

# Enseñar a pensar históricamente mediante los libros de texto. Implicaciones para la formación inicial del profesorado

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Teaching to think historically using textbooks. Insights for initial teacher education drawn from a qualitative empirical study in Austria

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## Resumen:

Este artículo refleja resultados del Mixed Methods research project CAOHT. En el proyecto, es investigado como libros de textos de history se utilizan en escuelas secundarias en Austria en el contexto del cambio de paradigmas hacia orientación en competencias que fue introducido en 2008. Resultados de observación participante cualitativa en 50 lecciones de historia y entrevistas cualitativas y semi-estructuradas con 50 profesores muestran la crucial importancia de libros de textos para profesores y la influencia grande que tienen a la educación de la historia en los colegios. No obstante, en la formación inicial del profesorado, el trabajo con libros de textos juega un papel no decisivo. El artículo, se afirma por tanto que en la formación inicial del profesorado, los futuros profesores deberían aprender a trabajar con libros de textos de forma reflexiva. Lo último apoyaría los intentos

## Abstract:

This study was conducted within the framework of the research project CAOHT<sup>2</sup> which aims to determine how history textbooks are used in Austrian secondary schools in the context of the paradigm shift towards historical thinking that was implemented in 2008. The results, obtained from qualitative participant observation in 50 history lessons and from semi-structured qualitative interviews with 50 teachers, show the importance of textbooks for teachers and the big influence they have on history lessons. However, in initial teacher education, work with textbooks plays a minor role. It is argued that in initial teacher education future teachers should learn to work in reflective ways with textbooks since this would support the ongoing attempts to implement historical thinking in the practice of history education in Austria.

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de implementar el pensamiento histórico/científico en la práctica de la educación de la historia en Austria.

**Palabras clave:**

Libros de textos de historia pensamiento histórico; formación inicial del profesorado; profesores de historia; investigación empírica; observación participante; entrevistas cualitativas.

**Key words:**

History textbooks; historical thinking; initial teacher education; history teachers; empirical research; participant observation; qualitative interviews.

**Résumé :**

Cet article reflète les résultats d'un projet de recherche sur les méthodes mixtes CAOHT. Dans ce projet, on étudie comment les manuels d'histoire sont utilisés dans les écoles secondaires en Autriche dans le contexte du changement de paradigme vers l'orientation des compétences qui a été introduite en 2008. L'observation qualitative des participants se traduit par 50 leçons d'histoire et entretiens qualitatifs et semi-structuré avec 50 enseignants qui montrent l'importance des manuels pour les enseignants et la grande influence qu'ils ont sur l'éducation de l'histoire dans les écoles. Cependant, dans la formation initiale des enseignants travaillant avec des livres, les textes jouent un rôle non décisif. Dans l'article, il est affirmé que dans la formation initiale des enseignants, les futurs enseignants devraient apprendre à travailler avec les manuels de manière réfléchie. Ce dernier soutiendrait les tentatives de mise en œuvre de la pensée historique / scientifique dans la pratique de l'enseignement de l'histoire en Autriche.

**Mots clés:**

Manuels d'histoire ; pensée historique ; formation initiale des enseignants ; professeurs d'histoire; recherche empirique; observation des participants; entretiens qualitatifs

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## Introduction

If we take the findings of Hattie's meta-study on research into schools and teaching seriously, behavior of the teachers is the key factor for learning in schools (Hattie, 2009). Thus it is important to know, what is really done in lessons, in order to be able to align initial teacher education more strongly to the practice of future teachers. Over the last decades, it has been continuously pointed out in international research that we don't have much knowledge concerning the use of textbooks (namely concerning the use of history textbooks) in lessons, since there is a lack of empirical research in this respect. Even though it is assumed that textbook work plays an important role in history lessons, we hardly know empirically based how much and in which ways history textbooks are used in teaching practice. Consequently, also in initial teacher ed-

education in Austria, the development of future teacher`s ability to work critically with textbooks doesn`t play an important role.

