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Greek School Religious Textbooks for Transdisciplinary Visual Encounters

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Abstract

In Greek education, religious textbooks play a significant role and are often the primary source of learning material. This study explores the visual components of Greek secondary religious textbooks. It aims to answer questions about the types of visuals used, their content and placement, and how they interact with the text. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative processes. The study also examines the issue of “otherness” and how the visuals in the textbooks can stimulate students’ participation and engagement regardless of their color, nation, or personal beliefs. The findings suggest that an interdisciplinary approach to learning and personal stimulation through inter-social and interreligious connections can effectively address the issue of otherness. The study’s results confirm the above hypothesis and provide interesting insights into the dynamics of religious textbook visuals.

Keywords: visuals, interdisciplinary approach, otherness, connection, correlation

1. Theoretical background

There has been a tremendous shifting process concerning (upper)secondary religious textbook material over the last ten years, which primarily consists of the fruit of educational and theological discussions and processes among peers, while on the other hand, derives from the changing of the political scenery in power (Zachos & Michailidou, 2014, p. 1). The latest religious textbooks combine pictorial wealth framing in almost every didactical unit. Nevertheless, the general pedagogical and communicative stances of many scholars worldwide still advocate introducing pictures into text (polymorphism), transmitting knowledge more vividly, and creating a smooth cognitive experience of the message served for the student.

The main pedagogical principle is grounded on enhancing the cognitive part instead of an abstract and stripped visual aspect of learning (Tursunmurotovich, 2020, p. 98), cultivating such a knowledge consolidation and deepening mental climate (Tursunmurotovich, 2020). Furthermore, the didactical pictures provide an extra working space for students to criticize and analyze the textual material efficiently (Guo et al., 2018, p.244). The eye-catching concept also works for the case, while the front and

back covers of the books (or at least one) are also pictorial and serve the eye attraction mode of the students (Guo et al., 2018).

Four categories of pictures seem to be provided: a) Orthodox religious images, b) interreligious images, and c) modern photos and artful illustrations. Often, picture captions provide additional theological, historical, and social stimulation for further study. There is no systematic division of the pictorial material in the textbooks, which is rather multi-scattered in the content spectrum. Group tasks and individual exercises follow at the end of each unit; some are grounded in specific visual content (Li, 2017, p. 57). All the above image groups serve a logical-based learning methodology illustrated by precise footsteps: a) eye capturing, b) extrinsic curiosity cultivation, c) intrinsic exploration of the visuals, and d) stimulation and critical thinking.

Eye-capturing mode creates the initial bond between the textbook and the future reader (Magn et al., 2020, p. 759). The extrinsic curiosity cultivation mode makes curiosity rise and develop, and the intrinsic exploration mode facilitates reading and deep study (Ajibade & Elemi, 2012, p. 163). At the same time, the mind is stimulated at the end and starts to synthesize and criticize the material.

After the above illustration, it is regarded seminal to mention the main aspects and goals of the present research: a) to provide empirical evidence of the recent religious textbooks' visual behavior, b) to provide empirical evidence of the kind of visuals used, c) to examine the connection between the visuals and the textual material and d) to examine the approach of the otherness (diverse ideas emerging by students of a multi-cultural classroom). Before analyzing the above goals, two main noteworthy concepts emerge from the division mentioned: visualization and critical process (Ajibade & Elemi, 2012).

1.1 Visualization and critical processes anatomically

The human brain functions visually (Stark, 2001, p. 126), with cortical neurons transmitting optical signals (Stark, 2001) from environmental images to the brain through reverse mirroring mode (Ramachandran & Altschuler, 2009, p. 1693). This process recreates the whole picture in the brain like a puzzle game (Kiorpes, 2016, p. 11384), with the object brain definition following as a subconscious content task. The prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus develop the critical and recall processes in the individual's memory bank (Miller & Kohen, 2001). The brain works as a net (Deco et al., 2008, p. 1), connecting thousands of neurons for information transmission (Deco et al., 2008). However, research shows that a sophisticated matrix for decoding visual stimulations and the subsequent processing of informational and social experiences plays a crucial role in the brain's holistic formation. The prefrontal cortex objectifies initial visualizations for analysis and decision-making products.

So, when visualization makes critical connections, the binding process provides individual or social significance. Every significance derived by optical stimulation supports the social and biological sustainment of the person since the latter cannot live without physical provision and personal or social meaning. Both significantly affect the existence, duration, development, and thriving of an individual in modern civilization. In addition,

the current social nutrition of humans is the significance of things, which means the relations developed among them and their consequent impact on every individual following their own lives. In that concept, social connections are merely regarded as a fruit of the inside brain matrix, which is plastic (Jäncke, 2009, pp. 521-538) and constantly being developed, especially in students of middle education. Education is a critical but not unique source of finding significance, especially religious education since the latter reads the social letter's symbolic meaning and finds the hidden importance beside the typos. If that is the case, religious education is a monstrous burden for the survival of human civilization as a denoting inheritance.

Textbooks, for instance, include a comprehensive social meaning platform structured by textual and pictorial utility (Houts et al., 2006, p. 174). A message to be provided to students is always at the center of the didactical process. This message should be certain, solid, and multi-referenced. The latter means that by helping students effectively and facilitating synthesis and critical thinking, the message should relate to various cognitive disciplines, providing different parts of the meaning puzzle. In that concept, the interdisciplinary symbolic approach to learning finds its ground in the Greek textbook visualization through text and images combined (Leeuwen, 2005, p. 1).

1.2 Greek religious textbooks and the interdisciplinary symbolical approach

Religious textbooks are a helping tool for religious education and teaching and a reference teaching basis for the didactical process (Erricker, 2010, p. 33). All (or most) disciplines follow the same politics (Foster, 2011, p. 5)¹ when the teaching areas facilitate the textbook context. According to Greek educational reality, the (upper) secondary education disposes of religious textbooks for both levels, secondary and high school², which include three grades each. Every grade disposes of a unique reference textbook according to which the religious education teacher must perform their teaching process grounded in the related curriculum (Erricker, 2010). This obligation does not include the official usage of other religious textbooks (Dinama, 2015, pp. 42-43) since the multiplicity of reference textbooks has yet to be officially established in the Greek educational system.

Nevertheless, every religious teacher feels free to supplement any other source of educational information, including every necessary book for unit planning, with web material, related multimedia, articles from the imprint or digital press, and so on. Academic freedom in Greece is quite popular in disciplines that do not require final exam assessment. The latter means that in the context of religious education, at the end of each semester, a recap test occurs. At the end of the final semester, the religious education teacher could also choose between performing a test or a written assignment. In every case, the teacher's planning should follow the assigned curriculum based on the religious textbook provided (Keast & Council of Europe, 2007, p. 120).

Although the teaching course is set, the creative dynamics of the theological discipline

1 Foster claims that academics from the school textbook may be roughly divided into two camps: (a) those who uphold the critical and analytical structure and (b) those who uphold the historical structuralism.

