution, adopted in the aftermath of the destruction provoked by the inherently racist and antisemitic ideology of the Nazi regime, states that "the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races." Indeed, one of the Organization's first major global programmes was to expose the fallacies of racism. "Whenever it is, whatever form it takes, racism is an evil force, and to the extent that UNESCO can kill it by the truth, it will do good," declared the *New York Times* on 19 July 1950.

Ever since its creation, UNESCO has sought to address the root causes of racial prejudice and discrimination, challenge the unacceptable discourses that legitimize intolerance, discrimination and group-targeted violence and to provide solutions to mitigate its disastrous impact on our societies. Racism has no biological foundation, whatever fallacious scientific veneer populist ideologues may try to maintain to justify their hatred. Racism is, above all, a profound attack on universal values of human rights and a deliberate attempt to destroy our sense of a shared humanity. In that respect, racism has always been and remains an assault on all people's aspiration to dignity and freedom, an obstacle to international dialogue and peace, and an impediment to economic, social and cultural development. In a context of forced migration and conflict, ecological threats, persisting inequalities, as well as rising extremist, populist and exclusionary ideologies that fester on fears and angst, racism and racial discrimination remain one of the great challenges of our times.

From an educational perspective, confronting intolerance and discrimination begins with instilling in learners the values, attitudes and behaviours that support responsible citizenship and commitment to peace and human rights. This entails developing policies that are inclusive and provide vulnerable and marginalized groups with quality education. It means addressing historical grievances inherited from violent pasts and acknowledging their legacies and consequences up until the present day, such as prejudice and structural discrimination, systems of oppression and domination. UNESCO's Holocaust and genocide education programme, the Routes of Enslaved Peoples project, and the General Histories series are at the heart of UNESCO's struggle against racism: they bear witness to history, deconstruct discourses that justify racial injustices and atrocity crimes, question present-day inequalities, and support the reappropriation of history as in the case of the General History of Africa. Such work entails supporting the development of curricula, pedagogies and educational media that are free of prejudice and bias and do not perpetuate stereotypes or legitimize unequal social structures but rather promote inclusive and respectful societies. Moreover, we need actively anti-racist education materials that provide educators with the tools they need to support anti-racist learning and a vision in which our sense of shared humanity will eclipse our societies' tendencies for regression, division and conflict.

I hope these new guidelines on countering racism, which show a very contrasted picture of how the issue is dealt with worldwide, and recommendations to combat racism in textbooks and learning materials, will improve our awareness of how educational media can unwittingly condone racism and help education stakeholders uphold the values that underpin a society where no one's life is regarded as unworthy.



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# Introduction

## a. Background

Racism can take many forms. These forms are strongly determined by context since they can have very different manifestations at different times and in different places. As such forms are part of explanatory and legitimating models and are embedded in specific socio-political narratives, they can therefore only be analysed and understood in light of their respective historical and social contexts (Hormel 2018, p. 82). Moreover, they are subject to constant historical change. However, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century racial theories aiming to provide an ostensibly “scientific” rationale for white human superiority, colonial exploitation, land theft from and enslavement of non-white people (Arndt 2017, p. 30 et seq; Hormel 2018, p. 84; Marmer and Sow 2015 and many others) continue to feed racism today and manifest themselves in adapted forms of racist ideologies and practices.

Ongoing systemic racism, anti-Black, anti-Muslim and antisemitic hate speech and hate crimes, and xenophobic discrimination against migrants and refugees are some of the manifestations of racism today (UN Human Rights Council 2021). Regional and transnational social movements highlight a number of grievances. For example, the global Black Lives Matter movement, which started in 2013 with the aim of challenging white supremacy and building local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities, has called attention to police brutality and racially motivated violence against Black people, and advocates for racial justice.

One of the earliest UNESCO initiatives to raise awareness of racial inequality was a programme that released four statements on race between 1950 and 1967 (Duedahl, 2016, p. 5; Duedahl, 2008) and three prominent series of UNESCO publications. While these early publications focused primarily on an anthropological discussion of race as a biological or social category, the thematic focus later shifted to the social reasons for and effects of racial prejudice and discrimination, and to possible courses of action against racism (UNESCO 1969). Further documents such as the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice of 1978, the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights of 1997 and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001 clearly condemn racial prejudice. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which was drafted following the third World Conference Against Racism of 2001 (United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance) emphasizes the importance of non-discriminatory, equal access to education for all in law and practice. The Programme of Action states that human rights education forms the central framework for the implementation of measures, and urges States to “develop educational materials, including textbooks and dictionaries, aimed at combating those phenomena and ... give importance, if appropriate, to textbook and curriculum review and amendment, so as to eliminate any elements that might promote racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance or reinforce negative stereotypes, and to include material that refutes such stereotypes” (Article 127). In 2019, UNESCO renewed its commitment to the global fight against racism in 40 C/Resolution 39 of the General Conference, in which it called for action to be taken against all forms of “racial discrimination, racial hatred and racial hate crimes”, bearing in mind that international law condemned “any doctrine of superiority based on racial differentiation”.



## b. Race, racialization and racism

Racist ideologies and discrimination continue to be a global problem, and however mutable and difficult to grasp in different conceptions, racism persists (Balibar, 1990). It is by no means a phenomenon of the past; rather the racialization of bodies and identities is part of “modern configurations of power” (Messerschmidt 2009, p. 62). Racism in today’s societies is not necessarily based on phenotypic characteristics and biological heredity; nowadays it often relies on notions of cultural differences and their presumed incompatibility and irreconcilability. “Race” is often replaced by the term “culture” or by “ethnicity”, “nation” or “religion” (Paschalidou, 2019, p. 97 et seq.; Mecheril 2003; Kooroshy and Mecheril, 2019), terms that function as “linguistic hideouts” (Leiprecht, 2001) and continue to follow the unbroken logic of racist classification to maintain a racialized order. These conceptions define cultures as mutually exclusive and static entities, in the sense of “second nature” (Taguieff, 1991, p. 238) or “quasi-races” (Hormel 2018, p. 85). In this way, “culture” operates as the functional equivalent to “race” (Marmer and Ziai, 2021).

The reality of race and the ambivalence in the use of this term are summarized by Colette Guillaumin: “This is exactly the reality of ‘race’. It does not exist, but it does kill people.” (1992, p. 217). In other words: race as a category may have been superficially overcome, but racial thinking persists, and its manifestation significantly impacts the lives of those who are racialized. A critical engagement with racism should therefore start with the recognition of racialized relations as a societal reality. This involves the understanding of race as a social construction and the prevalence of this construction within different levels of society, also identifying supposedly non-race-related phenomena of inequality and discrimination as just that (Leonardo, 2013, p.19; see also Bell, 1992). From a critical perspective, this means reconceptualizing “race” as an analytical tool for examining and uncovering the materialized effects of racism (Soudien, 2013).

In the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of 1965, the most important legal basis for combating racism under international law, the term “racial discrimination” is described in the first article as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination | OHCHR).

To capture racism as it is contained in and disseminated by educational materials, in these Guidelines racism is defined by the two constituent components of racialization (the fabrication of “races”) and power relations (the linking of these “races” with power).

At the very basis of racism is the process of racialization, i.e. the construction of the object of racism (“races”). It includes certain mechanisms (Memmi, 1982; Takeda 2017; Leiprecht, 2015, p. 123; Rommelspacher, 2009, p. 29):

- Classification: There is a demarcation between groups of people. The existence of differences and thus of different “races” is asserted.
- Homogenization: The groups are regarded as self-contained and uniform; individual characteristics take a back seat.
- Naturalization/culturalization: Certain characteristics and abilities are attributed to the members of a group, either by resorting to biological justifications through natural inheritance (naturalization) or to social justifications through cultural heritage (culturalization).
- Essentialization: The characteristics assigned in this way are conceived as static and unalterable features, the very essence of this entity. Stereotypes are based on the belief in such essential features.
- Polarization: The result is seemingly irreconcilable differences and antithetical fixations that polarize social positions and, to a certain extent, function as “social allocators”.
- Hierarchization: These social positions are then used as the basis for valuations and justifications, and in many cases also for blaming the “other” and fostering hostile images of them.

These mechanisms are often concealed. The presence of racialization (and racism) is not always visible; rather, it is often present as previously learned and unchallenged racist “knowledge” and thereby perceived and repeatedly recalled as part of a social reality (Quehl, 2015; Marmer, and Sow, 2015). Racist ways of thinking and practices become effective as a social structural principle that – overtly or inadvertently – generates relations of inequality.

In these Guidelines, racism is reflected in its systemic dimension. Racism is conceptualized as power relations that serve to establish, legitimize and/or stabilize unequal distributions of privilege and resources based on racialization. Racism encompasses ideologies in which the production of meaning is linked to power strategies, as well as exclusionary practices in which these ideologies are structurally implemented in social processes and material realities. (Hall, 1989; Miles, 1989; Miles 2000; Chesler, 1976).

## c. Racism and educational materials

Education systems are situated within different racial contexts and thus face different challenges globally. Resources need to be developed and made available that enable quality education for all and allow persistent inequalities to be faced. As a result, there have been a host of efforts to address racism in curricula and in education policy guidelines worldwide.

Educational materials – whether printed textbooks or digital learning materials – are not neutral resources of learning and knowledge transmission; rather, they can be used to convey a particular worldview and self-perception, social values and norms, as well as to underpin an existing or aspired-to social and political order. The selection and structuring of knowledge in textbooks represent an ideological process that supports the beliefs and interests of political or social groups. Thus, on the one hand, teaching and learning materials can promote human rights and a culture of peace and strengthen cultural diversity and cohesion in a society in the spirit of a sustainable, equitable and inclusive understanding of education, while on the other hand they can also be sources of discriminatory representations and racism. Negative and misleading descriptions, rigid cultural stereotypes and prejudiced images, as well as flawed or entirely absent narratives, can tend to cast people of colour (POC), migrants and refugees or members of other groups, including those minoritized, in a negative light and/or render them invisible (UNESCO 2017, p. 7 et seq.). Explicit and implicit forms of racism in educational materials have an impact on the self-perceptions, experiences, relationships and behaviour of teachers, students, and all those involved in educational contexts, with and without experiences of racism.

## d. Objectives and structure of the Guidelines

The Guidelines are primarily aimed at textbooks developers, authors, and curriculum writers. In addition, they also contain aspects and recommendations that are valuable for policy makers and educators.

### **Key objectives of these Guidelines:**

- Increase awareness and improve understanding of how racism manifests itself in educational materials.
- Provide guidance on how to counter/reduce racism in educational materials.
- Support policy makers and developers of educational materials to ensure that textbooks and online learning materials do not perpetuate or condone racist stereotypes but rather promote more inclusive and respectful societies.
- Demonstrate the barriers that hinder the development of non-racist/anti-racist educational materials.
- Offer recommendations and good practices for developing anti-racist educational materials.
- Support a systematic process of reflection, definition and clarification among those that make decisions pertaining to textbooks and digital content quality assurance.

The Guidelines are based on a review of textbook studies from around the world that have been published in the past decade. In order to provide meaningful, research-based recommendations efforts have been made to cover various world regions and thereby also different societal and educational contexts – as far as such textbook studies are available for these regions. Therefore, the authors of these Guidelines did not conduct separate textbook assessments but relied on the relevant existing research as much as it was accessible.

In terms of languages covered, studies published in English were primarily selected and reviewed for these Guidelines, while also including research in German, Spanish and Portuguese. The authors of these Guidelines, reflecting their positionings as researchers located in a Western country of the Global North, are aware of possible limitations to their perspective. In order to rebalance this potential asymmetry suggestions and advice from external experts, as well as from members of an advisory board supporting the drafting process, have been taken into account. For the designation of minoritized groups, the Guidelines generally adopt the terminology used in the textbook studies under review when discussing findings from the respective research paper; in other sections of the Guidelines, the designations reflect common usage, also taking into account the proposals made by members of the advisory board. In some cases, studies older than a decade were cited, e.g. if no recent studies could be found for the region in question or if more recent studies indicate the significance of findings from preceding studies. It is possible that some of the shortcomings identified in those textbook studies, and which were cited in these Guidelines have already been amended in newly updated textbooks.

In addition to the academic review that looked at studies on textbooks and combined their results, UNESCO organized regional consultations with experts from North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific region as well as the Arab region. The insights given by these experts contributed to a large extent to the understanding of race in education in these specific regions and were taken into account when drafting the overall considerations at the end of these Guidelines.

The Guidelines consist of three parts. The Introduction provides an overview of the background, definitions of race, racialization and racism as well as the objectives of these Guidelines. Part 1, the Extended Summary, summarizes the key findings and the main recommendations based on Part 2, the Academic Report, which presents the analysis of a selection of recent studies of textbooks and other educational materials that address racism and racialization. Therefore, the academic context for the recommendations presented in Part 1 can be found in Part 2. To facilitate reading, Part 1 directs the reader to the relevant text passages in Part 2.

Section 2.1 systematically presents identified manifestations of racism in select studies of textbooks. It subsumes the findings into six subsections, arranged according to their chosen discursive or thematic focus, each of which elaborates on key issues and concludes with practical recommendations for the respective context. Section 2.2 presents general recommendations alongside guiding questions regarding the three structural levels of textbooks – visibility, representations, and narratives. Considering the insights gained across various discursive framings, this section provides orientation on relevant criteria that can be valuable for different educational contexts. Part 2 is completed by a discussion on race and racism as subject matter in educational materials, with specific recommendations (section 2.3).

The Guidelines end with overall considerations about the broader political and educational contexts of textbook improvement (Part 3). The bibliography (Annex) contains all the studies analysed as well as further referenced academic literature and international documents.

# Part 1

## Extended summary

# 1.1. Key findings on manifestations of racism according to discursive contexts and context-related recommendations

Manifestations of racism in educational materials can only be fully comprehended when examined against the background of existing political and societal discourses. Analyses of educational materials thus often also include extensive examinations of such discourses as reflected, for example, in legislative change, policy regulations or paradigm shifts in public debate.

In this section, context-related recommendations are presented in relation to the key findings from textbook studies, subsumed into six discursive contexts: post-migration settings; national/ethnic/cultural/religious minorities; indigenous peoples; reinventing the “West and the Rest” and othering; Black Identities and images of Africa; and whiteness.

## Post-migration settings

Textbook studies that approach the topic of racism in textbooks by focusing on migration and migration-related diversity are predominantly situated in North American and Western European societal contexts. Such studies particularly focus on the representation and marginalization of first generation migrants and second or later generation descendants of migrant families, as well as overall transformations of societies and societal discourses (“post”-migration). A country’s self-image as a destination country for immigration, the definition of who is a migrant and who is not, and the racialized implications of this, are subject to societal negotiation, and eventually reflected in educational materials.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- The discussion on migration in textbooks is usually based on a linear conception of migration (immigration into one’s own country) and presents migrants as an exception; it does not capture the multitude of global, multidirectional forms of human mobility throughout history and in the present.
- Migration and displacement are often framed by a discourse on the supposed cultural otherness of migrants, while their “integration” is presented as a challenge and possibly problematic, or even as a threat to national identity and demographics.
- There are also economic perspectives on migration, emphasizing the socio-economic benefits gained by migrants and/or individual success stories (through successful integration).
- Textbooks sometimes make use of group-based stereotypes, showing certain migrant groups as exemplary and certain others as troublesome.
- In some instances, forced displacement is implicitly or explicitly depicted as a threat to the country of destination, using figurative language and/or vivid images to suggest masses of people crossing the border.

- When addressing the readers of textbooks, authors can sometimes exclude migrant students. Such students are not directly spoken to, neither are their experiences taken into account. Rather, they are placed outside the ethnocentric/monocultural national identity conceptions established in the textbooks.

### Recommendations

➤ (For detailed recommendations see 2.1.1)

- **Migration as a normal course of history:** Migration movements have taken place at every stage of human history – globally, regionally, and in multiple directions, and should be portrayed thus in textbooks.
- **Migration and displacement today:** Migration and displacement should be addressed in their social, spatial and temporal diversity, together with the societal discourses associated with them.
- **Diversity in the classroom:** Textbooks should foster openness and an awareness of diversity in society and in the school.
- **Appreciation of migrants and their cultural contributions:** Textbooks should acknowledge and recognize the rich and diverse cultural contributions of migrants across human history.
- **Avoid stereotypes:** Any kind of generalizing and essentializing attribution to social groups or individuals obscures the perception of the intra-group diversities of migrants, displaced persons and refugees as well as their individual characteristics, and should be avoided.
- **Raise awareness of racist structures and practices:** Reasons for social inequalities should be decoupled from attributions to groups and individuals, and instead be exposed within social structures and existing power dynamics.
- **Intersectional perspectives:** Migrant and refugee women are subject to specific stereotypical attributions in many societal contexts; textbooks should work to counter these while integrating intersectional analysis.

## National/ethnic/cultural/religious minorities

Many textbook studies examine the depiction of minoritized groups in countries and regions characterized by national, ethnic, cultural, religious, and/or linguistic plurality. The studies focus primarily on the question of how national identity is produced and reproduced in educational materials, who is included in the national “we” and who is excluded as the (racialized) “other”, within discourses of national unity, societal harmony, multiculturalism or, by contrast, explicit or implicit hostility towards minoritized population groups.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- Many textbooks dealing with national, ethnic, cultural, religious and/or linguistic plurality in society display an ethnocentric conception of national identity. Historical cultural contributions of minorities are either not dealt with at all or not integrated into the main narrative.
- The marginalization of minorities ranges from complete absence to discriminatory stereotyping or even overt conceptualization as the enemy, attitudes which are sometimes historically explained in textbooks.
- In some textbooks the portrayal of societal plurality is guided by an ideal of national unity: relations between the majority society and minorities tend to be described harmoniously, omitting historic or enduring conflicts and/or oppression.

### Recommendations

➤ (For detailed recommendations see 2.1.2)

- **Knowledge about national/ethnic/cultural/religious communities:** Fact-based knowledge about different national, ethnic, cultural and religious communities, as well as their beliefs and practices, creates an initial basis for objective debate and mutual understanding in a pluralistic society.

- **Sensitize students to diversity and multiperspectivity:** Textbooks should raise awareness of diversity and polyphony within a plural society.
- **Counter forms of societal and systemic discrimination:** Textbooks should counteract any form of “enemy” images that are widespread within the society as well as racist stereotypes and prejudices, and structural and institutional racism.
- **Adapt textbook contents to the local requirements:** It is especially important in multinational societies to adapt textbooks to the regional conditions and needs of different groups of students.
- **Intersectional perspectives:** Consider the context-specific and complex intersections of different affiliations, such as ethnicity/race, religion, language, regionality, class/caste, and also gender and ability/disability, especially in multinational societies. Members of oppressed groups can experience policy and societal discrimination differently based on their intersecting identities.

