

Making textbook content inclusive:

A focus on religion, gender, and culture



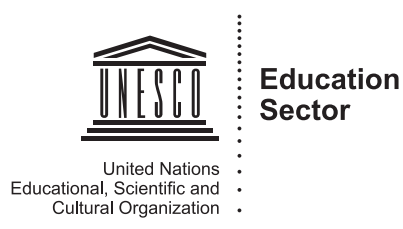
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UNESCO Education Sector

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A student studies at Shree Sahara Bal Primary School, Pokhara , grade1, Pokhara, Nepal

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . 3

PART I – GENERAL CONTEXT . . . 7

Background . . . 7

Rationale and challenges . . . 7

Objectives and target audience . . . 8

PART II – PRESENTATION OF FOCUS THEMES . . . 9

Religion . . . 9

Gender . . . 9

Culture . . . 10

PART III – GUIDELINES FOR WRITING, REVISING, AND EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS . . . 12

Employing inclusive language . . . 12

Representing diverse identities . . . 14

Integrating human rights . . . 19

ANNEX . . . 23

Glossary . . . 23

Selected bibliography . . . 25

Main international legal instruments . . . 26

PART I – GENERAL CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Background

UNESCO has been working on textbook development issues since its inception in 1945 as part of its fundamental mandate to “build peace in the minds of men and women.” Initially, this work focused on textbooks as educational tools for promoting peace through mutual understanding, especially between and among former antagonists. Textbook research and revision projects supported by UNESCO during this era were aimed at the removal of content leading to negative stereotyping of the “other,” narrow nationalism, and the glorification of war.

While these themes remain relevant today, UNESCO’s more recent initiatives on textbooks and learning materials have broadened to include considerations of the role of education in promoting human rights and ending discrimination in all of its forms. These were initially framed by UNESCO’s 1974 “Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.”

As a result, textbook development policies, research approaches, and guidelines are now embedded in a broader and deeper definition of quality education that emphasizes the importance of learning to live together on the basis of respect for diversity. This vision of education is at the very heart of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal 4, and its target 4.7 in particular, which explicitly emphasizes “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.” This emphasis is reflected in UNESCO’s most recent strategic educational initiatives, especially its pursuit of Global Citizenship Education (GCED).

The pioneering efforts of UNESCO and its partners to improve the quality of textbooks around the world have resulted in significant progress. With few exceptions, textbooks no longer function openly as tools of propaganda or as incitements to violence. Nevertheless, a growing body of international research on school textbooks has uncovered numerous, sometimes subtle, elements of texts that continue to nurture the formation of divisive stereotypes that might fuel discrimination, ethnic tensions and more generally,

violent extremism. Though sometimes inadvertent, these examples and omissions can lead to inaccurate and damaging impressions of others. The challenge now is to ensure that schoolbooks endorsed by educational systems serve as a potent force for countering all biased, incomplete, and inaccurate representations of peoples and societies. This will help ensure learners develop into informed and culturally literate citizens who are able to contribute constructively to their societies.

This publication was developed by UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) with the assistance of an international group of specialists in inclusive education. The three key issues – religion, gender and culture – were agreed upon at an expert meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in September 2012. They are among the most critical and possibly controversial issues that may lead to stereotyping and should therefore be addressed properly to encourage diversity and respect for all in quality textbooks. The draft content was tested twice: once in a UNESCO workshop in Rabat, Morocco in May 2013; and, following revision, it was tested again in Vienna, Austria in July 2015 in cooperation with the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID). The resulting publication is deeply rooted in universally shared values as stated in standard international references, in particular those related to human rights and diversity (see Annex on legal instruments related to textbooks).

Rationale and challenges

The three key issues – religion, gender and culture – were chosen for their common link to the concept of human diversity. These three potentially controversial topics are important aspects of inclusive education because they help shape the learning environment of a school as well as its educational practices. Although they are here treated individually, it should be noted that since culture is a very broad concept, it can encompass religion and gender.

As the most visible aspects of a curriculum, textbooks are often considered the main script that shapes the teaching and learning processes. However, in some contexts, textbooks are but one of many educational sources. Because textbooks are used in various ways and take many different forms, there is no singular approach for guiding the development of all quality textbooks. Accordingly, a healthy appreciation

of diversity cannot be achieved simply by comparing and reflecting on the three topics addressed here in isolation. In reality, religion, gender, and culture interact in complex ways; moreover, each is acted upon by a number of other factors.

To illustrate the complexity of these interactions, consider gender distinctions. These are strongly related to differences between cultures, which often in turn reflect religious traditions and individuals' own choices. Culture transmits values and social codes that influence both individual and social ways of life. These naturally emerge in education. Perspectives toward gender distinctions and religious diversity have a cultural dimension that is reflected in the pedagogy that is adopted by educational leaders and the textbooks they use.

Similarly, in many contemporary societies religions are closely connected to culture and are often crucial components of one's cultural identity and social status. These interactions vary greatly, not only between countries but also within them, and they emerge in differing forms depending on their political contexts. For example, in many societies political and religious structures are tightly and intentionally linked, while in secular or highly secularized societies this is not the case.

