



Understanding European education landscape on natural disasters – a textbook research

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The importance of natural-disaster education for social preparedness is presented. Increasing damage caused by natural disasters around the globe draws attention to the fact that even developed societies must adapt to natural processes. Natural-disaster education is a component part of any education strategy for a sustainably oriented society.

The purpose of this article is to present the role of formal education in natural disasters in Europe. To ensure a uniform overview, the study used secondary-school geography textbooks from the collection at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, Germany. Altogether, nearly 190 textbooks from 35 European countries were examined.

The greatest focus on natural disasters can be found in textbooks published in western Europe (3.8% of pages describing natural disasters), and the smallest in those published in eastern Europe (0.7%). A share of textbook pages exceeding three percent describing natural disasters can also be found in northern Europe (3.6%) and southeast Europe, including Turkey (3.4%). The shares in central and southern Europe exceed two percent (i.e. 2.8% and 2.3%, respectively).

The types and specific examples of natural disasters most commonly covered in textbooks as well as the type of natural disasters presented in textbooks according to the number of casualties and the damage caused were analyzed.

The results show that the majority of European (secondary-school) education systems are poorly developed in terms of natural-disaster education. If education is perceived as part of natural-disaster management and governance, greater attention should clearly be dedicated to this activity.

In addition to formal education, informal education also raises a series of questions connected with the importance of this type of education. Special attention was drawn to the importance of knowledge that locals have about their region because this aspect of education is important in both traditional and modern societies.