Methods in School Textbook Research

Jason Nicholls, University of Oxford

Abstract This paper represents an attempt to provide an overview of methods used in textbook research. Focusing first on generic methods as outlined in key literature across the field, I argue that methods for textbook research are fundamentally underdeveloped and in need of further research. Following this, I outline examples of good practice evident in a series of specific textbook studies. However, fundamental to the paper is the idea that sophisticated textbook studies can only be guaranteed with the systematic development of generic frameworks and instruments.

Key Words Methods, Textbooks, Research, Key literature, Generic, Specific

This paper represents an attempt to provide an overview of methods used in textbook research. How is it possible to analyse texts? What preparations need to be made? What guidelines should be followed? What frameworks can be applied? What criteria provide the best tools? What categories should be developed? What questions should be asked? These questions are of fundamental importance to all involved in analysing textbooks. However, it has to be said from the beginning that researching this area is not an easy undertaking. This is due to the fact that surprisingly little work has been done in terms of setting out clear generic guidelines for analysing texts. While pioneers of textbook studies such as Michael Apple in the United States and researchers at the Georg Eckert Institute in Germany, have done much to develop the field there is little explicit discussion in their work of the precise instruments used to conduct textbook research. Research findings discussed in detail are, more often than not, reported on the back of vague discussions of the methodology used. Similarly, where researchers are explicit about the fact that they used a list of questions to analyse a range of texts, they are rarely explicit about the actual questions they asked. We the readers are, therefore, left to tease out the questions from the results.

In this paper I will first give an overview of generic methods for textbook analysis as described in works supported by UNESCO, the Council of Europe and others. This will be followed by a discussion of methods used in specific studies, particularly those focusing on the representation of World War 2 in school history textbooks. Finally I will consider the implications of the current state of affairs.

1. Generic methods for textbook analysis

1.a. Historical background – methods in context

Supranational political bodies such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe have long recognised the potential role of education for promoting international understanding. As a result there have been numerous initiatives to make history education more responsive in Europe and globally. To an overwhelming extent the initiatives represent a response to the devastating wars and conflicts, often fought on ethnic, nationalist or sectarian grounds, that dominated the twentieth century. Reconciliatory measures have sought to heal differences between countries, to bring attention to the mechanisms within national education systems that perpetuate prejudice, stereotyping and bias and, through bilateral and/or multilateral dialogue, to discuss alternative ways of proceeding (Slater, 1995).
As early as the 1920s the newly formed League of Nations drew much attention to the importance of comparative textbook research and after World War 2 developments continued under the responsibility of UNESCO. In the post-war years UNESCO oversaw many bilateral textbook projects, often between former “enemies” or between countries where there were border disputes. By the 1970s, however, in the wake of increased economic and political crises on the global level, a more multilateral and/or global approach began to take hold and initiatives for textbook research emphasised the need for multilateral procedures (Pingel, 1999, pp. 9-16).

In 1974 researchers at the newly named Georg Eckert Institute (for International Textbook Research) began to work in direct co-operation with UNESCO, a relationship that continues to flourish to the present day. Formed in 1951 as the International Institute for Textbook Improvement by Georg Eckert, a German historian and educationalist, the institute has established itself as a world centre in the field of comparative textbook analysis. Over the years the relationship between UNESCO and the George Eckert Institute has been consolidated through conferences (for example the 1988 conference co-hosted by UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute: International Consultation with a View to Recommending Criteria for Improving the Study of Major Problems of Mankind and their Presentation in School Curricula and Textbooks), numerous publications and the creation of the International Textbook Research Network. (Set up in 1992 and based at the Georg Eckert Institute in co-operation with UNESCO, the International Textbook Research Network consists of researchers affiliated to other institutes, universities and NGOs involved in textbook research from around the world). Recently this collaboration has produced a key work in the field of generic methods for textbook analysis, namely the UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision written by Falk Pingel, Deputy Director of the Georg Eckert Institute (Pingel,1999). This work and its implications will be discussed in section 1.b.

In addition to developments by UNESCO the Council of Europe has played a major role in supporting a wide range of projects directed at improving history textbooks in Europe. Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe has organised many Pan-European conferences for history teachers and scholars as well as publishing guidebooks aimed at assisting textbook authors to avoid ‘bias and prejudice’ in their writing. The 1990s saw the initiation of the Council of Europe’s ongoing project, Learning and Teaching about the History of Europe in the 20th Century. This has involved research and publications by scholars from across Europe in many areas of history education including textbook research. In particular, Robert Stradling’s Teaching 20th – century European History, published in 2001, includes interesting sections on methods for textbook analysis and will be discussed in section 1.c (Stradling, 2001).

Other important publications include the work of Estonian researcher Jaan Mikk in his Textbook: Research and Writing (2000). In this single volume of over 400 pages Mikk covers an array of issues associated with the use, evaluation and analysis of textbooks. Peter Weinbrenner’s “Methodologies of Textbook Analysis used to date” that appears in “History and Social Studies – Methodologies of Textbook Analysis” (1992) is also important. Finally, developments in the United States must also be considered. These contributions will be discussed in section 1.d.

