
The Evolution of Textbooks in the Last Decade: A Literature Review from an Inclusive Education Perspective

Tania Caamaño-Liñares^{*1}, Miriam González González^{*2}, and Ana Rodríguez Guimeráns^{*1}

¹Universidade de Santiago de Compostela [Spain] – Praza do Obradoiro, 0, 15705 Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña, Espagne, Spain

²Universidad de La Laguna [Tenerife - SP] – S/C de Tenerife Spain, Spain

Abstract

Technological and sociological progress has driven a transformation in the way education is understood. Consequently, in the last decade, the educational world in particular, and society in general, has raised awareness of inclusion and a diverse approach to learners, directly influencing the design and development of materials used in the learning process. Textbooks have become, due to their historical presence in classrooms around the world, the teaching material par excellence, being not only an object that facilitates learning, but an authentic representation of the culture of a territory, of complex social situations and, of course, a tool for the transmission of values and counter-values that deeply permeate new generations in an implicit way (Munakata, 2016). Consequently, textbooks have been influenced by these changes in line with the changes in a heterogeneous and diverse society. Therefore, they have had to adapt to curricular changes, to rapid technological advances by changing the support and the way of showing the contents, and they have also had to expand their offer by becoming more accessible and varied in terms of the representation of how diverse human beings are by nature, paying special attention to those groups that have historically been excluded, such as people with some kind of functional diversity, women or belonging to the LGTBIQ+ group, people from different cultures and, of course, with different languages (Ayaz et al., 2016). Taking this into consideration and knowing that this is a recent change, to what extent have they been able to live up to this task, and has this issue been resolved with the change to technological support, or is it still a pending issue for publishers?

This paper presents a literature review that delves into the evolution of textbooks in education, with the inclusion paradigm as a central focus. The review was carried out in 2024 using the SCOPUS database. We worked on the basis of the Prism Method (Page et al., 2021), following its four phases (identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion). A search using this method yielded 49 open access results, 2 of which were discarded due to their unavailability on the web.

The results obtained reveal a growth in scientific production in this area during the year 2023 and a common language among them, which is English. The highest participation in this type of publications comes from Spain and the United Kingdom, with the Universitat de València and University College being the universities that stand out as the main researchers

*Speaker

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The content analysis has shown a series of categories in which the publications are grouped, with articles focusing on linguistic and cultural diversity being the most frequent, followed by those on the inclusion of specific content. Focusing on attention to diversity, only 7 address the subject in a broad sense, 4 from a gender perspective and another 4 studying functional diversity. Within the first category, the texts analysed focus on the representation of multiculturalism in the classroom, how linguistic diversity is dealt with in multilingual territories and the representation of certain communities that have been discriminated against by ethnicity, such as Africans. In the category of diversity in a broad sense, we include those studies in which textbooks are reviewed from a perspective of inclusion of different groups through an intersectional relationship of exclusionary situations. The texts that focus on the representation of women do so from the perspective of iconic representation, equality in the models and the language used. Surprisingly, one of the categories with the most results does not analyse attention to diversity, but rather the "inclusion" of certain specific contents, many of them focused on the environment, healthy habits, among others. The results show the need for future research on the representation of human diversity and the appropriateness of the format and content. Despite the interest of the results obtained, a possible limitation of the research is that it may be too narrowly focused on a single database. That is why we propose future comparative research using new academic databases, as well as extending the historical range of the search, which will allow us not only to know the state of the art in the field but also its evolution over time.

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