Because of the complex interactions between religion, gender and culture, this publication offers multiple opportunities to recognize diversity and practice respecting it without neglecting the specificities and commonalities of each of the three topics. The publication, which is a guide, may be applied in textbooks according to subject and age group, and in keeping with the particular characteristics of each country's educational system.

Some textbooks will emphasize links between religion and culture; others will treat the topics separately, making clear distinctions between and among them.

For authentic change to take place, educational systems need to allow universally shared values to be integrated not only in curricula and textbooks, but also in pedagogical practices, teacher training, and every other aspect of school life.

The present guide's primary task is to enable its users to address and counter stereotypes in a variety of educational contexts, through teaching and learning materials.

Objectives and target audience

The objective of this guide is to help to put an end to harmful stereotypes. It pursues this objective by assisting all actors involved in textbook production, from design to use, in adopting new approaches and practices based on equality and respect for diversity.

Regardless of their actual role in the development and use of textbooks, all users of the guide can expect to gain heightened awareness of how to promote peace, equality, and social cohesion in developmental and educational contexts. By illustrating the important work of shaping teaching and learning interactions that are free from prejudices and harmful stereotypes, the guide offers insights useful to all those interested in development and education.

The guide was intentionally written in a simple, practical style so as to be immediately accessible to textbook developers, adopters, and users, even those who are working on their own. Although it is designed primarily for textbook authors, curriculum developers, and teachers, it might also be particularly useful for publishers, political stakeholders, and teacher educators.

It is meant specifically to assist in designing, writing and evaluating textbooks:

- Curriculum developers may, for example, use the guide to help set criteria for the conception and selection of core textbooks as well as supplementary learning materials. It is hoped that application of the guide will, in fact, help to build capacities for critical textbook selection.
- Teachers may wish to use the guide as a checklist for analyzing existing texts and for recommending revisions to forthcoming editions.
- Publishers may use the guide at every step of text development, from concept to final production, or they may find it useful in the development of updated editions of well-established titles.

PART II – PRESENTATION OF FOCUS THEMES

The three key issues in this section are structured for ease of reference and use. The presentation of each contains discussions of the following elements: the issue's background, its main concerns, and the role of education in addressing the issue. In order to present each issue, a number of critical questions are addressed.

These include:

- How has the United Nations addressed the topic from the international perspective of promoting peace and human rights?
- How relevant is the topic to an education system's commitment to the provision of quality learning materials?
- What are the concrete questions to ask within the scope of the topic so as to introduce respect for universally shared values in schools and other learning spaces?

Key issues

Religion

Background

Contemporary societies are increasingly diverse in terms of religions and beliefs despite the fact that throughout history many states have sought to achieve unity through a dominant religion. In most cases, minority religions have lived alongside dominant religions with varying degrees of freedom.¹

Furthermore, different schools and tendencies often emerged within the same religion, sometimes giving rise to conflicts, including schisms, religious wars, and the like. With the rise of globalization, the multiplicity of world views and religious practices that individuals confront has also increased.

Main concerns

This guide seeks to aid individuals in appreciating the diversity of beliefs present in societies while fostering peaceful,

respectful interfaith exchanges. This means recognizing not only that many differing faiths exist, but also that these faiths have different interpretations of their religious sources and origins. Appreciating this diversity also entails respecting forms of spirituality and philosophical traditions that have no concept of god, including secular philosophical perspectives. Secular or highly secularized societies separate religion from politics, citizenship from faith, and civil law from religious law. In these societies, there is a tendency to advocate for education aimed at civil and political engagement regardless of one's individual religious allegiance.

The role of education

Textbooks are instrumental in the process of raising awareness about others' beliefs and fostering understanding of, and respect for, the diversity of beliefs present in societies and the world at large. Textbooks can help to combat prejudice, present pluralism as an asset, and encourage mutual understandings based on respect for the right to express one's beliefs. They contribute to promoting tolerance, critical thinking in the face of divisive stereotyping and discrimination, and the independence of individual choice.

Education aims at promoting interfaith dialogue and comprehension of a diversity of beliefs. It is not to be confused, however, with faith education, which is designed to impart the message, dogmas, and rites of a given religion.² In the context of a school, interfaith education seeks not only to explore a variety of beliefs but also to emphasize possible similarities and differences between them.³

Gender⁴

Background

Having concentrated on rooting out racist and xenophobic prejudice in textbooks as early as 1946, in the 1970s UNESCO started to tackle gender stereotypes, which are recognized as

¹ Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education. Today, the majority of States recognize freedom of conscience and freedom of worship as fundamental freedoms.

² Religious education can be described as learning about one's own religion or spiritual practices, or learning about other religions or beliefs. Interfaith education, in contrast, aims to actively shape the relations between people from different religions. (UNESCO Guidelines on intercultural education).

³ Cf. Robert Jackson (2014). Signposts- Policy and practice for teaching about religion and non-religious world views in intercultural education. Council of Europe.

⁴ This guide has been adapted from the quantitative method developed by Carole Brugeilles and Sylvie Cromer for academic research. The basic principle is here taken for manual use and to be employed for all subjects.

a source of enduring inequality between women and men. A research programme on the image of women was launched after the 1980 Copenhagen World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women to identify and characterize sexism and recommend various steps to eliminate it.⁵ The programme showed that sexism in textbooks often consists of failing to recognize the range of actual roles played by men and women in society and neglecting the real advances that have been made in terms of gender equality.