2 High school education is equivalent to upper secondary education.

are not framed. The religious teacher could use necessary didactical means to facilitate the student's learning and understanding by enriching and grouping the didactical material according to the required circumstances (Keast & Council of Europe, 2007, p. 65). The latter could be accelerated when a connection is made between the provided material and the new one found. Those links could not be manifested in an accurate and absolute way since the prospects and intentions of each teacher differ significantly. The only way such an endeavor can be achieved is through an interdisciplinary symbolic approach to learning (Hummel, 2010, p. 959). The latter relates to positioning hints and symbolical elements in the textbook (Hummel, 2010), which can drive students' minds toward other areas of knowledge and thinking. Including textual components is one approach, but text and image combinations could offer much more (Nugent, 1982, pp. 163-174). Visual material is an essential component of didactics used as a paradigm or stimulus. Both functions serve the leading cause: *understanding and connecting*. When speaking in terms of wholistic cognition, *one cannot survive without the other* (Schnotz et al., 2014, p. 974). The learning process is grounded in finding connections (Greco & Sosa, 1999, p. 92) to discover new knowledge or enlighten existing ones. The problem that occurred is what might happen when there is no current knowledge in the first place. The previous issue can be solved by creating an experience (Bruner & Olson, 1973, p. 125). The latter could be quickly and gradually formulated through dynamic symbolism, which can stimulate the brain and memory. A fundamental pre-knowledge basis³ occurs through that stimulation, shaping and expanding the preexisting experience. Through that experience, knowledge comes forth (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011) as the fruit of the symbolical impulse as direct or indirect thinking on the object referred to. The latter is served beneficially through imaging.

1.3 Connections are the heart of knowledge

Knowledge is everywhere⁴. Everything around the world concludes knowledge (Schnotz et al., 2014). The point is that there is no cut-off piece of information. Well, it may seem like it, but in the end, the meaning of things can be found concerning one another (Baumeister, 1991, p. 20). Elements of nature are connected and interact with one another; people are constantly in several interrelationships; technological achievements are grounded on the logical linkage of their components; a modern enterprise functions from the perspective of cooperation among its peers; a doctor cannot exist without patients; and the list might be endless. The same concept holds for school and academic learning provided through schooling, teaching processes, and textbooks (Baker et al., 2012).

If the above principle generally works, that does not exclude any specifications or malfunctions in the sphere of the human world since every human mechanism has drawbacks of any kind. The linear methodology applied through the textbooks is regarded as a traditional specification of Greek education. Specifically, in the Greek

3 Pre-knowledge elemental basis occurs when an individual disposes of previous cognitive ground about an object or experience about a situation or process.

4 B. Russell speaks about two kinds of knowledge: *knowledge of truth* and *knowledge of things*. The former is based on belief, while the latter is based on awareness (Duncan, 2018, p. 3564).

science and math textbooks, the information parts of the advanced grades do not always conclude revisions of the presupposed cognitive functions (Dimopoulos et al., 2005, pp. 174-5), with which the new knowledge is essentially adherent. The old mental items are regarded as a prerequisite. A similar philosophy occurs in other disciplines and usually has extra modifications in the logic of reminding or simplifying paradigms.

Fortunately, religion subjects are formatted from a series of topics that function as citations to other themes of interest, following the new pedagogical trend of the cumulative learning approach (Koukounaras Liagkis, 2014, pp. 153-169). The latter means that the student could easily understand what is happening in a chapter's case. However, if they are willing to explore further, they could take an advanced look at another unit building up its tower of knowledge (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2014, pp. 97-118). On the contrary, that might not turn out to be science subjects, presupposing the previous knowledge consolidation, without which the new text material given could not be digested. A similar occasion could also hinder life learners who are pleased to develop themselves (Boeren, 2019, pp. 45-59). So, school textbooks are rather a prerequisite in Greek education (Troianou, 2013, p. 92).

An explanation of the above matter might be the linear way knowledge is provided via the textual or mathematical formulas used in each case. On the other hand, another learning path is provided by following a spiral direction of study, which combines the past textual knowledge with another new cognitive part, usually offered via hints, allusions, or titles. The new unique feature would usually be presented through images of any kind in the marginal space of the page (Agrawal et al., 2011, pp. 1847-1856). In that instance, the new information is not analyzed but tends to stimulate the students' minds to find additional information for the studied material. In that way, a stimulated student processes the image hint and tries to see what connects that new information or image content with their current material while simultaneously getting back to ensure the connections and forth to find new and building the cognitive structure in their own way (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2014). Indeed, learners learn better from what they understand (Brogaard, 2005). When this occurs, the textbook's images serve as *mental stimulators*; to make sense of the text, the reader attempts to piece together the pictures in their head by connecting the seemingly unrelated notions of them. So, images create cognitive branches that travel the mind further from the text, seeking connections with other mental parts. Advanced learners and students follow the previous process to seek unifications and understandings beyond the existing ones, creating multi-branching interrelations.

Visualizing multi-branched relationships may be effective (Kirby & Moore, 1988, p.169). As the inquiry progresses, the person can make several connections between various items, extract relevant information, analyze the data, develop patterns when possible, and ultimately comprehend the information presented within its context (Moore & Dwyer, 1994, p. 279). Information's context is based on how constituent pieces relate to one another via their many identities. A student's assignment may make sense within the classroom frame, a statistical measurement may be meaningful within the edge of its study, and a television program may be utterly comprehensible within the boundary of a television show. Everyone can benefit from seeing the world from a

broad perspective (Hinds et al., 1992, p. 29). It is important to note that the frame may expand or contract depending on the information at hand, making it very malleable. In that concept, multiple learning branches consist of structures, and numerous academic branches consist of knowledge sources. All the above processes may occur in various dimensions in the human mind when pictorial material is used for brain stimulation. The stimulated brain focuses faster and produces ideas and relationships (Kirby & Moore, 1988) through memory invocation.

The religious textbooks include various illustrations, encapsulating pieces of intercultural and interdisciplinary information and knowledge suitable for a current multicultural class (Smajic, 2008, p. 40). Religious teachers could use their hints according to the case by setting up their learning playground (Rehman et al., 2022, p. 10554). Students could make a statement, agree or disagree with a previous stance, or even express their feelings by playing a game of grimaces or body expressions. The point is that every student could participate in the picture exploration process by contributing their own experience and knowledge from their perspective, building their learning tower (Rehman et al., 2022). For all those reasons and even more, illustration material is so important to be studied in its form and function, both theoretically and empirically.

1.4 Significance and peculiarity of illustration material

The textbook illustrations can differ based on the subject, page size, curriculum, author's methodology, citation type, and age group it caters to. Illustration strategies have specific characteristics that may seem insignificant, but they play a substantial role in the impact and importance of pictorial material. These structuring strategies include using color, picture size, placement on the page, and supplementing the text to make it more accessible and attractive (Rehman et al., 2022). The learning objective should be connected to the parallel text material provided, and a more direct relationship would lead to better results in coloring and consolidating.

On the contrary, the more indirect the above relationship is manifested, the more abstract learning results are extracted (for example, learning to use critique, symbolisms, allegories, diversions, and similarities). There may be numerous instances in which students' minds appear not to focus thoroughly when studying their textual content and concurrently noticing the corresponding images (Cardoso et al., 2012, p. 1831), leading to abstractions that are not directly consistent with the textual material itself (attention abstraction is not the case here). However, such illustrations cannot be excluded from the educational process since they are still products of learning stimulation achieved, and students should be encouraged to express their thoughts and learning experiences even in an abstract way or learn to convert abstraction to construction (Hasan & Mitchelmore, 2006, p. 279).