## Indigenous peoples

Studies of how educational materials address indigenous peoples examine the temporal and spatial placement of certain peoples and communities in the selective construction of the respective national history, references to violence in the past and their situation today, depictions of culture and life, and their current positions in society. Particular attention is paid to strategies of internal othering. In such cases, several authors also propose specific content that should be incorporated in order to highlight the agency and significant contributions of indigenous peoples, and that indigenous peoples’ place in national histories should be included.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- The inclusion of indigenous peoples is usually limited to historical events, suggesting that they belong to the colonial past. The lived reality of indigenous peoples and individuals in present-day societies is rarely addressed.
- Textbook studies point out the inadequate treatment of colonial conflicts in which the persecution of indigenous peoples is often downplayed; likewise, stories of resistance are insufficiently covered.
- The cultural and civilizational achievements of indigenous peoples are often marginalized and disparaged in comparison to the culture of the majority society.
- Individuals and communities of indigenous peoples are often exoticized, by highlighting certain striking ethnic features and thus reflecting a colonial/anthropological gaze.

### Recommendations

➤ (For detailed recommendations see 2.1.3)

- **Provide full and inclusive history:** Providing accounts that do justice to indigenous peoples’ histories, questioning the dominant narratives of colonial history through counter-storytelling, paves the way for understanding the life and culture of indigenous peoples in the present.
- **Visibility of life in the present:** Textbooks tend to present indigenous peoples’ lives and culture primarily as relics of the past; this should be counteracted.
- **Deconstruct the colonial gaze:** Any kind of projection of colonial, racist or anthropological viewpoints regarding indigenous peoples is to be avoided.
- **Avoid trivialization:** Textbooks must omit any content that marginalizes, exoticizes, trivializes or degrades indigenous peoples’ communities and individuals. Instead, efforts must be made to respect and normalize indigenous peoples’ lives and cultures.
- **Intersectional perspectives:** Give special consideration to the complexity of indigenous peoples’ lifestyles and social orders. Also address women’s leadership roles in indigenous communities where relevant.

## Reinventing “the West and the Rest” and othering

According to textbook studies, some educational materials used in so-called Western countries, those in North America and Europe particularly, feature a worldview that is based on the juxtaposition of Western countries and all other countries, which Jamaican-British cultural theorist Stuart Hall has summarized in the phrase “the West and the Rest” (Hall 1992). Textbook studies show that this ideological division of the world, which is based on historical ideas but has also adapted to changes over time, has certain spatial, political, economic and cultural implications that are also reflected in many textbooks.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- European/Western countries often distinguish themselves from the “rest” of the world in textbooks and make comparisons by using binary patterns of description (e.g., progress/backwardness; industrialized countries/developing countries).
- Such discourses and terms are prevalent not only in European and North American textbooks but are also adopted in societies that do not identify as Western.
- Even textbooks that claim to integrate discourses on cultural diversity may still exclude identities designated as “other”.

### Recommendations

➤ (For detailed recommendations see 2.1.4)

- ➔ **Deconstruct Europe and the “West”:** Europe and the “West” should not be the only point of reference; change perspectives and include counter-narratives from the Global South when addressing the path of history, scientific advancement, governing structures etc.
- ➔ **Integrating diverse groups as relevant actors:** Avoid setting minoritized groups apart from the narrative “we”.
- ➔ **Intersectional perspectives:** Textbooks should avoid any kind of racialized gender discrimination; instead, highlight the agency and feminist stances of women of colour, by including non-Western feminist and gender theories and historical movements that challenge both racialized social orders and gender oppression.

## Black identities and images of Africa

Several studies highlight the need for closer examination of particularly grievous racial discrimination against Black people in many current societies and their educational materials. In contrast, Black History textbooks and curricula, that is, about the history of Black people, their role and contributions to national and world history have been analysed as an alternative to mainstream educational materials with the potential to challenge dominant interpretations of history and to provide diverse expressions of Black identity. The perpetuation of hegemonic notions in the depiction of African people and countries, often lumped together and regarded as a single geographic and cultural entity, has been the subject of a number of textbook studies.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- Textbook studies criticize flawed accounts of the colonial past, in which the enslavement of Africans and continuation of racial violence are insufficiently addressed.
- In particular, the disconnection of the racial oppression in colonial history from inequalities in present-day societies impedes a historical understanding of power-related continuities and gaps.
- Textbooks on Black History provide revisionist approaches to historical narratives and various forms of expressions of Black aesthetics and identities.



- Studies on the portrayal of Africa in textbooks sometimes show a simplistic construction of the continent as an inferior counterpart to Europe and include racial hierarchical ideas that are also perpetuated in development discourses.

### Recommendations

➤ (For detailed recommendations see 2.1.5)

- **History of colonialism and racial violence:** The history of colonialism and its ideologies and practices of racial hierarchy have material implications that persist today, giving rise to radically different life experiences for white people and Black people. The history of colonial violence must be addressed extensively and through multiple perspectives.
- **Black History and counter-histories:** Black History not only focuses on Black people and isolated events but also presents Black perspectives that destabilize Eurocentric interpretations of history and lay bare histories that have hitherto been ignored.
- **Black culture:** Stereotypical othering of Black people in school textbooks should be replaced with a variety of forms of expression that inspire identity building.
- **Images of Africa:** Colonial racist notions and paternalistic views of Africa are still prevalent in textbooks; these need to be deconstructed.
- **Intersectional perspectives:** The concept of intersectionality emerged in the context of Black feminist movements and opens up multiple perspectives on Black female and non-heteronormative gender identities.

## Whiteness

A number of textbook studies build on the theoretical perspective of critical whiteness studies (CWS), which explore and contest the claimed normality and neutrality of whiteness – and other dominant positions. When examining racialized relations in textbooks, taking whiteness as an analytical category allows for normalized knowledge and perspectives to be revealed, denaturalizing power relations and dominant positionings. While discourse analyses from a CWS perspective mainly show how the dominant position is obscured in textbooks and thereby constructed as a universal standard and an ever-present normality, several content-analytical textbook studies examine quantitative and qualitative relations between different racialized groups in textbooks, sometimes in combination with the study of other categories of difference, most notably gender.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- In many textbooks, whiteness is not discussed as racial construction. White positioning appears as non-racial normality and neutrality; it has a normative effect.
- White knowledge and perspectives are often treated as universal facts.
- White privilege often remains invisible; power relations and inequality that are linked to it are thus almost impossible to trace back and appear to be the natural order of relations.
- Some textbooks show an overrepresentation of people depicted as white, with visuals demonstrating a dominance of “white”, “Caucasian”, and “light-skinned” figures and those “without shading”, who, in addition, appear in a greater variety of roles and activities compared to POC.

## Recommendations

➤ (For detailed recommendations see 2.1.6)

- **Whiteness as colour:** Textbooks should work toward de-normalizing dominant knowledge and perspectives that are construed as objectively true and generally applicable.
- **Diversity:** The ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in social realities should be reflected in texts and images.
- **Knowledge and norms:** The claimed universality of dominant epistemologies can be deconstructed by diversifying topics and voices.
- **Perspective and positioning:** Textbooks should raise awareness of diverse perspectives, possibilities of representation, and interpretation.
- **Intersectional perspective:** Textbooks can point out context-specific effects that result from the intersection of whiteness with other social categories of difference. They could point out, for example, in what way POC might not enjoy equal opportunities or discuss what is meant by “white privilege” in a specific context.

## 1.2. Guiding questions on visibility, representations and narratives and general recommendations

In this section, the key content-related findings and practical suggestions from the previous section are discussed across the six different discursive contexts. The aim is to identify overarching principles for textbook development in addition to the context-related recommendations. Furthermore, guiding questions on the structural levels of visibility, representations and narratives provide orientation on relevant criteria that can be valuable for different educational contexts.

### Visibility

➤ (for detailed analysis see 2.2.1)

Visibility means the perceptible presence (or absence) of people, topics and perspectives. Visibility initially concerns the question of which social groups and which identities are depicted, but also the narratological level of textbooks and how they communicate. This becomes evident in the positioning of the narrative voice in textbook texts, and how readers are constructed in texts and images.



#### Question 1: Who is speaking?

A number of studies have shown that in textbooks, especially in the social sciences, a certain dominant speaker position appears based on the implicit idea of a national “we”, drawing a boundary between dominant groups and socially minoritized groups who are excluded from the textbook’s formulated “we”. To include diverse social groups in the narrator’s perspective, it is important to:

- Avoid a dominant narrative voice associated with one particular ethno-racial or national structure.
- Instead, incorporate a variety of narrative voices and diverse perspectives that speak to students from different societal groups. Authors and sources should also be diverse.



#### Question 2: Who is speaking to whom?

The question of which students are addressed in educational materials and how identity-building possibilities are created through text and images also concerns the narratological level. As textbooks are supposed to speak to all students, regardless of their social affiliation, it is important to:

- Ensure a wide range of first and last names in texts that appeal to as many students as possible without hiding the existing diversity. This can be done, for example, by using different ethnically marked names, or, if feasible for the linguistic context, by using names that are common across cultures.

- Provide opportunities for visual identification by using a variety of appearances in terms of different clothes, accessories, hairstyles, body sizes, skin tones, etc. At the same time, care should be taken to avoid the essentializing exaggeration of what could be considered distinct ethnic characteristics.
- When performing tasks and exercises, avoid any kind of different treatment or differentiation between students of diverse ethnic groups; instead respect diversity in the classroom as a whole, in the school, and in society.



### Question 3: Who is speaking to whom about whom or what?

The visibility of diverse groups in textbooks is one of the central issues in textbook studies. Findings range from the complete absence of some groups, through an unbalanced distribution, to the over-exposure of one particular group or a few exemplary groups. However, it is essential to:

- Reflect the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of social realities in texts and images and include more content on minoritized groups.
- Embed minoritized groups within textbook content in a substantial manner, i.e., combine the visibility of these groups with meaningful contexts, rather than presenting them in loose, randomly distributed content fragments. Qualitative visibility is to be given preference over quantitative occurrence.
- In images, diversify the appearances of individuals and groups, as well as their roles and activities, and show different racialized population groups interacting with each other. Avoid an ethnocentric bias in the composition of groups.



### Question 4: How is this visibility established? What is on display and what remains hidden?

Some studies have pointed out the simultaneous visibility and invisibility of racialized “others” in educational materials. These racialized groups are subject to two processes moving in opposite directions: a process of assimilation that camouflages them and certain characteristics, and an exoticization process that places them on display. It is also relevant to question where in a textbook the existence of racialized groups is hidden, and where and with which characteristics it is displayed. In order to generate balanced modes of visibility, it is recommended that textbooks:

- Avoid overuse of ethnocultural identity markers considered “typical” and that lend an essentialized visibility to minoritized groups.
- Avoid portrayals that prominently render characteristics considered “different”, leading to othering of or “staring at” minoritized groups.
- Exercise caution against adopting tokenistic approaches to multiculturalism, which by displaying apparent differences merely produce a “colourful” picture without, however, addressing the aspects of difference that lead to inequalities.

### **Question 5: Who is overlooked?**

Several textbook studies draw attention to a striking imbalance in portrayals of race, gender, and class. These textbooks lack a holistic and/or intersectional approach that encompasses the relations between difference and inequality, considering complex identities and multiple affiliations. To cover the blind spots that often remain in textbooks, it is important to:

- Apply an intersectional perspective that considers race, gender, class, and other social categories together, rendering different racialized identities visible.
- Establish this intersectional perspective as an instrument of continual analysis in textbook development, in order to continually promote the visibility of intersectional identities in line with the constantly shifting contexts of society.

## Representations

» (for detailed analysis see 2.2.2)

Representations are linked to meaning and power. In textbooks they can exercise social control by symbolically and selectively depicting the world and society and assigning specific meanings. Many textbooks thus normalize and legitimize the status of dominant groups and existing power relations and naturalize existing inequalities and socially constructed racial relations. In order to understand the power dynamics behind the portrayal of social groups it is necessary to examine how meaning is produced in textbooks and which associative, linguistic and visual attributions are linked to certain racialized groups.

### **Question 6: Who is portrayed in which position, in which role and occupation, and carrying out which activities?**

The question of power-related representations expands reflections on visibility. Many textbooks, in addition to quantitative frequency, display a privileged treatment of white people, in particular white men. Members of dominant social groups are associated with positively connotated roles and activities and also shown in generic, everyday activities, which contributes to a further normalization of their position as majority shareholders in society. The wide variety of roles in which individuals from dominant groups are portrayed easily creates the impression that they are everywhere and can do anything, whereas those from minoritized groups cannot fill all these roles. To counter this imbalance, it is important to:

- Ensure there is a wide variety of roles among different racialized social groups, in all areas of life (family, friends, hobbies, public life etc.).
- Fill positively connoted, desirable roles and aspirational career profiles (scientists, engineers, fire fighters, teachers etc.) with people from different racialized social groups and ensure that groups historically discriminated against are presented in a manner that creates a sense of identity.
- Depict people from different racialized social groups in areas that creates a general sense of identity for students, such as generic, everyday activities (reading, shopping, cycling etc.).
- Minimize or avoid the depiction of people from minoritized groups in service roles.
- Contradict ethnic or cultural stereotypes of certain abilities, motivation, proclivity and types of behaviour that are associated with particular roles and activities, (e.g. that people of Asian descent are “naturally” good at science and are therefore often preferred in illustrations in natural sciences textbooks).

- Ensure there are class intersections when depicting racialized groups in different roles, and also depict traditionally marginalized groups as representatives of the middle or upper classes.

### **Question 7: Who interacts with whom?**

Moreover, the composition of racially diverse groups and the portrayal of interactions is another relevant factor. As demonstrated in textbook research, race relations in textbooks tend to be ethnocentric, with one dominant group at the centre and few cross-connections between marginalized groups on the periphery. In order to reflect the reality of race relations throughout history and in the present, it is recommended that textbooks:

- Depict living together in a diverse society in all its multifaceted relationships and interactions and show relations with and between people from different minoritized groups.
- Show interactions between members of different minoritized groups so they can be perceived as equal, active, self-determined and individual like members of dominant groups, building the foundation for learners to recognize themselves as part of a common humanity.

### **Question 8: What characterizations are used and what associations do they elicit?**

Representations of racialized groups are often context-specific and linked to specific images, terms and meanings, through which prejudices and stereotypes can be reproduced. It is important to realize that racial stereotypes do not necessarily have to be loaded with negative connotations to have a negative effect. Positive stereotypes, too, have restrictive effects and nevertheless often contradict reality as lived. The rigidity of racial stereotypes also supports static preconceptions of races as inalterable entities. Occasionally textbooks adopt well-known terms and images from public discourse, which have complex chains of associations that are subsequently reactivated when applied in the educational context. In order to counter racial stereotypes and prejudices in social discourses and in educational materials, it is important to:

- Avoid assigning any fixed characteristics to social groups or making any unnecessary distinctions, whether positive or negative; instead, descriptions should try to work against stereotypes and towards dismantling bias and prejudices.
- Deconstruct negative stereotypes and prejudices. This can be done by providing information on the meanings and functions of stereotypes, which may in certain circumstances not be entirely wrong but only represent a small segment of a complex reality.
- Also confront intersectional stereotypes (e.g. the association of Black youths from underprivileged households with criminality) through critical thinking and dialogue.
- Confront simplifying, generalizing ascriptions to entire populations and deconstruct essentialist notions of culture or race; instead try to highlight the internal diversity of minoritized groups and their members' very different life stories. Also demonstrate transformation processes and the adaptability of communities, lifestyles, cultural concepts, practices and symbols.
- Avoid polarizing juxtapositions in descriptions, which suggest a supposed unusualness of a marginalized group vis-à-vis the dominant group and the incompatibility of different groups because of supposedly contradictory ways of living or thinking.
- When including pictures and terms from public discourse, carefully examine the underlying narratives and associations.

- Aim to engage and empower students, by critically questioning cultural stereotypes and labelling and analysing problematic expressions and underlying notions.



### Question 9: How are representations linked to real life?

A knowledge-based examination of racial prejudices and stereotypes in textbooks, without the critical assessment of existing knowledge and how it was produced and reproduced, runs the very real risk of directly replacing old stereotypes with new ones and inducing a renewed reduction of racialized groups to certain characteristics and of individuals to their racialized backgrounds. Furthermore, textbook studies often point out that members of dominant groups are represented and perceived with much greater differentiation than members of racialized groups who may be prominent due to their “race”, but whose individual characteristics and personalities remain invisible. Another problem is the prevalence of external attributions that leave little room for identity building. This is implemented in textbooks, for example, through colonial racial attributions to Black bodies and the establishment of a colonial/anthropological gaze on indigenous peoples. In order to provide rich and just representations of lived realities and opportunities for identity building, it is important to:

- Select examples and set tasks that are as relevant to real life and the present day as possible and which feature individualized representations of people from minoritized groups, highlighting personal skills and achievements, motivation and behaviour, proclivities and decisions as individual qualities.
- Respect and prioritize the self-image of racial groups as depicted in self-representations and self-descriptions, while presenting a variety of identity-building expressions that inspire and empower students.

## Narratives

⇒ (for detailed analysis see 2.2.3)

Narratives combine single events into a story. In textbooks, narratives organize national history or histories and create a cultural identity by lending meaning to selected events. By presenting such events in main and subplots, establishing temporal and causal connections, legitimizing power relations and categorizing the contributions of individual people and population groups, narratives provide explanations for the present – for our contemporary social order and racialized relations.



### Question 10: Whose histories are told or silenced?

Some studies have found a clearly selective and biased structure in history and social studies textbooks. Narratives often unilaterally reflect interpretations of history promoted by the dominant groups, either omitting the histories of minoritized groups altogether or arranging them in a subordinate position to the main storylines. Thereby, the textbook studies reveal very different, country-specific narrative patterns that construct and legitimize social orders based on public discourses, certain group interests, political ideologies, or visions. In order to achieve a broad inclusion of cultural identities and diverse histories, it is important to:

- Actively search for missing histories and incorporate identities and experiences that have been suppressed in narratives thus far, critically questioning dominant master narratives via counter-storytelling and first-person testimonies.
- Critically question dominant conceptions that inform periodization and prioritization in portrayals of history, incorporating histories beyond the colonial or dominant timeline.

- Portray historical relations between different racialized groups comprehensively, such as traditions of cultural and intellectual exchange as well as conflictual encounters, histories of oppression, violence suffered, and resistance.
- Embed the histories of minoritized groups within national history, and in doing so highlight the roles of individuals and population groups, and of political movements and initiatives.
- Include a broad spectrum of contributions by minoritized groups over the course of political history, and give a balanced portrayal of cultural, scientific and social achievements.
- Avoid trivializing the histories of minoritized groups and abstain from fragmentary depictions of them.

### **Question 11: Whose perspectives are included?**

The search for, and inclusion of, missing histories in a multidimensional representation of history can only be accomplished by adopting a change of perspective that incorporates the experiences and knowledge of minoritized groups. However, textbook researchers frequently point to the dominance of hegemonic doctrines over the histories of minoritized groups, which are presented in history textbooks in a one-sided and unquestioned manner, without reference to underlying scholarly controversies or viewpoints from the group in question. In order to achieve a multi-perspective approach, it is important to:

- Create a fundamental awareness of different interpretations of history, different viewpoints from scholarship, and varying theoretical perspectives on historical and cultural phenomena.
- Present the perspectives of different groups on current affairs and historical controversies, using a balanced selection of primary sources and incorporating the views of researchers from minoritized groups.
- Openly address controversial debates among researchers.
- Dispel myths around the histories of minoritized groups and critically question dominant narratives by means of counter-narratives.
- Consistently engage in an epistemological shift of perspective, including in the language used, for example speaking of “anti-colonial resistance” rather than “belligerent rebellion”.