1.b. The UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision by Falk Pingel of the Georg Eckert Institute

After decades of involvement in textbook research UNESCO has at long last produced a methodological guidebook. In the book author Falk Pingel outlines many of the
considerations that textbook analysts need to take before and while embarking on research projects. Essentially, Pingel emphasises the complexity of textbook research and the need for researchers to consider all eventualities during their preparation to conduct a project.

In the section entitled ‘How to conduct a project: methodological issues and practical guidelines’ Pingel gives an overview of ‘The stages of an international textbook study. First, Pingel describes the necessary preparations that need to be attended to before commencing a textbook study – e.g. defining a textbook sample from which it is possible to make generalisations. Next, Pingel outlines various methods and techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, which may be used to analyse texts. Third, he provides a list of generic categories upon which an analytical instrument may be constructed. Finally, Pingel discusses ‘additional considerations’ that should be taken into account.

Defining a textbook sample
In any textbook study there are few things more important than a precisely defined sample. For Pingel, the type and quantity of textbooks to be analysed are essential considerations for analysts wishing to generalise on the basis of research findings. Practical considerations such as the number of countries to be included in an international study are also important details for a research project in its preparatory stages (pp. 21-22).

Quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques
How can we analyse textbooks having defined and selected a sample? Before describing specific research methods and techniques, Pingel gives a brief outline of the two major concerns in textbook research. The first concern regards the pedagogical implications of the text. In other words, how are textbooks used by teachers and received by students? The second concern regards the content of ‘the text itself’. In other words, what is included in the text, what is omitted and why? Having made this distinction Pingel proceeds to give a ‘short overview about methodological approaches, with a few examples of categories for analysis’ (p. 22).

Pingel emphasises the fact that different methods reflect different purposes and that ‘each approach provides answers to different questions’. Pingel then proceeds to outline the key features of quantitative and qualitative methods used in textbook research. Overall, Pingel stresses the complimentary nature of both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Quantitative methods are used to measure aspects of the text in terms of frequency and space. This may take the form of quantifying how frequently particular words or names, places or dates appear across a sample of texts. It may also involve measuring how much (or how little) space is allocated to a particular theme, event or topic. As in other fields of social research, quantitative methods are useful when analysing large samples. However, they enable breadth at the expense of depth telling ‘us a great deal about where the emphasis lies, about selection criteria, but nothing [in themselves] about values and interpretation’(p. 45).

Pingel describes qualitative methods in greater detail. With qualitative methods of textbook analysis depth presides over breadth. As such, the results tend to be richer with regard to understanding the way that information is presented in a text yet more difficult from which to make generalisations. Pingel then goes on to list different qualitative approaches to textbook analysis. First he describes hermeneutic analysis, used to unearth hidden meanings and messages in textbooks. He then briefly outlines linguistic
analysis, involving the examination of words and terminology with controversial meanings and cross-cultural analysis, where all sides in a bilateral or multilateral study examine each other's textbooks to identify bias. Finally, he discusses discourse analysis, where the researcher deconstructs textbook content to identify what information, groups and events the author values, takes for granted, valorises or regards as unimportant. Pingel also refers to contingency analysis, a new method combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyse the representation of both text and images. However, his description of this last method is extremely vague (p. 45).

Unfortunately, there are many qualitative methods for textbook research that Pingel fails to mention all together. These include disciplinary or historiographical analysis, used to investigate the manner in which the discipline of history is conveyed, visual analysis, used to evaluate the ways in which images, charts and maps are employed, and question analysis, used to assess whether in-text questions facilitate the development of students' memorisation or critical thinking skills. In addition, critical analysis, used to identify and expose textbook portrayals that perpetuate unequal social relations in society and structural analysis, used to investigate exactly how historical events and processes are structured or 'delivered' across textbooks, are not mentioned (Foster, 2002). Finally, there is the whole issue of semiotic analysis to identify signs and signifiers in texts, as theorised by cultural theorists such as Roland Barthes (1976). Although a popular tool for textual analysis in cultural and literary theory, the relevance of semiotic techniques for textbook analysis is not explicitly acknowledged by Pingel.