Holding that gender inequality is harmful and unjust for women, men, and societies at large, UNESCO advocates for equality among genders, notably through education. In particular, UNESCO's commitment to promoting Global Citizenship Education involves facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that encourage individuals to challenge harmful stereotypes and prejudices, including those related to gender. In this way, it contributes to building societies that support gender equality. The objective of such education is to combat discrimination that affects people regardless of their aspirations or potential. Such discrimination deprives individuals of mobility and choice, and it denies societies valuable perspectives and much needed workforces.

Main concerns

This guide seeks to promote gender equality and to encourage individuals to appreciate gender diversity, which entails recognizing the gendered social orders of the past (in history books and literature, for example) and identifying it in the present (in civics textbooks depicting one's own society, for example). The idea is not only to encourage and support all genders equally, but also to draw attention to the processes that lead to gender-based inequalities, marginalization, and exclusion. A complementary goal is to illustrate how equality can be achieved. This should underscore how those marginalized can progress from victims to free agents.

The role of education

Textbooks should impart new knowledge and skills while providing nuanced characterizations of societies past and present, both our own and those of others. They should develop critical thinking skills that will help to foster informed citizens with a sense of belonging to the human community and an understanding that all have the same rights, responsibilities, and duties.

Textbooks should help students understand the roles most often assigned to women and men and recognize those aspects of social change needed to build a fairer social order that includes both sexes and sexual minorities on an equal

footing with the mainstream society. Discussions prompted by reading textbooks and teacher-pupil interactions can be used to address, question, and dismiss stereotypes.

Relating examples from past societies and telling stories that give prominence to other gender categories (besides men and women) and other sexual orientations (besides heterosexuality)⁶ can show the prejudicial effect of the division of humankind into two sexes and the imposition of heterosexuality.

Culture

Background

The defense of cultural diversity, as understood by UNESCO, is an ethical imperative, inseparable from children's universal right to education. It implies a commitment to the fundamental rights of persons belonging to minorities and to the cultural rights that are an integral part of human rights.⁷ Culture is also central to contemporary debates on citizenship and identity, social cohesion, and the growth of knowledge-based economies.

Main concerns

The recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity⁸ is regarded as a means to foster peace, social cohesion, and sustainable development.⁹ Consequently, safeguarding cultural diversity is an important aspect of national and international policy. As countries become increasingly interconnected in a globalized world, regional cultures are influenced by external factors. In this context, there is a concern that local cultures are rendered uniform, and ultimately lost to future generations. While the proliferation of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) further accelerates this process; these technologies provide the opportunity to foster interaction between individuals and peoples, and put in close contact countries and cultures that were previously separated.

The role of education

Education has a major part to play in shaping such dialogues as cultural exchanges and economic cooperation become increasingly more common. Schools are often the first place in which a climate of trust and mutual understanding among diverse individuals and communities can be built. Textbooks can either help or hinder this development.

5 Cf. Andrée Michel (1986). *Down with stereotypes! Eliminating sexism from children's literature and school textbooks*. Paris, UNESCO. Also available in French and Arabic.

6 Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

7 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 13 and 15.

8 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001 – and its corollary, dialogue among peoples.

9 UNESCO (2009). *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*.

Education is the means for present generations to pass on this heritage of cultural diversity to future generations. It is a source of innovation, creativity, and mutual borrowings that can be encountered in all aspects of pedagogy. Learning to read and write, discovering the world's history and geography, exploring new languages, acquiring knowledge of literature, the arts, mathematics, science and new technologies – these are all ways of discovering the complexity and development of culturally diverse societies. Such learning highlights exchanges between cultures and their interdependence. It encourages students to cultivate their own distinct perspectives while also remembering that they take part in the world's history, which is the history of many diverse and varied cultures. Education of this sort contributes to improved mutual understanding and increases the quality and depth of the student's knowledge base. This widens the choices available to students for developing personal and professional capabilities, leading to freer and richer moral, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual lives, and laying the foundations for active global citizenship.¹⁰

Textbooks can be used to promote cultural diversity and, in particular, nurture culture in its broadest sense understood as the “whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group.”¹¹ (Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, World Conference on Cultural Policies)

¹⁰ Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ For a full definition, see Annex

PART III – GUIDELINES FOR WRITING, REVISING, AND EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS

Quality textbooks should be free from divisive stereotypes and prejudices. This can be achieved by adopting a human-rights based approach to textbook development and use. Such an approach emphasizes diversity and combats divisive stereotypes by applying the following three strategies:

- Employing inclusive language
- Representing diverse identities
- Integrating human rights

These three strategies are interrelated and directly relevant to considerations of religion, gender, and culture in textbook use and development.

For each of these strategies in the following tables, users are offered suggestions for writing quality textbooks. They are organized around challenging questions or points to consider which lead to recommendations and approaches to writing, revising or evaluating existing texts, and suggested practices and/or examples or “promising practices” with short explanations.

