

# Increases in curriculum contents, from 2000 to the present day

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## Abstract

This article describes the development of textbooks and the way in which contents have changed during the transition between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Some of the contents of textbooks appear more often; in fact, perhaps due to the change in education policies, certain contents are increasing. In accordance with European and Spanish laws, some textbooks in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century were modified at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and so we can confirm that they form part of a process of adaptation. We have compared a number of textbooks written in Basque in order to ascertain the changes or adaptations made by six publishers. This work contains four increasing and two decreasing sets of contents: landscape, history, people and Europe (increasing), and family and education (decreasing). The results of this article are based on the UPV05/131 research project.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, contents, iconography, textbook

## 1. Introduction

Recent development in relation to curricula and textbooks has opened up some impressive perspectives for researchers, because the process of the new situation of western societies has provided scope for new contents, and not only because relations between states change, but rather because a number of clichés have also been adapted or have changed. We feel this may be the case with the contents of textbooks. Some of these are immigrants, the family model, small cultural groups, women, symbols or historical events. According to Soysal (2004), in addition to the large-scale changes implemented by Europe, the European context has also increased in textbooks. The aim of this project is to explain the quantitative and qualitative fluctuations in textbook contents, and determine how the contents appear. In addition to determining increases in contents, those which have declined or are on the verge of disappearing will be identified, by an explanation of the reasons behind these fluctuations.

## 2. The function of the text book for drawing up the curriculum

The textbook is located between the official curriculum and the teacher. In addition to its function in interpretation of the curriculum, it is also presented for use by teachers. It also provides information on the methodology required for the achievement of higher levels of objectives among the contents, through exercises to be done by the pupil. Finally, the contents of the textbook will be what is taught and studied at school. As Apple (1996a, 24) states in *El conocimiento*

*oficial* (Official knowledge), “these are the devices which make up the real curriculum at most schools”.

Teachers are dependent on publishers, since they do not have the required training to produce all classroom materials. Area (1994, 85-113) says the following as a summary of the reasons found by various authors to explain the subordination of teachers to textbooks: “The structure of the curriculum, teachers’ working conditions and their training are the culprits of a lack of ability or control in relation to the responsibilities of the work involved, i.e. planning the teaching/learning process, development and assessment”.

Puelles (1997, 47-48) claims that the textbook is a political tool. In addition to its pedagogical and educational nature, it is well known that it constitutes a device for political socialisation of the student. It is enough to remember Jules Ferry’s line of thought to realise that possession of a textbook also means possession of education.

Again according to Apple, what will be taught in schools is regulated through these textbooks, and it is precisely this which ensures the uniformisation of the knowledge of all students. Gimeno (1995, 75-130) claims that all students have their own textbook, all students have the same textbook, and that the textbook is the device which guarantees a common culture. Moreover, this phenomenon has been in place since the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, since simultaneous education was produced for students at that time. If this is the case, textbooks may be taken as the school’s memory, because it is here-and-now curricula which are portrayed in them. In the opinion of Choppin (2007, 107-141), the image society wishes to give of itself is reflected in the textbook like a mirror, because “the topics glide through the texts, the examples, the images,

the headings, the label in the titles, with contemporaries largely unaware of this, a series of topics in which the dominant classes see themselves reflected and seek to create the foundations of the identity of the entire nation”.

In this sense it is worth bearing in mind the reasons provided by different authors, namely that, more than in other pedagogical documents, textbooks reflect the information and philosophy of an entire era, dealing with life, school, and pedagogical matters. According to Apple (1996b, 66), “they are the expression of specific constructions of reality, of particular ways of selecting and organising the vast universe of potential knowledge. They embody human vision with respect to what may be considered legitimate in terms of knowledge and culture”. As Habermas (1989) claims, this discourse has an effect on students, since the “perlocutionary” function of an utterance is to say something to produce a certain objective. Moreover, since ideology reflects the conflict between different groups, the identity of different groups, power struggles etc., to paraphrase Van Dijk (1996, 9-49), it could be said that the concepts, values, opinions and lexical or iconographic contents of textbooks are used to build social models.