Religion textbooks use various illustrations in different sizes and locations: photographs, paintings, Christian religious iconography (hagiography), modern religious art, abstract paintings, geographical maps, and mind maps. In addition, social and intercultural illustrations denote a new novice educational perspective of learning through acceptance; the latter could be only the beginning. Artful thinking is one of

the best ways to enhance learning through acceptance of otherness, which denotes two main parameters: a) there is not only one way of seeing things around, while there will always be students in class having diverse perspectives; and b) many other academic disciplines could help build a better view of the schooling curriculum in the context of an interdisciplinary educational philosophy (Cooper et al., 2001, p. 230).

1.5 Recommendations for diversified teaching concepts

The argument that *there is not only one way of seeing things and that better knowledge-building is enhanced through a broader learning experience* knocks on the door of the modern learner and student, and a wide variety of learning approaches support the current school curriculum trends. A similar occasion tends to be implicated in the Greek (upper) secondary curriculum, although other exterior social (at the most) limitations seem to activate negative educational results (for example, school board extensive opinion diversions, education political union interventions, or major complex school management decisions).

Moreover, when persisting monolithically on one teaching approach while a new one needs to be thoroughly examined as a possible best practice, the education system and mentality need a great deal of truthfulness and relative feedback. It is like a little kid being allergic to something, and its parents look after it by treating the allergy but not avoiding the substance or cause that created it. In some way, the same occurs in the Greek educational reality since learning is a multi-dimensional process grounded in many disciplines interrelationships. The latter is called the *interdisciplinary approach* (Deneme & Ada, 2012, p. 885). Religious subjects could be included in this substantial educational process.

It concludes the core rendezvous point of various cognitive realms like history, archaeology, sociology, law, physics, philosophy, and more (Deneme & Ada, 2012). As referred to in this context, knowledge is connected to other cognitive areas, in contrast to the old-fashioned scientific and teaching approach based on interpreting the world through the lens of only one discipline each time. The above scientific exclusion had several consequences: a) psychological ones, since the advocates of a viewpoint fanatically insist on their point, mostly connecting persistence with selfishness; b) communicational ones, since the advocates of a viewpoint unfairly interrupt a fruitful communication with other scientific or philosophical cultures' representatives; c) scientific ones, since the advocates of a viewpoint do not allow themselves to see other aspects of truth; and d) sociological ones, since the advocates of a viewpoint exclude themselves from the socialization processes.

The latter point provides much food for thought. The knowledge-discovering process is not an absolute item ready to be consumed but the method of introducing an unknown object to the subject for research willing to find additional possible aspects of it. That is called *conceptual learning* to most authors (Duit & Treagust, 2003, pp. 25-62). In that concept, cognition is based on a direct epistemological or realistic philosophy like Bernard Russell's concerning the immediate awareness and concentration on the object and natural facts expressed by language (Russell, 2013, p. 1) for interpreting the world.

On the other hand, cognition is now bridged with *relativism* from a sociological point of view. Philosophical relativism is not only the tool through which object relationships are examined through the lens of research, but even more so since humans are the protagonists in making relationships happen to produce actual consequences and cognitive products (Lave, 2018, p. 201). A human conversation or a scientific debate might be the crossroads of exchanging not only ideas and methodologies in a technical way of speech but also an intercultural meeting experience through which a way of thinking probably emerges as an exchange of cultural currency. Therefore, intercultural currency is grounded and supported through pictorial material in the context of religious textbooks. The former might be a hypothesis. Furthermore, a question arises: How can that occur?

Firstly, religious discipline disposes of the advantage of combining and using diverse scientific areas and fields, through which a comparative approach to the reality of God is supported. The contemporary religious curriculum in (upper) secondary schools is no longer based on strictly memorizing dogmatic principles but on applying them in free discussion to benefit the pupils as individuals and as members of an organized and democratic society (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p. 1). Learning the object itself is not prohibited, but it seems more beneficial to understand the object considering its context. Therefore, illustration approaches in religious textbooks support contextual knowledge (Levin et al., 1993) in combination with classroom task groups or interactive creative assignments. Educational texts in most scientific fields provide many illustrations, enhancing contextual knowledge in science and the humanities. Simultaneously, they seem to be quite consonant with the pedagogical directives a group of academic textbook specialists formulated, tending to make the textual material more approachable and appealing.

Besides the fact that illustrations may help students resolve inquiries (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 56), the former might turn out to be a proper stimulation for the more weakened students and students with special needs to (re)activate their hidden skills and participate equally in the educational activities (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, pp. 26-27). Indeed, modern classrooms include students of various backgrounds and unequal capacities, and the teacher should find a balance point to regulate the classroom dynamics by adding and teaching more capabilities or enhancing the existing ones (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). Individual teaching may not be feasible in the context of a systemic classroom⁵. For that reason, simultaneous educational help is provided under certain legal and pedagogical circumstances in Greece to help needy students obtain the rest of their classmates following the general learning stream. On the other hand, another ready-to-use solution is at hand. The textbook illustrations could be used as a vantage point for making simple learning tasks for all students during class (Boova & Leong, 1996).

A vivid example might be the didactic usage of the miraculous biblical cure of the blind man by Christ. When the deepening learning process of the current biblical account might lead to boring situations (even though miracles of Christ are never dull to

5 A systemic classroom involves many interactive students from different cultures (Mercer, 2010, p. 2).

narrate in class), religion teachers could take the lead and initiate a diversified didactic strategy by proposing to their students to search the internet for a photo based on that miracle or more, if they are able to, and make a collage in their religious notebook, keeping their comments underneath. They could even sketch that alternatively, or even make a poster with all their work included. Theoretically, contextualization takes the place of textualization, which might occur when an image is employed pedagogically. Students can connect themselves with each unit's content and broaden their knowledge experience creatively and productively (Johnson, 2002, p. 12).

The connection with the art discipline was more than evident in the above case. There are also many other occurrences in which textbook pictures cite other essential and appealing-to-use subjects (Jewitt, 2008, pp. 252-253). For instance, a picture of a protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox mission endeavor could demonstrate the possible relation with the materialistic and, therefore, medical needs of the third-world populations, starting a debate concerning the best social-world politics that could be adapted and implemented for the well-being of those people and how the whole process could be realized. The poverty, famine, illnesses, lack of medicine and education, the need for clean water provision, and other requirements could easily make a case for a sociological discussion regarding the religious subject in class in the context of a democratic classroom (Darder, 2017).

A textbook picture of space, Earth, and other planets also contains a beautiful motive for a profound didactic connection between the biblical creation process and humankind's future scientific and space perspective. In that frame, the conquering of space and the vision of space travel could inflame students' curiosity, fantasy, and argumentation moods and nourish the class climate for starting to make group presentations on peculiar scientific topics that might be associated. In such a way, religion class could be grandly opened to different arguments and scientific debate, enriching students' experiences and skills.

The point of creating a diversified didactic ground is not only the link between religious discipline and others in the school curriculum. The interdisciplinary methodology, of course, aids a great deal in the didactic and learning processes and multiplies the methods and approaches of the reference topics derived from different academic areas. On the other hand, one can learn from one another, and several mistakes could also be avoided among teammates. There is also an additional essential concept related to visual stimulation and learning. Older textbooks were based on textual formation, and their visualizations were limited enough, especially in (upper) secondary education; consequently, students were obliged to work independently and deliver their homework on a fixed schedule. Individual learning was the only one planned to keep students to themselves.

On the contrary, when books introduced several illustrations, their content was enriched, and their size grew thicker. Firstly, students needed to familiarize themselves with what to do with the images at some point. Gradually, teachers were instructed to use visual material and broaden the textbook learning content even more (Johnson, 2002). Then, students start making links and rough-noting additions to their existing ones, or

the knowledge has been consolidated. Note-taking simultaneously with listening and participating formatted the new style of didactic approach (Sahlström, 2002, pp. 51-52).