In this article, some results will be presented from the large scale Mixed Methods research project *Competence and Academic Orientation in History Textbook* that is currently being conducted in Austria. Apart from other things, one aim of the project is to inform initial teacher education with respect to how history textbooks are used in Austrian secondary schools. When we know the ways in which textbooks are used, the necessary practical relevance can be established for aligning theoretical foundations of history learning and initial teacher education with empirical results. To gain deeper insights into how history education is being conducted and how textbooks are used in the practice may inform teacher educators about how to prepare future teachers to better meet their future challenges.

In a first section of this article, there are some basic ideas of the historical thinking approach that future teachers are supposed to implement in their history teaching and textbooks authors are required to introduce in the books. In a second and third section, the need for empirical studies into the use of textbooks is laid out and the research design of the CAOHT-project is described. Consequently, some results about the use of textbooks, drawn from participant observation in 50 history lessons and qualitative interviews with 50 teachers will be presented, whereby the question will be asked about what implication the results may have for initial teacher education in Austria in order to finally draw a conclusion.

## Historical thinking in the Austrian curriculum

There have been international so-called ‘history wars’ about the purpose, content and form of history education over the last decades (Peterson, 2016; Evans, 2010; Taylor & Guyver, 2012). Over the course of these fierce discussions, it has become clear that the development of historical thinking skills is now seen as ‘primary goal of history education’ (Levi-sohn, 2015, p. 1) by most history educators. The orientation towards an historical thinking approach that was introduced in Austrian history teaching at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> millennium has meant a real paradigm shift in history education, and it implies much more than just over-

coming rote learning. History education is now understood as the development of students' abilities to think historically – think like a historian does – a concept that challenges the conventional idea of using history to introduce the next generation to accepted master narratives (Körber & Meyer-Hamme, 2015, p. 89). Since about the year 2000 the discussion in Austria and Germany was often dominated by the dichotomy of content and skills (Kühberger, 2009; Körber, Schreiber & Schöner, 2007 among many others) that was in some cases exaggerated how Arthur Chapman pointed out recently (Chapman, 2015, p. 31-32). Nevertheless, generally speaking, in academic history education research and in the Austrian curriculum for lower secondary schools, historical learning is seen as the introduction of pupils to a style of scientific thinking about historical narrative, historical sources and historical orientation rather than mainly being about the accumulation of positivist encyclopaedic content. An important aspect in this regard is the reflection on the fact, that history is tied to the present of the one who deals with the past to understand his present, and the expectations for the future are tied back to past experiences. In other words, history always means orientation in the present and for the future by dealing with the past (Jeismann, 1985, p. 40). The connection of the past with the present and future, especially the critical reflection on the fact that history means personal orientation in the present and enables future actions is – at least theoretically – very important in this respect. Thus, history learning is about the acquisition of abilities, competences and willingness to learn to master a specific system of thought (Kühberger, 2009, p. 11) that shall help students to be able to deal with historical culture in reflective and (self-)reflexive ways: A challenge in a time in which so much “historical knowledge” is available, unstructured, on the internet, is to learn how to deal with this information. Waltraud Schreiber pointed out that in the age of Google and Wikipedia, the development of historical thinking is becoming increasingly more important (Schreiber, 2006, p. 13).

In Austria the traditional “content-oriented” curriculum for lower secondary schools was exchanged in favour of a skilled based curriculum of historical thinking in 2008. In a new curriculum in 2016 the competence approach was even made stronger. The background of the curriculum for the subject “History, Social Studies and Civic Education” is the concept of historical thinking that was elaborated by the international group of history education researchers *FUER Geschichtsbewusstsein*. This model

traces back to the theoretical work of Danto (1968), Rüsen (1983), as well as other authors and is based on the concept of 'historical consciousness' (Körber & Meyer-Hamme, 2015, p. 89).