Examination of textbook contents obeys the criterion of the critical paradigm by specifying the nature of the information presented – either the information presented explicitly, or information surreptitiously concealed. The contents are also studied from the point of view of both quality and quantity, in order to explain what information is being given to the student. In a UNESCO-commissioned survey Michel examines how women are covered in French textbooks, both quantitatively and qualitatively. It was Garreta & Careaga who studied the space given over to women in Spanish textbooks, and since then many more studies have been carried out – by Subirats, Blanco and the institute for women Emakunde, or Nuño’s survey on the place of women in science.

Aspects of racism or ethnic minority presence are covered in the study conducted by Dean, Hartmann & Katzen in another UNESCO project. A number of lecturers at the German University of Duisburg, among whom Schallenger and Stein, writers lecturing in political sciences, have taken an interest in political literature as reflected in textbooks. The Georg-Exkert-Institut in Braunschweig, for example, is Europe’s largest textbook research entity. The Swedish institute directed by Selander commenced a study of textbooks in 1990. Selander brought in some new slants to research in terms of the importance of social and institutional parameters, and also contributed some new facets to the way in which research is conducted. In France, the *Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique* and several of its researchers (CherVEL, Choppin etc.) are important references in such investigations.

In Spain, Dávila and also Dávila and Erriondo produced a large amount of work on the development of

school books in different historical periods. They described doctrine scripts and grammars in the initial years of the *fuero* laws, and also textbooks which appeared at a later stage, discussing the effect of innovation within teaching or the linguistic models of teaching, among other didactic material.

Subsequently, Erriondo, Garagorri and Isasi examined books produced in Basque and Spanish by nine publishing houses for the second cycle of Compulsory Secondary Education. Murua, meanwhile, studied “Contents in relation to the Basque Country from several viewpoints”. The same author, in an article with the title “Geografía berriak Euskal Herriari jarriak”, examined the contents of textbooks for levels 4, 5 and 6 of primary education in terms of the concept provided of “our country”.

Bilbao, Ezkurdia and Perez (2001) examine textbook iconography in Bizkaia, in the western Basque Country. According to the authors, what transpires from textbooks in the decade of the year 2000 is that the province of Bizkaia is mentioned most frequently, and that the references are mostly to landscapes. Although Bilbao appears frequently, the main features found relate to the flora of forests, fields, mountains or natural landscapes.

Our team, composed of Perez Urraza, Ezkurdia and Bilbao, studied the contents of textbooks for our doctoral theses. Perez Urrazak shows *Reference to science, technology and professions in textbooks in the Basque Country (Zientzia, teknologia eta lanbideen agerpena Euskal Herriko testuliburuetan)*. This sets out the ideological function of the textbook through the treatment of Basque in professions, starting with the state education system and its hegemonic knowledge – science, technology and economics models.

Ezkurdia’s paper *Identitatea eta Ingurunea Curriculumean* (Identity and surroundings in the curriculum) studies the effect and function of surroundings and curriculum on the construction of identity. Among the conclusions as to construction of identity, Ezkurdia points out the importance of the concepts of time and space on territory and history.

Begoña Bilbao’s thesis, *Kultur erreferentziek oinarritzako hezkuntzako curriculumean, Euskal Herriko eskoletan* (Cultural references in the basic education syllabus in schools in the Basque Country), compares the official curricula used in the Basque Country at both synchronic and diachronic levels. The parameters used to characterise Basque culture are divided into three groups – landscapes, additional characteristics and language. Here we see that, although contents relating to Basque culture are contextualised in different ways, the majority are treated from the hegemonic point of view, and less so from the socio-cultural viewpoint.

In consideration of all these works, our three theses set out to study textbooks published in Basque, with the additional possibility of studying those published in

Spanish or French and used in Basque schools. We have studied iconography and written text for the following three reasons: because textbooks use a combination of both to explain their contents, because the iconic code and linguistic codes are interpreted together, and finally because they make up a single context.