Although these tables provide a representative selection of approaches, they do not cover all issues that are relevant to all aspects of culture, religion, and gender across borders. Where possible, training sessions should be organized to ensure that the guide is used to its full potential by including local and regional examples from textbooks currently in use.

Employing inclusive language

Textbooks should be written in a language that optimizes learning objectives, with the purpose to impart knowledge and information (the number of believers in a particular religion, for example, or exploring the actual role of women and explaining their marginalization), as well as to facilitate

dialogue and critical reflection. Textbooks also teach pupils how to approach and interpret this knowledge. By paying critical attention to the language used in textbooks, one may ensure that all students feel included in individual and collective enquiry.

Some languages bear the traces of inequality. For example, many languages have grammatical rules that indicate that “the masculine takes precedence over the feminine.” Although they may have previously been discriminatory, languages evolve and can also express changes in gender relations, reflect diversity, and strive for equality. The following table provides suggestions to correct the biases that can be conveyed through language in textbooks.

Table 1: Employing inclusive language**What aspects of language should authors be aware of when writing or revising textbooks?**

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & POINTS TO CONSIDER	SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS & APPROACHES	SUGGESTED PRACTICES AND/OR EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES
1 INFORMATION ABOUT BELIEFS AND WORLDVIEWS	Avoid overly broad generic terms that may seem neutral but oversimplify the representation of a society, religion or other groups. Avoid generalizations about practices that set one group against another	Use qualifiers without generalizing. For example, use "Many Christians fast before Easter" instead of "Christians fast before Easter," which indicates that all Christians fast before Easter
2 USE OF CONCEPTS, TERMS	Make sure concepts and terms show diversity within a country. Examine the etymology of particular terms. Language's history should be addressed to explain concepts, terms, and their evolution.	• Study how a nation is constituted: Does the term "citizen" include both men and women? If not, why not? Since both women and men belong to a social class and live at a particular time, it is important to verify what sorts of individuals are portrayed. • Use plurals to refer to peoples, cultures, and languages in order to avoid a uniform view of cultures. For example, "indigenous peoples". • Considering the Constitution of a country where it is stated that it is a "Plurinational State" • Or the Constitutional framework of another country: with regard to languages, Article 32 adds that " (...) The state shall respect and preserve the languages in the regions as national cultural treasures." (UNESCO Database on the Right to Education). • Studying for example: Which language does a word come from? Why does a term have an etymology derived from a foreign language? What are the borrowings and linguistic influences? Why is the word "democracy" used in countries with very different histories?
3 USE OF GENDERED TERMS	1 Provide titles of both the feminine and the masculine terms if they are available. 2 Use terms, names that do not systematically confine men or women to a specific role or function whenever possible.	• Alternate masculine and feminine terms in titles and occupations. For example, alternate sportsmen and sportswomen, statesman and stateswoman, businessman and businesswoman. • Men as fashion designers , cooks, nursery teachers; women as doctors, manual workers or scientists.
4 STEREOTYPED AND BIASED TERMS	Bear in mind that hierarchies and discrimination are conveyed by some terms.	• Reflect on how cultures that were once described as "primitive or barbaric" have now achieved global recognition. • Use precise terminology that avoids ambiguities and hasty generalizations, like confusing "religion" with "fundamentalism".

Representing diverse identities

Identity signifies both the recognition of a person's individuality as that person portrays himself or herself to others or is perceived by others, and an individual's membership of a group, society, or community created by language, kinship, lifestyles, beliefs, or other common ties.

According to Amartya Sen: "The very odd presumption that people of the world can be uniquely categorized by single and overarching systems of partitioning does not work anymore [...] we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups – we belong to all of them. Identity is multiple and shifting. No individual or country has a single unchanging identity."¹² This is increasingly the case as individuals become ever more mobile and migration becomes progressively more common. As a consequence of this and other aspects of globalization, individuals, notably young people, experience a greater diversity of identities than ever before.

In our increasingly diverse societies it has become vital to ensure that individuals and groups with varied and ever changing cultural identities interact and coexist harmoniously. Education that promotes empathy and fuller mutual understanding of one another is conducive to the integration and participation of *all* citizens, ensuring the vitality of civil society.

Textbook authors make a number of other choices in order to simplify a body of disparate facts, sources, and interpretations and make these intelligible and meaningful. The risk is that in doing so they fail to represent the diversity present in societies. Great effort should be made to ensure that textbooks and other learning materials provide a fair and accurate representation of cultures that make up societies. This implies developing an educational approach that takes into account the diversity and the multiplicity of identities present within and across societies, an approach that respects specific features of societies while highlighting the exchanges and reciprocal relationships that create and sustain them.

It is additionally recommended that textbooks avoid presenting religions as uniform and timeless systems. To this end, they can, for example, illustrate different faiths present in the same geographical area, or emphasize exchanges between different faiths, perhaps highlighting features shared across denominations and philosophies. Acknowledging the diversity of faiths entails making room for those individuals who profess no religion, and refraining from passing general judgements and ranking religions.