### **Question 12: Which connections are drawn to current racial relations?**

Ideologies of racialized hierarchies and practices in the past must be addressed in the context of existing inequalities in relationships within contemporary societies. The history of racial oppression, violence and exploitation still has concrete material implications today, giving rise to radically different lived realities for dominant and minoritized populations. It is therefore important to:

- Show, from a historical perspective, how aspects of racialized differentiation between social groups give rise to inequalities.
- When addressing the connections between historical systems of oppression and current unequal relations, make every effort to de-naturalize this depiction. Identify practices of racist oppression as intentional acts, and clearly name both those who benefit from such disparities and those who are discriminated against.
- Also address cultural identities against the background of specific racialized experiences, presenting both the history of violence suffered and stories of resistance, and linking them to the resilience and agency of communities today.



- Focus particularly on the historical dimension of intersectionality, attending to the manifold contingencies and connections between race, class/caste and also gender and regionality.



### **Question 13: How are primary sources selected and implemented?**

A variety of source materials can be used in addition to textbook texts in order to present history from multiple perspectives and to inspire different ways of accessing a textbook topic. A variety of intertextual references opens up alternative perspectives and approaches to the discussion, instead of simply providing a fixed interpretation of history. Since the inclusion of primary sources already lends a degree of authenticity and credibility to textbook content, these sources, whether historical documents, newspaper reports, scholarly articles, interview statements, maps or photographs, should be carefully selected and properly contextualized. In doing so, it is important to:

- Ensure a balanced, context-aware use of primary sources, taking care – particularly in the case of first-hand voices – to contextualize them appropriately.
- When using fact-based data or statistics that demonstrate a causal relationship with racial inequalities, provide support in interpreting the data.
- Convey the value of oral traditions and incorporate the various forms by which historical events are remembered through the generations in ethnocultural minoritized groups.

# 1.3. Key findings and recommendations on race and racism as subjects in educational materials

» (For detailed analysis see 2.3)

When countering racism in educational materials, it is not enough to simply remove racist content. Direct discussion of race and racism itself is crucial, in order to initiate reflection and learning processes that not only include race-related knowledge but can also change attitudes and reveal possibilities for action. Many studies, regardless of the discursive context of the analysis, point to the deficits and obstacles in educational materials that hamper a deeper understanding of race and racism or an open discussion of racial inequalities.

The key findings from the textbook studies examined here include:

- The discussion on racism in textbooks is often minimal and based on a narrow understanding of racism. There is hardly any information on structural or systemic racism as complex relations of power and inequalities that affect society as a whole.
- An understanding of race as a social construction is also often missing. Textbooks instead sometimes give faulty notions of race, some of which are based on outdated, biological and essentialist ideas. This applies in particular to biology textbooks.
- Teaching scientific literacy for the respective school subject/academic discipline can be helpful for a critical examination of race and racism.
- Teaching race and racism should be knowledge-based and subject-oriented, encouraging students to reflect on their own positioning and involvement in power structures and to develop critical understanding and agency.

## Recommendations

» (For detailed recommendations see 2.3)

- **Race as a social construct:** Educational materials should raise awareness of the scope and impact of race as a social category that is linked to political power, inscribed in discursive and material realities.
- **Structural racism:** Educational materials should raise awareness of structural/systemic racism as complex, historically evolved, global and societal power relations and disparities that are embedded in concepts and practices.
- **Knowledge-based approach:** For a proper understanding of the prevalence and social implications of race and racism, foundational knowledge of race-related history, language, academic and public discourses is required.
- **Subjective engagement:** Discussions on race and racism should also provide opportunities to develop subjective perspectives on social issues and personal experiences.
- **Intersectional perspective:** The examination of race and racism should be linked to the awareness that identities are context-specific and multifaceted, with multiple differences intersecting.

# Part 2

Review of  
textbook studies:  
Academic report

## 2.1. Manifestations of racism according to discursive contexts and context-related recommendations

Manifestations of racism in educational materials can only be fully understood when examined against the background of existing public discourses. Such manifestations are context-specific: in other words, they are linked to specific historical interpretations, national identity constructions, and practices of knowledge production and social control that perpetuate racialized inequalities and oppression. Textbook studies, whether content-analytical or discourse-analytical, thus often extensively examine these discourses as reflected, for example, in policy or legislative change or paradigm shifts in public debate.

This section presents findings from textbook studies subsumed into six discursive contexts: post-migration settings; national/ethnic/cultural/religious minorities; indigenous peoples; reinventing the “West and the Rest” and othering; Black identities and images of Africa; and whiteness. Each subsection concludes with practical recommendations for the respective context, but also points out potential pitfalls and challenges when implementing the recommendations. These considerations are also valuable for teachers/educators to critically reflect on teaching practice and didactics. Additionally, each set of recommendations is complemented by an intersectional perspective on various categories of difference (race, gender, class, etc.). “Intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989) points to the concurrent presence and complex interlacing of diverse social identities and multiple affiliations, also considering the interdependency of various power relations and social inequalities. Multiple aspects of discrimination can result from “interlocking systems of oppression” (Collins, 1990). An intersectional framing broadens the scope of the examination by including a critical approach to numerous factors of marginalization and by considering recommendations aimed at the multidimensional inclusion of identities hitherto still ignored.

### 2.1.1. Post-migration settings

Much of the recent research approaching the topic of racism in textbooks by focusing on migration and migration-related diversity is situated in traditional or, increasingly, “new” immigration countries, predominantly in North American and Western European societal contexts. When addressing migration, textbook studies stemming from or addressing these contexts focus on representation and marginalization of first-generation migrants, but also on the experiences of second or later generation descendants of migrant families as well as the overall transformations of societies and societal discourses (“post”-migration). Qualitative, content-analytical and, especially, discourse-analytical approaches tend to predominate when addressing migration, diversity and racism in textbooks.

A longitudinal study of textbooks in a German region exemplifies what can be seen as a discourse shift in the discussion of migration. In this report, discourse has moved from an emphasis of the economic benefits of foreign employment and the necessity of employing migrant workers in order to facilitate the German “economic miracle” in the early postwar period, to increasingly culturalized framings of the foreignness of migrants, their religions and lifestyles, and presumed irreconcilable differences from mainstream German culture (Geuenich, 2015). In this research, the change in discourse is seen to be accompanied by essentializing group classifications and wording. For example, “the Italian” stood alongside Greeks and Spaniards as proxy for “the guest worker”, while in the discourse of foreignness “the Turk” was constructed as the prototype (ibid). Similarly, a number of Swiss educational materials selected for examination in research reviewed here (Wälti and Ziegler, 2010) address migration primarily

in the context of labour migration and presumed “foreign infiltration” (Überfremdung). A longitudinal study of Flemish geography textbooks finds that the more recent texts tend to depict migrants in terms of their apparent foreignness and urban problem districts (Schuermans, 2013, p.9 et seq.). In an analysis of some state standards for US History and Civics, Hilburn, Journell and Buchanan also find depictions of immigration as a cause of cultural conflicts, positioning immigration as a catalyst for ethnic and cultural tensions and a hindrance to forging a national identity (2016, p. 244).

By contrast, textbook discourse on migration in the United States of America is seen to be dominated by the national master narrative of the land of opportunity, according to which immigrants enter the country through the “golden door” in pursuit of personal freedoms and material prosperity (Foster, 1999, 2006). Discursive group assignments are also significant in US textbooks, as revealed by research reviewed here. In these cases, Asian Americans, for instance, are sometimes invoked as a “model minority” which has successfully overcome all hardships to achieve the “American Dream”, earned through personal commitment and hard work – a narrative template that corresponds well with the perceived national storyline of “American Progress” (Suh, An and Forest, 2015, pp. 44-46). However, these descriptions are problematic, particularly as they are often linked to essentializing characterizations, by applying “typical” cultural traits in the case of Asian Americans such as family values and the work ethic (ibid, p.46). Some of the assessed textbooks in research examined here also give a skewed image of the lived realities of Asian Americans, who have in fact experienced severe racist discrimination (Kelly and Aden, 2022).



**Children from migrant families are sometimes portrayed as a problem group in the textbooks studied**

A general topic related to migration is “integration” into society (Niehaus, 2017; Dündar and Kenyon, 2020; Triguero Roura, 2022). A report on German textbooks points out an integration discourse that emphasizes measures taken by the state and their successes, while at the same time pointing out obstacles to successful integration that are mainly attributed to migrants, such as low levels of education, lack of language skills, and ignorance of cultural practices (Niehaus, 2017). In a selection of reviewed Austrian and German textbooks, the implicit assertion of self-chosen segregation (Hintermann et al., 2014) and a “parallel society” (Geuenich, 2015), which is self-contained but separated from the majority society, underlines the challenges of living together in a diverse society. According to a study looking at Spanish social science textbooks, even “xenophobic attitudes and racist attitudes” following a list of other presumed negative consequences of immigration are implied to be a result from migrants having problems adapting (Triguero Roura, 2022, p. 20). When encountering such a problem-oriented discourse on integration, migrant readers of textbooks are in a sense placed in a “double-bind situation” (Geuenich, 2015, p. 361): They are implicitly called upon to demonstrate their willingness to fit in whilst being simultaneously confronted with almost irreconcilable differences.

A study of a number of Chinese and Korean heritage language textbooks used with immigrant children in the USA, and issued by Chinese and Korean governments, similarly points to the perceived exclusionary effect of textbooks: the monocultural/monoethnic conceptualization of both countries – the country of origin and the country in which the textbook readers currently reside – presents these students with a dilemma as they cannot synchronize their dynamic transnational experience with either the “true” traditional Chinese or Korean culture nor with the white-only US society. (Sun and Kwon, 2020). Furthermore, the authors of the study point to a correspondence with the concept of “nativism”, which in critical academic literature has been identified as a common aspect of racism towards Asian Americans (ibid, p. 409).

Furthermore, children from migrant families are sometimes portrayed as a problem group in some textbooks studied, referring, for instance, to internal family conflicts and being split between two cultures (Geuenich, 2015). In addition, textbook assignments sometimes call upon them to act as representatives and to report on “their culture” and “their homeland”. As identified in some other studies on textbooks, direct invitations to non-migrant

learners to speak about “the others” in a discriminatory way are no less problematic, reproducing racist stereotypes and “knowledge about foreigners” (Niehaus, 2017, p.117). Müller-Mathis (2017, p.125) points to the pitfalls of intercultural pedagogy, precisely by reproducing hegemonic relations through the difference-based discussion on migration.

Hegemonic relations are particularly made manifest, as is often observed, by a dominant perspective and/or a particularly dominant narrator’s position (Knudsen, 2009, 2016; Padilla and Vana, 2019). In examples from select Norwegian textbooks Knudsen observes a linking of narrative perspectives with white/European, male, upper-/middle-class and the homogenization and naturalization of “immigrants/refugees/working class/ethno-race/males in terms of content” (2016, p. 88). Migrant speaker positions can fracture dominant narratives and add multi-perspective dimensions to them, yet in some instances firsthand voices are selected and presented in ways that rather support prevailing narratives (Suh, An and Forest, 2015, p.48; see also Gulliver and Thurrell, 2017, pp. 55-56).

A problematic understanding of migration in some textbooks is also reinforced by the invocation of threatening scenarios in the context of “illegal” migration and displacement. Grawan points to the dramatizing conflation of migration with illegal immigration in a German textbook example (2014, p. 44 et seq.), and Budke and Hoogen (2018) examine the selection of images for German geography textbooks that draw on highly recognizable motifs from mass media discourses, showing people in overcrowded boats. Threatening visuals of refugee boats arriving on European shores, accompanied by a correspondingly metaphorical vocabulary, e.g., “waves of refugees” or “refugee flows”, provide an emotionalized, conflictual allegory for mass immigration (Niehaus, 2017, p. 112).


This is mostly based on polarizing notions of push and pull factors, such as leaving conflict-ridden countries and striving for a better life in positively connotated destination countries (Budke and Hoogen, 2018, Weiner, 2018). Migration and displacement are thus portrayed in many textbook contexts as a unidirectional movement. In a study of Austrian textbooks, Hintermann et al. (2014) find a narrowing perspective on migration presented as something that “others” do.

It is also significant for textbook studies to ascertain which social groups are assigned to the category of migrant in the first place, especially since textbooks do not always provide a precise definition of “migration” and “integration” (Markom and Weinhäupl, 2017; Hilburn and Fitchett, 2012). Geuenich (2015) indicates that resettlers (Aussiedler), for instance, are not conceived as foreigners in the examined German textbooks and their integration is presented as unproblematic. Osterloh (2008) notes that being German is implicitly equated with being white. In the Dutch context, Weiner (2014) observes that the term for foreigner (allochtoon) is reserved for non-white migrants, whereas European, white immigrants are not referred to in the same way in the textbooks examined; similarly as in a sample of Spanish social science textbooks, where “immigrants” partially works as proxy for non-white, non-European groups (Triguero Roura, 2022, p. 21-22). A study on a number of Swedish textbooks shows that following a curricular reform “Sweden-Finns” were included as one of five national minorities, which meant this group was considered as internal “others” rather than labour migrants; however, despite gaining admission to the national identity (being a Swede) the group was still excluded from the cultural identity (Swedishness) (Spjut, 2021). In the case of US textbook examples, Hilburn and Fitchett (2012) point out the incorporation of people through land acquisition and thus border expansion, for instance by conquest, purchase or annexation. These “involuntary Americans”, who became part of the USA without their consent, are barely addressed in the reviewed textbooks, much less recognized as having become American through coercion.

In contrast, a cross-curricular analysis of a number of Ontario textbooks finds that European immigration is established as a constitutive factor of Canadian demographics today, however, thereby removing Indigenous Canadian peoples both temporally and spatially from the national “we”, amongst other things through an implicit assertion that the First Nations had voluntarily passed on the land to white settlers (Smith, 2015, p. 180 et seq.). A similarly linear conception is identified in a sample of Australian and New Caledonian textbooks: In redefining Indigenous people as “first settlers” within a presumed “settler society continuum” they are integrated into the national narrative as early migrants (Stastny, 2022, p.137 et seq.) However, this strategy of co-opting sustains the idea of a linear modern trajectory within which European settlers represent the latest, and most advanced form (ibid, p.139).

The self-image as a country of immigration, the definition of who is a migrant and who is not, and the racialized implications of this, are subject to societal negotiation and are therefore also reflected in educational materials.

 <b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>(1) Migration as a normal course of history</b>	Migration movements have taken place at every stage of human history – globally, regionally, and in multiple directions, and should be portrayed as such in textbooks.
	→ Address diverse forms of human mobility (immigration, internal migration, etc.); also forced displacement, expulsion and resettlement over history, expanding the focus beyond south-north migration movements.
	→ Help students understand the connections between historical and current processes of migration and displacement.
<b>(2) Migration and displacement today</b>	Migration and displacement should be addressed in their social, spatial and temporal diversity, together with the societal discourses associated with them.
	→ Address the diverse forms of, and reasons for, migration and displacement in the context of transnational mobility, geopolitical shifts, territorial expansion, religious persecution, climate change, etc.
	→ Address the controversies associated with political and societal processes of inclusion or non-inclusion, related political regulations, legislation and terminology (participation, integration, assimilation etc.).
	→ Introduce students to terminology related to migration, showing how terms and concepts have developed (integration, citizenship, nationhood etc.).
	→ Critically examine racially connotated labelling practices; provide information on their historical backgrounds and encourage the sensitive use of language.
<b>(3) Diversity in the classroom</b>	Textbooks should foster openness and an awareness of diversity in society and in the school.
	→ Reflect demographic reality/diversity in the textbook (in texts and images).
	→ Include migrant students in the textbook portrayal (in texts and images), and provide opportunities for situated identity building.
	→ Include topics relevant to the migrant perspective in textbooks.
	→ Use multiple narrative voices from different perspectives in textbooks.
	→ When students are directly addressed by the textbook, avoid any categorical differentiation between students with any migrant/displacement background and those without.
	→ Provide opportunities for problematization, critical discussion and dialogue.
<b>(4) Appreciation of migrants and their cultural contributions</b>	Textbooks should acknowledge and recognize the rich and diverse cultural contributions of migrants across human history.
	→ Avoid utilitarian stances toward migration and differentiating migrants based on their socio-economic status.
	→ Avoid biased portrayals of migration/migrants as political issues and/or a burden on society.
	→ Explore and make visible the societal, cultural, scientific, and political contributions of migrants over the course of history.
	→ Point out the extent to which migrants contribute to today's public life, politics, science, sport, culture and the arts.
	→ Include migrant perspectives on current affairs and in public debates.
→ Provide encouragement and opportunities for participation.	

<b>(5) Avoid stereotypes</b>	<p>Any kind of generalizing and essentializing attribution to social groups or individuals obscures the perception of the inner group diversities of migrants, displaced persons and refugees as well as their individual characteristics, and should be avoided; instead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Provide counter-images to widespread stereotypes of cultural otherness.</li> <li>→ Provide counter-images to ideas of uniformity within groups of migrants, displaced persons and refugees.</li> <li>→ Avoid all kinds of contrast or comparison between people based on their immigration status and/or nationality.</li> <li>→ Highlight different life stories and point to the individual qualities, motivations and achievements of migrants, displaced persons and refugees beyond cultural/religious markers.</li> <li>→ Provide individualized, real-life examples for textbook assignments and case studies.</li> <li>→ Ensure balanced and context-aware use of primary sources to decode racist depictions of migrants, displaced persons and refugees.</li> </ul>
<b>(6) Raise awareness of racist structures and practices</b>	<p>Reasons for social inequalities should be decoupled from attributions to groups and individuals, and instead be exposed within social structures and existing power dynamics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Address current forms of everyday racism, structural and institutional racism, including in the school and classroom.</li> <li>→ Discuss historical cases of racist discrimination in the context of current issues.</li> </ul>
<b>(7) Intersectional perspectives</b>	<p>Migrant and refugee women are subject to specific stereotypical attributions in many societal contexts; textbooks should work to counter these while integrating intersectional analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Critically question widespread stereotypes applied to migrant and refugee women.</li> <li>→ Present female role models from public life, with special emphasis on women who are advocates for their communities, are outspoken and work to counter discrimination in society or enacted through policy decisions; also highlight agency and feminist stances of migrant women.</li> </ul>
 <b>(8) Pitfalls and Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ There is a risk of pessimism when addressing structural inequalities and of presenting migrants as victims of their circumstances.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: Discussions about inequalities should always involve a critical diagnosis, potential solutions and opportunities for building agency and developing empathy and solidarity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>→ A discussion of migration/migrants based on differences raises the risk of perpetuating these differences.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: When discussing migration and societal diversity, one's own positioning should also be critically examined.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 2.1.2. National/ethnic/cultural/religious minorities

Many textbook studies examine the depiction of minoritized groups in countries and regions characterized by national, ethnic, cultural, religious and/or linguistic plurality. Such studies primarily employ content and discourse analysis and focus largely on the question of how national identity is produced and reproduced in educational materials and the positions assigned to the “we” and “the (racialized) other”.

