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Photographs in Dutch History Textbooks: Quantity, type and educational use

Abstract

Im Zentrum der Studie steht die Analyse der Verwendung von Fotos in Lehrbüchern der Niederländischen Geschichte für die Sekundarstufe in der Zeit von 1970 bis 2000. Die Grundlage der Analyse bildet ein medienwissenschaftlicher Zugang zur Schulbuchforschung, in dessen Rahmen sowohl die Anzahl der Bilder sowie deren Art erhoben als auch der pädagogisch-didaktische Verwendungszusammenhang erfasst wurden. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass im Laufe der Zeit immer mehr Fotos, insbesondere Pressefotos, Aufnahme fanden. Außerdem erhielten die Bilder häufiger eine didaktische Funktion und wurden nicht mehr nur zur Illustration eingesetzt.

Die statistische Analyse zeigte allerdings, dass der Anstieg der didaktischen Nutzung von Fotos nicht im Zusammenhang mit der zunehmenden Verwendung von Pressefotos steht. Diese verstärkt pädagogisch-didaktische Nutzung der Fotos ist auf drei Gründe zurückzuführen: Erstens sind mehr Bilder verfügbar, weil Archive Bilder digitalisieren und bessere Techniken entwickeln, um Bilder zu finden. Zweitens: Veränderte Lehrpläne und Lernziele bieten bessere Möglichkeiten zur Nutzung von Fotos in Schulbüchern. Drittens: Niederländische Autoren von Geschichtsschulbüchern widmen pädagogischen Theorien zunehmend mehr Aufmerksamkeit. Diese Autoren der neuen Generation sind ‚Hybrid-Historiker‘ und als solche spezialisiert auf didaktische Methoden, die ihnen helfen, Bilder als didaktische Instrumente zu nutzen und nicht nur zur Illustration.

Introduction

When I was a pupil of about fourteen years old, my History teacher showed a photo on which soldiers raised the American flag at the Island Iwo Jima, Japan in February 1945. We were asked if we knew the picture. Everybody kept silent because none of us had seen it before. The teacher shook his head and mumbled that apparently this image was never shown to his pupils so it should be added to the textbook. I remembered this scene after reading Marc Ferro's *Comment on raconte l'histoire aux enfants* (1984) in which the first sentences summarize the essence of the book:

„Our image of other people, or of ourselves for that matter, reflects the history we are taught as children. This history marks us for life” (Ferro 1984, p. IX).

Nowadays, the image shown by my teacher is published more often in History textbooks. When following Ferros comment and my teachers remark it can be assumed that the image of the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima currently serves a more important visual function.

Using History textbooks as historical source

Textbooks play an important role in creating a visual image of events, persons or processes. However, in The Netherlands little attention has been paid at studying textbooks as historical source. Traditionally, historians and media scientist have focussed on newspapers, magazines and television but textbooks were not considered as a legitimate source. Nowadays, a growing number of studies on textbooks have been undertaken. At least three reasons can be formulated for this increased attention. First, researchers now realize that textbooks are printed in large numbers and reach an enormous amount of pupils. Therefore, textbooks are now considered as mass medium just like newspapers and magazines.¹ Second, research has shown that textbooks are still the most popular tool in class. Even though internet and CD-ROMs are used more often, the textbook is the primary medium. Third, textbooks have been used practically always at schools in the Netherlands since every child was obliged to go to school since 1901. This long period creates the possibility to make comparisons over time. When looking at the use of media at schools we see that all sorts of media have been used, for example the posters that were made by the Dutch artists Isings. His paintings used to hang in all school classes for a long time.² Nowadays these paintings are replaced by posters that are widely distributed by publishers or all kinds of initiatives. During the period 1950-1970 movies were used in classrooms that were specially produced for education purposes. Today, special programs are broadcasted on Public Television like the 'School TV Weekjournaal' (School television Journal) and websites are developed which can be used by teachers and pupils.³ This short overview of school media shows the large amount of different types of media. However, textbooks were always the primary medium in the classroom. All the other media (posters, television or websites) were extra while the book was and still is the most important medium. For visual researchers, a fourth reason can be formulated why textbooks should be studied. Research has shown that images are

¹ In The Netherlands it is practically impossible to get official figures of the number of textbooks that were printed and sold. Nevertheless I found one thesis that included a letter with an overview of the amount of books that were sold by publisher Wolters-Noordhoff up to 1986. See Drunen (1987). „Etnocentrisme en Geschiedenis“: (Het Beeld Van) Japan in Geschiedenisboeken, 1920-1980.