With regard to gender, research shows that men are over-represented in certain fields that are considered prestigious (such as politics, science, economics and art) and less visible in the private sphere (home, bringing up children), which is

often deemed to be the province of women.¹³ By promoting a variety of different role models with different genders, textbook writers can awaken students' curiosity, tolerance, and critical awareness.

Textbook writers should pay attention to the characters they use, taking into account types of characters and numerical balance. Ensuring a numerical balance between male and female characters means exploring the position and role of women, both now and in the past, as well as explaining the absence of women or men from some areas and occupations by referring to historical contexts and stereotypes. By offering pupils a variety of role models for girls, boys, men and women, textbooks encourage them to become involved in all school subjects and show them that every type of skill is open to all regardless of their sex. It allows students to imagine themselves as occupying roles that might have otherwise seemed prohibited or unavailable to them. Thus, textbooks can be used to broaden students' perceived educational and vocational options. By explaining processes of marginalization and equality to pupils, we encourage them to overcome the idea of prescribed gender roles, enabling them to think about the possibilities of social change.¹⁴

¹² Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹³ See UNESCO Promoting gender equality through textbooks

¹⁴ See UNESCO Promoting gender equality through textbooks

Table 2: Representing diverse identities**How can textbook authors illustrate the complexity of identities and related experiences and promote diversity?**

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & POINTS TO CONSIDER	SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS & APPROACHES	SUGGESTED PRACTICES AND/OR EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES
1 REPRESENTATION OF DIVERSITY	1 Provide factual information on various groups, both religious and non-religious, offering information that facilitates an understanding of the wealth of different perspectives and their complexity.	Individuals may describe themselves as members of the “Hindu”, “Baha’i” or “Muslim” faith in some situations, but others will, depending on the circumstances and to whom they are talking, prefer to define themselves by their social status, origin, age, nationality, occupation, or some other designation.
	2 Present various tendencies within religious traditions, since not all believers observe the same rites or interpret them in the same way.	Protestantism and Catholicism in Christianity, Shia and Sunni in Islam, and Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism.
	3 Discuss individuals’ interpretations of their faith and its practice, including those with non-religious traditions.	Reflect on accounts of Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim celebrations, rituals, or other beliefs to familiarize students with different interests and perspectives.
	4 Explain the different views of religious and non-religious groups on social issues in order to promote reasoned debate.	- Consider how events in the private lives of individuals (such as marriage to a person with a different religion or no religion at all) may affect how they define themselves and how they educate their children. - Reflect on individuals from different religions living in a same country often sharing the same historical experience as well as the same traditions and beliefs.
	5 Acknowledge people who do not profess any religion.	Discuss the possible spiritual lives and values of non-religious individuals.
	6 Avoid interpreting people of a given faith as uniform or reducing or assigning individuals and groups to their national or religious backgrounds.	A textbook developed for secondary schools <i>Across the Centuries</i> (Houghton Mifflin Social Studies, 2003) includes a photograph of a street scene in Morocco illustrating the diversity of modern Muslim women’s dress.
	7 Connect information about religions, beliefs, and rituals with daily experiences of a religious or non-religious community.	The primary 3 social studies textbook for South Sudan (Ministry of Education and Instruction, 2012) includes illustrated, side-by-side descriptions of Christian and Muslim wedding celebrations.

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & POINTS TO CONSIDER	SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS & APPROACHES	SUGGESTED PRACTICES AND/OR EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES
	8 Give space to religious accounts of history and provide neutral information about related controversies. Encourage multiple perspectives of history.	a) Show that religions, beliefs and religious observance are subject to change. Examples should be used to identify both changes and continuities, examining which key concepts, rituals, symbols have remained constant over the centuries and which have changed. Example: Abraham in the three religions of the Book highlights mutual borrowings and common symbols and figures in the history of religious traditions. b) Reflecting on for example: <i>The Countries of the Black-Sea Region and Socio-Political Developments in the 19th and 20th Centuries</i> publication made collaboratively by educators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with the support of EUROCLIO – European Association of History Educators and its project partners. It demonstrates that people with different backgrounds can work together on the use of innovative approaches to the teaching and learning of cultures beyond borders. (EUROCLIO Newsletter 2014). c) A civics-textbook introduces the students to the reality of pluralistic societies. According to the description, religious diversity is no obstacle to a shared sense of belonging and a collective identity. "Palestine", the title of this unit reads, "is a country of diversity and pluralism". In its text, Palestinian society is described as being marked by different intellectual, political, cultural and religious influences. This image of Palestinian society is fostered through the illustration on the cover of the textbook. Such pluralism is not depicted as an exception, but as a rather normal feature of contemporary societies: People of different cultural, religious and political orientation are a regular part of community. Source: al-Tarbiya al-Madaniyya Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre 2007 (Palestine)