In these theses, our reading of the subject matter was similar to the research technique for contents examination used by Bardin (1996). However, although it was clear that we wanted to study the books used in schools, we could find no easy way to extract all the data from the books. We were aware that there was a description of the cultural references to our country in the textbooks used in Primary Education in Basque schools, particularly in the textbooks used at level 5. However, we also wanted to clarify which aspects of the Basque Country's culture were covered by those references, setting out the differences between publishers.

Thus the paper published recently by Bilbao, Ezkurdia and Perez Urraza (2004) was more specific than before in terms of the link between textbook contents and the immediate surroundings. We observed that the choice of where and how contents are specified is extremely important, because with respect to the nature of the information it is not the same thing to base ourselves on either one option or another. This project concludes that as textbook publication locations change –whether the books are published in Basque or Spanish– the context of the contents is also different.

### 3. Increase in contents as of the year 2000

We compared 12 textbooks in this research project. Several of them were published in the last decade of the 20th century, whilst others date from the year 2000. All of them were published in Basque, since we wished to compare their evolutions over the years to the present day.

Those published since the year 2000 are of particular importance to us for two main reasons: firstly, because the state's dominance within the education system and thus within textbooks is set to change; it is the effect of European laws which are bringing change, change introduced by the 2007 legislature. This also gives us the chance to draw comparisons with data up to the year 2000, and define contents which have been updated, or have changed or adapted between the two periods.

6 publishers were studied – a number of these are local, whereas others publish material all over the state.

As Table 1 shows, 2,322 pages were read, and 4,072 icons examined.

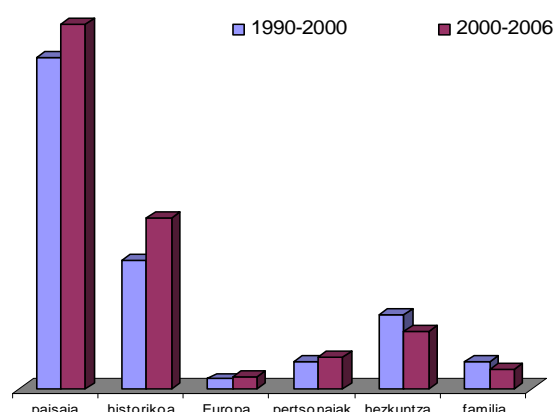
	1990-2000	2000-2006	1990-2000	2000-2006
Publishers	Pages		Icons	
Ibaizabal	200	168	387	327
Erein	200	200	306	309
Santillana	216	204	474	514
Anaya-I	160	150	219	185
Anaya-II	200	200	315	327
Edebé	224	200	402	307
	1,200	1,122	2,103	1,969
	<b>2,322 pages</b>		<b>4,072 icons</b>	

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample

This project has studied the increases in contents, defining those in both periods which show an upward trend. Contents which have fallen have also been mentioned – those appearing less frequently.

The 4,072 icons studied have shown us which appear most frequently. This confirms our work to date (2002, 2004, 2005 and 2006) – in other words, landscapes are the most popular contents of textbooks. There are other contents which show an increase – history, personalities, and Europe. When increases in content were determined – those showing most frequency – those moving in the opposite direction also appeared – decreasing contents. We observed that contents in relation to school or education appear less often, and were struck by the fact that the theme of the family was found among these. Graph 1 below shows the increases and decreases in the situation of contents.

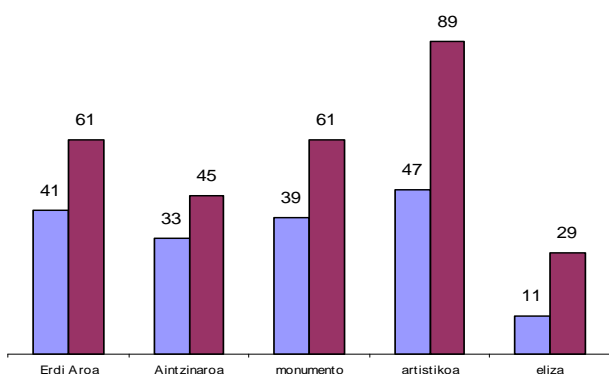
As the graph shows, landscapes and historical contents make up the initial majority, followed by two more topics, Europe and personalities. It is these which have increased in frequency between 2000 and 2006.