## **Textbooks and the question of their role in fostering historical thinking**

Since that in international history education research, the significance of textbooks has been continuously pointed out for decades, it is very likely that history textbooks play an important role in the implementation of the historical thinking approach into teaching practice. It is said that history textbook narratives have a huge influence on the emerging historical consciousness of students (Haydn, 2011, p. 67) since they convey the images of history for future generations and offer possibilities for orientation and identification for teenagers (Schöner, 2013, p. 66). Sometimes, textbooks are the only books that people deal with over the course of their lives (Pöggeler, 2005, pp. 24-25). Accordingly, it is argued that textbooks make a significant contribution to what students know and think about "other" people and cultures (Pingel 2010, p. 8). It was maintained that textbooks are so dominant in most education systems that the debate about what should actually be taught and learnt in schools is included in the selection and use of textbooks (Foster & Crawford, 2006, p. 2). Accordingly, textbooks are still referred to as a "hidden curriculum" (Foster & Crawford 2006, p. 2). Written textbooks are still awarded the status of the "key medium of history lessons" (Lässig, 2013, p. 6; Sauer, 2016, p. 588), in spite of the supposed increasing popularity of digital media, and it is suspected that they will probably continue to maintain this status "for a long time to come" (Schreiber & Schöner, 2005, p. 313).

Nevertheless, there are individual areas within history education research in which the textbook as a key medium is scrutinised critically because of the little empirical evidence there is about the practical use of textbooks in lessons (Gautschi, 2010, p. 127). In German-speaking history education research for many years, it was alluded to the fact that empirical studies about the reception and the use of textbooks are necessary (Borries, 2008, p. 241), it is to say, about "the role they really have in the process of learning in lessons." (Rüsen, 1992, pp. 238-239) The use of textbooks in concrete teaching practice must be examined empirically.

ically (Borries, 2008, p. 241). With regard to the few results of impact and reception research in this context, Handro and Schönemann assume that the concept of the textbook as a key medium “must be put into perspective (Handro & Schönemann, 2006, p. 5). Also in the field of general educational science, the so called “key medium” textbook seems to play a small role, at least when a publication of the German scholar Kahlert is being taken into consideration who talks about textbooks as “stepchild of the educational sciences” (Kahlert, 2010, pp. 41-56). Jörn Rüsen already stated in 1992: “This deficit [of empirical studies about the use of textbooks] is so grave, because without knowledge about how textbooks are used in practice, all textbook-analyses hang in the air” (Rüsen, 1992, p. 239) – and textbook analysis has in the meantime become an established field of research in History Education. In Germany, the *Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research*, in particular, is setting a course that goes far beyond the German-speaking region.

The fact that textbook research has become a “classic of subject didactic research” (Borries, 2012, p. 43) was alluded to. Nevertheless, most studies in the field of textbook research primarily examine the representation of individual topics of history for its appropriateness with respect to academic criteria, fidelity to official guidelines and elimination of prejudice (Borries 2012, p. 43). Textbooks are also analyzed for historical myths (e.g. Bernhard 2013, Bernhard, Grindel, Hinz and Kühberger, 2017), stereotypes and representations that do not correspond to the current state of academic research. This is an important work within textbook research that is supposed to bear fruit in the practice of textbook production and history teaching. However, through textbook analyses it is only possible to show what potential is available in the book (Schöner, 2013, p. 80). There has been one major empirical study about textbooks with the focus on German Speaking Textbooks. In a large scale triangulation study in German speaking countries, teachers and pupils were also asked with quantitative methodology about the way textbooks are used (Borries, Fischer, Leutner-Ramme and Meyer-Hamme 2005, p. 32), but the question of how intensively and in which ways textbooks are used in History lessons was not the central focus of the study. In Austria – with the exception of 19 teachers who participated in the aforementioned quantitative study, the question of textbook use has never been addressed with an elaborated empirical research design.

If we consider the significance that is assigned to textbooks for the

teaching and learning of history and the development of the historical consciousness of students, the lack of empirical studies into the use of textbooks in German speaking countries and especially in Austria is surprising. In other words, there is little empirical research into the medium from which most scholars believe that it is such an important factor in history teaching. In order to be able to talk about the “key medium” of history teaching in an informed way, and especially to know how to deal with the textbook in initial teacher education, it seems important to understand how teachers use textbooks in their lessons.