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & POINTS TO CONSIDER	SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS & APPROACHES	SUGGESTED PRACTICES AND/OR EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES
	9 Explain historical relationships between different religious groups, which may be characterized by encounters, exchanges and conflicts; allow students to put religions into broader social, political and intellectual contexts.	A textbook follows a comparative approach to different religious traditions. It provides information about major religions without singling out one of them. In addition, it covers various dimensions of these respective religions: historical origins, key concepts and beliefs, sources and ethics. (Content page) As illustrated in a picture, the textbook puts a particular emphasis on contemporary questions that are relevant for believers today: in this exercise, the students are familiarized with environmental ethics in Hinduism; other sections cover bioethics or sexual ethics (Exercise). Source: Living Religion. Fourth Edition. Pearson Australia 2011.
2 PRESENTATION OF CHARACTERS	1 Vary designations, attributes, and actions for each gender, perhaps taking examples from other cultures, to show the potential for diversity and change. 2 Draw attention to progress in formal and actual gender equality in your country. In many countries, occupations have become mixed.	- Example: Luiza Mahin, born at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was an Afro-Brazilian freedom fighter. A natural leader, Mahin became involved in revolts and uprisings of slaves in the Brazilian province of Bahia. A street vendor by profession, she used her business as an outlet for messages and leaflets in the resistance struggle. She played a central role in the significant “Revolta dos Males” (1835) and “Sabina” (1837-1838) slave rebellions. - Illustrations and stories in the social studies textbooks for grades 1-3 in Vietnam (Ministry of Education and Technology, 2008) show boys and girls working together at the same tasks to keep their school clean, women in professional roles, and boys participating in housework.
3 DESCRIPTIONS OF IDENTITIES, IMAGES AND ILLUSTRATIONS	1 Encourage learners to examine the importance of terms related to identity, examining historical sources and the geographical boundaries of different cultures.	- Reflect on what terms such as “the Buddhist world” or “Arab-Islamic civilization” mean? Do “Western societies” and “Eastern societies” refer to geographical situations, political systems, religious traditions or something else? - A civics textbook may illustrate a society as the mixture of different religious and non-religious perspectives, influenced by countless cultural, political and intellectual forces.

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & POINTS TO CONSIDER	SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS & APPROACHES	SUGGESTED PRACTICES AND/OR EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES
	2 Demonstrate commonalities and differences.	• Study exchanges and borrowings between different entities and cultures brought into contact along the Silk Road, around the Mediterranean, and at other cultural intersections. • Illustrate borrowings and connections between ways of life, clothing, food, children's education in countries that are far apart and seem quite different. Example: tales throughout the world that have certain abiding features; key figures who have left their mark on world history and are recognized in different cultural areas.
	3 Explain that not all clichés and stereotypes are wrong: they can portray a part of complex reality.	Example: reflect on Western images of the East [which] cannot be erased that easily. For that matter, clichés can portray a part of reality such as camels and oil wells in the desert, or crowds in which students recognize men wearing djellabas or keffiyehs or women wearing the hijab as signifying the Arab and Muslim world (Comparative study of textbooks in the framework of the euro-arab dialogue 2015).
4 CHOICE OF SOURCES AND STYLES	Identify and analyze various sources of information to explore shades of meaning and differences of expression, including news articles, archives, poetry, religious reflections and the like.	• Study the phenomenon of colonization for example, a textbook may use texts, records and posters produced by the colonial country, the people fighting for independence, and the opponents of colonization in the colonial country.

Integrating human rights

Human rights are moral and legal norms, often enshrined in international treaties, that uphold the equality and worth of all individuals, regardless of differences in culture, gender, or religion. Textbooks play a vital role in conveying this message to students, but it is also important to consider the actual international instruments that have been ratified by governments to guarantee freedom, equality, and non-discrimination.¹⁵ Examining these documents broadens students' perspectives and encourages them to think critically as they learn to contribute constructively to society. Furthermore, knowing that such instruments exist and have been upheld by countries all across the world reinforces the message that all individuals are equal and deserve respect. Textbook authors and users are especially well positioned to communicate this message by emphasizing that equality transcends differences in religion gender, and culture.

For example, textbooks can acknowledge cultural diversity in the world and in a society by illustrating a variety of cultural expressions, like differences in language and the arts. To go one step further and promote cultural diversity, textbooks need to also defend cultural rights as human rights. UNESCO acknowledges that even defining cultural rights is a complex issue since all human rights have a cultural dimension. The situation is particularly complicated in legal contexts where there is sometimes tension between cultural rights and civil or political rights.¹⁶ However, given the importance of cultural diversity for the survival of cultures, intercultural educational policy must be aimed at exploring, promoting, and protecting this diversity. Its challenge is to find the right balance between the promotion of universalism and cultural pluralism.

In terms of gender, textbooks may introduce discussions of rights by examining changes throughout history. For centuries all across the world, equal rights (for men and women, or for some other categories of populations) were not the norm. Women also suffered – and still suffer – all sorts of discrimination in terms of salaries and access to jobs, education, and the like. Textbooks should show how the situation of men and women has changed. The intention is to explain each gender's role and status in a historical context, making comparisons with other periods and societies while referring to national legislation or the ratification of international conventions that seeks to promote equality. Illustrating these historical advances helps explain how the protection of women's rights has empowered women, leading to broadened roles in every area of life and improving society in general.