Graph 1. Increases and decreases in contents

As of the latter half of the 20th century, landscapes were a frequent feature of textbook iconography, and to the present day they have become increasingly common in textbooks. Landscape contents have gradually become transformed during this time, and we now observe urban landscapes, coasts, rivers and mountains.

Historical contents have also increased, led by art or artistic contents, as the graph shows. Looking at these data, we might be led to think that the frequency shown by major monuments has had an effect on the artistic increase, since both these contents show parallel trajectories. Graph 2 shows the contents in relation to historical data.



Graph 2: Content increases in relation to history

In the 20th century we also find contents with different variables in relation to history. As of the year 2000, we encounter personalities, historical monuments and artistic constructions with increasing frequency, which all reflect the importance attached to history in the choice of contents, although percentages show a particular increase for the Middle Ages and Ancient History. Hispania in Roman times arouses interest, as does medieval society. We must take into consideration the fact that it was during the Middle Ages that the territories of today were shaped. The proliferation of historical buildings and monuments bears some relation to the presentation of the reality of tourism in the Basque Country, and the Autonomous Community in particular, thus confirming the trends previously envisaged.

Specifically, historical monuments were used most in the latter years of last century, and percentages have risen to show a definite increase. If we found increasingly fewer references to personalities during the last century, this trend has now changed and personalities are on the increase. It should also be said that the personalities encountered are more frequently men than women.

In Image 1 showing Fernando the Catholic Monarch taking the fueros oath on page 156 of a book published by Ibaizabal in 2003, the main players are all men.

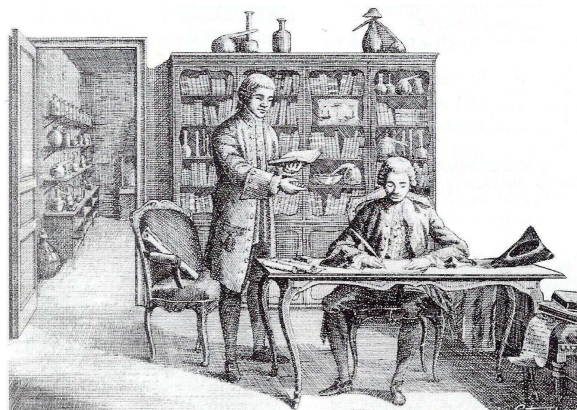


Fernando Katolikoa Erregea, Bizkaiko foruak beteko zituela hitz ematen.

Fernando the Catholic Monarch, swearing to keep the Bizkaia fuero laws

Image 1: People in history

The same situation may be observed in Image 2, where men are also the main protagonists in terms of scientific progress. This was also published by Ibaizabal (2003, page 158).



Elhuyar anaiak wolframioa deritzon metala aurkitu zuten.

The Elhuyar brothers discovered the metal known as wolfram

Image 2: People in scientific history

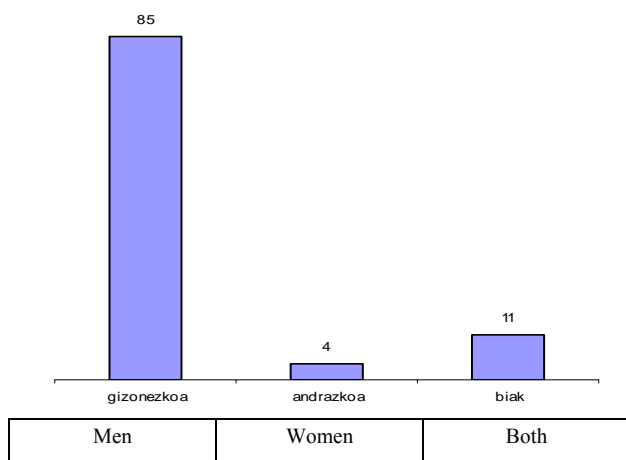
We must make a special mention from the point of view of gender, since textbook contents continue to depict the stereotype of adult males.