## **The Austrian CAOHT Project – Researching textbook use in the history classroom**

### **Research design**

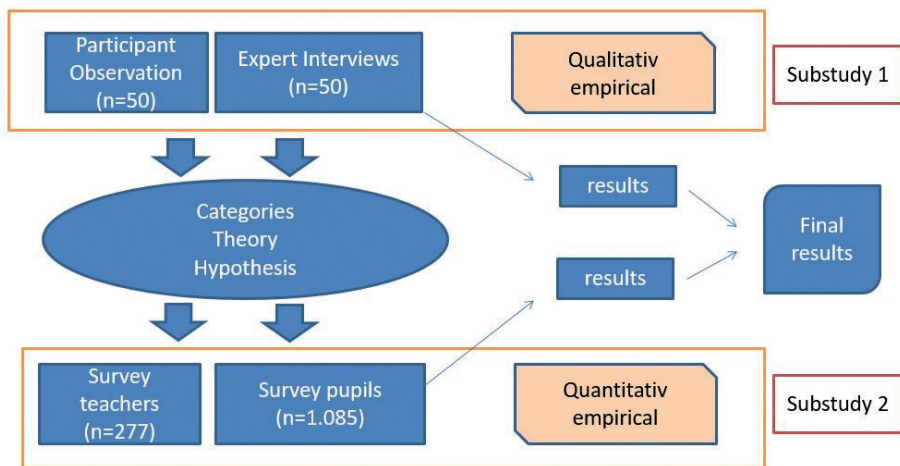
The aforementioned question of how history textbooks are used in Austrian schools, and what role historical thinking plays in this context in day-to-day history lessons is currently being investigated in a large scale Mixed Methods research project called *Competence and Academic Orientation in History Textbooks* (CAOHT).<sup>3</sup> The research design consists of a sequential mixed-methods research study. A characteristic of such a design is that “questions or procedures of one strand emerge from, or are dependent on, the previous strand” (Teddlie & Sammons, 2010, p. 118) that means that mixing methodology occurs across chronological phases. In the case of the CAOHT-project, the qualitative study was conducted first and the quantitative study emerged from and depends on the qualitative results, how it is depicted in figure 1. Qualitative methodology was used to generate a theory about textbook use in Austria and this theory is subsequently tested with quantitative methods (QUAL, QUAN). In this sense, Mixed Methods has been described as “the opportunity to try and achieve both theory verification and theory generation, and more resilient foundations on which to make stronger inferences” (Sammons, Davis, Day and Gu 2014, p. 570) within one study.

The qualitative strand of the project consisted of two individual studies, namely expert interviews with teachers (n=50) and ethnographic participant observation in history lesson (n=50). The interviews and the

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3 The project has been funded by the Austrian Science Fund with 286.000 Euro.

observations led to rich textual data that provided the foundation from which categories and hypotheses were developed and these were used to construct the quantitative survey, which is how it was described in Bernhard (2018). The generated theory was tested with the subsequent survey study with teachers (n=277) and students (n=1085) (Kelle, 2008). The overview of the results of the qualitative and quantitative strands shall provide a fuller picture, enable a better and deeper understanding and thus contribute to gain “more comprehensive, internally-consistent, and valid findings” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007, p. 122).



**Figure 1. Research design of the empirical part of the CAOHT-project**

For this article, only data derived from the qualitative strand will be presented. It will be asked the question of how long and in which ways the history textbook was used in the 50 observed history lessons and what this means for Initial Teacher Education. Before that, the scientific procedure of participant observations and interviews with history teachers will be described in more detail.

## Participant Observations and interviews

The participant observations were taking place in history lessons from different teachers from lower secondary schools in Vienna. For this, 26 different schools (Gymnasien and Hauptschulen/Neue Mittelschulen –



NMS) have been visited. There was a high diversity in the sample – from schools with pupils whose parents come from an underprivileged background to independent schools with parents with a high social and economic status. It was made sure that different backgrounds are taken into consideration. For the selection of the sample of schools, we counted on the one hand on the help of school authorities. A leading school inspector wrote an email to 25 schools (Gymnasium) with the request to participate in the study. The Head Teachers of these schools were contacted by our team and were asked to pass on the information about our study to their history teachers. 27 teachers who participated on a voluntary basis could be recruited this way. Teachers from the middle schools (NMS) were more difficult to find, since hardly any responded to the invitation of the school authorities. Therefore, we phoned Head Teachers directly to ask whether any of their history teachers would be willing to participate in the study. This way, and with the help of gatekeepers from Educational Research at the University of Education of Vienna, it was possible to recruit 31 teachers from middle schools. All teachers (38 female, 20 male) taught in Secondary I. The sample of teachers also reflects the diversity of teachers: There were teachers with more than 25 years of teaching experience, others who had just started teaching as well as teachers with some years of experience. With most of the teachers it was possible to conduct both a participant observation of their history lessons as well as an interview. Some were only interviewed, and some were observed only during teaching – this depended on the teachers.

