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Divided world versus one world: A comparative analysis of non-continuous text elements in school geography textbooks of international selection

Citation: Bagoly-Simo, Peter. (2012). Divided world versus one world: A comparative analysis of non-continuous text elements in school geography textbooks of international selection. IARTEM e-Journal 5 (1) 33-44 (Abstract) (Article)

Abstract

Otherness is embodied in geography in regionalization. Regions with similar respectively different ecological, economical, social, and cultural features have been traditionally clustered on global scale in "worlds". While political and economical factors played an important role in distinguishing between the First, Second, and Third World during the Cold War, clustering developed and developing regions considers also additional aspects such as resources, education, or technology. Stressing more the aspects of convergence rather than the ones of divergence, contemporary discourses build on the idea of (education for) sustainable development in an undivided "one world". Textbooks for school geography contain along with the continuous text also a multitude of non-continuous text elements that carry an expressive and very contrastive iconography of the "own" and the "other". This paper deals with the question, how otherness is expressed through non-continuous text (e.g. maps, diagrams, cartoons, pictures etc.). We argue that otherness is often expressed through self-inclusion respectively self-exclusion of the own country on a global level. For that, the paper compares a sample of secondary school geography texts from Germany (Western context), Romania (post-socialist context), and Mexico (post-colonial context). Qualitative content analysis of the meta-text elements (Pingel 2010) was carried out. The results show that non-continuous text divides worlds by classifying and clustering on several scales, while cross-curricular coordinates contribute to a converging one world. The results also show that a new regionalization based on concept of sustainable development seems to be emerging.

Key words: otherness, regionalization, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), geography