A more exciting advancement was observed through oral communication and debate-making in the classroom because of the new approach (Sahlström, 2002). Students used to make their stand and participate more enthusiastically in the learning process, while the character of learning was converted from passive to active. The connection of the pictures with the texts inflamed a new connection among the students. It is necessary to mention that social connections are a complicated social situation depending on several factors and variables like human character, social environment, circumstances, social theme chat and chemistry, mood, health, way of thinking, mental condition, ethics, social views, and many more. A similar frame holds in education as well. However, the educational system and didactic strategies could advance themselves and create processes and presuppositions of cultural, social, and scientific interest and poles of appeal (Bryk & Schneider, 2004, p. 4); textbook illustrations are part of such a concept. Students are not expected to be converted to social or scientific learners through methods and books; their intention and attitude are the first-class mechanisms to link them with knowledge (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2014) and make them understand they are part of a broader reality.

Bond enhancement in class is one branch of the case, while the other accepts students of different nationalities (Kirova & Prochner, 2015, p. 382). In religious education, social bond broadening and enhancement of social relationships for advancing school life are included in the calling of all educators, especially those of humanities and theology disciplines. The biblical message of Christ for people to love one another is undisputed (Ferrini, 2021, p. 27). While everyday practice and social logic cultivate individualistic rituals and cynical viewpoints for life methods and human beings' attitudes and manipulations, their teachers and parents make the difference in a new formation by teaching them otherwise. Even so, the practice appears to be much more problematic given that social cruelty can occasionally come from within families. However, the current school philosophy develops a systematic approach to intercultural issues through integration classes or cultural school projects throughout the school year in the context of an accumulative logic that accepts everyone as they are. In every case, during religion classes, students from different cultures should be motivated to participate in the whole learning dynamics of the classroom (Francis, 1992). The same principle should be a part of every school discipline throughout the school curriculum. Nevertheless, the language communication hindrance hinders the achievement of the learning and socialization goals. The benefits of the accumulative religious classroom atmosphere concerning the illustration of the above educational framing are explained below.

Pictures could offer an outstanding pedagogical service when used creatively and effectively (Hosseini et al., 2015). The latter means that the meaning of the day's lesson could be conveyed through visuals to all the students (international students included). Then, the religion teacher could initiate a debate in class or assign a related artful thinking activity (Chemi, 2014, pp. 370-383), motivating and inflaming students' participation. The above concept includes only the outline meaning of the visual methodology since a whole new communicational and pedagogical philosophy is developed beneath it.

The visual elements of the textbooks include particles of general communicational planning through which every picture may function as an alternative language tube. The architecture of an image is a hidden narration that emerges via its drawn elements (Hullman & Diakopoulos, 2011, p. 2231).

In the first reading, conceptual sketching includes several autonomous features, but still, in the context of a drawn canvas, autonomy could easily be considered a part of their secret or bizarre relationship. The game of the visual elements could be transmitted in class as a pedagogical game or a communicational challenge (Hullman & Diakopoulos, 2011), since the visual alphabet has generated new modes of thinking in the kid's brain, ready to provide new stimulations and responses in the classroom. The concept is the conversion of the textual alphabet into a visual one or vice versa, depending on the didactic occasion. Consequently, astray students with a low class participation index gradually grasp a more dynamic learning approach in class. In addition, international students are increasingly linked with the rest of the class members, advancing their communication interactions and social capacities and making their class work even better. However, the most important clue could be the gradual conversion of a possible negative climate in a family through the in-school change of the student's mentality. That could be an interesting academic area to examine elsewhere, however.

The old accounts about prehistoric humankind using the first visual cave-wall imprints for communication reasons are a practical example of how visuals have been used throughout the deep human past as a communicational or reminiscent tool. That was the first pedagogy through which primordial survival and messaging were served. Complicated situations demanded creative methods to be handled. The same principle could work for a modern-day classroom coping with current demands.

2. Methodology

Pedagogically significant, pictorial school materials should be more noticed in favor of textual analysis and formation in educational settings. However, this review considers the importance of visuals in promoting critical thinking, motivation, participation, abstract thinking, imagination, and collaboration. The research utilizes a mixed methodology approach (quantitative and qualitative) to examine the frequency and relevance of religious textbooks' illustrations, captions, and content and their connection to neighboring chapters. The researcher considered the above methodology approach crucial because the research objective (Religious Textbook Analysis) includes both content and numeric data. In addition, the image analysis process is quite cohesive, mostly with hermeneutical and observatory tools. However, in many cases, there were quantitative transformations of the qualitative data for better review by the reader. In that case, multi-methodology reading is identified with mixed methodology in the context of the method terminology.

Specifically, the present analysis focuses on the religious textbooks of the three secondary school grades (A, B, and C) and the first twenty pages of each one, whose titles are provided in Table 3.2. This selection was made for two reasons: a) to grasp a representative sample of the visuals provided from the three textbooks' grades, and b) to

have greater period flexibility regarding the process of the results. Rather than focusing on each textbook's specifics, the idea for a bloated database sprang from examining a tiny but representative sample of each one and then having the opportunity for an intergrade comparison. The three religious textbooks were uploaded to the ATLAS TI Suite, a qualitative analysis software. The first twenty pages of each textbook were marked for review. Consequently, according to the book's content, every visual element was selected and identified by its kind and subject using a particular coding system (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 47). The latter means that every code retrieves a sum of information concerning the visual elements, including the primary index, for further adherence. The codes used are shown in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1. *Code list*

n	codes
1	center
2	codex scanner photo
3	drawing map
4	hagiography
5	left
6	modern orthodox art
7	painting
8	photo
9	right
10	sketch
11	top left
12	up-right
13	Western religious art

The above codes (Table 2.1) consist of an accumulative list of the codes used for all the textbooks reviewed. Two kinds of codes have been used: a) those pointing out the visual form of the codes used in the religious textbooks (numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13) and b) those that point out the location of the visuals referred to (numbers 5, 9, 11, 12). Both codes were critical since they indicated the kind of illustration used and their preferred location in the textbook. The illustrations' geographical character throughout the religious textbooks plays a significant role since the latter is related to the textbooks' textual elements and should be easily accessible to the students. The above codes are based on a qualitative and graphical examination of the following three textbooks used in secondary school, some of the attributions of which are presented in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2. *Secondary religion textbooks' titles and page expansion*

Titles		
Grade A - A journey for life – the meeting of God and man according to the biblical narration (20 pages selection %)	Grade B The Church – A life course through history	Grade C The testimony of the Orthodox Church around the world
Pages: 151	Pages:146	Pages:89
13,24%	13,69%	22,47%

As shown, there is a descending page tendency among the books from grades A to C. The more primary diversion observed is indicated between grades A and C (61 pages) rather than between grades B and C (51 pages). Grade A's textbook focuses on biblical narration analysis and presentation; Grade B's textbook focuses on presenting various church personalities through the centuries; and Grade C's textbook presents various church history topics. In every case, there is also an additional content peculiarity since the above table's content description consists of the central core of the textbooks.

A crucial choice was made about the length of the research after choosing the evaluated religion textbooks and using the codes to characterize the images. The detailed revision of the pictorial material was not the first goal, but extracting an interesting sample would provide a seminal kind of information concerning the type, the place, and the content of the illustrations reviewed. In that case, the first 20 pages of each textbook were thoroughly researched, as indicated in Table 2.2.