Concerning the participant observations, protocols have been written during the participant observation according to Lamnek (2010, p. 557-565) and the lessons were also audio taped. After the fieldwork, the protocols were supplemented by the recordings. It is important to note that before the observations were conducted, the participants were explicitly asked to conduct a normal history lesson as they do usually and not prepare anything special that doesn't correspond to their routines. This way 2,430 minutes of history lessons could be recorded in which 1,049 pupils were taught. Also, expert interviews with history teachers according to Bogner, Littig and Menz (2009, 2014) regarding their approaches to history lessons, historical thinking, and their use of teaching and learning materials, particularly textbooks were conducted. These were semi-structured face to face interviews. To prevent socially desirable answers in the interviews, the teachers were referred to as experts ("expert

interviews"). We made it clear that we came to learn from the practice in order to be able to inspire theory in History Education Research using their experiences. Respect for teachers and for their work was an important basis of our fieldwork. In accordance with qualitative methodology, we didn't go to the field to evaluate but instead to try to understand teachers' beliefs and actions. An interview guideline was used to cover all the topics that were interesting in the context of the study. Nevertheless, the questions were as open as possible so that teachers could talk freely and share their personal convictions as uninfluenced as possible. Many topics that were on the interview-guideline came up naturally while the teachers shared their experiences and talked about their practice. The interviews were up to 70 minutes of duration, and they were recorded and fully transcribed. All the interviews and the participant observations were conducted by the author of the article. This fieldwork was conducted in Vienna from February 2016 to June 2017.

### **Results: The textbook is used extensively and reading textbooks is the most common form of textbook work**

Observation data shows that the history textbooks are used extensively in history lessons. An analysis of all protocols of participant observation shows that in more than 1/3 of the 2,430 minutes of observed history lessons, the written history textbook was used in one way or another for teaching. When data is analyzed to figure out how the textbooks was used, it becomes apparent that the most common form of history education among the 50 lessons was reading the author's text or written sources in the textbook collectively or individually and discussing the topic with the teachers. Often students asked questions about the topic or the teacher asked questions that had to be answered by the students. This was not only the most frequent form of textbook work in the 50 observed lessons, it was also in general the most frequent form of work in the history classroom. Furthermore, fulfilling learning tasks that are not in the textbook but have to be done using textbooks played an important role – teachers distributed for example handouts with gap filling exercises or other activities that had to be worked on by using textbooks. Also learning tasks that are offered in textbooks have been used often in teaching practice. As already mentioned, textbooks were used for more than 1/3

of the observed time, and for the three presented types of textbook work, these made up more than 80% of the time in which textbooks were used.

Interview data complement the results of the observations. As one teacher said in an interview: "Yes, I mean, especially in history I think it is very good, I use it often, the book." (I-A11, teacher gymnasium) In the interviews, teachers were asked what a typical lesson of theirs looks like, and in the answers, textbook work was frequently mentioned. Teacher A3, for example, emphasises in her answer that students really want to read aloud from the history textbook. The following quotation from the interview points toward the importance of reading textbooks in the lessons of this teacher (I=Interviewer; T=interviewed teacher):

T: A typical lesson? That is so different. I would say, I come into the classroom, I have myself/ yes we greet each other. I note down who is missing. Then we take a look, where did we stop in the last lesson [...]. Then we look to see whether it is an introduction into a new topic or if we need to go on with a topic we already dealt with. **Often we look at the book when there is a new topic, then we start reading it in the book all together.** I am for reading silently but the pupils always want to read aloud.

I: Could you go into detail, the students want/

T: Always read aloud.

I: That someone reads to the others?