**Designing an analytical instrument – categories and questions**

As William Fetsko, the American textbook analyst, comments, 'Time spent in designing the analysis instrument will pay great dividends throughout the process' (Fetsko, 1992, p. 133). To 'design' the 'instrument' researchers must formulate a framework or criteria of categories and questions fine-tuned to the specific aims and objectives of a particular textbook project. The categories and questions are then applied to all the textbooks in the sample from which analysis of the results may proceed. In the UNESCO Guidebook Pingel refrains from giving examples of completed analytical instruments stating that the 'categories and methods for analysis can only be presented in a very general way' (1999, p. 47) due to the very specific nature of every project. Instead, Pingel gives a much more general 'List of Criteria for Analysis' which is set out (quoted directly) below:

**Textbook sector components:**
- Educational system
- Guidelines/curriculum
- Adoption procedures
- Structures of publishing houses

**Formal criteria:**
- Bibliographic references
- Target group (school level, type of school)
- Dissemination

**Types of texts/mode of presentation:**
- Author's intentions (if specified)
- Descriptive author's text (narrative)
- Illustrations/photos/maps
- Tables/statistics
- Sources
Exercises

Analysis of content:
- Factual accuracy/completeness/errors
- Up-to-date portrayal
- Topic selection/emphasis (balance)/representativeness
- Extent of differentiation
- Proportion of facts and views/interpretation

Perspective of presentation:
- Comparative/contrastive approach
- Problem-oriented
- Rationality/evocation of emotions

(Pingel, 1999, p. 48)

The list is composed of 5 main focus categories (main criteria). Within each category a series of sub-headings (sub-criteria) are listed around which probing questions could be formulated in accordance with the specific aims and objectives of a given project. The list of criteria is useful but, in the attempt to provide a generic overview, perhaps overly general.

Additional considerations
Finally, Pingel discusses other dimensions and practical considerations essential to the textbook research process. Pingel writes of the implications of a country’s economic circumstances for the production and physical quality of textbooks. He also talks about the very difficult task of determining what “pseudo-factual” content should be included in texts. Although the process of including and omitting specific content virtually guarantees contention, Pingel emphasises the difficulties involved in those cases where disagreements appear irreconcilable (pp. 24-26). Pingel then goes on to describe spatial and time variables within textbook research. Spatial and time dimensions refer to the dynamic between the locality of the textbook and of the textbook researcher (pp. 26-27). In other words, textbook researchers with different backgrounds may evaluate textbooks from different places and at different times in different ways. Finally, Pingel draws attention to the idea of official public memory and the ways in which these memories are ‘masked by the different ways in which textbooks are used’ (p. 27).

Assessing the UNESCO Guidebook
The UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision is the first of its kind and in this sense an important step. Falk Pingel provides an overview – a general methodological framework – on how to go about conducting textbook research from conceptualisation, to design, to practice, to findings and finally their dissemination. He raises many questions and rightly brings attention to the numerous practical and methodological pitfalls faced by the textbook researcher. To this extent there is much that is useful in Pingel’s guidebook. However, what Pingel does too little of is guide the prospective textbook researcher in how to analyse texts. Two or three examples of methodological instruments used for analysing specific aspects of a given text or sample of texts together with clear explanations would have sufficed. Pingel does have an answer to this, however, when he refers to the methods of analysis presented in the book as ‘a minimum standard for textbook analysis’. He then explains that this is due to the fact that, ‘Often our questions and aims are more specific and we [ourselves] have to further refine the instruments to be used in the study’ (p. 47). There is some truth in this. However, a minimum standard is perhaps not enough to enable potential researchers to
understand the processes involved. More examples were needed to illustrate Pingel’s discussion of methods and procedures. This is a guidebook, the most important function of which is to guide.

1.c. Robert Stradling: “Evaluating History Textbooks”

Critique implies an ideal or at least a ‘provisional’ or ‘located’ ideal. The act of arguing what is problematic about a thing is simultaneously to imply what is not problematic or at least “less problematic”. As such, when we critique, judge or evaluate an object or a relationship between things we implicitly suggest a hierarchy. To make improvements on x or y, to suggest ways in which things may be presented more clearly than before, to increase awareness of particular issues by doing this or that and so on. Critique of an object is, therefore, based on the implicit orientation of the researcher, the located subject, and implies a ‘located’ ideal.

In his recent book, Teaching 20th-century European history, published in collaboration with the Council of Europe (Stradling, 2001), Robert Stradling confesses at the beginning of the chapter ‘Evaluating History Textbooks’ that, ‘It is not written with the intention of seeking to offer a definitive answer to the question ‘What is a good history textbook?’” Stradling recognises that what counts as being a good textbook in one place by a certain group of people is likely to be perceived differently in another place by other people and that ‘a definitive answer usually leads to little more than broad and rather platitudinous generalisations’. Indeed, the idea of defining a set of core principles that every history textbook should include is, as Stradling argues, unlikely to be satisfactory for all situations, offering no more than ‘a stimulus for further discussion’. Nevertheless, Stradling proceeds to set out a series of categories and questions for evaluating history textbooks that, I would suggest, imply a ‘provisional’ ideal (p. 257).

Stradling’s book is a Pan-European guide for history teachers and, therefore, not aimed specifically at textbook researchers. However, by providing an analytical tool for teachers, a framework for evaluating textbooks, Stradling acknowledges that teachers are as much textbook researchers as scholars. For this reason Stradling’s categories and questions are of interest to all involved in the research, analysis, critique and evaluation of textbooks.