Additionally, each picture's substance was carefully considered, following the caption for each image. A *no-title* indicator was used when there was no caption or title. The next step was to organize all the captions into one place and link them afterward to a theological topic (category). Moreover, it was fascinating to show the statistical frequencies that emerged according to the quality of the pictorial material used and the formulated links among them. In this way, the reader could easily shape a view of the visual anatomy of the Greek religion textbooks and find relationships among them when such a task is doable. In every case, all the visual materials and maps included in the first 20 pages were under research. For more details, follow the Results section.

3. Results

When setting the results' order, the first research consideration was to extract the statistical data concerning the codes used. Therefore, a first-hand impression is given below:

Table 3.1. *Grade A religion textbook frequencies*

Visuals grounded	Grade A religion textbook Gr=16 Absolute	Column-relative (%)	Totals Absolute
• Codex scanner	3	18,75%	3
• Drawing map	1	6,25%	1
• Hagiography	4	25,00%	4
• Painting	2	12,50%	2
• Photo	5	31,25%	5
• Sketch	1	6,25%	1
Totals	14	100,00%	14

The Grade A religion textbook results are shown in Table 3.1 above. The first column describes the findings in terms of visual coding quality objects; the middle column provides the absolute numerical frequencies; and the third column provides the percentage frequencies correlated. Photographic material (31,25%), hagiographical material (25,00%), and codex scanning photos (18,75%) are the most prominent visual data according to the results. On the other hand, there is an absolute percentage similarity between the drawing map and sketch visuals (6,25%). The last column shows the total numeric findings, according to which 14 visual objects are the content of the first 20 pages of the Grade A religion textbook. A chart of the above percentage data is presented as follows:

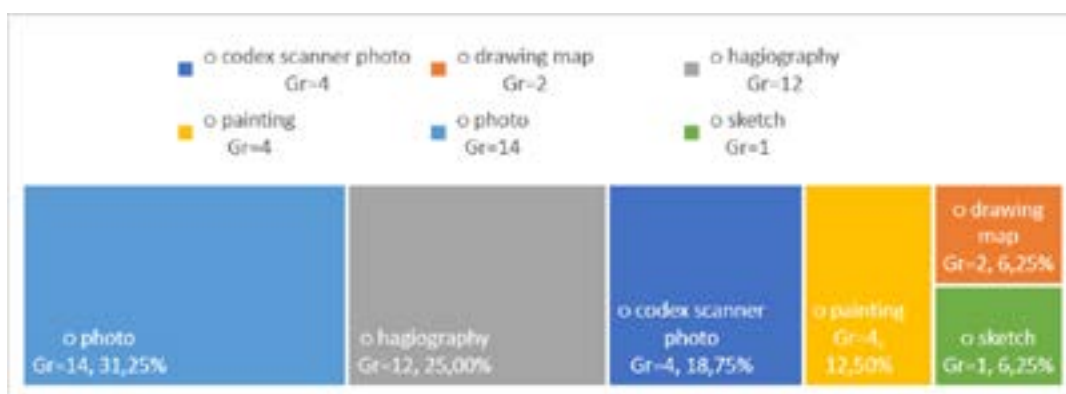


Chart 1.1. Grade A religion textbook frequencies

Interestingly, the orientation of the above visual objects (chart 1.1), as depicted in the religion textbook, is illustrated in Table (3.2) below:

Table 3.2. Grade A visual objects orientation

Orientation	Grade A Religion textbook visual objects location	
	Gr=16	Column-relative
	Absolute	
• Center	9	56,25%
• Left	3	18,75%
• Right	1	6,25%
• Top-left	2	12,50%
• Top-right	1	6,25%
Totals	7	100,00%

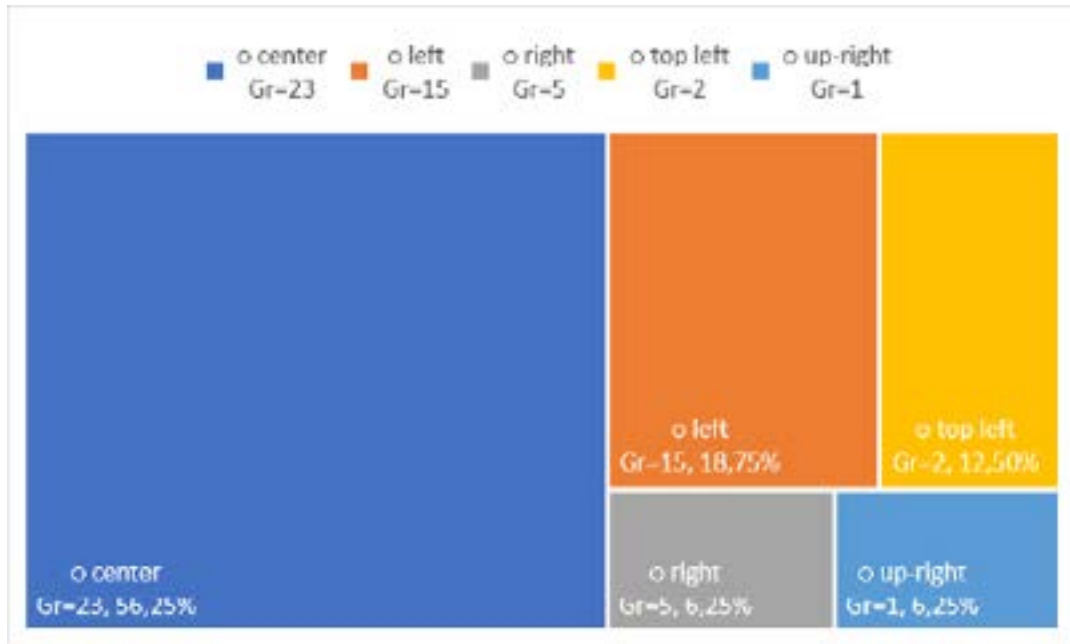


Chart 1.2. Grade A religion textbook location frequencies

The data shows that the most prominent orientations are the center (56.25%) and the left location (18.75%). The “Gr.” indicates the total grounded findings in the three religious’ textbooks, and the blue frames the related chapters. The general location tendency index throughout the Grade A religious textbook is oriented from top left to center according to the displayed arrow in Chart 1.2. The visual material captions found at the center location are shown in the pivot table (3.3) below:

Table 3.3. Grade A visual captions and chapters

Captions’ Comment	Codes - orientation	Correlation
The photo shows kids going to school.		
From Anna’s Frank Diary (text related to the passage from elementary to Secondary School)	center photo	Anna Frank’s diary and her life generally included school life. ✓
The Scripture and the candlestick.		
The divine inspiration of the New Testament canon	center photo	The candlestick and Scripture are coherent elements with the canon. ✓
The creation of man.		
The divine inspiration of the New Testament canon	center hagiography	The creation of man is not included in the New Testament canon.

An artful painting called «The Celebration.»			The notion of celebration needs to be more abstract. The passage to Secondary is only considered an optimistic situation for all kids.
The passage from elementary to Secondary School	center painting		
The topic of the artful painting is «The Alphabet of the church.»	center sketch	The alphabet of the church is the beginning of the Christian faith.	✓
A new look to the Church’s alphabet (teaching).			
The First page of Matthew’s Gospel.	Center codex		There is no direct correlation between Matthew and the Old Testament.
Looking into the Old Testament	scanner photo		
Jesus and Samaritan dialogue.	center	There is a direct correlation.	✓
God talks to humans in Biblical narrations.	hagiography		
Jesus saves Peter from drowning.	center	There is a direct correlation between the facts that happened.	✓
The Realism of the Biblical Narrations	hagiography		
The books of Old and New Testament canon.			
The Holy Scripture accumulates the experiences of man and God’s meeting.	center drawing map		The title of the chapter is far more symbolic.