T: Reads to the others. You will see it in the other class, we will probably read aloud again. **It is always like this.** No, they really want to read aloud. This is still so in class eight [students of about 18 years old]." (I-A3, teacher gymnasium)

As mentioned above, (1) reading was together with (2) fulfilling learning tasks with the help of the book and (3) fulfilling tasks in the books the most common form of textbook work that could be seen in the observations. The second type of textbook work is described by teacher A7:

I-A7: I: How often do you use the textbook in your daily lessons?

T: I would say, in about two thirds of the lessons.

I: In two thirds of the lessons the textbook is used?

T: I guess so, yes, yes. In lower second/ yes, definitely [...]

I: And what do you do with the textbook? What are the ways in the lessons, in which you use the textbook?

T: **On the one hand, to work out information. Yes. Well, really reading through it, on the other hand to analyze pictures, sources [...]**

Most of the time they work on their own. Either it is a **working task that I elaborated, also there are in the book/ sometimes I have them do tasks to it [the book] that I find useful**, that's right. And then they work with it on their own. I tell them where they approximately find it in the book, well, not only: Look it up! Yes, because otherwise they find / well I do it, I give them a page number between, I don't know, between these seven pages you find the answer to this question." (I-A7, teacher gymnasium)

When Teacher A2 (teacher gymnasium) was asked in which ways history textbooks can enrich teaching practice, the first thing to come to his mind was to do working tasks that are in the books:

I-A2: I: You say you use the book. In which way can it enrich history lessons?

T: In the first place, yes, **working tasks, tasks, they are certainly sometimes very funny, you can quite well incorporate them.** The textbook, it is, **the tasks are not very challenging**, but, yes, it is quite nice and the children then have a sense of achievement then, when they can do it so easily. (I-A2, teacher gymnasium)

This quote points toward an important observation. Learning tasks in textbooks are often not very challenging. In the CAOHT Project there is also conducted a substudy that asks how learning tasks in Austrian history textbooks contribute potentially to historical thinking competencies. Generally speaking, without anticipating the results of this study, it seems that many learning tasks in textbooks focus strongly on reproduction of contents and hardly initiate domain specific historical thinking processes (Bernhard 2017b). They might be able to activate and to motivate students – how teacher A2 expresses “they are certainly sometimes very funny”. Nevertheless, and this leads to the next section of this article, they should more often also make it possible to think historically using historical sources and historical narrative in a reflective way.

## **Discussion: Implications for initial teacher education**

Since reading the textbook and fulfilling learning tasks in the books are activities so frequently carried out in history lessons, it becomes clear that the content and approaches offered in textbooks are directly reaching students. One major problem in this respect is that textbooks are often used as a source of positivist knowledge – they tell one single narrative objectively as the truth about the past. Not only do textbooks often present the past in a positivist way, but also, at least in German and Austrian textbooks, many myths can be found. This has been written about in two books published by the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (Bernhard, 2013, Bernhard, Grindel, Hinz and Kühberger, 2017), and also in Bernhard (2015). Myths in textbooks definitely reach students through textbook work, simply because there is such a strong focus on reading in the history lessons. In the observation, textbook narratives were hardly critically scrutinised at all. Critical textbook use would consist, for example, of taking into consideration the constructive nature of history presented in a textbook, analysing its deep structure, making visible possible perspectives or intentions of the authors or comparing the textbook with historical sources or scientific historical literature. In this context, learning tasks are central. As we saw in the observations, they are very often used by teachers when they are in the textbooks. It could be concluded that if there are good learning tasks in textbooks that help students to reflect on the past and on history in an elaborate way, then these tasks are very likely to come into practice. This kind of textbook work is very seldom practiced in teaching, and the analysis of the observations protocols reveal this, even though in the interviews it turned out that Austrian teachers generally strongly support those approaches that cover certain aspects of historical competences, like, for example, critical thinking and the use of history to orientate in the present (Bernhard 2017a)