As part of his analytical framework Stradling constructs four main categories across which there are forty probing questions. Within each category Stradling offers questions that will guide the evaluation of the researcher. Category one, dealing with the evaluation of textbook content, includes questions on coverage, sequencing and the curriculum, space allocation, the incorporation of multiple-perspectives, cultural and regional identity, and omissions. Category two, identifying the textbook’s pedagogical value, includes questions on students’ prior skills and knowledge, on whether the textbook encourages memorisation or skills development, on the use of charts and pictures, on the explication of historical concepts in the text, and on the facilitation of comparative thinking. The third category, identifying intrinsic qualities in history textbooks, includes questions on assessing textbook pitch, on whether a text relies on reductionism, and on the possibilities for identifying author bias in texts. The last category deals with extrinsic factors that may impact on the textbook. Questions to ascertain when the book first appeared on the market, the price and robustness of the textbook, whether the book is aimed at a specific group of students, and the extent to which the textbook will need to be complimented with alternative resources, are included in this category (pp. 258-263).
Stradling provides an example of guidelines – criteria based on categories and questions for analysing history textbooks. Perhaps Stradling’s categories could be redefined and the questions appropriately re-clustered. In addition, questions would need to be fine-tuned according to the specific focus of a given project. This may require the formulation of additional categories. William Fetsko, for example, suggests a set of generic categories different to Stradling’s including ‘Readability’, ‘Format’ and ‘Quality of the Text’ but his questions are more or less the same (Fetsko, 1992, pp. 132-133). Likewise, Crismore argues for the inclusion of categories that evaluate “the rhetorical form of textbooks” beyond merely the analysis of what information is included and omitted, in order to measure ‘the way the content is presented’ (Crismore, 1989, p. 133). Like Stradling, however, both Fetsko and Crismore refer to analytical criteria to be used by teachers and/or textbook selection committees. They are not writing for the benefit of the academic textbook researcher per se and their ideas must be adapted accordingly. Nevertheless, Stradling’s categories and questions for evaluating textbooks represent an important and much needed example: a criterion from which to work from, a reference point from which to locate oneself, a beginning open to further discussion, just as Stradling intended.

There is another side to ‘making categories’ and ‘asking questions’, however, that throws light on the important connection between methodology and the epistemological and indeed socio-political orientation of the researcher. To begin with, the process of asking particular types of questions can be and often is evaluative involving the assessment of what is ‘good’ or ‘better’ and what is not. From Stradling’s questions this is clearly implied in the sense that he favours textbooks that, among other things, offer multiple perspectives, social and cultural history as much as political history, and offer information consistent with the latest research findings. Textbooks including these elements are therefore, by implication, better than those that offer nationalistic, monocausal interpretations of history focusing on the military/political pursuits of famous men. Whether he likes it or not Stradling’s criteria are thus based on a ‘provisional’ ideal of what constitutes good knowledge and what makes a good textbook and what does not. In addition, the criteria tell us much about Stradling’s socio-political orientation with regard to the function of history education in democratic societies: views should be expressed in all their plurality while actively interpreted by a critically engaged student populace. Thus, Stradling’s methodology, like all methodologies, is intimately connected to an epistemology – a theory of knowledge – that, in turn, expresses an implicit socio-political orientation.

In the senses described above, Stradling offers more to the prospective researcher than Pingel. Unlike Pingel, however, Stradling does not give details on the many other practical and methodological aspects involved in textbook research. He doesn’t discuss sampling or parity for instance. This being said, Stradling is, after all, writing for teachers involved in selecting textbooks as and when the school budget allows. Yet the concerns of Stradling and the teachers on behalf of whom he is writing are not so dissimilar to those of the academic textbook researcher. I would suggest combining aspects of both Pingel and Stradling’s work, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, for a more complete framework.
1.d. Other Contributions

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union many Eastern European states have been involved in an intense effort to re-write their textbooks, particularly in the fields of history, geography and civics. However, while textbook research in Eastern Europe is a flourishing field, few works are published focusing specifically on methods. *Textbook: Research and Writing* by Estonian Jaan Mikk (2000) is an exception. Although not an easy read and in places poorly translated, the author devotes over 400 pages to ‘methods of textbook evaluation and….recommendations for writing….textbooks’ (p. 9).

On the whole, Mikk emphasises the importance of quantitative techniques for the analysis of textual structures (pp. 77-103) stressing ultimately that ‘methods must be reliable and valid’ (p. 78). This gives the book a positivist/empiricist flavour not necessarily conducive to researchers of, say, ideology in history textbooks. Moreover, much of the book is devoted to textbook writing. However, in his discussion of methods for ‘the analysis of….value forming’ textbook content Mikk outlines some qualitative approaches (p. 101). Like Pingel and Straddling Mikk describes the need to formulate topics and subtopics, a framework of categories, to guide content analyses. This being said, Mikk goes a step further when he proceeds to explain how ‘there are two possibilities for developing a list of [guiding] topics’ (p. 103). The first possibility is rational and conceptual, involving the formulation of a set of topics prior to textbook analysis. The second possibility is empirical and practical, involving the provisional analysis of a sample of textbooks upon which to formulate a set of topics. Importantly, Mikk reminds us of the intimate relationship between methodology and epistemology. In other words, do we construct an analytical instrument based on an idea of what is to be analysed or on our experience of what is to be analysed? The answer, I would suggest, has something to do with both.