As regards religion, textbooks can illustrate diverse relationships between rights and religious freedoms. For

example, in some countries a distinction is drawn between civil law and religious law, separating religion from legal and political institutions. In such countries, citizenship is not defined in terms of membership of a religion and all citizens are equal regardless of their beliefs, origins, or affiliations. In other countries, reference to God or an official religion is enshrined in the Constitution. Discussions of religions, religious differences, and rights are therefore often bound to considerations of legal and political frameworks. It is important that textbooks accurately reflect the diversity and complexity of these interactions. The following table provides an overview of the most important issues that textbook authors and users face when considering questions of rights, and it includes examples of how to address them.

¹⁵ See the Annex for a comprehensive list of these instruments.

¹⁶ UNESCO (2009), Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue: UNESCO World Report.

Table 3: Integrating human rights

How can textbook authors integrate rights and link them to international legal instruments?

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & POINTS TO CONSIDER	SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS & APPROACHES	SUGGESTED PRACTICES AND/OR EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES
1 PRESENTATION OF CONTROVERSIES INVOLVING RIGHTS	1 Make pupils aware of growing religious intolerance and fundamentalism, and demonstrate the need to prevent all forms of radicalization. Provide promising practices to counter intolerance.	• Example: mention the importance of the right to education for girls, citing Malala Yusafzai, winner of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize. • <i>A civics-textbook which introduces the students to fundamental rights of each citizen, among them freedom of opinion and religion. These rights are not abstract rules, but have to be put into practice in daily life. This illustration encourages students to think about ways to defend their rights, and what means they have to promote these rights. Such activity could start in schools, as argued in a related exercise: "In our days, religious intolerance is gaining ground in many communities. To avoid this situation to reach my school, I am preparing a sketch together with my school mates to promote religious tolerance in school environments".</i> Source: Éducation civique et morale CM1. Lafon: Abidjan 2010 (Ivory Coast)
	2 Encourage constructive discussion among students about compromise and conflicts around religious issues in contemporary societies.	• The World History: Medieval to Modern Times (Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 2007) describes the widespread practice of religious tolerance, especially towards Jews and Christians, in societies ruled by Muslims during the Golden Age of Islam.
2 DEMONSTRATION OF POLITICAL RIGHTS	Provide a timeline for rights won nationally and internationally; list these rights and compare them for various periods and countries.	• Example: Citizenship in Athens in the fifth century BCE. Point out that democratic principles often did not benefit women, slaves or foreigners. However, without themselves being citizens, women played a vital role in the transfer of citizenship, since to be a citizen, your father had to be a citizen and your mother had to be a citizen's daughter.
3 REPRESENTATION OF STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS AND CIVIL RIGHTS	Provide a timeline for rights won nationally and internationally; list these rights and compare them for various periods and countries.	• Draw attention to change with regard to different family models: – Working fathers and mothers sharing housework, managing family resources and making decisions jointly – Children of both genders having equal access to resources (food, care etc.) and activities (school, play, etc.) and sharing equally in family chores

4 PRESENTATION OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Provide a classification of diverse roles and occupations in culture, music, science, technology, the arts and religion and so on for various periods and countries.

- Illustrate evolving roles of women. Example: the Moroccan Touria Hadraoui was the first woman to emerge nationally and internationally as a performer of melhun (sung poetry), a field long reserved for men. Similarly, the Algerian woman Beihja Rahal is famous in the North African Andalusian musical tradition, recognized as one of the sources of courtly love in the Christian West and historically the province of men.

5 PRESENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Provide International case law highlighting cultural aspects of human rights.

- In the case of Apirana Mahuika et al. v. New Zealand, the petitioners were New Zealand Maoris who claimed that their rights under Article 27 of the Covenant had been violated in a dispute over fishing rights (UN Doc. CCPR/C/70/D/547/1993 and Comm. N°. 547/1993). In these cases, the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) has employed a dynamic approach to the concept of culture, including economic activities linked to the culture of a community, without confining itself to the protection of traditional economic activities or means of livelihood.

ANNEX

Glossary¹⁷

Culture

"In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs." Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July-6 August 1982.

Cultural diversity

A wide range of distinct cultures exist. Although cultures often blend into one another, there are noticeable differences between and within them.

Discrimination

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the principle of non-discrimination. In Article 1 of its 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO states that "the term 'discrimination' includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education." Nowadays many countries have extended both the sphere and grounds of discrimination. For example, many nations now include discrimination in the workplace and on grounds of disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Curriculum

Systematic and intentional articulation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in the context of learning experiences and opportunities in both formal and non-formal education.

Gender

'Gender' refers to roles and responsibilities associated with idealized cultural images of men and women. Social roles are laid down by the family and the society and are linked to culture. For gender roles to be understood within a society,

a learning process takes place from the moment one is born. However, definitions of masculine and feminine vary with time and are a cultural construct that can and do change overtime. Unequal gender relations are therefore neither predestined nor immutable. The concept of gender can be used to question gender-based inequalities and promote gender equality.

Gender parity

Gender parity is a guarantee of gender equality. From the perspective of gender, it is vital that textbooks maintain a balance in their representation of the sexes as well as of the full spectrum of socially constructed gender identities. This balance should be maintained in the choice of images depicting both adults and children.

