

# **Framing the Israel/Palestine Conflict in Swedish History School Textbooks**

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# Abstract

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The following dissertation has examined the ways in which the history of the Israel/Palestine conflict has been framed in a number of Lower Secondary school Swedish History textbooks as well as in a small number of Social Science/Civics teachers' statements. The initial problem discussed has been a noted discrepancy between textbook content and scholarship on the conflict's history. The overarching question posed thus has been what is the established framework on the conflict in the textbooks and teachers' statements? Reflecting different approaches, the theoretical framework adopted here sees the construction, selection and organization of school knowledge as a political and power/knowledge problem. In this regard "official knowledge" on the conflict is linked both to the local political, ideological and cultural context within which it is situated as well as historical shifts in the conflict's power relations internationally. Thus many of the topics and themes selected in the textbooks and teachers' statements have been identified as reflecting a host of conflicting – external and internal - discourses. The first of this dissertation's main conclusions is that the linkages between scholarship, textbooks and teachers' statements in general have been very weak and do not provide a platform for a broad critical understanding of the root causes of the conflict on the basis of varying perspectives. Instead, they are far too anchored in ideological assumptions, despite the appearance in textbooks and teachers' statements of vying discourses which highlight perspectives from both sides of the conflict's history. While the latter has provided a sense of balance, it has generally been illusory. The reason for this is rooted both in the lack of perspectives and presence of ideological assumptions which in turn is reflected throughout the textbook framings and teachers' statements through the recurring notion of "equal" claim. This notion undergirds the discourses discussed above and constitutes a particular order of discourse. This functions to occlude the inherent inequities and power asymmetries of the conflict going back to its very inception and constitutes the established framework on the conflict's history in the textbooks and teachers' statements.

## Key terms

Curriculum theory, History school textbooks, teachers' statements, "official knowledge", power/knowledge, discourse, order of discourse, ideology, established framework