When we want teachers to learn to use textbooks in ways that potentially foster historical thinking, they have to be taught how to do so. However, in Austrian initial teacher education, textbook work, and how it can be verified quickly by researching the university curricula of initial teacher education, is seldom a topic. Moreover, in the interviews, it was said by teachers that in initial teacher education they were told not to use textbooks because only “lazy teachers” work in

this way “That’s right! I can remember when I was in initial teacher education, it was the worst thing that you could do, use a textbook. Only lazy teachers use a book” (I-A11, teacher gymnasium). Even though there seem to be more fascinating and creative approaches to history teaching than textbook work, in a pragmatic view, we have to take into account that textbooks are used and it is not very likely that a raised finger will change this. Also the young teacher A24 (teacher gymnasium, two years of teaching practice) shared in the interview that “definitely in teacher education” the use of the history textbook was presented as “not very useful”. Nevertheless, she shared that she likes to use the textbook and does it frequently “without any scruples” (I-A24). Teacher N14 who also works in initial teacher education for history teachers told that in her experience student teachers (in practice phases during initial teacher education) very seldomly use textbooks even though she encourages them to do so. In her opinion, it would not be realistic to formulate so many handouts in future, when they would have to teach 20 lessons a week or more: “They somehow have the impression, when they use the book, namely the texts or the sources in the book, that I may say that they are lazy. I don’t know. [...] they always try to exclude the textbook and make five handouts” (I-N14). Young teachers who already completed their practice during initial teacher education and have started to work in a full time job in a school like for example A18 (teacher gymnasium, in her first regular year), shared in the interview that the textbook is very important for her:

“I think that for young teachers like me, it’s true, I really like to draw upon the textbook, because I can then simply/ I think/ I am not so experienced and I really have to prepare myself over and over again and I have to learn things and so on, so that I really like to draw upon the textbook”

Thus, while teachers are in initial teacher education practicing, they often don’t use textbooks, because textbook work has a bad reputation. However, when teachers start to work full time, then suddenly the textbook often becomes very important and helpful to get on top of things in a time that is often perceived as to a high degree stressful. However, when teachers haven’t learned how to do good textbook work before this phase, it is likely that the kind of textbook work these teachers conduct won’t be very well reflected on or elaborated.

## Limitations of the study

This study draws upon 50 participant observation in secondary schools in Vienna and qualitative interviews with 50 teachers. Thus, it is a qualitative study that does not, of course, claim to depict the general population in Austria or elsewhere. Nevertheless, this study may help to understand in a deeper way what is happening in schools with textbooks. The data from 50 lessons can moreover indicate a tendency of strong textbook use and makes it possible to generate empirically based a theory of how textbooks are used in Austria. This theory is at the moment tested with quantitative methodology. Furthermore, it has to be taken into consideration that teachers who offer participation in such a study are normally self-confident because otherwise they would not let somebody from a university observe their teaching. Accordingly, it can be supposed that generally speaking, the teachers we were able to observe may not be average teachers but may be reflected more by what they are doing and are pedagogically more able than others who did not want to participate. However, this indicates that also teachers who take more time to reflect have a strong focus on the kind of textbook work described here. This could even be seen as further argument to underpin the necessity of teaching future teachers how to deal with textbooks in critical ways.

## Conclusion

In 2010, the history education researcher Peter Gautschi drew attention to the fact that in the course of the paradigm shift to competence orientation, teachers were suddenly requested to teach historical thinking, although the textbooks only partially show how this could be done on a daily basis. Thus, Gautschi sees the necessity for a reconception of textbooks throughout the German-speaking countries (Gautschi, 2010, p. 131). With the qualitative empirical findings presented in this article, a strong dominance of textbook work in schools has been made visible and it has been shown that the most frequent form of textbook work in the sample is reading textbooks and fulfilling learning tasks with the help of the books or in them. Based on this, the question about if history textbooks nowadays are laid out such that the ground is prepared for the most important domain-specific thinking processes for the learners is an

important question to address. To change history education, to base it more on scientific discourse and to allow historical thinking to reach students, the first thing to do is to introduce historical thinking approaches into textbooks. In this context, it will be very important to introduce into the textbooks good domain specific learning tasks that relate to historical sources and to historical narratives and go beyond reproduction of content. Furthermore, since textbooks are so dominant in teaching practice and since this probably cannot be changed in a top-down way, it seems necessary that in initial teacher education, student teachers must learn to deal with textbooks in elaborated ways and conduct “good” history teaching using them.

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