² For more on Isings, see Blokker/ Blokker/ Blokker (2005). *Het vooroudergevoel: de vaderlandse geschiedenis en Oostrom* (1998). *Historisch tableau: geschiedenis opnieuw verbeeld in schoolplaten en essays*.

³ For example the Dutch website www.teleblik.nl on which students and teachers can see historical footage that is digitized specially for educational purposes.

useful to memorize certain events or processes.⁴ Didactics therefore stimulate the use of images in textbooks. In the recent Dutch handbook ‚Geschiedenisdidactiek’ the authors Arie Wilschut, Dick van Straaten and Marcel van Riessen refer to a British research that showed that children between the age of ten and thirteen years old, preferred images above texts (Wilschut/ Straaten/ Riessen 2004, p. 129). In an older Dutch handbook, the author Leo Dalhuisen also states that

„students prefer images simply because they can visualize the events. Images often show events at a glance, while many words and sentences are needed to describe the same events” (Dalhuisen/ Toebes/ Verhagen 1983, p. 169).

These reasons illustrate the possibilities of studying textbooks for historians and media scientists. This resulted in a few studies on the effect of images in Dutch textbooks.

Previous research

Several studies on Dutch textbooks have been performed but only a few focus on the images in the books. The first Dutch study on the effect of images in textbooks is by Antoon de Baets in which the influence of textbooks on public opinion about non-Western cultures in Belgium was researched (Baets 1988). Not only texts were examined but also images. A model contained six elements by which the pictures were studied, among which the content of the photo, its size and the caption accompanying the photo. De Baets concludes his study by stating that this model was a first draft and that research on images has to be undertaken with caution since a systematic analysis of images is much harder than analyzing texts (Baets 1988, pp. 306-307). A second Dutch study on textbooks is by Ineke Mok on the use of the term ‚race’ in history and geography textbooks (1999). Also Mok analyses images by using methods of Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen (1996) and Roland Barthes (1993). Images were studied in three steps. First, the pictures were examined separately of the text. Second, the order of the photos were analyzed and third the relation between the photo and its caption was examined.

Both the study of De Baets as well as the research of Mok were aimed at describing the influence of the textbook on the perception of people. However, no study has examined the way photographs are used in Dutch textbooks in general which is the main focus of this article.

⁴ See for example Mednick (1966) *Psychologie van het Leren*.

Organization research

This research is part of a PhD-project, called 'Photographic Icons' in which the production and use of photographic icons in Dutch History textbooks is examined. In the first phase of this research, an inventory was made of the photos in practically all Dutch History textbooks for High School pupils that were published in the period 1970 – 2000.⁵ A team of three researchers examined all the books to determine the types of photos and its contents. A total of 412 textbooks have been examined and 5.395 photos were analyzed.⁶ All the photos have been digitized, submit into a database and 59 values of information were added to each photo.⁷ This article focuses on three types of information: the quantity of photos over time, the types of pictures and the educational use of the photo.

Results

Quantity of photos

Images play an increasingly important role in all sorts of media. More photos are included in newspapers, magazines but also textbooks. The following graph illustrates this trend. It shows an increasing tendency of the average amount of photos that were published in a History textbook per periods of five years.⁸

⁵ In The Netherlands, different institutions have collections that are available for research. All libraries have a few copies but three institutions have workable collections. The library of the Erasmus University for example has received a large amount of textbooks by donation that forms the *History Didactics Collection*. For more information see www.fhk.eur.nl/english/chc/hdc. Together with the collection at the National Museum of Education in Rotterdam and the National Library in The Hague, one can get quite a complete view of all the books that were published in the period 1970-2000.

⁶ For reasons of space, a list of examined textbooks is not included in this article. A copy can be obtained by contacting the author.

⁷ The software used to create the database is called Fotostation Pro which is developed by the Norwegian company Fotoware. The program is designed to manage large amount of images. Users are able to edit the images, submit metadata and surge through all the images. Exports of all the data can be made and afterwards imported into statistical software like SPSS. More information about Fotostation can be found at www.fotoware.com/Products/FotoStationPro

⁸ We also calculated the size of the books and photos but results show that there is no significant change in both over time.