Peter Weinbrenner’s essay, ‘Methodologies of Textbook Analysis used to date’ (2990) is useful because he describes with such clarity what is lacking in textbook research. Weinbrenner is indeed quick to point out that textbook ‘research is incomplete’ and that there remain many gaps in the field that need to be filled (p. 21). To begin with, he argues, textbook research has not been sufficiently theorised. There is no ‘theory of the schoolbook’ upon which to construct solid methodologies. Secondly, there are ‘empirical limitations’. In other words, we continue to know very little about the effects of using school textbooks. Finally, writes Weinbrenner, ‘we do not yet have a set of reliable methods and instruments for the measurement and assessment of investigations in the field of schoolbook research’ (p. 22). In order to fill these gaps Weinbrenner suggests a series of dimensions and categories in school textbook research where future developments, often involving new understandings of the meaning of textbook research, might take place.

Beyond these offerings, American scholars have made important contributions to textbook research. Since the 1970s, Michael Apple’s highly influential work has, to some extent, dominated the agenda. In books such as *Teachers and Texts* (1986) and *Official Knowledge* (1993) Apple develops a highly critical analysis of the hegemonic processes that characterise the production and consumption of textbooks both inside and outside of the United States. Unfortunately, where Apple has devoted himself to producing a rich theoretical perspective, he rarely gives explicit and detailed accounts concerning methodology, either generic or specific to his own work. Apple has written extensively on the theme of school textbooks but one can never be sure of exactly which ones since he almost never defines his sample more specifically than *all the textbooks in capitalist America*. This is not always the case with Apple’s colleagues. In *The Politics of the Textbook*, co-edited by Apple (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991), Christine Sleeter and
Carl Grant give a precise account of methods used in their critical study of representations of diversity in US school textbooks. However, their submission is the only one to cover methods in the entire volume (Sleeter & Grant, pp. 78-110).

In the US, Apple is not alone in neglecting the discussion of methodological approaches in textbook research. Across the board, in key works by leaders in the field, methodological procedures and processes receive little attention and rarely anything close to an explicit and detailed description. In *Language, Authority and Criticism*, edited by De Castell *et al* only one of the essays, ‘Rhetorical Form, Selection and the Use of Textbooks’ by Avon Crismore, approaches the issue of analysing/evaluating textbooks using criteria based on the formulation of categories and questions (1989). Likewise, in *The Textbook Controversy – Issues, Aspects, Perspectives*, edited by John Herlihy, only one of the submissions focuses on the methodological processes involved in textbook evaluation and selection. The article by William Fetsko, ‘Approaching Textbook Selection Systematically’, is only 6 pages long (Fetsko, 1992, pp. 129-136). It doesn’t take expert frequency and space analysis to realise that published discussions of generic methods in textbook research are under-represented.

### 2. Methods used in studies investigating the representation of World War 2 in school history textbooks

#### 2.a. World War 2 Textbook Studies in Context

How are pan-global historical experiences represented in history textbooks, particularly when the experience is as controversial as World War 2? Do textbooks in different countries tell us different stories about the war? What underlying agendas define selection? What information is included? What information is omitted? How is information presented and what are the implications? These questions are the concern of textbook researchers focusing on representations of World War 2.

Most researchers focus on a particular and manageable aspect of the war - e.g., the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (Foster & Morris, 1994), the Holocaust (Pingel, 2000), the experience of the Blitz (Crawford, 2001) etc., although some quantitative projects have focused on the war in its entirety (Ketchum, 1986). Not surprisingly, qualitative forms of content analysis have tended to dominate the field although there are examples of purely quantitative studies using space and frequency analysis. Some projects combine the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The field offers numerous possibilities for longitudinal analysis, comparing current textbook representations with information and data unearthed through historical research. However, latitudinal analysis appears to be more popular, comparing current representations in one country with those of other countries. In general, the field is undeveloped with little work published in books and journals. The quality of the work is accordingly varied. This is particularly the case when studying the methods used to conduct studies. Many authors are explicit about how, for example, they defined their textbook sample yet unclear when describing the instrument they used – the framework of categories and questions – to analyse the sample. Thankfully, this is not always the case as will now be discussed.
2.b. Methods used to analyse representations of World War 2 in textbooks from a single country

**Constructing national memory: The 1940/41 Blitz in British history textbooks by Keith Crawford (Crawford, 2001)**

In this illuminating study Keith Crawford successfully deconstructs the way in which the Blitz is mythologised in UK history textbook accounts of World War 2 for Key Stage 2, 3 and 4. Crawford argues that the Blitz myth – that indomitable Britons worked together harmoniously in the face of adversity in a display of natural courage and goodwill – is a social construct. Perpetuated by dominant ideologies this myth of the Blitz has become established in the public memory, an essential element of modern British cultural and national identity. However, through the detailed historical analysis of numerous historical accounts Crawford undermines the myth and ‘presents evidence which suggests that children are provided with a narrow view of the past which promotes a sense of unity and patriotism in a way which limits critical historical consciousness’ (p. 323).