According to Table (3.3), the first column is divided into two sections: the first (the one up) provides the content of the caption, while the second (the one down) signifies each textbook chapter. The second column maintains the code of each visual, linked with the kind and its location in the textbook. A wholistic impression of any reader could focus on the transcendence of the ex-elementary students ready to go to secondary school and the parallel effort of introducing the elements of the Christian Scripture (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998, p. 1). In addition, the focusing matter is also served through the top-left-to-center tendency movement of the visuals in geographical terms, while simultaneously there is a visual balance between the photo and hagiographic material (50%), which possibly denotes a coexistence between Orthodox tradition and the modern vision of religion through modern art expression, visuals of which are missing so far (visual content paradox).

Proceeding to Grade B’s religious textbook, the first data impression follows in Table 3.4 right below:

Table 3.4. *Grade B religion textbook frequencies*

Codes	Grade B religion Textbook	Column-relative	Totals Absolute
	Absolute		
• Codex scanner photo Gr=4	1	7,14%	1

• hagiography Gr=12	9	64,29%	9
• photo Gr=14	2	14,29%	2
• Western religious art Gr=2	2	14,29%	2
Totals	14	100,00%	14

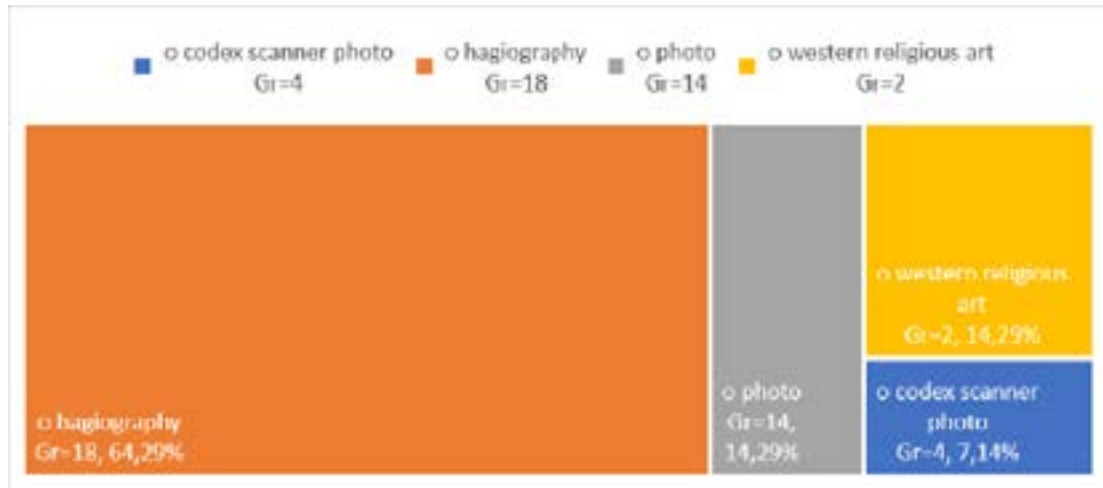


Chart 1.3. Grade B religion textbook frequencies

As illustrated, hagiography covers the most significant part of Chart (1.3) (64,29%) compared to the photo visuals (14,29%). The traditional way of visualizing is the most prominent in the first twenty pages of the grade B textbook. It is interesting to follow Table 3.5 below and observe the location of the visuals referred to:

Table 3.5. Grade B visual objects orientation

Codes	Religion Textbook location	Column-relative	Totals Absolute
Absolute			
• Center Gr=23	5	35,71%	5
• Left Gr=15	6	42,86%	6
• Right Gr=6	3	21,43%	3
Totals	14	100,00%	14

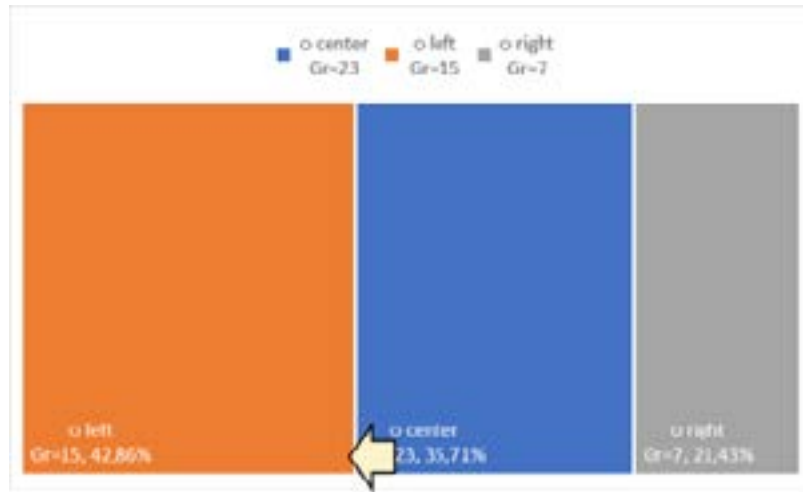


Chart 1.4. Grade B visual objects orientation

Noticeably, a dynamic left movement tendency of the visuals derived from the center location of the current religion textbook, according to the statistical data of the table above (Chart 1.4) is observed, illustrating the exact opposite tendency movement in comparison with the previously examined textbook. However, there is a current similarity regarding the visual location in both books since the center and left sides are essentially the most preferable and vital locations, as illustrated so far. The next step of the research is to define the content of the related visuals:

Table 3.6. Grade B visual captions and chapters

Quotation Name	Codes	Correlation	
The Pentecost. The expansion of the church toward the nations the ascension of Christ	center hagiography	There is a consequent correlation between Pentecost and the expansion of the church.	✓
The Pentecost	Codex scanner photo left	There is a consequent correlation between the ascension of Christ and the Pentecost.	✓
The Pentecost The Pentecost The Babel	right Western religious art	Direct correlation.	✓
The Holy Spirit into the life of the church The Vine	center hagiography	The relationship is formulated via opposition.	✓
Jerusalem and the first Christian community	hagiography left	The first Christian communion may be considered a branch of Christ Himself.	✓

The Church as a ship	hagiography left		Inaccurate correlation.
Christ and church relationship			
The Holy Eucharist in the Primitive Christianity	center photo	The Holy Eucharist is the center of the life of the church timelessly.	✓
The Life of the primitive church			
John the Evangelist with his deacon, Prohoros	hagiography left	Direct correlation.	✓
The First Obstacles and the Seven Deacons's election			
John the Evangelist			
The tradition of the first Christian community	center photo		Inaccurate correlation.
John the Chrysostom			
The tradition of the first Christian community	hagiography right		Inaccurate correlation.
Apostle Paul	center		
Paul's Charismatic personality	Western religious art	Direct correlation.	✓
The Pentecost	center hagiography	Direct correlation.	✓
The Pentecost			
Paul's way to Damascus			
The Christian persecutor is converted into the apostle of the Nations.	center hagiography	Consequent correlation between the facts.	✓
The Apostle Paul			
The Christian persecutor is converted into the apostle of the Nations.	hagiography left	Consequent correlation between the facts.	✓

As can be noticed, many hagiographies enhance the traditional Orthodox way of textbook illustration, mainly on the left side of it. Beyond the illustration matter, an interesting observation could also be made: that most of the captions are strongly linked with the notion of the church. The main corpus of the church's theology as it has been delivered to subsequent generations is based on a few key concepts: the vine, Pentecost, the church as a ship, the apostle Paul and his journey to Damascus related to his miraculous conversion, and the contributions of John the Chrysostom and John the Evangelist. The expansion of Christian teaching through the apostle Paul and the historic church's contribution dynamically embraced all the people of the historical world with no exceptions, gradually shaping the ecumenical character of Christianity. The latter has educational and moral significance concerning the respectfulness of otherness as a whole (Lickona, 2009, p. 74).