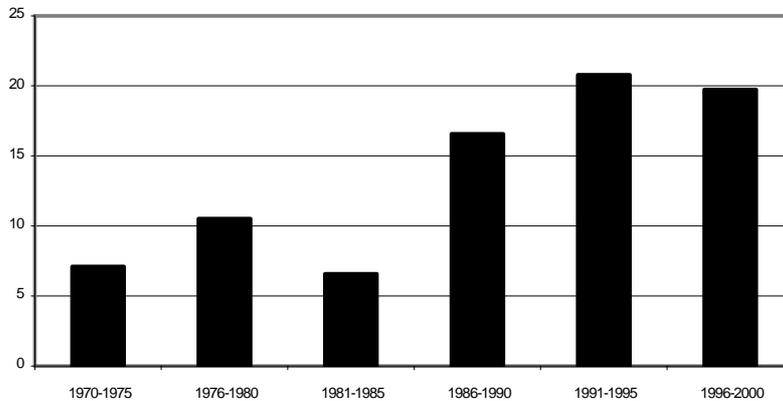


Fig. 1: The average amount of photos, published in Dutch History Textbooks for High school pupils per periods of five years.

However, not only the amount of photos has increased over time. The use of color photos increases as well (see fig. 2). Black & White images are dominant in all the books throughout the whole period, which is not surprising since the focus is on historical images. However, a shift in the proportion can be seen after 1986: more images in color appear in the History textbooks. This might be explained by the use of modern printing techniques that created easier and cheaper ways to print in color. Nevertheless, since color photography emerged after the Second World War in The Dutch press photo industry, this trend could also indicate a shift in the type of information or subjects that are discussed in textbooks. A third reason could be the types of photos that were used.

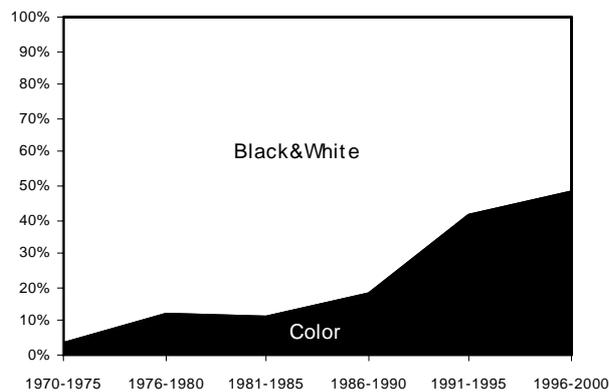


Fig. 2: The proportion color photographs and Black & White photos in Dutch History Textbooks for High School pupils per periods of five years

Types of photos

Each photo is described to be a press photo, portrait or photographic illustration of a building, statue or object. A photographic illustration is a static picture of an object and a portrait is a photo in which the person photographed poses deliberately for the photographer. A press photo is defined as a photographical illustration of an event, which the photographer assessed as deviant of everyday life and was made to be published in a mass medium.⁹

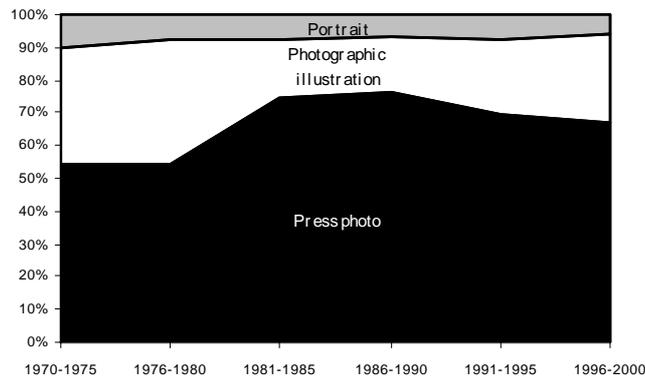


Fig. 3: The proportion Portraits, Photographic Illustrations and Pressphotos in Dutch History Textbooks for High School pupils per periods of five years