The findings range from the complete exclusion of specific groups (Nawani, 2014; Çayır, 2015), the reproduction of discriminatory depictions (Podeh, 2018) and openly hostile images of an “enemy” (Fruchter-Ronen, 2018; Gaul, 2014; Simai, 2016;) to existing and changing discourses of multiculturalism in society and in the textbooks (Teff-Seker, 2020; Nawani, 2014; Chaturvedi, 2015; Muhammad and Brett, 2020). These studies often reveal discrepancies, for example, between the declared goals of education reforms and their implementation in curricula and textbooks or between official narratives and public perception.



Many of the existing studies point to what is seen as an ethnocentric concept of national identity. Çayır (2015), for example, concludes from an examination of 245 Turkish textbooks as to an underlying assumption that a citizen is ethnically Turkish and denominationally Sunni Muslim. The inclusion of other ethnic or religious groups, framed in some cases in a “discourse of Ottoman tolerance” (p. 532), was not seen in this study to extend beyond symbolic references to multiculturalism which tend to mask existing inequalities and divisions. An examination of select primary school reading textbooks from Myanmar, a country uniting 135 different ethnicities, highlights a tendency to frame the religious, ethnic, and linguistic make-up of citizens as Buddhist, Burman and Burmese-speaking (Treadwell, 2014). In the case of a number of Sri Lankan textbooks examined by research reviewed here, national identity is seen as inextricably linked to being Sinhalese and Buddhist (Gaul 2014). Despite the stated vision of being a multicultural, integrated society, these textbooks tend to prioritize Buddhism and retell an origin myth that sets the beginning of national history at the point when the first “Aryans” (designating the Sinhalese community) arrived, while later settlements are described as “South Indian invasions”.



Many of the existing studies point to what is seen as an ethnocentric concept of national identity

In some textbooks, an explicit emphasis on national unity and harmony is prominent, as it is in select textbooks in Myanmar with the repeated motto “Being United” held up as the foundation for peace, stability and development, requiring setting aside differences in favour of community (Treadwell 2014, p. 45). A study of a number of Pakistani textbooks underlines progress in the inclusion of diversity-related content, however with still strong emphasis on national unity, harmony and cohesion, and, in some instances, the omission of conflicting memories and contested readings of the national past (Muhammad and Brett, 2020). Regarding select textbooks assessed for India, Nawani (2014) highlights the complex interlocking of caste, class, region, religion and gender in relation to the marginalization of certain sections of the population, including stereotypical depictions, or ignoring certain groups altogether. New materials, produced by the National Council on Educational Research and Training (NCERT), are designed to provide a more nuanced exploration of the experiences and knowledge of different social groups (ibid.).

Páez (2015) demonstrates how multiculturalism discourses take shape in textbooks in a comparison of a selection of Mexican textbooks over the course of two education reforms. The concept of the “mestizaje” seems to be central to the national self-image of Mexico as presented in these sampled textbooks. The term describes a biological and cultural mix of European and Indigenous heritage, which in its traditional version does not include sections of the population who are of African and Asian descent. In later textbooks analysed, which combine the idea of the “mestizaje” with intercultural educational approaches and indigenism, the concept of national identity is expanded to include other racialized groups.

A multi-country report on the representation of Roma in European curricula and textbooks that was commissioned by the Council of Europe and comprised materials from 21 member states shows that Roma are mentioned in textbooks from all selected countries but placed within a limited range of topics (Council of Europe, 2020). The representations are often marked with stereotypes and in some cases inaccuracies. Roma are represented mostly as a historical topic or as victims, frequently as both, for instance when “Jews and Roma” are lumped together as one terminological unit in the context mass murder during World War II, thereby also neglecting the specific situation and history of Roma in European countries. In the analysed textbooks the contributions of Roma individuals and communities and their roles in society are rarely addressed. Roma are rather implicitly located outside the respective national identity.

 <b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>(1) Knowledge about national/ethnic/cultural/religious communities</b>	Fact-based knowledge about different national, ethnic, cultural and religious communities, as well as their beliefs and practices, creates an initial basis for objective debate and mutual understanding in a pluralistic society.
	→ Start by acknowledging the existence and status of national, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities including those that have a self-awareness or identity but may not yet be recognized as such in the public perception.
	→ Address changes and continuities through history within national, ethnic, cultural, and religious communities, and changing concepts, symbols and lifestyles.
	→ Challenge notions of intra-group uniformity and consider the internal diversity and complexities of different communities.
	→ Take into consideration overlaps in linguistic variety and regional aspects.
	→ Avoid reducing communities and individuals to their affiliation and associated features.
	→ Encourage awareness of different contexts, differentiate between political, national, religious and cultural groupings, and between political ideologies and religious beliefs.
	→ Present historical relationships and cultural and intellectual exchanges between different communities.
	→ Address historic forms of discrimination and violent pasts.
→ Embed the histories of different groups within national history, addressing the significance and roles played by individual personalities and groups.	
<b>(2) Sensitize students to diversity and multiperspectivity</b>	Textbooks should raise awareness of diversity and polyphony within a plural society.
	→ Provide a balanced representation of diverse communities, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in texts and images, and encourage appreciation of different lifestyles and identities.
	→ Counteract ethnocentric and racist ideas.
	→ Present the perspectives of various groups on current affairs and historical controversies, using a balanced selection of primary sources.
	→ Foster an awareness of different interpretations of history, scientific viewpoints, and approaches.
→ Engage in critical reflection on the national self-image, the construction of "nation" and "citizen," and "them" and "us," as well as the notions associated with them.	
<b>(3) Counter forms of societal and systemic discrimination</b>	Textbooks should counteract any form of enemy images that are widespread within society as well as racist stereotypes and prejudices, and structural and institutional racism.
	→ Encourage subjective and critical engagement with ethnocentric constructions and the hierarchization and marginalization of minorities/minoritized groups in both the past and present.
	→ Raise awareness of forms of radicalization, religious fundamentalism, and racist ideologies, and identify options for action.
<b>(4) Adapt textbook contents to the local requirements</b>	It is especially important in multinational societies to adapt textbooks to the regional conditions and needs of different groups of students.
	→ Adapt textbooks to the linguistic requirements, i.e. languages, regional dialects, common vocabulary etc.
	→ Reflect cultural and religious lived realities in case studies, exercises, names, visuals, etc.
<b>(5) Intersectional perspectives</b>	Consider the context-specific and complex intersections of different affiliations, such as ethnicity/race, religion, language, regionality, class/caste, but also gender and ability/disability, especially in multinational societies. Members of oppressed groups can experience policy and societal discrimination differently based on their intersecting identities.



### (6) Pitfalls and Challenges

- More knowledge about different minorities does not necessarily lead to more mutual acceptance.
  - Recommendation: A knowledge-based approach should always go hand in hand with a critical, subjective engagement with societal discourses, structures and practices leading to inequalities and antagonism.
- In highly diverse countries or regions it seems impossible to attend to all minority groups and to present them all in the textbook. Only a cursory section on societal diversity seems possible.
  - Recommendation: More helpful than short references to as many groups as possible is the removal of hierarchical structures, for example between an ethnocentric position serving as a normative template, and minoritized groups. It is also important to avoid presenting a dominant perspective on these other marginalized groups. Qualitative portrayals are to be prioritized over quantitative information.
  - Recommendation: The development of essentially positive attitudes towards societal diversity is the most important factor.

## 2.1.3. Indigenous peoples

Studies of how educational materials address indigenous peoples examine the temporal and spatial placement of certain peoples and communities in the selective construction of national history, references to violence in the past and the current situation, depictions of culture and life, and their assigned positions in today's society. Particular attention is paid to mechanisms of internal othering, which can trivialize and exoticize, and sometimes conceal, indigenous existences or, conversely, be particularly exposing. Several authors also point out the persistence and resilience of indigenous peoples and individual personalities. Specific proposals have been made, but not yet implemented, for content to be incorporated that would highlight the agency and significant contributions of indigenous peoples.

The debate surrounding school history books generally concerns how their portrayal of the past is considered to be, particularly when it comes to histories of violence (Stastny, 2022). In the context of select textbooks used in the USA, Cummings (2012) detects gaps in the content of such history and social studies educational materials with regard to broken treaties, land grabs, relocation and drastic population reductions among the Indigenous people of North America. The “myths of the empty land” and implicit presentations of “manifest destiny” remain stubbornly in place in the historical narratives in educational materials according to this study (ibid.).

A balanced historical reappraisal in textbooks should also include stories of resistance when addressing violent events. Cummings finds that students are still taught little about the resilience, survival and life stories of Indigenous people of North America for example (ibid., p. 264). On the other hand, the history of the Sámi, as depicted in a couple of Norwegian textbooks examined in a study reviewed here, describes their struggle for recognition and their agency; however, Eriksen is critical of the missing aspect of oppression, when addressing the process of so-called “Norwegianification” (2018, p. 63). In a sense, the story of oppression is told, but without an oppressor.

A further significant historical dimension concerns cultural and “civilizing” efforts, which are principally associated with Europeans in textbooks, with no mention of important achievements by indigenous peoples. Moore (2020) finds depictions of Aboriginal sea voyages using modern navigation instruments in a selection of Australian textbooks; however, the narrative position is one of incredulity, which relativizes the portrayal of Aboriginal achievements. These texts subtly establish white people as the normative benchmark and underpin white superiority in a comparative juxtaposition.

Portrayals of indigenous peoples in many textbooks assessed in the studies reviewed here are frequently situated in the distant past and in spatially diffuse regions: “an ahistorical, frozen-in-time exotica image” (Sharp, 2013, p. 183). In some Mexican textbooks indigenous peoples are predominantly associated with antique artefacts such as pyramids, calendars, myths and legends (Berkin, 2016; Berkin and Le Mûr, 2017), while in select USA textbooks the lives of Native Americans are often also portrayed in the colonial past – living in tepees and hunting with bows and arrows – and seldom in the recent past or even the present (Sleeter and Grant, 2011), which leaves the impression of a vanishing culture (Brown 2016). This marginalization of indigenous peoples, both temporally and spatially, conforms to what is seen as the chronopolitical logic of a Eurocentric narrative, which tells European history and the history of colonialism as a “moral success story”, according to Araújo and Maeso (2012a).




Portrayals of indigenous peoples in many textbooks assessed in the studies reviewed here are frequently situated in the distant past and in spatially diffuse regions

When addressing lives and cultures of indigenous peoples in the present, there is a thin line between normalizing an identity and a renewed “othering” through exoticizing. The depiction of Sámi in a sample of Norwegian textbooks is characterized by the density of semantic markers of “authentic” lifestyles, such as reindeer and traditional gákti dress (kofte in Norwegian) and could run the risk of reducing Sámi identity to a series of distinguishing traits and thus homogenizing it, as pointed out by Eriksen (2018, p. 61).

No less problematic in some textbooks is the denigration of specific characteristics and lifestyles attributed to indigenous peoples, such as the primitive associations of societal forms of organization such as “tribes” and “clans”, the conflation of nomadism with a precarious way of life and the inherent tendency to misinterpret certain types of behaviour (Moore, 2020, p. 119). Such examples reflect an anthropological gaze which raises the white position to that of an objective observer and makes the indigenous peoples the object of observation. They also depict indigenous peoples as “less cultivated”, ignoring the richness and diversity of their cultural heritage, knowledge and competencies.

It is essential that indigenous history is given a place in national histories (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) 2014). A sample of Moroccan textbooks assessed in a study reviewed here provides strong examples in describing the Berber population, their historic achievements and military successes, in a way that includes them in the collective “us” (Maye-Saidi, 2018). Brown points out the importance of including the viewpoints of Native American academics when producing textbooks, in particular when dealing with controversial aspects of common history (2016, p. 68 et seq.). A linguistic analysis of Grade Eight textbooks for different subjects in Ontario highlights the connection between the construction of “us” and national belonging. It finds there is an assumption of immigration in the understanding of cultural and national identity, which leaves the realities of indigenous populations out, with complex implications and effects that could also be described as “racial microaggression”. The phenomenon of the narrative of immigration being used to suppress the history of native peoples thus creates a complex network of structural ostracism with indigenous population groups at its centre (Smith, 2015). In other studies, the general or near absence of indigenous peoples in some textbook examples and societal contexts is criticized (Efron 2020; Sherlock, 2016).

 <b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>(1) Provide full and inclusive history</b>	Providing accounts that do justice to indigenous peoples' histories, questioning the dominant narratives of colonial history through counter-storytelling, paves the way to an understanding of the life and culture of indigenous peoples in the present.
	→ Present indigenous peoples' histories beyond the timeline of colonial history, i.e., the era before the arrival of Europeans/the dominant group today.
	→ Incorporate indigenous peoples' histories and the diverse roles played by them into the portrayal of national history.
	→ Show appreciation of the cultural achievements of indigenous peoples for human civilization and present it as part of the country's unique heritage. Also address their contributions to finding innovative solutions to climate change and to sustainable development.
	→ Address stories of past violence, land-grabbing, systematic persecution, religious proselytization and/or educational assimilation in the past as well as ongoing intergenerational harms; also, critically address settler colonial logics and corresponding narratives.
	→ Incorporate the history of resistance and show indigenous peoples in their full agency, e.g. by highlighting political power, institutions and activism initiated by indigenous peoples.
	→ Dispel myths about indigenous peoples' histories and incorporate counter-narratives in the national history narrative.
	→ Introduce different academic standpoints on controversial debates about historical events and include the views of scholars belonging to indigenous groups, as well as indigenous traditional knowledge-keepers.
	→ Consider that historical sources are often produced by the privileged and powerful; raise awareness of the origins of historical sources and introduce oral history and other methods of history coming from below.
	→ Demonstrate the value of oral traditions, objects, textiles, knot systems and other forms by which history is passed down through the generations.
<b>(2) Visibility of life in the present</b>	Textbooks tend to present indigenous peoples' lives and culture primarily as relics of the past; this should be counteracted.
	→ Include the recent history and political participation of indigenous peoples in the present.
	→ Present complex lived realities correctly and deconstruct myths in the present.
	→ Address current forms of systemic marginalization, discrimination, land-grabbing, destruction of the natural environment, and other rights violations.
	→ Also inform about and discuss cultural appropriation of indigenous peoples' cultures and reflect the role of the media, entertainment, music, fashion etc.
<b>(3) Deconstruct the colonial gaze</b>	Any kind of projection of colonial, racist or anthropological viewpoints with regard to indigenous peoples is to be avoided.
	→ Avoid essentializing comparisons between indigenous and dominant culture (e.g. being "in touch with nature" vs. "civilized," or being "spiritual" as opposed to "rational").
	→ Avoid perpetuating hierarchies between people, lifestyles, and cultural artefacts (e.g. preference for the nuclear family model over clan family organization).
	→ Avoid colonial language constructions and narratives that may be hidden, depending on the context, in terms such as "discover", "untouched landscapes", "wilderness", "instinct", etc.
<b>(4) Avoid trivialization</b>	Textbooks must omit any content that marginalizes, exoticizes, trivializes or degrades indigenous peoples' communities and individuals. Instead, efforts must be made to respect and normalize indigenous peoples' lives and cultures.
	→ Avoid reducing indigenous peoples' cultures to isolated highlights (festivities, food, etc.) and to conspicuous ethnic markers (handicrafts, clothing, etc.); instead, chose individualized and everyday life examples.
	→ Avoid restricting content to the topics of consumerism, entertainment and tourism; instead, include topics and images of indigenous peoples across the textbook and represent them in everyday life settings.
<b>(5) Intersectional perspectives</b>	Give special consideration to the complexity of indigenous peoples' lifestyles and social orders. Also address women's leadership roles in indigenous communities where appropriate.



#### (6) Pitfalls and Challenges

- When addressing indigenous peoples' cultures there can sometimes be a risk of replacing old stereotypes with new ones, consequently producing a new form of essentialization.
- Recommendation: Incorporate indigenous peoples consistently into textbooks, in a variety of roles and in diverse tasks related to everyday life and free of cultural markers. Avoid creating the impression that indigenous peoples' lives only take place in certain designated areas at certain times.

## 2.1.4. Reinventing “the West and the Rest” and othering

Some educational materials used in so-called Western countries, those in North America and Europe in particular, feature a worldview that is based on the juxtaposition of Western countries with all other countries, which Jamaican-British cultural theorist Stuart Hall has summarized in the phrase: “the West and the Rest” (Hall, 1992). The textbook studies reviewed here show that this ideological division of the world, which is based on historical ideas but has also adapted to changes over time, has certain spatial, political, economic and cultural implications that are also reflected in many textbooks.

Similarly, depictions of Europe or the “other”, as they appear in the textbook studies reviewed here, indicate that Europe is frequently portrayed as more “progressive” than other regions of the world. These narratives are characterized by Eurocentric views and stereotypes, which involve the homogenization of other cultures or geographic areas, such as the “Orient”. In the corresponding depictions in these particular cases, there is a perceived reduction of “others” to primitiveness and a standardization, even simplification, of other cultures, especially in relation to Islam, indigenous peoples in various countries or the African continent in general (Markom and Weinhäupl, 2007), for example the portrayal of Muslims as alien, fundamentalist or militant (Gürsoy, 2016). Also, a recent study on history textbooks in the UK shows that ideas rooted in colonial tropes and notions of presumed “Oriental” aggressiveness and religious fanaticism, “African” servility and submissiveness, and “native” savagery and backwardness still reverberate in textbooks currently used in secondary schools (Nagre, 2023).

Select textbooks from the USA and France examined in a study reviewed here are seen to employ a narrative of progress and of interethnic national unity, that is to say the narrative is seen to highlight a “nationalist multiculturalism which includes minorities and limited depictions of past discrimination, but only to the extent that these do not detract from a positive view of France and the United States today” (Hutchins 2017, p. 36). According to this study, in their use of representational forms, the French textbook examples would tend to avoid addressing challenges and problems associated with current immigration and ethnic inequalities. In contrast, ethnic minorities are much more visible in the USA sample, which have absorbed certain non-negligible multiculturalist approaches, notably including Native American and African American history. However, racist discrimination and inequality are seen to be projected as a reality from the past, and thus avoiding a discussion of the scope and implications of contemporary manifestations of racism. These approaches are reflected in the illustrations used in these specific cases: the French textbooks assessed in the study, for example, feature isolated illustrations of POC but none of Muslims or Jews, very few of minorities and none that depict current migration movements. While in the textbooks sampled from the USA there have been increasing efforts toward improved representation, the visual diversity of both countries' textbooks that were assessed prioritizes portrayals of national unity (Hutchins, 2017, p. 78).

Portrayals of Europe in select non-Western textbooks sometimes reveal a differentiated view of Christianity (Olsson, 2009) and they may also adopt Western discourses on Orientalism and anti-colonialism. Representations of indigeneity are reproduced in these cases through discourses using terms such as New and Old Worlds, civilization, the Columbus adventure, discovery and whiteness: in other words, these discourses are seen to reproduce hegemonic, sexist, racist and essentialized understandings of the cultures of indigenous peoples in the Americas (for example Mirfakhraie, 2018).

One analysis of select Finnish textbooks considers, in terms of representation of diversities, that there are widespread misrepresentations and that a hegemonic national discourse prevails (Hahl, 2015, p. 7). At the same time, this analysis points to positive points in that these textbooks would demonstrate a critical awareness of the self and the other, that there is a perception of the plurality of diversity and that an emphasis on multiple identities tackles traditional homogenous representations. A review of select Norwegian textbooks notes the claim to open a “door to the world” and to encourage an understanding of cultural diversity and respect for different individual viewpoints, nonetheless they are seen to contain essentialist illustrations of the Global South and a narrative in which modernity and pre-modernity are portrayed in terms of perceived orientalism. In these cases, the image of the “Orient” is peppered with clichés of women and terrorism, and “East” and “West” are contrasted with one another (Oxfeld, 2013).