Moreover, the statistical data concerning the Grade C religion textbook are illustrated as follows:

Table 3.7. Grade C religion textbook frequencies

Codes	Grade C Religion Textbook frequencies Gr=18 -Absolute	Column-relative %	Totals Absolute
• Drawing map	1	5,56%	1
• Hagiography	5	27,78%	5
• Modern Orthodox Art	3	16,67%	3
• Painting	2	11,11%	2
• Photo	7	38,89%	7
Totals	18	100,00	18

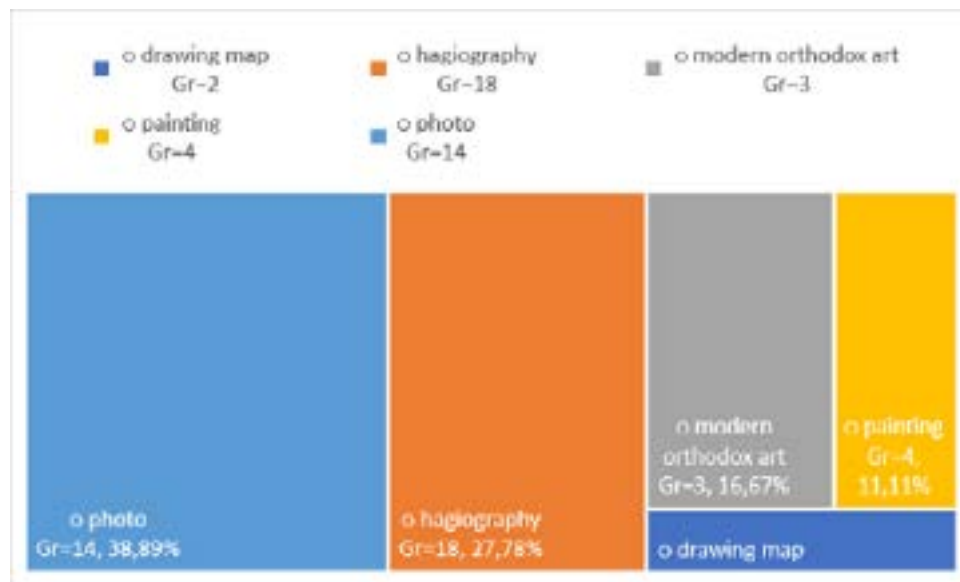


Chart 1.5. Grade C religion textbook frequencies

The photo-visual objects are prominent in the context of Grade C’s religion textbook (38,89%). This means that the modern illustration tendency is quite vivid and highly positioned in contrast to the hagiographic visuals, estimated at 18,27%. The difference between them is approximately 10%, which is significant. It is also observed that modern hagiographic visuals are statistically quite close to the latter (16,67%), which means that the current art depiction tendency is strongly preferable. Kids in Grade C may seem more mature and more familiar with stylish art visuals than their younger classmates. Furthermore, an illustration contradiction emerges between Grade B and C visual frequencies since there is a massive contradiction between the hagiographic tendency of Grade B (64,29%) and photo-visuals (38,89%) of Grade C. Grade B religion textbooks seem to encapsulate primarily hagiographic material.

In contrast, the Grade C textbook includes many photo illustrations. Concerning the frequency of matter among the three textbooks, an illustration peculiarity frames the preferable visual philosophy of the authors. On the orientation of the images used, the following data are informative:

Table 3.8. *Grade C visual objects orientation*

Codes	Grade C Religion textbook orientation Gr=18 Absolute	Column-relative %	Totals Absolute
• Center	9	50,00%	9
• Left	6	33,33%	6
• Right	3	16,67%	3
Totals	18	100,00	18

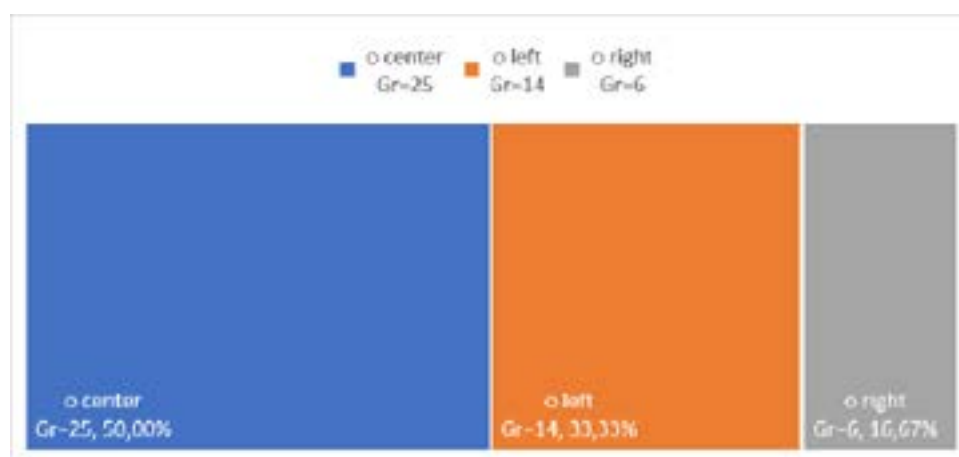


Chart 1.6. *Grade C visual objects orientation*

Concerning the above data (chart 1.6), a solid, centralized preferred location is depicted all the way, while the eyes of the reader are oriented to the center of the religion textbook. Centralizing the preferable site means an additional central meaning comes forth simultaneously with the textual information provided. So, the reader should place the illustration information next to the textual ones. On the other hand, left-positioned images tend to be correlated with the textual material in content terms. The left preference is still significant, though (33.33%). The final step of the analytical approach includes the content research of the illustrations, as below:

Table 3.9. *Grade C visual captions and chapters*

Quotation Name	Codes	Correlations	
no title The Orthodox Church today	left modern orthodox art		No correlation
The Communion of the Apostles Brotherhood	center hagiography	There is an ethical type of correlation.	✓
The Pentecost		The Pentecost is the inflame and the reason for the church's expansion.	✓
Different countries – exact origin	hagiography right		
Orthodox Mission The body functions through its limbs.	left photo		A complicated link
Orthodox world scattering The whole world presence of the Christian Orthodox Church	center drawing map	Direct correlation.	✓
Crete Panorthodox Council The Christian church organization	center photo	Direct correlation.	✓
Starting up of Crete's Panorthodox Synod The consciousness of the church	center photo	Direct correlation.	✓
no title The Life Proposal of the Orthodox Church	l e f t photo		No correlation.
no title Coping the questionings of life	center photo		No correlation.
no title Coping the questionings of life	left photo		No correlation.
no title Coping the questionings of life	center painting		No correlation
Abraham's hospitality Faith as the form of God's hospitality	center hagiography	Ethical type of relationship.	✓
The Holy Trinity God as Trinity- God as a loving society	hagiography right	Direct correlation.	✓
The Announcement of Jesus's Conception Mary's Announcement of the good news	left modern orthodox art	Direct correlation.	✓
no title Mary's Announcement of the good news	modern orthodox art right		No correlation.
no title Faith as a continuous blessing of God	center painting		No correlation.
The Last Supper		The Holy Eucharist, through the mystic supper, is the meaning of all meanings.	✓
Living with meaning	hagiography left		
no title Unity and equality	center photo		No correlation.