**Methodology**

**Textbook Sample:**
- 21 history textbooks for Key Stage 2, 3 and 4.
- All texts published in Britain.
- All texts contain author narrative; primary evidence such as photographs, cartoons, maps and personal accounts; and pupil activities.
- Texts on 20th century history including chapters on World War 2 were typically 250 pages in length.
- Texts focusing purely on World War 2 were typically around 80 pages long.
- In accordance with UK procedures there were no screening processes involved in the approval or adoption of the books, individual teachers and schools being free to choose books from whichever publisher they please.

**Type of analysis:**
- Qualitative techniques such as critical analysis, visual analysis and historiographical analysis were applied to textbook content
- Historical analysis of accounts of the Blitz experience including those of ordinary people who lived through the Blitz, biographical accounts of politicians and military officers in the 1940s, information from public archive material and mass observation survey files, as well as work by academic historians
- Textbook content was compared with analysis of historical accounts of the Blitz experience through a framework of core themes and questions.

**Categories/themes and questions:**

**Generic questions applied to textbook content included:**
- How does textbook content link with recent academic research in the field?
- Can recurring characters and events be identified?
- To what extent do these characters and events form part of a core national memory learned by students?
- What assumptions underlie the textual discourse? Does the text transmit a particular message?
- What do authors appear to value or think important?
− Does the text inform and explain events and issues? What issues or themes are covered in insufficient depth and could use further explanation?
− Does the text encourage the investigation and critique of evidence or the memorisation of knowledge?
− What appears to be taken for granted in the text?

The following questions, specific to the two themes ‘Wartime morale and propaganda’ and ‘Sheltering from the Blitz’, were applied to textbook content in light of evidence established through the analysis of historical accounts.

On the theme of ‘Wartime morale and propaganda’ Crawford discusses the following questions:
− How is wartime morale portrayed in the textbooks?
− To what extent are panic, suffering and low morale adequately represented?
− How are Britain’s leaders portrayed in relation to national morale? To what extent is this consistent with the findings of recent research?
− How is the attitude of the British people towards the leadership portrayed? Are multiple perspectives given to demonstrate the breadth of views?
− How are the use of propaganda and the role of the BBC portrayed?
− What is the relationship between national propaganda during the Blitz and its portrayal in contemporary textbooks?
− Which images of high morale during the Blitz experience are constantly repeated?
− Can textbook images be categorised?

On the theme of “Sheltering from the Blitz” Crawford discusses the following questions:
− How is the use of air raid shelters portrayed in the text? How does this compare with evidence from historical accounts?
− How is the use of the London underground for air raid shelters depicted in the text? Is this consistent with evidence from historical accounts?
− How is the exodus from bombed cities portrayed in the text if at all?
− Is the relationship between ‘black outs’ and rising crime represented in the text? How is it portrayed and in what detail?
− To what extent are black market activities described in the text? What explanations are given for black market activities?
− Is coverage given to the prevalence of anti-semitism in London’s East End or the extent to which Nazi propaganda was believed?
− Is the plight of conscientious objectors covered in the text? How?

One of the most important features of Keith Crawford’s study is its methodological clarity. Crawford describes his sample in detail followed by discussion of the type of analysis used, both to analyse texts and research historical accounts. Crawford is explicit about the generic questions used as well as how he arrived at the two specific themes: ‘Wartime morale and propaganda’ and ‘Sheltering from the Blitz’. The questions used to analyse the specific themes are evident in the discussion of the research results. Crawford ends his paper with a very clear concluding section summing up his analysis complete with recommendations for improvements. This is a model textbook study.
2.c. Methods used to analyse representations of World War 2 in textbooks from more than one country

*Arsenal of Righteousness? – Treatment of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima in English and U.S. History Textbooks* by Stuart Foster and James Morris (Foster & Morris, 1994)

In this provocative study Foster and Morris argue that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima is approached differently in English and US history textbooks. In particular, their results point to the poor ‘treatment’ of the subject in US texts. Relying heavily on the memorisation of repeated facts, names and dates, US textbooks lack depth and subtlety. This is especially apparent in the tendency to oversimplify the reality experienced by victims of the bomb, to oversimplify the making of the decision to drop the bomb and through a tendency to include few activities aimed at developing analytical skills for the interpretation of historical evidence. In contrast, English history textbooks tend to include a higher degree of engaging narratives including a multitude of perspectives, cross-referenced with relevant sources and imagery, and activities that approach the desired ideal of enabling students to ‘think historically’ (p. 164).

**Methodology**

**Textbook sample:**
- 4 US secondary school history textbooks and 4 English secondary school history textbooks.
- All 8 textbooks were found to be widely used in secondary schools.