A recent study on world history college textbooks used in the USA reports that their content, despite being aimed at broadening historical understanding, is still seen as being built from the singular narrative thread of “Western Civilization”, reproducing Eurocentric perspectives and anti-Muslim bias (Haque, 2022). These books can be seen to perpetuate a narrative antagonism between the West and other civilizations, in particular the Islamic world, which is conceived as competitor, and also reflect current partial societal bias. This analysis also reveals what it sees as major problems at the intersection of race and gender: there, Muslim women are seen to be stereotyped through contradictory references to the presumed sexual licentiousness and prudishness in the Islamic world (Haque, 2022, pp. 250-251). Also, while Western feminism is normalized in the specific text, perspectives from Islamic feminists are excluded (ibid, p. 252).

The Eurocentric world view is seen also to contain a narrative of modernity that places Europe in a progressive timeframe and other regions, in contrast, in an underdeveloped past – namely an early stage of human history – and the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world is structured accordingly, in a paradigm of development. According to this narrative, Europe had the right and the (self-sacrificing) duty – “the white man’s burden” in the words of Rudyard Kipling – to “civilize” itself and other regions of the world (Arndt, 2017, p. 40). In these cases, the history of Europe and colonialism is seen as being construed as a “moral success story” (Araújo and Maeso, 2012a) and this continues to be reproduced in a slightly modified form in many current textbooks. The impression of European superiority and beneficence is even reinforced when nothing or little is said about colonial violence and the structural impact of the imperial project, that suppressed local, indigenous systems of social organization and development, as identified in a study reviewed here which assessed a sample of history textbooks used in the UK (Nagré, 2023). Instead, one textbook examined in the study even hints to ostensible perils of decolonization when institutions of civil society set up in the colonial period are overrun by militarism and political corruption (ibid, p.16). Colonialism can then be presented positively, justified through arguments of liberation and humanitarianism or administration and order (Spiegelmann, 2022, p. 57-58).



The history of Europe and colonialism is [...] construed as a “moral success story” and this continues to be reproduced in a slightly modified form in current textbooks

In select geography textbooks, this paradigm of development is reported to become an organizing principle for the notion of the world and its imagined spatial division, such as the concept of fundamentally different “cultural regions”, which is used as an explanatory basis for increased conflict potential in multicultural cities (Schuermans, 2013), or the regionalization into “developed” and less developed areas (Bagoly-Simó, 2012, pp. 38-39).

The clearest differentiation in a number of European textbooks, as reflected in studies reviewed here, can be seen in the contrast they tend to present between Europe and Africa, according to which the entire African continent is shaped by poverty, hunger and violence and is dependent on help from the “West”. This is linguistically reflected in the use of terms such as “developing country”, “Black Africa”, “help for ...” and “school sponsorship” (Digoh and Golly 2015). Historical colonial relationships and responsibilities are not addressed in these examples (Weiner 2016), rather any progress made, measured against a Western-defined model of “modernity”, is attributed to

the commendable achievements of colonialism (Marmer, 2013, pp. 29-30). Thus, colonial narratives are further perpetuated in the development paradigm through the juxtaposition of white peoples' assistance in the Global South and the allegedly self-inflicted poverty and hunger mainly caused by an uncontrollable "population explosion", while ignoring the negative effects of activities carried out by companies from the Global North and also omitting the demands for reparations made by pan-African organizations (Marmer and Ziai, 2021).

An analysis of a selection of textbooks in Latin American countries reveals that they tend to depict "others" through four different narratives: as an "existential threat", as "inferior", as "violating universal principles" or as "different" (Rossi Schmechel, 2017, p. 13). None of the textbooks in the three countries analysed (Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, and Peru) contained a critical examination of their own society or included the viewpoint of either neighbouring country. In these particular cases, nationalist rhetoric, prejudices, stereotypes and resentment are found to be reproduced and reinforced by illustrations showing victorious battles or valiant national heroes. The respective "other" appears as the enemy and as the one who has contravened human rights.

📌 Recommendations	
<b>(1) Deconstruct Europe, the "West"</b>	Europe and the "West" should not be the only points of reference; change perspectives and include counter-narratives from the Global South when addressing the path of history, scientific advancement, governing structures etc.
	→ Contextualize historical relations within Europe/the West and beyond within a broader scope of world history and/or the concept of global citizenship education.
	→ Address the historical and semantic causes of "spatial" attributions, e.g. the division into "developing countries"/"industrialized countries", the "West" and the "Orient", Global North/Global South.
	→ Critically reflect and highlight the problems with widespread terms and concepts that are related to ideas of "modernity" and "development" and include academic debates on "Orientalism" and postcolonialism.
	→ In formerly colonized countries, reinforce the country's own history, sense of identity and self, in order to fight internalized colonization perpetuated through exogenous school systems and textbooks still in place and in use.
	→ Subaltern perspectives should be explored and included to challenge conceptualizations of formerly colonizing countries vis-à-vis the colonized countries, highlighting the agency and voice of oppressed groups.
<b>(2) Integrate diverse groups as relevant actors</b>	Avoid separating minoritized groups from the narrative's "we" position.
	→ Reflect critically on how people with diverse characteristics are categorized.
	→ Take care to avoid presenting the history of the "nation" merely from the hegemonic perspective, but integrate diverse perspectives into the narrative.
	→ Avoid presenting people with diverse (ethnic, religious, linguistic) characteristics as foreign or exotic but integrate them into the narrative's "we".
	→ Terms such as "progress" should be equally associated with diverse individuals and groups marked by categories of difference.
	→ Avoid negative associations and degrading language when addressing categories of difference.
	→ Avoid presenting minorities as a homogenous group; instead use nuanced, individualized representations.
→ Do not repeat clichés and stereotypes (even with the aim of countering them).	
<b>(3) Intersectional perspectives</b>	Textbooks should avoid any kind of racialized gender discrimination; instead, highlight the agency and feminist stances of women of colour, by including non-Western feminist and gender theories and historical movements that challenge both racialized social orders and gender oppression.





#### (4) Pitfalls and Challenges

- Comparing “Europe/the West” with “others” always risks Eurocentrism.
  - Recommendation: Begin by including diverse social groups in the narrative of the national “we” and allow critical reflection on the points of reference used and their attributions, such as “modern” and “underdeveloped,” “civilized” and “barbaric”.
- There is the risk of the “nation” remaining the sole point of reference for one’s own identity construction.
  - Recommendation: Begin with alternative frames of reference, such as biomes, indigenous peoples’ territories, linguistic regions, etc. that denaturalize the nation as the only category of analysis and present “the nation” in the context of inter- and transnational developments, thus avoiding attributions of superiority.

## 2.1.5. Black identities and images of Africa

Racist ideologies constitute and make use of “scientific racism” that emerged in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe and which, underpinned by racial theories, postulated differences between people based on physical characteristics, primarily on the basis of skin pigmentation. This approach gave rise to a system of racial hierarchy that classified Africans on the lowest rung. While biological conceptions of race have largely been eclipsed, colonial racist representations and narratives that denigrate or ignore Black people persist stubbornly in many textbooks today. Textbook studies that focus on Black identities and experiences in history and in contemporary social contexts address the omissions of colonial history, persistent violence against Black people, especially in former settler and segregated societies, attributions to Black people that have a tendency to essentialize, and also perpetuations of hegemonic notions in contemporary images of Africa.

Hegemonic, Eurocentric master narratives structure many textbooks’ interpretations of colonial history and its connection to contemporary social realities with their material implications, downplaying the role of individual nations in the enslavement of Africans in the past as well as ongoing racism against Black people in the present. For example, Araújo and Maeso (2012b) observe what they identify as a naturalization of colonial historical power relations and practices, particularly concerning the institutionalization of slavery, in a review of select Portuguese history textbooks. This includes the linguistically dehumanizing objectification of Africans as trade commodities and the narrative disconnection of colonialism from the main plot of European history as well as the political present. Select Dutch textbooks are also seen to separate the history of oppression and exploitation from the rise of the Netherlands as an economic power that accumulated wealth and privilege, perpetuating a “social forgetting” about the role of the Netherlands in the slave trade and obscuring the causes of socio-economic inequalities today (Weiner, 2014, 2016).

According to one study, US textbooks mostly convey a critical attitude toward enslavement in the national past, but some also contain euphemistic or mitigating depictions. For example, according to a study reviewed here, framed by “North Carolina slavery exceptionalism”, a sample of history textbooks in North Carolina emphasize that this state held fewer slaves than other southern states and that they were also treated better (Hilburn and Fitchett, 2012, pp. 55-57). Similarly, scholars have critiqued the portrayal of Thomas Jefferson, known to students primarily as a Founding Father and the third President of the United States, as an abolitionist despite having held slaves himself (Thomson, 2017; Robertson, 2018).

The portrayal of racial violence against African Americans in US social studies textbooks is reported as tending towards trivialization. In these cases, acts of violence are reduced to “bad men doing bad things”, and portrayals fail to describe the underlying structures, the beneficiaries of oppression, or the socioeconomic effects and power imbalances that persist today (Brown and Brown, 2010, p. 56 et seq.).

These textbook studies argue that Black perspectives and narratives are largely absent. The reviewed history textbooks commonly in use in the United States and Canada tend to present events from a white perspective (Sadlier, 2007; Loewen, 2008). The introduction of Black History in textbooks is intended to provide a space for counter-hegemonic discourses that break with the traditional timeline and paradigms, and to specifically situate cultural identities and experiences, ultimately promoting the principles of critical racial literacy with the requisite knowledge of concepts, structures, and agencies (King, 2016, pp. 75-77). King and Simmons (2018) have identified various dimensions of the revision of narratives, aesthetics, and identities in an examination of select US and Canadian Black History textbooks. Interpretations of history conveyed by these books contradict, for example, the widely held notion that the origins of the Atlantic slave trade lie in African forms of enslavement (Araújo and Maeso, 2012b, pp. 159-160). Representations from Black perspectives work, on the one hand, against the attempted absolving of oppressors from a racially hierarchical system found in part in white narratives and, on the other hand, they restore Black identities in historical representations in their complexity, humanity and agency (King and Simmons, 2018, pp. 104-105).

In the case of German textbooks, Marmer observes a reduction of Black people to the representation of their bodies. In this view, the colonized body, formerly captured, sold, exploited, “scientifically” classified and racialized, continues to be essentialized in contemporary textbook representations, either “Afro-pessimistically” naked and emaciated by hunger or “Afro-romantically” framed by a notably athletic appearance, sense of rhythm or eroticism (2013, p. 27). Sijpenhof (2019) also notes a certain constancy of stereotypes, for example in the hypersexualized portrayal of Black women. Black History textbooks, conversely, offer a variety of expressions that can help to shape an identity, such as various hair styles as acts of agency, courage, self-confidence, and sense of style (King and Simmons, 2018).





Portrayals of racial violence [...] fail to describe the underlying structures, the beneficiaries of oppression, or the socioeconomic effects and power imbalances that persist today

Racist stereotyping in general constitutes a widespread problem in representations of Black people, such as the association with certain styles of music or instruments (Bababoutilabo, 2019) or with excellence in sports (Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2015; McDonald, 2013). Padilla and Vana also identify notions of colourism, when darker-skinned Afro-Latinx are consistently and collectively portrayed as entertainers, sports icons and skilled workers (2022, pp. 11-12). Explicit negative connotations are also present in many textbooks under review: for instance, Black people appear predominantly – and sometimes only – in the context of enslavement (Sousa, 2021; Padilla and Vana, 2022; Oliveira, 2022) and are associated with low status, power and agency (Almeida and Ramírez, 2010; Liu et al., 2020) while silencing Black resistance in the contemporary society (Bonfim, de Jesus and Félix, 2019).

Racist stereotypes are also widespread in many textbooks in representations of the African continent as reported in textbook research. Marmer (2013) identifies four principal views: first, a racial hierarchy denoting Africa as inferior; second, an antithetical conception of Africa in opposition to Europe; third, Africa's alleged lack of history; and fourth, a narrative of modernity that structures relations between Africa and the “West” on the basis of a belief in progress informed by evolutionary history. As a result, the portrayal of Africa in these textbooks is highly simplistic in comparison with the complexities of the Western world, and Africa is unilaterally presented as a place of poverty, misery and disaster, as “underdeveloped” and dependent on foreign aid, evoking a paternalistic view of the continent (Marmer, 2013, 2017; Marmer and Sow, 2015; Digoh and Golly, 2015; Awet, 2018). The history of Africa is linked to colonialism and enslavement, yet there is little mention of anti-colonial resistance or struggles for independence (Marmer, 2013, p. 29).

However, based on the examination of a textbook account of the history of German South-West Africa, Mielke (2021) finds a reassessment of African histories that starts with Africa's precolonial past and proceeds from there with the account of contact between Europe and Africa from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Imperialism is related with a strong focus on African societies, also including the Herero and Nama War and the atrocities

committed by the German Empire. The texts emphasize local resistance against foreign colonial rule and present African leaders as self-confident actors. Mielke adds that this textbook example, which challenges the widespread notion of Africa's alleged lack of history, constitutes a rare exception to the mostly superficial treatment of the subject in many other German textbooks.

 <b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>(1) History of colonialism and racial violence</b>	The history of colonialism and its ideologies and practices of racial hierarchy have material implications that persist today, giving rise to radically different life experiences for white people and Black people. The history of colonial violence must be addressed extensively and through multiple perspectives.
	→ Address the historic emergence of the contemporary African diaspora via centuries of trafficking and enslavement of Africans.
	→ Trace the connections between colonial systems of oppression informed by racial hierarchies and current socio-economic inequalities.
	→ Address slavery, racial violence, racial segregation (e.g. apartheid in South Africa) and racial laws (e.g. Jim Crow laws in the USA) from the history of the nineteenth century to the present day.
	→ Address current racially motivated discrimination and open violence against Black people, as well as contemporary forms of resistance and protest cultures.
<b>(2) Black history and counter-histories</b>	Black History not only focuses on Black people and isolated events but also presents Black perspectives that destabilize Eurocentric interpretations of history and lay bare histories that have hitherto been ignored.
	→ Provide knowledge on the histories of African civilizations from antiquity to the early modern era and incorporate these into global contexts.
	→ Address political and social movements from the modern age to the present, e.g. Pan-African Congresses in the twentieth century.
	→ Provide accurate portrayals of Black thinkers and activists and their intellectual, artistic and political stances.
	→ Undertake a conscious search for missing stories and incorporate them, and include histories and identities beyond Black-white relations, e.g. Afro-Latinx, history of the Black Indians.
	→ Ensure that the shift in epistemological perspective is also reflected in the language used.
<b>(3) Black culture</b>	Stereotypical othering of Black people in school textbooks should be replaced with a variety of forms of expression that inspire identity building.
	→ Counteract negative and stereotypical representations, creating differentiated counter-images.
	→ Render visible the complexity and diversity of Black identities.
	→ Provide multidimensional insight into Black culture and aesthetics in the arts, music, architecture, fashion, literature, popular culture, etc.
	→ Highlight intellectual achievements and contributions by Black scientists and artists.
<b>(4) Images of Africa</b>	Colonial racist notions and paternalistic views of Africa are still prevalent in textbooks; these need to be deconstructed.
	→ Avoid any kind of essentializing, exoticizing, romanticizing or degrading of African people.
	→ Show the continent in all its complexities in both the past and present.
<b>(5) Intersectional perspectives</b>	The concept of intersectionality emerged in the context of Black feminist movements and opens up multiple perspectives on Black female and non-heteronormative gender identities.
	→ Introduce the work of scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, and the Black feminist movement, exploring the ideas and concepts using real-life examples that are easy to understand for students.
	→ Include the voices of Black female authors, artists and activists.
	→ Include voices from the Black LGBT community and discuss gender discrimination and empowerment.
 <b>(6) Pitfalls and Challenges</b>	→ When students are confronted with Black people in textbooks it is often in the context of enslavement, violence and oppression, which can have a trigger effect on Black students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: Emphasize particularly aspects of anti-colonial resistance and Black agency.</li> </ul>

## 2.1.6. Whiteness

Most textbook studies based on conceptions of race tend to focus on minoritized populations, be they migrants, refugees, national/cultural/ethnic/religious minorities, indigenous peoples or POC. The racialized “other” is the main object of study, while the white dominant group is not considered to be a distinct race (Knudsen, 2009, p. 62). In contrast, some textbook studies build on the theoretical perspective of critical whiteness studies (CWS), by which whiteness is made visible as a specific racial positioning and its claimed normality and neutrality are contested. When examining race relations in textbooks, whiteness as an analytical category allows for revealing processes of subjectification and normalized knowledge, denaturalizing power relations and dominant positionings, and ultimately unravelling specific racialized dynamics that whiteness persistently produces and reproduces.

The relativity of the category of whiteness in many textbooks selected for the research studies examined here is striking. In various societal and educational contexts, the normalized (white) positioning is just as variable and defined in its dissociation from racialized identities as those that are demarcated as non-white/black. In a selection of Norwegian textbooks, national identity tends to be discursively anchored in Norwegian cultural heritage and whiteness, while immigrants are associated with otherness (Knudsen 2009). Similarly, according to a study reviewed here and which examined German textbooks for political education, on the level of narration, Germanness is equated with whiteness in a way that, for example, excludes citizens of Turkish and Vietnamese descent. In terms of content, a representational model is adopted that constructs the “West” as white, while Africa, Asia and South America are placed in opposition and demarcated as black (Osterloh, 2008). Thangaraj points to the prevailing black-white dichotomy of the understanding of race in the US context, into which the “racial ambiguity” of Muslims and Middle Eastern identities is seen to not easily fit (2020, pp. 7-8). In her examination of German textbooks, Weber uses the term “beigeness” for the ambiguity of racialized identities, which are supposed to suggest racialized visual diversity, but are also markedly white in role and behaviour (Weber, 2017, p. 4).

A basic pattern found in many textbooks analysed in the studies reviewed here is the universalization of white knowledge and perspective. A sample of Australian textbooks shows how a white anthropological perspective on Aboriginality is established as a supposedly objective, scientific point of view. Moreover, white European standards are seen to be applied in the description of and judgement on Aboriginal culture, revealing what could be described as a paternalistic, condescending attitude (Moore, 2020). In select US textbooks, the history of Native Americans is predominantly told by white scholars whose viewpoints on contentious issues prevail over those of indigenous historians (Brown, 2016, p. 68 et seq.). A comparable example is the representation of Africa in some German textbooks examined in a study reviewed here, according to which the continent is deprived of an autonomous history. Rather, historical accounts begin with its “discovery” by Europeans, followed by colonialism and enslavement, whereas Ancient Egypt is commonly claimed as part of the European-Asian cultural history and distinguished from “Black Africa” (Marmer, 2013, 2017). In another example of German politics textbooks, the knowledge discussed is presented as universally valid: A linear understanding of “development” based on the European model is preferred. Western societies are used as a normative reference point when it comes to issues of human rights, peace and democracy, with the clear suggestion that these have already been successfully achieved in those states designated as white (Osterloh, 2008).