⁹ The formulated definition is created by the researchers after going over several definitions. Former picture-editor Harold Evans states that a press photo has to be 'decisive', referring to photographer Henri Cartier-Bressons who raised this issue for the first time in his book 'The decisive moment' (1952) According to Evans, a press photo does not have to be made by a professional and simply are 'pictures on a page', referring to the title of his book which is a leading book in the study of press photos. (1997) Other leading press photo theorists like Howard Chapnick (1994), Vicky Goldberg (1991) and Mary Warner Marien (2002) all claim that a press photo is an illustration of a news event, made to publish in a mass medium like a newspaper, magazine or website. This definition is not sufficient yet since the term 'news event' is quite subjective. What one person may find news, does not have to be news to the other. When journalists describe what news is, they often refer to the quote of a former New York Times editor who stated that it isn't news when a dog bites a man. But when a man bites a dog, one can speak of news (Chase 1971). Dutch former correspondent Joris Luyendijk refers to this definition in his book *Het zijn net mensen: beelden uit het Midden-Oosten*. According to Luyendijk news is not about the 'most important thing in the world' but the event that deviates of everyday life, the so called exception on the rule (2006, p. 44). Apart from this aspect, Luyendijk demonstrates that news is constructed by journalists. A journalist selects on his own values and always makes a subjective choice. In studies on photography, researchers also more often emphasize the aspect of constructing a reality. Mary Panzer for example states in the book with the in my opinion quite misleading title *Things as they are* that: „Photojournalism is a collaborative project, in which photographers, writers, editors and publishers creatively interpret and translate the chaos of life into a product that can be distributed to readers. In the end, the business of representing reality is all about invention” (2005, p. 10).

Results show that press photos are published most often throughout the whole research period and its use increases, while the use of photographic interpretations decreases. The use of portraits has been quite stable over time.

Educational use

The second part of this article will focus on the educational use of photographs in History textbooks. Are photographs used as didactic instruments? For education-experts, it is obvious that every element in a textbook should have an educational function. However, for historians this is not always the case. British culture historian Peter Burke for example states that historians are trained to analyze textual sources, not photos. According to Burke, historians don't have the proper instruments to work with visual sources while these photographs could contain the same amount of information as textual sources (Burke 2001, pp. 13-14). Dutch professor of History of Society, Media & Culture Henri Beunders shares this opinion and states that historians treat photos light-footed. According to Beunders, one can see this by looking at the way historians use visual materials in their books. These photographs often don't serve a function but are mainly used to make the page look 'less boring' (Beunders 2000, p. 19). This critical stand can also be found in Dutch didactical handbooks. Leo Dalhuisen, who edited the successful textbooks series 'Spreekend Verleden', was one of the first didactics in The Netherlands who made authors and teachers realize that photos can be used as didactical instrument. In his handbook *History at school – Methods & Media* (1983) Dalhuisen gives a couple of reasons why visual materials should be used. He states for example that certain historic events or processes are better presented by visuals than by texts. And pupils are better capable to remember facts that are brought to them by photographic materials than by textual sources (1983, p. 169). But Dalhuisen does not just say that visual sources should be added in textbooks to make the page look 'less boring', referring to Beunders quote. In contrary, the photos should serve a didactic function and therefore Dalhuisen offers a couple of examples on how to use visual sources in the classroom (1983, pp. 174-177). In a more recent published Dutch handbook (2004) the added value of photographs at the education process is further explained and the authors spend more on this subject than Dalhuisen does (Wilschut et al. 2004). The authors describe different ways for a teacher to use images in a class/ lecture and how to use them in an assignment. They also discuss possibilities to analyse and interpret images by comparing images and judging the reliability and representativity of the image (2004, pp. 128-150).

These remarks functioned as theoretical background when determining of each photo if it serves an educational function. Do the pupils learn something of the photo and its caption or are they only published 'to make the page look less boring', as Beunders states? A photograph is coded as didactic functional when there is a link between the photograph and the text on the page where the photograph is published. The following two examples describe how every photograph has been coded.

The first photo is coded as 'didactic functional'.