**Type of analysis:**
- Qualitative techniques were applied to textbook content. These included comparative analysis, critical and disciplinary analysis as well as elements of visual, question, and structural analysis.
- One quantitative technique was applied to textbook content: space analysis.

**Foster and Morris also discuss the question: ‘Why compare the chosen topic?’ They give the following reasons:**
- The use of the atomic bomb is a common and popular topic in US and English schools.
- The topic is important in the context of World War Two and the Cold War
- The topic is relevant to contemporary issues such as environmental protection, the use of force and nuclear weapons.
- The topic is significant for both the US and UK as allies in World War 2 and as countries with modern nuclear arsenals.

**Categories/themes and questions**

Foster and Morris develop three themes or overarching questions in order to analyse and evaluate the textbooks in their sample: ‘What was it like?’ ‘How and why did it happen?’ and ‘How do we know?’ These themes provide a clear analytical framework for evaluating the combined use of source materials, author narrative, pictorial evidence, explanatory captions and the use of statistics across the textbook sample.
On the theme/overarching question “What was it like?” Foster and Morris discuss the following questions:

− How are narrative, source materials and pictorial evidence combined to induce feelings of empathy among students?
− How engaging is the narrative? Does it portray a strong sense of human hardship suffered?
− How are source materials used to portray human hardship?
− What is the balance between the use of source materials and author narrative?
− Is the use of sources supported by narrative?
− How are statistics used? Do they add a meaningful dimension to the experience of human suffering?
− How many photographs are used? How do they depict the “reality” of Hiroshima?
− What captions are used to describe photographs?

On the theme/overarching question ‘How and why did it happen?’ Foster and Morris discuss the following questions:

− What explanations are given for the decision to drop the bomb?
− Are major decisions placed in context?
− Are major decisions questioned in any way?
− Are multiple perspectives given on the pros and cons of major decisions? Are Truman’s options presented?
− To what extent are source materials used to support different perspectives?
− Are students asked to give their own perspective or to discuss perspectives?
− Is sufficient background information provided to enable students to develop their own perspective?
− Is background information biased towards any particular perspective?

On the theme/overarching question ‘How do we know?’ Foster and Morris discuss the following questions:

− How effective is the use of historical evidence across the textbook sample?
− To what extent can students formulate judgements based on the presentation of evidence?
− To what extent does the textbook invite the use of critical skills of investigation and inquiry?
− Is contradictory evidence used or included?
− What reference is made to historical research in the text?
− To what extent does the text encourage students to accept sources at face value? To what extent are events presented as unquestionable and given?
− Are sources used only to justify the making of major decisions or to critique those decisions?
− Are the texts explicit about how opinions may be affected by the way that primary sources are presented?

Foster and Morris provide a very clear methodological framework for their analysis. The sample is well defined and the reasons for selecting the chosen topic clearly explained. In addition to this, the style of analysis and the three overarching questions used to analyse the sample are explicitly laid out. Sub-questions that support the three themes are clearly evident in the discussion of the research results. In conclusion, Foster and Morris sum up clearly in a section complete with a wide range of recommendations for improvements. These factors combined give the overall impression of a well-organised and sharply focused research project.
2.d. Studies involving quantitative methods to analyse World War 2 in history textbooks

*World War Two Events as Represented in Secondary School Textbooks of Former Allied and Axis Nations* by Allen Ketchum (Ketchum, 1982)

How have quantitative methods been used to analyse World War 2 in history textbooks? In this 1982 doctoral study Allen Ketchum attempts to investigate ‘how former combatants of World War II now present the facts of that struggle to their current student populations’ and ‘to create comparative education research methodologies that are compatible with the incipient power of microcomputers’. Using a wide range of quantitative techniques Ketchum identifies several patterns across the textbook sample.

**Methodology**

**Textbook sample:**
- 8 textbooks from 8 countries. A single textbook from each of 4 formerly Axis countries during World War II, West Germany, Italy, East Germany and Hungary, was selected. A single textbook from each of 4 formerly Allied countries during World War Two, the United States, Britain, the USSR and Poland, was selected. Selection was also based on each nation’s political and strategic allegiance in the early 1980s, the period in which Ketchum conducted the study. Thus textbooks were selected from two former Axis countries and two former Allied countries that had become NATO members (the United States, England, West Germany and Italy) and from two former Axis countries and two former Allied countries that had become Warsaw Pact members (the USSR, Poland, East Germany and Hungary), since the end of World War Two.

**Textbook translations:**
- All textbooks in the sample were translated into English (by scholars at the University of London).

**Type of analysis:**
- Comparative content analysis.
- Quantitative methods involving 3 ‘time’ and 3 ‘event’ centred techniques. Time centred techniques included chronological analysis, emphasis analysis, and ethnocentrism analysis. Event centred techniques included alternative treatment analysis, spatial analysis and omission analysis.
- All techniques were computer facilitated involving the identification and evaluation of words, sentences, categories and patterns across the textbook sample.
- Statistics were employed to identify patterns in the data. However, Ketchum states quite clearly that the “research is ex post facto and is not intended to be used to generalize to any other population of textbooks” and thus ‘[s]ince the collected data is 100% of the population of the chosen history textbooks, the use of statistical tools is limited to a ‘consolidation-of-data’ mode rather than the more common experimental and predictive mode’.