From the perspective of CWS, the concealment of whiteness as a racial position is crucial for the assertion of white perspectives and knowledge as objective, neutral, and normal. This includes avoidance of any discussion on the racialized distribution of wealth and power (Fitzgerald, 2012). Instead, there is a naturalization of white privilege and exercise of power in some textbooks. Poverty and conflicts in the Global South are thereby not presented as an effect of European expansion and neo-colonial power but appear ahistorically, as almost naturally given or as a consequence of the abuse of power by black-designated individuals or states. Historically evolved and structurally consolidated inequalities remain hidden, as well as the beneficiaries of these disparities (Osterloh, 2008). Through such representations and without a proper reflection of their own position within power structures, white students are sometimes led towards personal feelings of concernment and to self-identification as the benefactor, which Osterloh describes as an education for “romantic philanthropy” (“Gutmenschentum”) (2008, p. 106 et seq.).

Regarding the institutional context of select German educational materials, Osterloh also points to an underlying liberal aspiration to equality and tolerance in textbooks, which is reflected in the integration of multiculturalism discourses, but which misses out on important contextual links (2008, p. 119). Multiculturalism is also integrated in a number of US sociology textbooks examined in a study reviewed here, in which, however, the role of white racism and the perpetuation of white privilege are not discussed. This is further supported by a colour-blind ideology that creates the belief that present-day society is racially neutral in the sense that race is not (or no longer) a significant factor in shaping people's experiences, allowing for the persistent impact of racism on the lives of POC to be ignored (Fitzgerald, 2012). Displaying the "colour" of people, however, may be seen to serve as a token form of multiculturalism in some Norwegian and Canadian textbooks examined in a study reviewed here, in that it is used as a clear signal that content about minoritized groups has been integrated (Knudsen, 2009, p. 67; Gulliver and Thurrell, 2017, p. 57).



A basic pattern found in many textbooks is the universalization of white knowledge and perspective

The demarcation of white positions and positions of colour is further supported by the attributions of certain, usually antithetical, characteristics. From the images in a selection of Dutch textbooks examined in a study reviewed here, for instance, the study finds a clear ascription of power positions and victim roles, those helping and those in need of help, civilized and uncivilized etc. to white and black positions respectively. In such images, "Black people are racialized downward, while whites have been racialized positively" (Sijpenhof, 2019, p. 167). Whiteness at an individual level is often characterized by qualities such as rationality, efficiency, and discipline (Weber, 2017). Whiteness at the state-related level is positively represented by the rule of law, peace, democracy, prosperity and diversity, whereas black-designated states are negatively and one-dimensionally associated with violence, poverty, exploitation, powerlessness, backwardness and gender injustice (Osterloh, 2008; Taylor-Mendes, 2009).

Sometimes, however, there is an essentialization of whiteness. Morgan (2007), for example, notices a homogenizing conflation of white people with "perpetrators of racism" in a South African textbook sample. In this case, the essentialization of "white perspectives" equated with European colonialism, eugenics, social Darwinism and segregation, and integrated into a monocausal discussion of the causes of racism, inevitably leads to a repeated polarization of "us" and "them". In this view, the chapter in question, originally designed as a lesson on race and racism, does not ultimately lead to the desired anti-racist learning effect, but rather hinders "de-learning racism" (ibid., p. 82).

While studies reviewed here using discourse analysis based on a CWS perspective mainly show how whiteness is made invisible in textbooks examined, and thereby constructed as a universal standard and ever-present normality, some other content-analytic textbook studies show quantitative and qualitative relations between different racialized groups. Some of the diversity-related textbook analyses combine the study of race with other categories of difference, most notably gender, but also class and in few cases ability. There are quantitative analyses of visual material in a number of textbooks, sometimes across subjects (e.g. social sciences and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)). Analytical categories of "race", "colour", "skin tone" or "shading" are used to identify the presence of different racialized groups.

In general, whereas some studies find improvements in terms of increasing diversity (Jiménez and Lerch, 2019), much of the research reveals a significant overrepresentation of "white", "Caucasian", "light-skinned" actors and/or actors "without shading", sometimes intersecting with the gender category "male" (King and Domin, 2007; Delgado, 2008; Brooks, 2008; Yamada, 2011; Ceglie and Olivares 2012; Mattox et al. 2008; Bush and Mattox 2019; Eilard 2019; Kim 2019; Liu et al. 2020; Bernabé and Martínez-Bello, 2021; Bowen and Hopper, 2022). Women of colour are among the least represented groups in the resources selected for examination (Lawlor and Niiler, 2020; Ferreira, 2019; Bush and Mattox, 2019). This dominance of whiteness and asymmetry in the (visual) representation of diverse groups could partially be traced back to the fact that textbook publishers resort to the already stereotyped and hierarchized iconography offered in image databases (Núñez Pardo, 2022, p. 714).

Furthermore, the racial composition in group pictures is also informative. In their review, Sleeter and Grant observe that there is little interaction between different groups of colour in the textbook samples, instead interracial contact occurs mostly with white people (2011, p. 203). “The main impression the books give about Whites is that they are numerous and everywhere” (Ibid, p. 201). Race relations in these textbooks are seen therefore as ethnocentrically structured, with whites at the centre and few cross-connections between non-white groups at the peripheries.

 <b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>(1) Whiteness as colour</b>	Textbooks should work toward de-normalizing dominant knowledge and perspectives that are construed as objectively true and generally applicable.
	→ Exemplify how dominant knowledge and social norms that are usually perceived as universal are in fact specific, historically evolved ideas, often linked to racialization and power.
	→ Point out historical and present-day racial disparities as rooted in the normalization of dominant positions, whiteness in particular.
	→ Make whiteness visible as a specific positioning, also point out specific white privileges and exercise of power.
<b>(2) Diversity</b>	The ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in social realities should be reflected in texts and images.
	→ Diversify appearances, names, characteristics, activities, etc. across subjects and throughout all textbook chapters.
	→ Avoid any ethnocentric dominance of one social or racially constructed group.
	→ Make POC visible through individual characteristics and motivations; show them in various everyday activities and as role models; also show them in interaction with each other.
	→ Do not over-expose or over-explain the presence of POC in texts and images, i.e. do not portray them as exceptional by providing excessive information.
<b>(3) Knowledge and norms</b>	The claimed universality of dominant epistemologies can be deconstructed by diversifying topics and voices.
	→ Include postcolonial history perspectives and counter-narratives.
	→ Include the viewpoints and work of scientists of colour.
	→ Treat knowledge, values, social norms and cultural practices of different racialized groups of colour in an equal manner.
	→ Avoid binary juxtapositions, direct comparisons and judgement.
<b>(4) Perspective and positioning</b>	Textbooks should raise awareness of diverse perspectives, possibilities of representation and interpretation.
	→ Favour multi-perspective narratives over a single (supposedly objective) story.
	→ Encourage self-reflection on ones own positioning, multiple roles and affiliations.
	→ Address all students equally and avoid any contrasting distinctions between them (e.g. white students and students of colour).
<b>(5) Intersectional perspective</b>	Textbooks can point out context-specific effects that result from the intersection of whiteness with other social categories of difference. They can point out, for example, in what way POC might not enjoy equal opportunities or discuss what is meant by “white privilege” in a specific context.
 <b>(6) Pitfalls and Challenges</b>	→ The discussion of whiteness could reiterate biologically essentialist notions of race. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: Provide comprehensible information on the concept of whiteness at the beginning of such discussions. It should be clarified that “whiteness” denotes a social positioning and is relative and changeable. As an analytical category “whiteness” focuses on positions of power and thereby makes certain racialized dynamics visible and explainable.</li> </ul>

## 2.2. Guiding questions on visibility, representations and narratives and general recommendations

In this section, key content-related findings and practical suggestions from the previously introduced textbook studies are compiled and discussed across the six different discursive contexts. The aim is to identify overarching principles for textbook development in addition to the context-related recommendations. Guiding questions on the structural levels of visibility, representation and narrative provide orientation on relevant criteria that can be valuable for different educational contexts.

### 2.2.1. Visibility

Visibility means the perceptible presence (or absence) of people, topics and perspectives. Textbooks as media emerge from selective processes of political, economic and cultural debates and reflect the interests of dominant social groups (Apple, 1991). Visibility thus initially concerns the question of which social groups and which identities are depicted, i.e. whose lived reality is included as part of institutionalized textbook knowledge. This question is brought into focus in many textbook studies examining aspects of diversity (Hickman and Porfilio, 2012); some researchers also point to the narratological level of textbooks and the impacts of hegemonic structures on how they communicate. This becomes evident in the positioning of the narrative voice in textbook texts, and how readers are constructed in texts and images.

#### **Question 1: Who is speaking?**

A number of textbook analyses have shown that in textbooks, especially in the social sciences, a certain dominant speaker position appears based on the implicit idea of a national “we” (see 2.1.4). In the texts, this self-image sometimes emerges in a formulated “we” that explicitly includes only certain social groups and excludes “others”. In a selection of Norwegian language textbooks, for example, “we/our” is seen to coincide with the history of the “Vikings, the Edda and the sagas of Norse history” (Knudsen, 2009, p. 66; see 2.1.6). In this way, the narrative perspective adopted in these textbooks constructs a dominant conception of “us”, drawing a boundary between them and socially minoritized groups who are not called upon in the textbook’s “we”, and thus remain invisible.

It is therefore important to:

- Avoid a dominant narrative voice associated with one particular ethno-racial or national structure.
- Instead, incorporate a variety of narrative voices and diverse perspectives that speak to students from different societal groups. Authors and sources should also be diverse.

## Question 2: Who is speaking to whom?

The question of which students are addressed in educational materials and how identity-building possibilities are created also concerns the narratological level. Studies show, for example, how for a long time, select German textbooks did not consider the presence of migrant students, which is reflected in instructions such as “Formulate possible future paths for foreign children. What should be the goals of integration policy?” (Niehaus, 2015, p. 42; see 2.1.1). Other methods place migrant students in the role of reporters on “their culture” or “their homeland” (Geuenich, 2015, p. 352; see 2.1.1). Images are also often ethnocentrically informed, such as in the case of a Swedish textbook. Although the illustrations of the children who are meant to lead the readers through the textbook as identifying figures are obviously designed to show visual diversity, this particular book nevertheless has recourse to a “white (Eurocentric) ethno-racial structure”, in other words, “Scandinavian, West or South European” (Eilard, 2019, p. 111; see 2.1.6). Textbooks are supposed to speak to all students, but students of colour are absent here.

It is therefore important to:

- Ensure a wide range of first and last names in texts that appeal to as many students as possible without hiding the existing diversity. This can be done, for example, by using different ethnically marked names, or, if feasible for the linguistic context, by using names that are common across cultures.
- Provide opportunities for visual identification by using a variety of appearances in terms of different clothes, accessories, hairstyles, body sizes, skin tones, etc. At the same time, care should be taken to avoid an essentializing exaggeration of what could be considered distinct ethnic characteristics.
- When performing tasks and exercises, avoid any kind of different treatment or differentiation between students of diverse ethnic groups; instead respect diversity in the classroom as a whole, in the school, and in society.

## Question 3: Who is speaking to whom about whom or what?

The visibility of racially diverse groups in textbooks is a central issue in many quantitative as well as qualitative textbook studies. Findings range from the complete absence of some groups through an unbalanced distribution that fails to do justice to social reality, to the over-exposure of one particular group or a few exemplary groups, all embedded within a liberal discourse of multiculturalism.

One such study reviewed here, for instance, finds a focus on white and Black populations in a selection of South African social studies textbooks, while overlooking groups of Indian and Asian descent (Rodríguez-Gómez and Sayed, 2016). One Japanese textbook example is seen to highlight diversity as an external phenomenon, with internal groups of ethnically minoritized groups seemingly absent from the portrayal (Yamada, 2011).

Some textbook studies focusing on content analysis combine an examination of race in the books with gender, class and/or ability. Many of these are quantitative studies that concentrate, for instance, on the visual representation of different subject groups. For the most part, the results are very similar: a clear quantitative dominance of “white/ Caucasian/light-skinned/without shading” with a frequent overlap with the gender category “male”, whereas women of colour are among the least visible groups (see 2.1.6). When assessing the over- or underrepresentation of certain racialized population groups, the demographic composition of the respective country tends to be taken as a benchmark. However, some authors also emphasize the importance of compensating for historically developed imbalances in textbooks, and of replacing the existing reality with an aspired-to, better one (see 2.1.6).



It is therefore important to:

- Reflect the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of social realities in texts and images and include more content on minoritized groups.
- Embed minoritized groups within textbook content in a substantive manner, i.e., combine the visibility of these groups with meaningful contexts, rather than presenting them in loose, randomly distributed content fragments. Qualitative visibility is to be given preference over quantitative occurrence.
- In images, diversify the appearances of individuals and groups, as well as their roles and activities, and show different racialized population groups interacting with each other. Avoid an ethnocentric bias in the composition of groups.



#### **Question 4: How is this visibility established? What is on display and what remains hidden?**

Some researchers have pointed out the simultaneous visibility and invisibility of racialized “others” in educational materials. Non-white bodies are, for instance, rendered invisible in spaces defined as white, whereas they are made “hypervisible” whenever they fail to conform to their white environment (Ahmed, 2007). They are thus exposed to two processes moving in opposite directions: a process of assimilation that camouflages them and certain characteristics, and an exoticization process that puts them on display (Thomas-Olalde and Velho, 2011, pp. 42-43; Stastny 2022, p. 137).

This begins at the level of the language used, for example when a Flemish textbook included in a study reviewed here, directs the students’ attention to the alleged “otherness” of multicultural city districts by using words such as “strange” and “catch our eyes” (Schuermans, 2013, p. 10; see 2.1.1).

On a discursive level, studies reviewed here investigate in which places in a textbook the existence of racialized groups is ignored, and in which places and by means of which characteristics they are displayed. With regard to Native Americans, for example, studies find their frequent absence from content concerning contemporary social contexts to be striking in the textbooks selected for examination, whereas they are included in specific sections on colonial history, albeit then endowed with ethnicizing characteristics (Brown 2016, Cummings, 2012; see 2.1.3). Similarly, according to studies reviewed here, in a sample of Norwegian textbooks a certain “semantic density” of “authentically” perceived identity markers is noticeable when addressing Sámi cultures (Eriksen, 2018; see 2.1.3), while in a number of reading primers from Myanmar, ethnic minorities are presented in illustrations, for instance, not in typical everyday dress but in formal festive attire and thus folklorized (Treadwell, 2014, p. 42; see 2.1.2). May and Sleeter (2010) call this tokenistic approach a “liberal multiculturalism” that employs a simplistic, even essentializing, yet highly visible treatment of difference.

Instead of facilitating the “seeing” of minoritized groups, such modes of representation rather evoke a “staring” in which the “otherness” of the counterpart is asserted, rendering the latter “hypervisible” (Knudsen, 2009, pp. 69-70).

In order to generate different ways of seeing and lending visibility, it is recommended that textbooks:

- Avoid overuse of ethnocultural identity markers considered “typical” and that lend an essentialized visibility to minoritized groups.
- Avoid portrayals that prominently render characteristics considered “different”, leading to an othering of or “staring at” minoritized groups.
- Exercise caution against adopting tokenistic approaches to multiculturalism, which by displaying apparent differences merely produce a “colourful” picture without, however, addressing the aspects of difference that lead to inequalities.

### **Question 5: Who is overlooked?**

Several textbook studies draw attention to a striking imbalance in portrayals of race, gender and class. Some textbook examples address racial inequality and racism in detail while neglecting gender, and other examples offer a balanced presentation of gender but are silent about social inequalities (McKinney, 2005). Accordingly, many textbooks lack a holistic and/or intersectional approach that encompasses the relations between difference and inequality taking into account complex identities and multiple affiliations. Numerous blind spots remain in textbooks.

It is therefore important to:

- Apply an intersectional perspective that considers race, gender, class and other social categories together, rendering different racialized identities visible.
- Establish this intersectional perspective as an instrument of continual analysis in textbook development, in order to continually promote the visibility of intersectional identities in line with the constantly shifting contexts of society.

## 2.2.2. Representations

Representations are linked to meaning and power. In textbooks they can exercise social control by symbolically and selectively depicting the world and society and assigning specific meanings to them. Many textbooks thus normalize and legitimize the status of dominant groups and existing power relations, and naturalize existing inequalities and socially constructed racial relations. To understand the power dynamics behind the portrayal of social groups in textbooks, it is necessary to examine how meaning is assigned and which associative, linguistic and visual attributions are linked to certain racialized groups.

### **Question 6: Who is portrayed in which position, in which role and occupation, and carrying out which activities?**

The question of power-related representations expands reflections on visibility. In many textbooks, in addition to quantitative frequency, there is also a semantic dominance of white people, in particular white men.

Positive, aspirational and prestigious positions and occupations (members of the upper classes, innovators, doctors, etc.) are frequently allocated to white people in the textbooks examined by the studies reviewed here (Sleeter and Grant, 2011; see 2.1.6). Examined textbooks for STEM subjects (chemistry, physics, mathematics, geology etc.) tend disproportionately to depict white men in the roles of scientists – characterized in images by a white lab coat and/or laboratory environment (King and Domin, 2007; Delgado, 2008; Brooks, 2008; Ceglie and Olivares, 2012; see 2.1.6) – although there is one telling exception: in some North American biology textbooks examined in studies reviewed here, people of Asian descent are frequently portrayed in such roles, as a population group that regularly features as examples of a “model minority” (Ceglie and Olivares, 2012, p. 63; Lee, 1996).

Also in depictions of generic, everyday activities (shopping, cycling, reading, cleaning teeth etc.), which provide a particularly simple reflection of life for students, people from dominant groups tend to be disproportionately represented (Treadwell, 2014; see 2.1.2 or 2.1.6). This contributes to a further normalization of their position as majority shareholders in society.

What is striking overall is the high variance of roles portrayed by individuals from dominant groups, which easily creates the impression in these textbooks that they are not only in the majority and everywhere, but can also do anything, whereas those from minoritized groups cannot fill all these roles.

It is therefore important to:

- Ensure there is a great variety of roles among different racialized social groups, in all areas of life (family, friends, hobbies, public life etc.).
- Fill positively connoted, desirable roles and aspirational career profiles (scientists, engineers, fire fighters, teachers etc.) with people from different racialized social groups and ensure that groups historically discriminated against are presented in a manner that creates a sense of identity.
- Depict people from different racialized social groups in areas that create a general sense of identity for students, such as generic, everyday activities (reading, shopping, cycling etc.).
- Minimize or avoid the depiction of people from minoritized groups in service roles.
- Contradict ethnic or cultural stereotypes of certain abilities, motivation, proclivity and types of behaviour that are associated with particular roles and activities, (e.g. that people of Asian descent are “naturally” good at science and are therefore often preferred in illustrations in natural sciences textbooks).
- Ensure there are class intersections when depicting racialized groups in different roles, and also depict traditionally marginalized groups as representatives of the middle or upper classes.