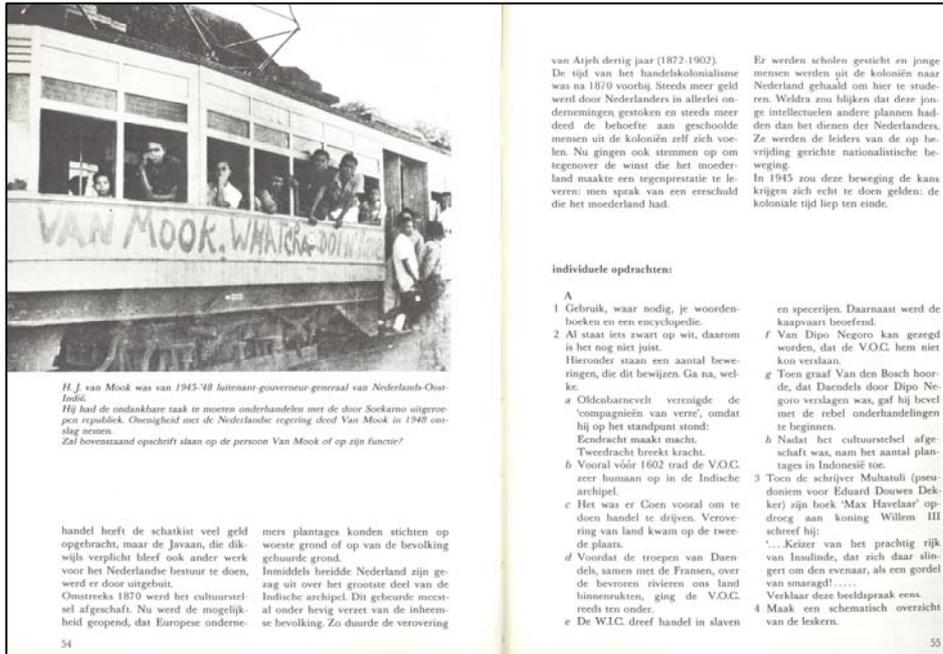


Fig. 4: A photo that is published in the textbook *Functionele Geschiedenis 3M* (1970) on page 54. The caption underneath the photo says: ‘H. J. Van Mook was Lieutenant-Governor-General of Dutch-East-Indies. He had the ungrateful job to negotiate with the Republic that was proclaimed by Soekarno. Disagreement with the Dutch government caused Van Mook to resign. Does the graffiti refer to Van Mook as a person or to his function?’

The photograph shows Indonesians in a tram in former Dutch colony Indonesia, but the focus of the photograph is on the graffiti on the tram. It says ‘Van Mook, what are you doing here?’ and refers to Hubertus van Mook who was minister of Colonies and tried to mediate between the Dutch government and the Indonesians about sovereignty for Indonesia. The photo is positioned at the end of a chapter and the caption poses the question if the graffiti refers to Van Mook as a person or to his function as minister of Colonies. By asking a question, the pupils have to look at the photo and rethink what they have learned which is a clear illustration of a photo with a didactical function.

The second example is coded as ‘didactic not functional’.

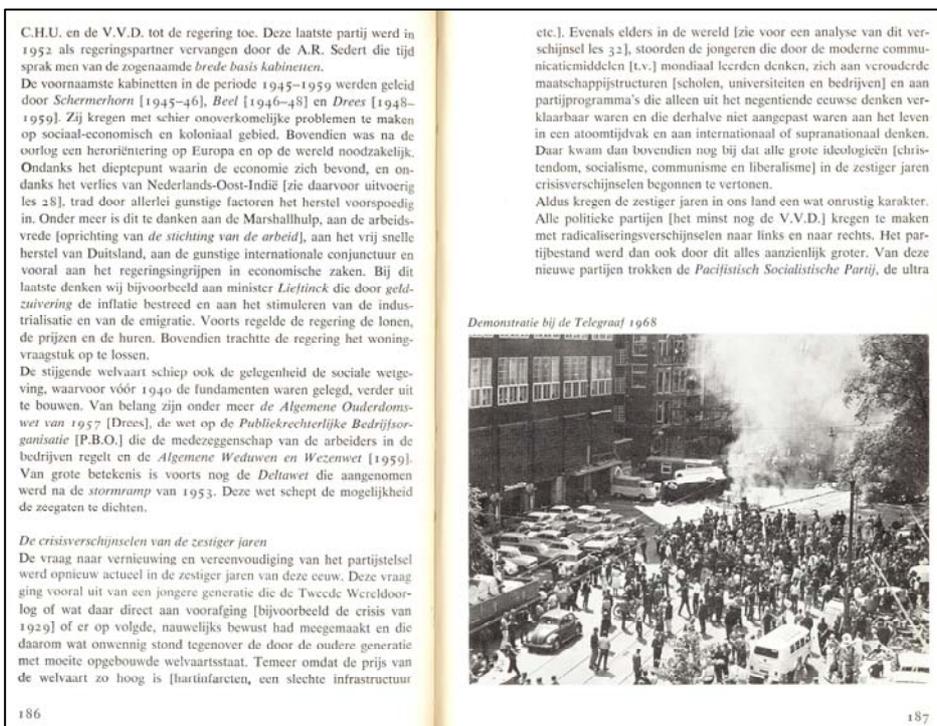


Fig. 5: A photo that is published in the textbook 'Mensen en Machten 5V' (1974) on page 187. The caption underneath the photo says: 'Demonstration at 'de Telegraaf' 1968'.