Mixed education in the development of each individual and in the socialisation process means putting aside gender stereotypes, and to this end alternative forms of co-education must be drawn up within the Schools' Education Project to encourage development in all contents in different sectors. The objective here is to educate people, taking no consideration of the gender allocated to them.



The LOGSE law sets out the regulations to prevent gender inequality in either the curriculum or in textbooks. In relation to teaching materials, it states: “Teaching materials for students will be adapted to publishing projects. In both texts and images, in accordance with section 2 of LOGSE Law 1/1990, consideration will be given to the following principles: equal rights between the sexes, opposition to discrimination in general, respect for all cultures, strengthening customs in favour of democratic conduct, and consideration of amoral and ethical values” (Perez, 2003, 118).

Although steps have been taken, and still are, towards equality in the curriculum, work is ongoing on inequality between the sexes on the hidden curriculum. The contents to be studied by pupils do not show parity between girls and boys – most of the people are men, now as before. Moreover, there are also those who say that the actual treatment is different, i.e. we are still treating girls and boys in a different manner at school. What happens in all areas is that, year in year out, the contents of textbooks are androcentric and have changed very little over time. In fact, since the study of the contents of textbooks first emerged – in accordance with the critical paradigm – much research has been carried out on gender in specific relation to what is taught. Investigations by Garreta, Subirats, Blanco or Nuño, among others, have pointed to the sexist contents of textbooks.



Graph 3: Gender, different frequencies

The data shown in Graph 3 show us the predominance of men in textbook iconography, in the past and present (Bilbao, 2006). Male adults appear most frequently - up to 51% in specific data.

Personalities in relation to Basque culture are also mostly men, as we showed in our investigations (Bilbao, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005). This is what is taught in textbooks, and again women are put aside. It would seem that men are the main protagonists of Basque culture.

In this hidden content of textbooks, it goes without saying that certain aspects of reality will be manifested and others will be separated from discourse, since boundaries are set for reality. Male reality will be manifested in these contents, and female reality practically cast aside. According to Bourdieu (2000, 17), in curricula “we incorporate, as conscious models of perception and appreciation, the historical structures of the male order, and thus we run the risk of turning to thought processes which are the genuine product of domination”.

In studies conducted during the 1980s, a number of authors point repeatedly to the androcentric nature of recent textbooks. This casts doubt on the effect of the LOGSE law, since the regulations and points of view expressed therein are not reflected in the resources used in schools.

Although steps are being taken towards equality in the curriculum, work is ongoing on inequality between the sexes on the hidden curriculum. The contents to be studied by pupils do not show parity between girls and boys – most of the people are men, now as before. Moreover, it is interesting to examine how women are depicted, what roles they play and in which situations they are portrayed, since the identificatory models as depicted in textbook iconography are limited and stereotyped. Unlike men, women appear in very few roles – most of the time they appear in family-connected roles, as mother, wife, grandmother or granddaughter. This is the most frequent depiction of women in textbooks (Bilbao, 2006). Image 3 below demonstrates what we mean.

We have found this scene in a large number of textbooks, with the woman depicted in a family role – it is in this context that women are portrayed.

Women show a scant presence, even as part of the family in textbook iconography. The family is a value which is on the decrease - contents are waning.

Image 3: Women’s tasks in textbooks

Furthermore, the family model depicted in textbooks is the traditional prototype, the nucleus model. The family stereotype is a man married to a woman in a relationship which produces children. In the family photograph below we see the parents, children, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, nephews and nieces, of all ages, but always in accordance with the partner model.