### **Question 7: Who interacts with whom?**

The composition of racially diverse groups and the portrayal of interactions are equally revealing. In some textbooks examined in studies under review here, it is striking that groups featuring POC tend to be presented as homogenous, in other words there is little interracial contact in general and almost none with other minoritized/racialized groups. Any interaction that may take place is portrayed as being with white people, or with people from the dominant groups (Sleeter and Grant, 2011, p. 203; Stastny, 2022, p. 130-131). Race relations in these textbooks can be described as ethnocentrically structured, with one dominant group at the centre and few cross-connections between marginalized groups on the periphery. This does not, however, reflect the reality of race relations throughout history or in the present.

It is recommended that textbooks:

- Depict living together in a diverse society in all its multifaceted relationships and interactions and show relations with and between people from different minoritized groups.
- Show interactions between members of different minoritized groups so they can be perceived as equally active, self-determined and individual as the members of dominant groups, building the foundation for learners to perceive and recognize themselves as part of a common humanity.

### **Question 8: What characterizations are used and what associations do they elicit?**

Representations of racialized groups are often context-specific and linked to specific images, terms and meanings, through which prejudices and stereotypes can be reproduced. An ethnic (or racial) prejudice is “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization ... directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group” (Allport, 1954, p. 9), which therefore aims to discredit the “other” and also creates a

decisive argument, based in racialized thinking, in order to clearly separate “the self” from the “others”. Stereotypes are often employed, which according to Schissler are “patterns and images that reduce the complexities of a phenomenon to a few significant characteristics” Schissler, 1989-90, pp. 85-86, and appear to make the “other” more tangible as a result of being a simple, memorable entity.

Depictions of Africa in several German textbooks, for example, tend to demonstrate two drastically simplified modes of representation (Marmer, 2013, p. 27; 2.1.5): There is an “Afro-pessimistic” construction of the continent as a place of poverty, misery and backwardness and also an “Afro-romantic” depiction of an untouched, exotic location associated with dancing and drums.

Racial stereotypes are not necessarily loaded with negative connotations, but even when they occasionally elicit positive associations they are always restrictive and often contradict the lived reality. This is evident in the way Asian Americans are regularly presented in a selection of US textbooks as a “model minority” who, due to their “typical” work ethos, can overcome sociocultural obstacles and realize the “American dream” (Suh, An and Forest, 2015; 2.1.1). There is no mention in such cases of individual life stories or difficulties. Such examples are seen also as evidence of a generalizing treatment of all Asian Americans, regardless of whether they are of Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese or Malaysian descent; they are all treated as a homogenous population group.

The rigidity of racial stereotypes also carries additional static preconceptions of race as an unchangeable entity. The presentation of indigenous peoples often takes on a museum-like character, frozen in the colonial past, and without reference to changes in lifestyle and cultural expression (see 2.1.3).

Occasionally textbooks adopt well-known terms and images from public discourse, which have complex chains of associations with racial prejudices and which are subsequently reactivated when applied in the educational context. In one specific case of a German textbook, photographs of overcrowded refugee boats conjure familiar and ominous symbols of mass immigration, which are also reminiscent of the rhetoric employed by extreme right-wing parties (Budke and Hoogen, 2018; see 2.1.1).

Racial stereotypes and prejudice stubbornly persist in social discourse, as in educational materials.

In order to counter them it is important to:

- Avoid assigning any fixed characteristics to social groups or making any unnecessary distinctions, whether positive or negative; instead descriptions should try to work against stereotypes and towards dismantling bias and prejudices.
- Deconstruct negative stereotypes and prejudices. This can be done by providing information on the meanings and functions of stereotypes, which may in certain circumstances not be entirely wrong but represent only a small segment of a complex reality.
- Also confront intersectional stereotypes (e.g. the association of Black youths from underprivileged households with criminality) through critical thinking and dialogue.
- Confront simplifying, generalizing ascriptions to entire populations and deconstruct essentialist notions of culture or race; instead try to highlight the internal diversity of minoritized groups and their members’ very different life stories; also demonstrate transformation processes and the adaptability of communities’ lifestyles, cultural concepts, practices and symbols.
- Avoid polarizing juxtapositions in descriptions, which suggest a supposed unusualness of a marginalized group vis-à-vis the dominant group and the incompatibility of different groups because of supposedly contradictory ways of living or thinking.
- When including pictures and terms from public discourse, carefully examine the underlying narratives and associations.
- Aim to engage and empower students, by critically questioning cultural stereotypes and labelling and analysing problematic expressions and underlying notions.



### Question 9: How are representations linked to real life?

A knowledge-based examination of racial prejudices and stereotypes in textbooks, without the critical assessment of existing knowledge and how it was produced and reproduced, runs the very real risk of directly replacing old stereotypes with new ones. Increased knowledge of different minorities does not necessarily lead to a more open attitude – indeed under some circumstances it can induce a renewed reduction of racialized groups to limited characteristics and of individuals to their racialized backgrounds.

Textbook studies often point up the problem of how individual characteristics can take a back seat to ascribed group characteristics in representations of racialized groups. Notably, the analysis of whiteness reveals that through the normalization and invisibility of the white position, there is space to observe differentiated characteristics and individual personalities, whereas POC in textbook representations are conspicuous because of their “colour” (see 2.1.6); or in the words of Dyer, “Other people are raced, we are just people”. (1997, p. 1).

Another aspect concerns the dominance of external attributions in textbook representations, as demonstrated by anthropological views of indigenous peoples (see 2.1.3) and prevailing colonial racial attributions to Black bodies (see 2.1.5). In contrast, examples of Black History in the textbooks under review tend to address the Black experience in an identity-building manner that encompasses a diversity of histories, feelings, aesthetics and expressions (King and Simmons 2018; see 2.1.5).

It is fundamentally important to:

- Select examples and set tasks that are as relevant to real life and the present day as possible and which feature individualized representations of people from minoritized groups, highlighting personal skills and achievements, motivation and behaviour, proclivities and decisions as individual qualities.
- Respect and prioritize the self-image of racial groups as depicted in self-representations and self-descriptions, while presenting a variety of identity-building expressions that inspire and empower students.

## 2.2.3. Narratives

Narratives combine single events into a story. In textbooks, narratives organize national history or histories and sketch a cultural self-image by lending meaning to selected events. By presenting such events in main and subplots, establishing temporal and causal connections, legitimizing power relations, and categorizing the contributions by individual people and population groups, narratives provide explanations for the present, for our contemporary social order and racialized relations.

Textbooks are not free from the beliefs and interests of those who produce them (Lässig, 2009). Studies of history textbooks often critique the total absence or misrepresentation of certain events, their biased interpretations of history, or their marginalization of minoritized populations. Narratives embedded in multiculturalism discourses also often reduce the contributions of minoritized groups to sideshows of national history with the spotlight on isolated, random events and personalities, or on “heroes and holidays” as Banks (1993) has described this fragmentary approach. In relation to specific history textbooks, Foster (2006, p. 169) criticizes the practice of “mentioning”, the superficial sprinkling of issues related to minoritized groups at sporadic intervals, in isolation from the more significant storylines of national history. While these textbooks grow thicker as a result, Foster explains, they still seem to lack a substantive treatment of ethnic minority history, and dominant national master narratives remain unaffected.

## **Question 10: Whose histories are told or silenced?**

Some studies reveal a clearly selective and biased structure in history and social studies textbooks. Narratives often unilaterally reflect interpretations of history promoted by the dominant groups, either omitting the histories of minoritized groups altogether or arranging them in a subordinate position to the main storylines. Relations between the dominant and minoritized groups are also interpreted unilaterally, from the perspective of the majority society.

A study of a selection of Sri Lankan history textbooks, for instance, argues that the dominant population group is clearly prioritized. This is reflected, among other aspects, in the presentation of the myth of origin, according to which national history begins with the arrival of the first “Aryans”, who are equated with the Sinhalese community (Gaul, 2014; see 2.1.2), whereas later settler groups are portrayed as “invaders”. The opposite is true of many US textbooks selected for research, in which the colonization of the continent by Europeans is implicitly justified based on “myths of empty land”. Likewise, land grabs and the displacement of Native Americans are framed and downplayed by a “manifest destiny” ideology (Cummings, 2012; see 2.1.3).

All in all, the textbook studies reveal very different, country-specific narrative patterns that are seen to construct and legitimize social orders based on public discourses, certain group interests, political ideologies, or visions.

To achieve the broad inclusion of cultural identities and diverse histories, it is important to:

- Actively search for missing histories and incorporate identities and experiences that have been suppressed in narratives thus far, critically questioning dominant master narratives via counter-storytelling and first-person testimonies.
- Critically question dominant conceptions that inform periodization and prioritization in portrayals of history, incorporating histories beyond the colonial or dominant timeline.
- Portray historical relations between different racialized groups comprehensively, such as traditions of cultural and intellectual exchange as well as conflictual encounters, histories of oppression, violence suffered, and resistance.
- Embed the histories of minoritized groups within national history, and in doing so highlight the roles of individuals and population groups, and of political movements and initiatives.
- Include a broad spectrum of contributions by minoritized groups over the course of political history, and give a balanced portrayal of cultural, scientific and social achievements.
- Avoid trivializing the histories of minoritized groups and abstain from fragmentary depictions of them.

## **Question 11: Whose perspectives are included?**

The search for, and inclusion of, missing histories in a multidimensional representation of history can only be accomplished by adopting a change of perspective that incorporates the experiences and knowledge of minoritized groups.

Examples from Black History textbooks, that is, about the history of Black people their role and contributions to national and world history demonstrate such an exemplary shift in perspective. These move beyond merely adding historical events and personalities to the presentation and employ a revisionist approach. This approach seeks to situate Black experiences more specifically and to allow for a reorientation of Black identity in its complexity, humanity, and agency, despite the attributions and interpretations informed by white history (King and Simmons, 2018; see 2.1.5). Counter-narratives in Black History textbooks confront the prevailing Eurocentric narratives, for example in a historical comparison of the intra-African and transatlantic slave trades.

However, textbook researchers also frequently point to the dominance of white doctrines over the histories of minoritized groups, which are presented in a number of history textbooks in a one-sided and unquestioned manner, without reference to underlying scholarly controversies and viewpoints from the group in question (Brown, 2016; see 2.1.3).

In order to achieve a multiperspective approach it is important to:

- Create a fundamental awareness of different interpretations of history, different viewpoints from scholarship, and varying theoretical perspectives about historical and cultural phenomena.
- Present the perspectives of different groups on current affairs and historical controversies, using a balanced selection of primary sources and incorporating the views of researchers from minoritized groups.
- Openly address controversial debates among researchers.
- Dispel myths around the histories of minoritized groups and critically question dominant narratives by means of counter-narratives.
- Consistently engage in an epistemological shift of perspective, including in the language used, for example speaking of “anti-colonial resistance” rather than “belligerent rebellion”.



### **Question 12: Which connections are drawn to current racial relations?**

Ideologies of racialized hierarchies and practices in the past must be addressed in the context of existing inequalities in contemporary societies. The history of racial oppression, violence and exploitation still has concrete material implications today, giving rise to radically different lived realities for dominant and minoritized populations.

Dutch textbook examples are reported to tell colonial history as a national success story, documenting the country's rise to economic power while downplaying its involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, and consequently disconnecting this part of national history from the main plot (Weiner, 2014; see 2.1.5). The line connecting the present prosperity of dominant social groups to the persistent inequalities resulting from colonial exploitation is thus cut with a single stroke. The result is seen to be a lack of social awareness of racism-related connections and the unhindered perpetuation of the social marginalization of Black people.

It is therefore important to:

- Show, from a historical perspective, how aspects of racialized differentiation between social groups give rise to inequalities.
- When addressing the connections between historical systems of oppression and current unequal relations, make every effort to de-naturalize this depiction. Identify practices of racist oppression as intentional acts, and clearly name both those who benefit from such disparities and those they discriminate against.
- Also address cultural identities against the background of specific racialized experiences, presenting both the history of violence suffered and stories of resistance, and linking them to the resilience and agency of communities today.
- Focus particularly on the historical dimension of intersectionality, attending to the manifold contingencies and connections between race, class/caste, gender and regionality.



### **Question 13: How are primary sources selected and implemented?**

A variety of source materials can be used in addition to textbook texts in order to present history from multiple perspectives and to inspire different ways of accessing a textbook topic. A variety of intertextual references opens up alternative perspectives and approaches to the discussion, instead of simply providing a fixed interpretation of history.

Since the inclusion of primary sources lends a degree of authenticity and credibility to textbook content, sources, whether historical documents, newspaper reports, scholarly articles, interview statements, maps or photographs, should be carefully selected and properly contextualized. In some circumstances, the use of primary sources can also present pitfalls, as demonstrated by a specific example from the USA addressing immigration and migration-related discrimination, in which the first-hand voice of an immigrant couple is used by the textbook to underscore its ideological message; the experience described, while factually correct, is however a rare exception and does not match the reality of life for many immigrants. The impression created can therefore be misleading (Suh, An and Forest, 2015, p. 48), and minoritized groups are thus once again deprived of a voice.

It is therefore important to:

- Ensure a balanced, context-aware use of primary sources, taking care – particularly in the case of first-hand voices – to contextualize them appropriately.
- When using fact-based data or statistics that demonstrate a causal relationship with racial inequalities, provide support in interpreting the data.
- Convey the value of oral traditions and incorporate the various forms by which historical events are remembered through the generations in ethnocultural minoritized groups.



## 2.3. Race and racism as subjects in educational materials

When countering racism in educational materials, it is not enough to simply remove racist content. Direct discussion of race and racism itself is crucial in order to initiate processes of reflection and learning that not only include race-related knowledge but can also change attitudes and reveal possibilities for action. This can be challenging, particularly as students and teachers are not free from preconceived notions. They come with certain ideas about race and racism that often do not fully capture the reality of racism and racial relations. To overcome this, it is crucial to impart knowledge about concepts, discourses and narratives, and to make sure that learners can make connections to their individual experiences, questions and concerns. Teaching race and racism should include knowledge-based and subject-oriented approaches.

The majority of the studies that discuss the integration of race- and racism-related topics in textbooks find the treatment of these topics inadequate, starting with the definition of race and racism. For example, there is a lack of conceptual clarity about race as a social construction (Triguero Roura, 2022) and little reflection on connections between historical developments and racial inequalities in contemporary societies (Fitzgerald, 2012). Sometimes racism is not clearly named as such (Nagre, 2023, p. 14; Real and Ferreira, 2019), but instead euphemistically reduced to “discrimination” (Gulliver and Thurrell, 2017; Sijpenhof, 2018) and/or subsumed under other forms of social exclusion, thus evading direct engagement with the role of racialization (Rodríguez-Gómez and Sayed 2016, p. 128). Racism is also sometimes reduced to individual attitudes and behaviour when it is defined, for instance, as “prejudice or hatred based on race, color or nationality” (Montgomery, 2005, p. 433).

The texts selected for research in the studies under review here often fail to grasp racism in its structural and institutionalized forms. For instance, the prevailing tendency to separate out racism as an exceptional phenomenon is viewed critically in relation to textbook examples from the Canadian context, as it is seen not to do justice to its historical reality as a “foundational fiction of the modern state” (Montgomery, 2005, p. 438). Racism, however, is precisely a “signature of modernity” in many contexts, manifested in institutions, laws, social norms and also in the way we deal with racism (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 62; Weiner, 2014). Often general discomfort and feelings of vulnerability (“racial fragility”) or rejection of personal involvement (“racial apathy”) are seen to get in the way when the topic of racism is brought up (Sijpenhof, 2018, 2019). In some contexts, racialized inequalities are considered to have been resolved and overcome, ignoring or denying the persistent effects of race, and thus any engagement with race and racism is deemed unnecessary, even counterproductive (Husband, 2016a). This is partly reflected in textbooks, in which various obstacles are found that hamper a deeper discussion on racism:

- Attribution of racism to distant places while denying racism within one's own society. For example, a selection of Dutch textbooks can be seen to dissociate the country from racism by assigning racism to other countries, such as the USA before the civil rights movement or to apartheid-era South Africa (Sijpenhof, 2018; Weiner, 2018).
- Historization of racism as an issue from the past which has been overcome (Rezai-Rashti and McCarthy, 2008; Gulliver and Thurrell, 2017, p. 51). In some Canadian textbook examples, accounts of racism are limited to the 1960s or earlier. In contrast, later racism-related incidents are discussed as “human rights infringements” or attributed to individuals (Montgomery, 2005, pp. 436-437).

- Conflation of racism with extremism: In some textbooks, for example, racism is sometimes equated with National Socialism and antisemitism during World War II (Montgomery, 2005, p. 435). In the context of a selection of German resources, the understanding of racism is sometimes narrowed to right-wing extremism in the present, the substitutional discussion of which gives the impression that the problem of racism has been fully dealt with (Müller-Mathis, 2017).
- Mitigation of racism: In select US textbooks, the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II tends to be justified by “fear” and “national security” without naming the racial discrimination enacted by the government (Ogawa, 2004; Kelly and Aden, 2022). A similar approach can be found in a selection of Canadian textbooks, for instance, where antisemitism and hostilities against Black people and immigrants during the 1930s are to some extent excused as being the result of “bad economic times” (Montgomery, 2005, pp. 435-436).
- The absence of perpetrators and thus a continuation of “racism without racists” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Bonilla-Silva and Embrick, 2006; Triguero Roura, 2022): When racial violence is discussed, there is hardly any mention of perpetrators. On the contrary, there is often misleading use of the active or passive voice in the relevant text passages (Fitzgerald, 2012; Sijpenhof, 2018). Phrases such as “millions of Africans arrived in the plantation areas” to describe the violent abduction and enslavement of people; or “during actions dozens of people died; thousands were put in prison” to describe the suppression of Black protests in South Africa obscure the existence of deliberate actors (Sijpenhof, 2018, p. 350).
- Individualization of racism: A greater focus on violent expressions of racism, such as hate crimes, than on systemic and institutional forms associates racism with the irrational actions of individuals and distracts from the role of politics and a deeper societal division (Rezai-Rashti and McCarthy, 2008, p. 531; Stastny, 2022, p. 125 et seq.). The depiction of racial violence in examples of US history textbooks examined in studies reviewed here, as resulting from the immorality of individual perpetrators – “bad men doing bad things” – obscures the institutional and structural ties that supported such acts and benefited from them (Brown and Brown, 2010; Kelly and Aden, 2022, pp. 245-246).
- Simplification of racism, for instance by a monocausal explanation of racism and by sweepingly blaming certain groups, e.g. Europeans or white people. Morgan (2007) uses a South African textbook example to show how texts and assignments, intended to be lessons imparting a deeper understanding of racism, accidentally lead to a re-essentialization of white and Black positionings and ultimately to the opposite learning effect. Gilbert (2019), again in the South African context, points out from specific cases that racism, although comprehensively covered through numerous historic cases (Nazism, apartheid) and within diverse approaches (human rights education, Holocaust education), is sometimes reduced to one single explanation and eventually presented as varying degrees of the same phenomenon.
- Avoidance of controversy and complexity: In some cases, controversial issues, viewpoints and personalities are left out of the discussion of racial history; instead consensus-based, one-dimensional storylines are preferred (Foster, 2006; Soler, 2006; Suh, An and Forest, 2015, p. 49; Stastny, 2022, p.140-141). At times, important scholarly positions are overlooked or deliberately ignored (Rezai-Rashti and McCarthy, 2008, p. 532; Puentes and Gougherty, 2013, p. 168). Deckman et al. ascribe the apolitical, neutral tone they observe in a selection of health textbooks to the publishers efforts to satisfy a broad audience and not to alienate dominant populations (2018, pp. 298-299). The limitation to mainstream topics and conservative perspectives also reinforces the belief that existing institutions are capable of providing solutions to social and racialized inequalities (Foster, 2006, p. 168). They themselves are not questioned. Thus, racism remains hidden in its structural/systemic form.
- Perpetuation of racism, for instance by unintentionally resorting to racialized stereotypes and ideology, when discussing racism (Farias and Ferreira, 2014).