Ketchum’s entire sample was exposed to the following ‘time-centred’ and ‘event-centred’ quantitative analytical techniques:
Time-centred techniques

Chronological analysis:
- Ketchum describes *chronological analysis* as a method for examining ‘the importance that the history textbook authors place on events that occurred in a certain imposed time parameter’. Ketchum measures the importance placed on events in each of the 69 ‘month’ periods from September 1939 to August 1945 across the eight-nation textbook sample (p. 40).

Emphasis analysis:
- Having identified ‘the eight most emphasised months in each text’ using *chronological analysis*, *emphasis analysis* involved measuring ‘the total number of words written about events’ in each of the eight month periods (p. 46).

Ethnocentrism analysis:
- Ketchum is keen to point out that *ethnocentrism analysis* is neither an ethnic nor an anthropologically oriented form of textbook analysis. Rather ethnocentrism analysis is used to ‘identify the quantity of material in a textbook that refers to events in World War II that are in the geographic ‘sphere of influence’ of the country that the text comes from’ (p. 52).

Event-centred techniques

Alternative treatment analysis:
- *Alternative treatment analysis* facilitates the formulation of generic categories in order ‘to organize the researcher’s exploration into the texts’. Using this type of analysis Ketchum was able to ‘group the materials of the eight textbooks into the following fifteen categories: Battles West, Battles East, Communist Party, Deaths, Economics, Exiled Governments, Personalities, Policies, Resistance, Surrenders, Tactics, Treaties, War Declarations, War Travesties, and Nonclassified’. In textbooks from across the sample the emphasis on each of the above categories was found to vary - e.g. in the Italian and West German text there was a pronounced tendency to emphasize ‘Resistance’. In the Soviet text the emphasis was on ‘Battles East’ and in the US text greater emphasis was placed on ‘Personalities’ compared with texts from other countries etc (pp. 56-58).

Spatial analysis:
- Each of the 15 generic categories identified using *alternative treatment analysis* contains a series of subcategories. In all, the 15 generic categories contain 114 specific subcategories. Ketchum used *spatial analysis* to search ‘for ‘events’ that the textbook authors deemed paramount. This was done by isolating any of the 114 subcategories where 4% or more of the space of any text was utilized to describe the ‘event’ (p. 84).

Omission analysis:
- Using *omission analysis* Ketchum attempts to measure what ‘is not in the history textbooks’ (p. 87). As Ketchum summarises: ‘Omission analysis, the last event-oriented method, simply examines the number of events that were ignored in each text….This technique found the East German textbook to have the lowest number of omissions, and the Soviet text to have the most’ (p. 92).

Ketchum’s doctoral study is an interesting piece of work. With its Cold War era focus and its reliance on what are now very old-fashioned computing techniques the work
comes across as something of a dated ‘period piece’, yet there is much of value in the study. To begin with, the methodology used is clearly laid out. Thus, Ketchum clearly defines his research aims and objectives while his use of analytical techniques and procedures is easy to follow. Likewise, the results of the study can be clearly understood due to Ketchum’s good use of tables, graphs and charts. This being said, the sample size is too small, yet Ketchum is well aware of the fact that by using one textbook from each country he is unable to generalise from any of his results. Deeper samples of say 3 or 4 textbooks per country would have been more complex to analyse (and translate!) but the yield from the research findings would likely have been far greater.

3. Conclusions

In the field of textbook research, methods used to analyse texts are rarely discussed clearly and in depth. Thus where ideology, politics, language and other content related issues are readily approached across numerous publications, methods are all too often given a brief mention. Pingel offers useful advice on the textbook research process in its entirety, just as Stradling’s work brings light to the kinds of categories and questions researchers may need to use in order to evaluate texts. Likewise, other researchers such as Weinbrenner, Mikk and Fetsko bring light to an array of important issues. However, on the whole, too little work has been conducted on generic methods for textbook research and it remains as a gaping hole in the field. Detailed guidelines need to be set out on precisely how to construct methodological instruments for analysing texts and various methods currently in use need to be disentangled, defined and ultimately located in relation to each other. Finally, with regard to the work on representations of World War Two in school history textbooks, I selected studies that I consider examples of good practice. Yet, considering the lack of any generic set of clear guidelines for researchers to follow, it is perhaps not surprising that, in general, the methodological quality of research varies immensely. Sometimes the analytical instruments used are discussed openly and explicitly while elsewhere categories and questions need to be teased out, no doubt imprecisely, from the discussion of results. On the whole, the current state of affairs is less than satisfactory. More work is needed.

Correspondence

Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford OX2 6PY
England
Email: jason.nicholls@st-cross.oxford.ac.uk or skargatan79@yahoo.com

References


