

History Wars: Reconciliation through Textbooks?

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Coming to terms with the past is an ongoing conflict about the interpretation of history. Such conflicts are commonly called history wars. They take place at a national level as well as between various countries. They are essentially differences of opinion about the development of national traditions, the maintenance of legitimation and the construction of identity. History wars are not about facts but about the meaning of historical phenomena. Debates of this kind are typically not confined to their specialist field but meet with broad public resonance and are often the subject of vehement debate. Textbooks are highly involved in these debates since they can initiate or illustrate ethnic, cultural, religious or political conflicts and, at the same time, also serve as a means of conflict resolution and compromise. The goal of this lecture is two-folded: First, it will address some of these ongoing history wars in various parts of the world – focusing on Europe, the Near and Middle East, and East Asia – and show in which way they shape the public debate on history. Second, it will ask which role textbooks play in mediating these conflicts. In choosing a few examples of bi- and multilateral activities in textbook revision I will stress the achievements and challenges of such endeavours.

Dr. Eckhardt Fuchs is professor of comparative and international education as well as history of education at the Technical University Braunschweig. At the same time he serves as Deputy Director of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research located in Braunschweig as well. His research interests include the global history of modern education, international education policies, curriculum and textbook development, and human rights. He has been engaged in bilateral textbook activities and worked together with international organizations such as UNESCO. His research links present developments in education with a historical perspective. His most recent publications deal with various aspects of bi- and multilateral textbook revision, the current status of educational media research, the history and politics of children's rights, and curriculum reform in comparative perspective.

No registration necessary/Lecture in English