The majority of existing studies examining the discussion of race and racism in educational materials are focused on social science subjects, especially history and social studies, but also politics, geography and religion. They deal with implicit and explicit manifestations of race and racism, underlying conceptions and social implications. Race as a social construct seems to be primarily a matter for the social sciences. However, certain notions of race are also communicated in other subjects, as shown by some studies on physical education and biology textbooks, in which biologically essentialist concepts of race sometimes persist unquestioned.

Some Australian physical education textbooks are seen to show a biologically essentialist framing of race and human performance in sport (McDonald 2013). For instance, a classification of races is being made with an attribution of specific genetic preconditions and physical characteristics and ultimately particular preferences for sports, e.g., African Americans and running, Caucasians and water sports, Asians and gymnastics. Some Spanish textbook samples are also seen to associate racial phenotypes with sporting activities. They show, first, a clear dominance of white people, and second, a stereotyping of Black people, the second most common group in these books, with a particular emphasis on physicality, associated with sports such as athletics, basketball and American football (Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao 2015).

Biologically essentialist notions of race are seen to persist to some extent in sampled textbooks on natural sciences (Beltrán-Castillo, 2017, 2018). In the context of select US textbooks, for example, after an initial, significant decline in the treatment of the topic of race in biology textbooks into the 1990s, implicit and explicit references to race appear to have returned more recently in some studies, but this time less frequently in relation to phenotypic differences than to genetic differences (Morning, 2008; Willinsky, 1998; Donovan, 2015). While the texts on skin colour and on human origins generally resist biologicistic notions of human difference, lessons on genetic disorders give mixed messages about the meaning of race (Willinsky, 2020). Explicit references to “geographic ancestry” or specific “populations” in the distribution of sickle cell anaemia, for instance, underscore the idea of human racial classification and in this way reinforce deterministic notions of race.

A central conclusion drawn by some textbook studies is the need to teach scientific literacy in relation to the school subject concerned (Donovan, 2015; Morgan, 2010a, Morgan, 2010b). Willinsky (2020) suggests three strategies for dealing with existing textbooks on biology: Firstly, fact-check the textbooks’ racial associations, secondly, introduce historical contexts and shifts in the meanings of race in biology; and thirdly, attend to the meta-scientific discussions and various contemporary positions. After all, the ambiguous treatment of race in textbooks, Willinsky argues, is in part due to the fact that scientific debates are similarly heterogeneous and controversial. He recommends that students also be informed about the intersection of scientific and cultural norms in common understandings of race, and warns against the shorthand conclusion that race, being a socio-political construct, not a biological category, cannot be taught in the latter context (2020, pp. 1472-1473).

Similarly, Donovan (2015) points to the role of textbooks in addressing the preconceived, often scientifically inaccurate or incomplete, notions about race that students have often internalized. He argues that textbooks should work towards conceptual change, for example by simultaneously challenging scientific misconceptions and explaining the consensus of scientific understanding of a concept. The teaching of scientific literacy can, for instance, enable students to interpret scientific texts correctly, to distinguish scientific data sets from culturally framed interpretations of that data. Similarly, Shreiner and Martell (2022), in concluding their analysis of data visualizations in online curricular materials, underline the importance of media literacy and students’ capability to comprehend, use and create data correctly.

Based on findings from a specific South African history textbook, Morgan (2010a) also points out the importance of informing students about knowledge production processes and the historicity of knowledge systems, thus equipping students with the analytical skills to differentiate between pseudo-scientific opinions and scientific methods. In this regard, a deeper historical understanding is essential, for example by examining historical scientific racism, and questioning what was accepted as “hard science” and on what grounds (Morgan, 2010a, p. 758), and which scientific methods are used today to refute such concepts as racial theories and social Darwinism.

Learning about race and racism does not happen in an empty space that can be easily filled with knowledge. Rather, it can only succeed through a process of un-learning racism, that is to say disposing of preconceived ideas and internalized practices, including context-specific, racially charged terms, stereotypes and narratives, and confronting accepted knowledge and normalized power relations, as well as reflecting on ones own experiences and involvement. Un-learning racism also requires subjective engagement that connects to the students' lived realities and enables them to perceive and understand their own role in power structures.

📌 Recommendations	
<b>(1) Race as a social construct</b>	Educational materials should raise awareness of the scope and impact of race as a social category that is linked to political power, inscribed in discursive and material realities.
	→ Point out the reality of race as a socio-political construct; where required, deconstruct common cultural or biologically essentialist conceptions of race.
	→ Address intersections of socio-cultural and scientific norms in the understanding of race.
	→ Identify and contextualize race-related textbook content across subjects, both social sciences and natural sciences.
<b>(2) Structural racism</b>	Educational materials should raise awareness of structural/systemic racism as complex, historically evolved, global and societal power relations and disparities that are embedded in concepts and practices.
	→ Point out the existence of racism in the here and now of a given society.
	→ Point out the existence of racism at the centre of society, as racism cannot be reduced to extreme manifestations (right-wing extremism, hate crime, etc.).
	→ Provide information on the meaning of structural/systemic racism and its social implications, as racism cannot be reduced to individual attitudes and behaviours.
	→ Provide information on the connections between historical systems of oppression and implications of race in today's society.
	→ Provide information on the mechanisms and beneficiaries of historical and contemporary power relations.
	→ Avoid any kind of simplistic, euphemistic, apologist or obscuring explanation of racism.
	→ Provide real-life and personal examples of how racism has shaped and continues to shape the lives of individuals and groups.
<b>(3) Knowledge-based approach</b>	→ Highlight stories of resistance and the agency of individuals and groups who have experienced racial violence.
	For a proper understanding of the prevalence of racism and the social implications of race, foundational knowledge of race-related history, language, academic and public discourses is required.
	→ Make efforts for the holistic, cross-curricular integration of race and racism issues.
	→ Enhance discussions on race and racism through teaching of scientific literacy in the subject area; in doing so, also disclose contradictory evidence.
	→ Work towards de-naturalization of race and racism as it is rooted in common discourses.
	→ Introduce current racism-related topics with suggestions for open discussions.
	→ Provide suggestions for media-critical analysis of news, videos, movies, TV shows, advertisements, song lyrics, caricatures, etc. for race-related associations.
→ Provide suggestions for language-based analysis of everyday terms, idioms, jokes, etc. for race-related associations.	

<b>(4) Subjective engagement</b>	<p>Discussions on race and racism should also provide opportunities to develop subjective perspectives on social issues and ones own experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Encourage reflections on ones own positioning and involvement in social power structures.</li> <li>→ Encourage reflections on personal roles and affiliations in school and society, and ones own experiences with discrimination.</li> <li>→ Raise awareness of diverse perspectives on current diversity- and racism-related debates.</li> <li>→ Address students as members of society: encourage active social participation, point out possibilities for action and aim at empowering students.</li> </ul>
<b>(5) Intersectional perspective</b>	<p>The examination of race and racism should be linked to the awareness that identities are context-specific and multifaceted with multiple differences intersecting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Encourage reflection on ones own simultaneous affiliations, roles and experiences that multiply in complex ways.</li> <li>→ Make intersecting identities visible and de-normalize specific forms of discrimination and privilege.</li> <li>→ Connect race-related topics with discussion of other social movements and theoretical perspectives (e.g. feminist movements, queer theory).</li> </ul>
<div style="text-align: center;"></div> <b>(6) Pitfalls and Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ An open discussion on race and racism may be considerably more difficult if it takes place in a societal context in which the impact of race is ignored (“colourblindness”) or racism is claimed to have been overcome (“post-race”). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: It can be helpful to use context-specific examples to reveal the mechanisms of structural racism, and to clarify that racism cannot be conflated with individual, intentional actions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>→ Students as well as teachers sometimes come with preconceived “knowledge” about race and racism that may be inaccurate or fall short of the definition of structural racism. This can hamper the learning process and the acceptance of other evidence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: A refutational approach can be helpful. Textbooks can start with addressing widespread ideas, critically question these, and thus work toward conceptual change.</li> </ul> </li> <li>→ When dealing with racism, there is a risk of reproducing rigid victim-perpetrator patterns, even exposing students who have experienced racism and triggering painful emotions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: Discussions on racism should lead to the empowerment of all students. Self-reflection in the sense of racism-critical educational processes addresses each person’s involvement in power structures and can reveal possibilities for interpretation and action. Also point out the agency of each person.</li> </ul> </li> <li>→ Educational processes critical of racism also encompass a certain language use that may appear dogmatic to students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation: The development of language awareness is essential. More important than strict adherence to politically correct language rules and bans, is an understanding of the relationship between language and power. Textbooks can provide etymological information, point out examples of language misuse, discuss linguistic appropriation practices, pejorative terms and self-designations etc. (e.g. “Coloured” vs. “People of Colour”).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Part 3

Overall  
considerations  
beyond textbooks

Racism is a structural issue. Related systems of oppression are based on historical developments, institutions, legislation and jurisprudence, racialized bodies of knowledge and patterns of interpretation; they are not primarily due to the wilful actions of individuals. However, the tacit acceptance of existing structures and the dysconscious participation within these structures are “default actions” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 17) that contribute to the persistence of racism in society.

A critical educational approach can show possibilities for action towards change, based on power-critical and self-reflexive perspectives (Quehl, 2015; Mecheril and Melter, 2009), such as an understanding of racism as incorporating complex power structures with material implications and subjective reflections on ones own positioning and entanglement within this social structure (Autor\*innenKollektiv Rassismuskritischer Leitfaden, 2015).

Educational materials provide knowledge-based access and can encourage subjective engagement. However, improving the textbooks has its limits. Bönkost (2020) questions the assumption that textbooks can impart “correct” content and create a space free of racism, against the odds of external racial realities. It is important to consider that the social scope of racism also affects education and knowledge production, and ultimately involves textbooks as media of cultural knowledge. Therefore, countering racism can only succeed when embedded in a holistic approach that goes beyond the development of textbook content, and involves society, legislation policies and different levels of education, in particular higher education and teacher training programmes (Mato, 2020, 2022).

When it comes to removing racist content from educational materials and making them more inclusive and diverse, textbook authors and publishers face several challenges.

**Challenges for implementing the context-related and general recommendations for educational materials:**

- In many countries or regions, identity issues are closely related to policies denying equal rights for all people and thus hindering an inclusive curriculum. This is even more difficult in regions of violent conflict that reinforces discrimination and racism.
- Racism and discrimination towards indigenous peoples and minorities are persistent and pervasive in many regions of the world, such as the centuries-long exclusion of indigenous peoples and people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the major challenges is how to deal with this reality in textbooks, especially if racist and prejudiced officials are firmly established within the system and involved with the development of curricula, textbooks, and other educational materials. There are actors at community and national levels who would not want to see inclusivity being introduced.
- Another challenge can be geographical segregation, which limits exchanges between people as well as the assessment and supervision of instruction due to natural isolation, such as among Amazonian, Patagonian or island populations, for example. Similarly, indigenous populations or ethnic communities in remote areas are not fully included in education since they cannot access educational material.
- There are numerous private players in development and publishing, and the private sector is not always subject to strict regulation.
- While the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement has called much-needed attention to the importance of freely and openly accessible content, what is often missing are platforms that ensure this content is critical of racism, unbiased and accessible to teachers and learners.
- Developing an anti-racist curriculum requires different strategies, based on local contexts, in places that are diverse and those that are not, and where these biases are embedded.
- However much teachers may hope to change things, if they received their own education in the same inequitable, oppressive school system in which they later work they might have not been introduced to diverse perspectives in school or within a teacher training programme in higher education, but instead experienced a white-centric reality.
- Providing a toolkit or material on inclusivity is just the first step. Further steps must be undertaken to ensure that such materials can be accessed throughout every country and can be used as widely as possible.

In addition to the context-related and general recommendations for educational materials suggested in Part 2, attention must be therefore paid to the overall aspects that are preconditions for racism to be successfully countered in textbooks. These preconditions can be identified (1) at the political level, (2) within the context of textbook production, (3) within teacher education and teaching in general and (4) in civil society.

### Preconditions and recommendations

#### (1) Political level:

- At the political level it is necessary to create the right political conditions for change. This means abolishing legislation and exclusionary regulations that are racially discriminatory or ignorant of racialized inequalities, and developing normative frameworks, guidelines or anti-racist educational programmes, either through education ministries or other state authorities. Broad coalitions, as well as cross-racial and pan-ethnic unity nationwide or within communities are important to tackle racism in the education sector and especially in educational materials. Convening meetings between political stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels as well as between local school council members and students, teachers, parents and textbook authors could help improve communication about what students need and want.
- It is also crucial to set a strong and holistic curricular framework that includes knowledge acquisition, socio-emotional and behavioural development, and which fosters action-oriented measures. Guidance on spiritual development could also help place value on addressing racism. Curriculum developers and textbook producers work with clear operational frameworks and well-integrated strategies that consider diversity and address racism. Instruments with which to evaluate racist content can be developed, and specific commissions or boards can be appointed to oversee this issue, basing their actions on public protocols and guidelines.
- Mechanisms that monitor, measure and evaluate the quality, impact and effectiveness of all educational material in order to ascertain what works, what does not work, and how material could be improved should be institutionalized.
- The political will to introduce anti-racist education at all levels of education builds confidence in combating racism in schools. In many African contexts for example, the establishment of listening centres and psycho-social facilities that address all forms of exclusion and provide all children with a neutral and protected learning space free from any form of discrimination is recommended. In other regions such as Latin America and Europe, the state has significant influence on the approval and distribution of educational materials; in these cases, collaboration between textbook production and curriculum development is necessary. At the same time, the availability of specific guidelines and protocols for the development of educational materials renders the process of textbook production and approval transparent.
- Teachers who are working on anti-racist education within schools need to be supported and protected. Political involvement in textbooks and curricula should ideally foster an awareness of racism rather than resisting such initiatives.

#### (2) Textbook production:

- At the level of textbook production publishers should be knowledgeable about and familiar with the issue of racism. They must have at their disposal guidelines and evaluation tools in order to implement a “new narrative” on racism and discrimination.
- It is also important to draw on existing knowledge and materials collaboratively developed by youths and adults. Minoritized voices should be centred as primary or co-authors and should include the knowledge of elders who have survived enslavement, incarceration, dictatorships, and northern and cross-continental migration.
- In addition, books or any other educational material prepared or produced by marginalized groups should be used.
- Textbooks should be made available in several widely-spoken languages, as in some cases a significant language barrier can perpetuate certain biases. This is particularly the case in countries with many different population groups and languages.



- There needs to be a network of experts available to publishers in order to ensure, prior to publication, that the materials are inclusive in nature. Publishers can work with both local civil society organizations and think tanks as well as international organizations such as UNESCO to create such a network. This also applies to teachers, especially when they develop their own material, as in Norway, or where they are the main authors of textbooks, as in Portugal, Croatia and Germany. Especially in countries with only a very small number of educational publishers, such cooperation among authors and the inclusion of teachers in development and review processes could enhance the quality of the educational material produced.
- The revision of educational materials with a focus on race-related contents needs to be established as a continuous and reiterative process, reflecting shifts and changes in education and societal discourses.

### **(3) Teacher education and teaching:**

- With regard to school instruction, teachers and educators need to be trained in the history and dynamics of racism and discrimination as well as in overcoming racial prejudice and bias in a comprehensive and intercultural manner. Therefore, pre-service and in-service training should be provided to strengthen the skills and attitudes of teachers in the development of intercultural, bilingual educational tools and delivery methods. Teachers need support in understanding their own predispositions that find expression in school textbooks.
- Teachers as well should be trained to identify explicit and implicit racialized biases in textbooks and other supplemental materials that are applied in the classroom. They should be prepared to carefully select resources and critically reflect on possibly discriminating depictions and language in textbooks that are currently in use. Open classroom discussions on textbooks representations can then be one way of critical pedagogical intervention to deal with contents that are (still) based on racist notions. Such critical approaches eventually help students to uncover and challenge racism within the educational context and in society.
- Opportunities should be created in textbooks for social and emotional learning (including empathy and embracing diversity). Teaching socio-emotional and relational skills and attitudes in order to strengthen respect for diversity, tolerance and dialogue must be conducted systematically with proper guidance and as a whole-school intervention.
- Teachers should present an example of empathetic behaviour, promoting equality and respect for all social groups. As role models for students, they should constantly highlight the values and virtues of all ethnic groups, encourage students to share with each other and make evident the contributions that each one makes – or has made – to the world.
- Educators could organize meetings where they can share good practices and experiences regarding their work on addressing racial prejudice.
- They could also provide learning opportunities through the local community, including experiential and intergenerational learning. In Japan, for example, intergenerational learning is practised in order to initiate diversity learning from the community.
- Teachers may also focus on extracurricular activities and activity-based learning. For instance, there is a great emphasis on rote memorization in many South Asian countries. An activity-based curriculum and a concept-based assessment system will help every student to apply what they have learned from the textbook to their own contexts.

### **(4) Civil society:**

- Civil society activists might promote an agenda for research and for publishing educational materials about racism. They could organize regular meetings of experts on textbooks and materials countering racism and bias, encouraging local and national “champions” to advocate for an inclusive curriculum and educational materials, involving diverse stakeholders. Collaborations could be arranged with concerned communities and organizations to address racism and discrimination through awareness campaigns.
- Platforms for information and exchange can contribute to debates informing the perceptions of government, educators, publishers, parents, and students regarding the representation of racism in textbooks and teaching materials.
- Civil society organizations could help to mobilize funds for capacity-building workshops that could help develop anti-racist textbooks and teaching materials across all sectors involved in education. Policy stakeholders, educators, students and publishers will thus be empowered to act against racism in educational materials.

# Annex:

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# Key Terms

- Anti-racism
- Black history
- Colonialism
- Critical race theory
- Critical whiteness studies
- Diversity
- Educational materials
- Ethnocentrism
- Eurocentrism
- Identity
- Inclusion
- Indigenous people
- Intersectionality
- Migration
- Minority groups
- Multiculturalism
- Multiperspectivity
- Narrative
- Othering
- People of colour
- Race
- Racial discrimination
- Racialization
- Racism
- Representation
- Stereotypes
- Textbooks
- Visibility
- Whiteness

# Acronyms

CRT	Critical race theory
CWS	Critical whiteness studies
OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner
POC	People of colour
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US/USA	United States of America



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization

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# Unmasking racism

## Guidelines for educational materials

These Guidelines developed by UNESCO provide recommendations on how to combat racism in textbooks and to develop learning materials that are free of prejudice and bias and do not perpetuate stereotypes or legitimize unequal social structures. Through a comprehensive analysis of recent studies of textbooks and other educational materials, the guide also demonstrates how countries around the world address racism and racialization. It increases awareness and improves our understanding of how racism manifests in educational materials, and aims to support education stakeholders to promote just, peaceful and multicultural societies.