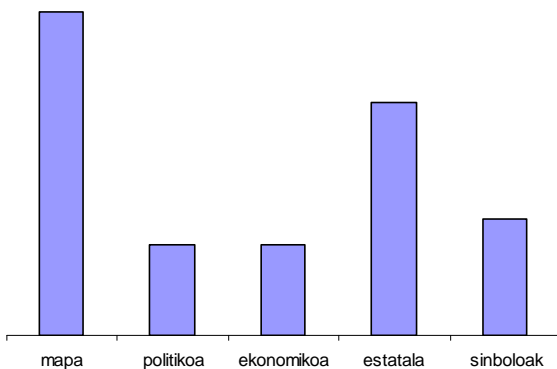


Image 4: The family model in textbooks

Although the family model in society is gradually changing, this is not reflected in the contents of textbooks, where the model continues to be traditional.

#### 4. European contents on the increase

We have found that European contents are also on the increase – however, what is reflected is the European Economic Community, depicted as composed of States and on graphs and maps in particular.



Map	Political	Economic	State	Symbols

Graph 4: Contents relating to Europe

Europe is portrayed as a political and economic entity as created by states, and to this end the most popular item is a variety of portrayals on a map, which is always the map of Europe.



Image 5: Europe in textbooks

Image 5 shows the iconography used to portray Europe, with the flags flying outside the European institution.



Image 6: The European symbol in textbooks

European characteristics are also of constant importance in textbook contents, since these are examples of the European dimension. The symbols are used to this end in textbooks – the euro, for example, coats-of-arms or flags.

Image 6 is an example of what is used for information on the concept of Europe.

We have not encountered any contents in relation to different identities, or realities of European languages or European cultural diversity.

#### 5. Decreasing contents in textbooks

When we studied increases in contents, we also observed there have been some noteworthy decreases. It should be mentioned that the family – as we said above – appears with increasingly less frequency in textbook contents, along with education and teaching.

The contents of education could be said to have decreased in accordance with the data we have compared between the two periods. However, there are considerable differences between the six publishers' iconographic representations of these contents.

	1990-2000	2000-2005
Ibaizabal	2.84	0.92
Erein	6.21	6.49
Santillana	3.38	1.95
Anaya I	3.64	9.19
Anaya II	1.27	1.83
Edebé	5.47	1.95

Table 2: Educational contents for each publisher

Table 2 shows the frequency of contents for each publisher. What the data show is that this type of content has all but disappeared in the case of the book published by Ibaizabal. The table also shows that contents in relation to schools or education have decreased considerably in the case of both Santillana and Edebé. The only exceptions which may be observed are the book published by Erein, and “Eleketan”, by Anaya.

When education appears in iconography, it is not specified anywhere in either previous textbooks or those used in the present day – the percentages are 65% and 62.9% respectively. Scenes and activities increase in these icons, and both appear with increasing frequency in textbooks. However, many of these were found in Middle Ages contexts (5%), whereas today we see that the context is the Modern Age (8.06%). Thus we understand that some appearances during this period are considered historic. Image 7 below shows an example found on page 194 of the book published in 1994 by Erein.



The new school system was introduced a few years ago. Schooling is now compulsory from the age of six or seven to twelve years old. However, a number of children do not go. The classrooms are overcrowded with pupils, and there are 50 or 60 to a classroom.

“We’ll go fishing after school.”

Image 7: Children at school

People appear in mixed situations in most icons, in similar proportions in both periods. One noteworthy feature is the increasing presence of infants and women, to the detriment of young people and men. In such situations there is a noticeable presence of women in modern books - 11.29% - as against only 6.25% in previous publications. The importance attached to education-related professions, however, must be placed within the context of basic education. Whereas these professions appeared in 5% of cases in older textbooks, they now appear more frequently – 8.06% of cases.



Image 8: Girls and boys at school

In addition to the schools portrayed in these scenes, many school situations are also reflected: we observe teaching materials, furnishings, play areas, classrooms etc., and also situations relating to pupils – pupils carrying out group experiments or involved with games, sports or new communications. Viewed from this perspective, the photograph occupies more space than the drawing, thereby increasing the credibility of what appears. The photograph appearing as image 8 above, published by Erein in 1994, page 160, is a reflection of what we mean.

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