Textbook Revision
and the Development of Common History Textbooks

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Introduction

Points of discussion:
- Textbook revision
- The development of common textbooks and teaching materials
- The Franco-German History Textbook

Textbook revision

• History education in the 19th/early 20th century
  - Fostered national understanding
  - Legitimated social and power structure
  - Depicted chauvinistic attitudes, especially under war conditions
• Opposition by child-centred progressive educationists, internationally oriented peace activists and labour unions
• Activities on many levels after First World War:
  - League of Nations: Cesares Resolution
  - Scandinavia: “Norden” Association
  - E.g. Franco-German textbook theses

Textbook revision

After the Second World War

• Bi- and international textbook consultations: e.g. 1951-1967; 1981-2003 Franco-German consultations
• 1951: Foundation of the “International Institute for Textbook Revision” as clearing house for international textbook collaboration; since 1975: “Georg Eckert Institute for international Textbook Research”
• After 1990: activities in transformation and (violent) conflict environments
Development of joint textbooks/materials

Objectives of joint history textbook projects:
• To overcome diverging narrations of history
• To support modern approaches of history teaching
• Issues: Divergent state controlled curricula and textbook approval
• Publication of supplementary material and teaching aides.

Development of joint textbooks/materials

• Jointly approved textbook series
  – Backed by authorities, fitting curricula
• Non-approved international textbooks
  – Enriched perspective, not for regular use
• Multilateral alternative textbooks
  – Multiple perspectives, “correction” of dominant views
• Bi-national alternative teaching material (PRIME)
  – Awareness of the perspective of “the other”
• Additional multi- or bi-national materials on specific topics
  – Enriching textbook content
• Teaching guides, background information

Methods
• Revised/discussed individual contributions; different perspectives not visible
• Compromise narration with different views pointed out in text and sources
• “Dual-narrative approach”
• Source book (with tasks)

The Franco-German History Textbook
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Project development

2003

Franco-German Youth Parliament

French ministry of education

Standing conference of German ministers of culture (KMK)

Prime minister of Saarland

Bilateral project group of experts

2005

Invitation to tender

Publisher tandem

Franco-German author teams

2006

French president

German chancellor

The Franco-German History Textbook

Issues during the development process

• Power questions
  – Federal structure
  – Complication of curriculum revision
  – Examination requirements

• Divergent interpretations
  – Few „national“ perspectives
  – Different meanings/connotations of concepts/terms

• Differences between curricula
  – France and Germany: National history embedded in European history with global aspects
  – New: interlocking of historical developments

The Franco-German History Textbook

Issues during the development process

• Concepts of history teaching
  – Germany: judgement, discussions
  – France: understanding, methods, interpretations

• Financial risk for publishers
  – Subsidies

Conclusions

Franco-German History Textbook

• High symbolic political importance
• Decades of textbook revision cleared the ground from conflictual interpretations
• Books address (and analyze) remaining divergences
• Despite favorable conditions: Books rarely used as main textbooks
Thank you for your attention