The photo shows a demonstration in Amsterdam in 1966 at de Telegraaf, which is the biggest newspaper of The Netherlands. Construction workers were mad about the way De Telegraaf covered a demonstration of the day before.¹⁰ The text in the book describes events in the sixties and refers to demonstrations in general but nowhere is this particular demonstration mentioned and also the caption is too short. It only says 'Demonstration at 'De Telegraaf' 1968'. Not only contains this caption the wrong year, it also not refers to elements in the text on the accompanying pages. Therefore, this photograph has been coded as 'didactic not functional'.

¹⁰ During these riots, one man died. An article in de Telegraaf stated that the man died after a heart attack but the construction workers did not agree with this and therefore demonstrated the next day at the building of the newspaper. Afterward it appeared that the man did die by the causes of a heart attack.

Results show that the proportion of photos with educational use and photos without educational use are practically equal (53 % educational; 47% non-educational) at the beginning of the research period. However, during the whole period we see that photographs more often serve educational functions. At the end of the research period, 81 percent of all the photos serve an educational function.

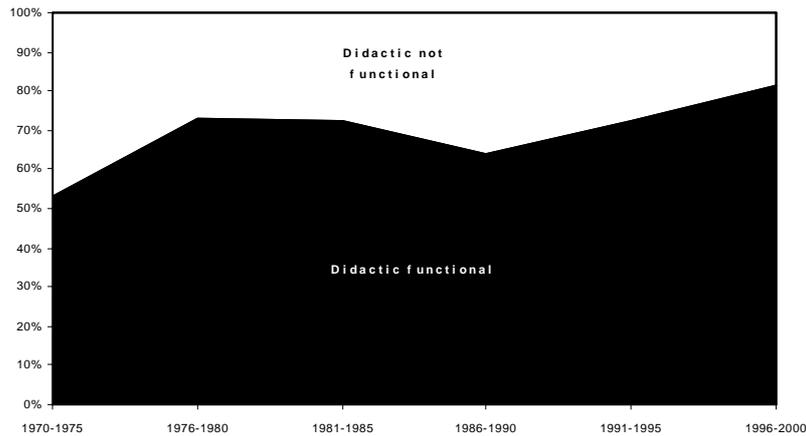


Fig. 6: The proportion Didactic Functional Images versus Images that are not Didactic Functional in Dutch History Textbooks for High School pupils per periods of five years.

Conclusion

We will conclude this article by describing some first preliminary explanations of the increasing use of didactic functional photos.

First of all, one can assume that more photos are made available through archives and photo agencies by the process of digitization and better search techniques, allowing editors to search for photos that were best usable in an educational context. This explanation could also be a reason why more color photos and press photos were included. When combining the results of the use of more press photos and an increasing use of didactic functional images, one could hypothesize that these two results could be linked by stating that press photos serve better as educational means than photographic illustrations or portraits do. To analyze this hypothesis we used a statistical program to calculate the correlation between the increasing publication of press photos and this rising educational use of photographs. However, results show that there is no correlation between the two variables (Pearson Correlation is $-0,011$). This result implies that the educational use of a photograph has nothing to do with the type of photo, but the way it is presented on a page in a textbook and accompanied by a proper caption.

A second reason could well have to do with changing curricula and a change in the way learning objectives are defined. What does society want the pupils to learn by studying History? Do they have to know the bare facts? Or do we want them to have the skills to analyze historical sources? The authors of the recent Dutch handbook mainly focus on this last aspect by talking about the way photos can be analyzed and interpreted by comparing photos and judging the reliability and the representativity of the photo (Wilschut et al. 2004, pp. 128-150).

A third reason for the rise of the use of photos with an educational function is the increased attention that is paid to educational theories by the authors of textbooks. The publication of Dalhuisens book for example could be a reason for this increased attention since it appeared in 1983. We see that in the period following, more photos serve didactic functions. This also coincides with the emergence of a new kind of history textbook editor in The Netherlands. In the beginning of our research period (1970), most textbooks were made by traditional historians who according to Burke and Beunders were not capable of analyzing visual sources. Since around 1985, we see a different type of editor emerge. We call this the 'hybrid historian'. These kinds of editors are skilled historians but are specialized in educational or didactic methods.

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