Gender roles

Philosophers, anthropologists, and sociologists have examined the interdependent categories of "masculine" and "feminine," and of "femininity" and "masculinity" and have concluded that they have no universal definition: a particular role attributed to men in one context may be given to women in another. A specific task considered "feminine" in one environment may be deemed masculine in another. Thus, each society establishes its own classification on the basis of its own particular criteria and logic. The roles of the different sexes are acquired through learning, and promoting equality helps underscore how arbitrary these roles are.

Gender stereotypes

These are a set of beliefs about the purported characteristics of men and women as social groups that are used to differentiate and order the categories of "masculine" and "feminine."

Gender system

The gender system is the set of norms, beliefs, practices and knowledge that organizes relations between men and women.

¹⁷ Definitions from Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue: UNESCO World Report, and other UNESCO or UN normative instruments and publications.

Learning media

Any type of medium or resource (including new and social media) applied to learning either through individual access or as part of an organized curriculum.

Learning resource

Any form of medium or material intended specifically to support learning, including textual materials, objects, models, electronic media and supplementary reading materials.

Multiperspectivity¹⁸

Multiperspectivity in history and in the teaching of history can be characterized by a way of viewing historical events, personalities, developments, cultures and societies from different perspectives through drawing on procedures and processes which are fundamental to history as a discipline.

Cultural pluralism

Cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity in our increasingly diverse societies. It is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied, and dynamic cultural identities. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, protections of the vitality of civil society and peace.

Quality textbooks and learning materials

A more current and comprehensive view identifies quality learning materials as those which actively engage the learner in the process of acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens of their communities and of the world at large.

Religion

UNESCO defines religion as collective and historical creations which “reflect the diversity of human experience and the various ways people have of coming to terms with the promise, challenge and tragedy of human life.” Religions are cross-cultural and internally diverse, as they interact with other cultural practices and values.

Rights-based approach

According to the United Nations system, a rights-based approach implies that all programs that pursue cooperation, policies, and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments/mechanisms of international human rights.

Sex

Sex refers to the biological differences among living beings based on observable differences in their physiological functions in procreation.

Stereotypes

Simplistic representations, often degrading and ingrained, which are used to describe characteristics attributed to an individual or group, generally reduced to one particular feature, whether sex, culture or religion.

Textbook

A textbook is a learning resource that brings together learning content intended for a specific level and domain, implemented in a systematic way in support of or as part of a curriculum. Traditional textbooks are printed, bound, and distributed for use as the main resource for teaching and learning in the majority of the world's educational systems.

¹⁸ See UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision, 2010 and Multiperspectivity in History Teaching: A Guide for Teachers, 2003.

Selected bibliography

The list below includes publications that were used to develop the guide, namely:

- Recent surveys and reports
- Analytical guides
- Additional resources that can be used to develop promising practices

Users may want to explore these resources for a more in-depth understanding of the issues. For an exhaustive bibliography on school textbooks on the three topics, please refer to the online version of the annotated bibliography on textbook development <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/multimedia/hq/ed/pdf/unesco-textbook-development-biblio.pdf>

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UNESCO (2015) Comparative study of textbooks: working document in the framework of the Euro-Arab Dialogue; summary report. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002431/243181e.pdf>

UNESCO (2016), Out in the open: education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002447/244756e.pdf>

Main international legal instruments

The guide is based upon universal values enshrined in international instruments. Textbooks should reflect a human rights-based approach to education and possibly introduce learners to some aspects of relevant normative instruments. Below is a reference of such instruments.

YEAR ADOPTED	SECTIONS RELEVANT TO TEXTBOOKS AND LEARNING RESOURCES
2007	UNESCO Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Article 14.1) Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2006	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24.3) States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including: (3.a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring.
2005	UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions Article 12 – Promotion of International Cooperation Parties shall endeavour to strengthen their bilateral regional and international cooperation for the creation of conditions conducive to the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, notably to promote the use of new technologies, encourage partnerships to: (12.d) enhance information sharing and cultural understanding, and foster the diversity of cultural expressions.
2001	UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity Annex II Main lines of an action plan for the implementation of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity Promoting through education an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and improving to this end both curriculum design and teacher education.
1992	UNESCO Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Article 4.2) States shall take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue. (Article 4.4) States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of their society as a whole.
1990	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Article 28.3) States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

YEAR ADOPTED	SECTIONS RELEVANT TO TEXTBOOKS AND LEARNING RESOURCES
1981	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 10 (c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods.
1974	UNESCO Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 38 (a) appropriate and constructive use should be made of the entire range of equipment and aids available; from textbooks to television, and of the new educational technology. 39 (b) Member States should promote appropriate measures to ensure that educational aids, especially textbooks, should be free from elements liable to give rise to misunderstanding, mistrust, racist reactions, contempt or hatred with regard to other groups or peoples. Materials should provide a broad background of knowledge which will help learners to evaluate information and ideas disseminated through the mass media that seem to run counter to the aims of this recommendation.
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Article 26.2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.



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Making textbook content inclusive:

A focus on religion, gender, and culture

“If you are a textbook writer or a curriculum developer, and you are committed to developing inclusive textbooks and/or learning materials, this practical guide will assist you in designing, writing and evaluating textbooks that are free from prejudice and stereotypes based on religion, gender and culture.”



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