It is observed that many of the visuals above have no caption whatsoever. Therefore, it was considered critical not to describe but to mention the occurrence as it occurs.

4. Captions' correlation

After pointing out all the captions of the liable images of all secondary religious textbooks simultaneously with the detection of the captions (titles) of the chapters referred to (all placed in the right corner column of the according tables in an up and down position) and statistically estimating the frequencies of the visual products used and finding out the relevant utility tendencies, the next step of the present research was to find out the possible dynamical correlations developed between the visual materials of the three religious textbooks with their textual chapters (Unsworth, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, the statistical results of the established qualitative correlations between captions and chapters would provide a noteworthy overview of the qualitative linkage between images and textual formations throughout the religious textbooks.

The methodology was simple and focused on finding any correlation between the visual and the chapter title. If there was no caption, there was no connection to discuss. Direct connectivity between them both attested to a direct correlation, and a consequence pattern was characterized as a consequent correlation between them. Moral and ethical relationships were also used as links between comparable notions. In the case of a successful correlation, the symbol “✓” has already been typed; otherwise, causation was placed instead. Researching a relationship consists of multi-dimensional work (Atkinson et al., 2000, p. 71) for someone to obtain since objectivity and subjectivity are mixed in various ways. However, the utility of specific explanations and criteria is considered a balance keeper between the realities mentioned above. The latter was the path of the present research regarding the quantitative estimation after the qualitative one as a pointer to the magnitude of the existing linkages. The results are below:

Table 4.1. *Caption's correlations*

Grades	Total number of items	Number of correlations	%
Grade A	9	5	55,55%
Grade B	14	11	78,57%
Grade C	18	9	50,00%
Total	41	25	60,97%

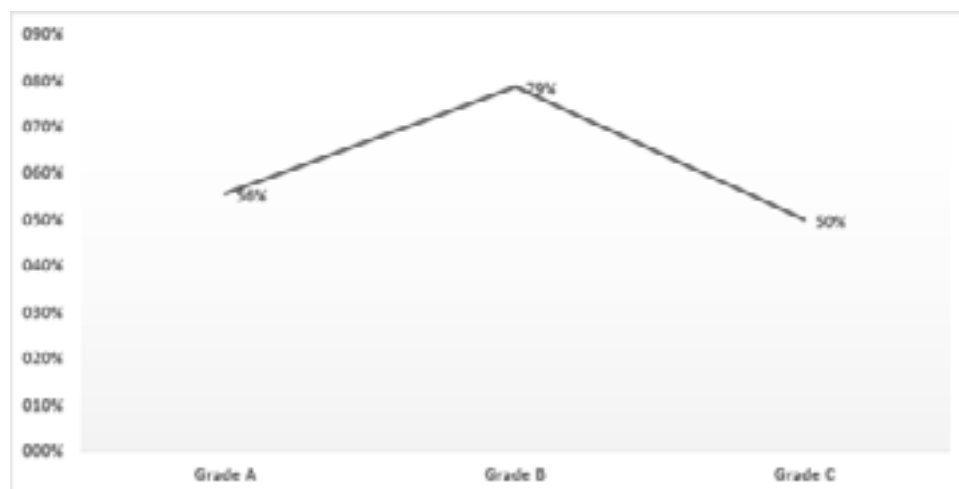


Chart 1.7. *Caption's correlations*

Grade B reaches the maximum correlation point (pictures with textual formations) at 78,57%; on the contrary, Grade A and B religion textbooks dispose of 50% accumulatively at their first twenty pages. Abstract picture themes, the unsuccessful content relationship between text and images, a lack of captions, or inaccurate topics in images are the main reasons for a low correlation index. However, the above sample generates a general idea about the illustration technique used. On the other hand, their pedagogical utility might dispose of a few different functionalities concerning the reception issue. The latter could be pointed out directly below in the conclusions section.

All the above results were regarded as quite critical in the context of the present study. The kind and location of the images and their caption cover, consisting of their essential content, behave essentially in the learning process. Students encapsulate the role of the receivers, while the religious textbook images the part of the transmitters (Cowdy, 2020, p. 24). The transmission process is a complicated function, and its efficiency when pictures are involved depends on their exact textbook location, their size, the use of coloring, the aesthetics, and the relationship development between the forms of the illustrations and the text next to them. Naturally, the linkage between text and images and producing a new notion as a learning experience occurs mostly in younger minds (Mantei & Kervin, 2014, p. 77). That is why the more vivid the illustration material, the more effective and solid the cohesiveness will be. There are few studies regarding the systematic approach of textbooks under the lens of their illustration covers since the textual formation tradition is considered a prime case. However, pictorial learning is integrated dynamically into the school textbooks of all disciplines, indicating a new brain language formation tendency (Mantei & Kervin, 2014) in the context of the globalist new pedagogy. Greek RE seems to follow the trend.

5. Conclusions

After analyzing the twenty pages of visual material included in each of the three secondary religion textbooks referred to, some critical conclusions emerged, which are displayed below:

- a. Connectivity is the primary sense in which knowledge and cognitive functions in the middle education system in Greece work. The connectivity philosophy concerns how notions and optical displays may present themselves as connected to the human mind. Understanding is grounded in connectivity.
- b. Visual textbook stimulation is considered a primary element in the educational context. They are divided into two basic categories: those that add educational information to the current textual material and those that appeal to students' attention and aesthetics.
- c. Visual religion textbook location is seminal; every image position serves different pedagogical functions. Right and left side locations to enhance connectivity functions, either encouraging students to add knowledge to their existing cognitive background or to simplify or consolidate their current textual material. Moreover, connectivity has an abstract learning character since it stimulates the brain to do additional personal thinking or cultivate its critical potential. That is the point of textbooks' low index visual correlation (50-55%) embracing $\frac{1}{2}$ of the twenty pages examined, which might serve the above abstract learning purpose. Simply put, a picture of conceptual content might distract attention, generate thoughts, or extract memories. The latter function is legitimate in the context of religious education.
- d. The center's location is a supplementary or emphasizing learning tool. Texts are interrupted via higher or lower-page central visuals, enhancing the main messaging of the text provided. Lower-central visuals could serve low-content text significance; higher-level page visuals help with high-content purporting. Still, the latter argument is not within the direct scope of the present analysis and illustrates an assumption that may need to be studied in another research context.
- e. Concerning the frequency results, it is regarded as seminal that in Grade A, modern photo visuals cover 31.25%; in Grade B, traditional Orthodox hagiography covers 64.29%; and in Grade C, photo illustrations cover 38.89%. It is also noticeable that there is almost a balance between Grade B (traditional Orthodox hagiography illustration) and Grades A and C (modern photoillustration).
- f. Regarding the frequency of textbook location results, it is noticeable that Grade A's favorite visual location is a central position (56,25%), Grade B's favorite location is the left position (42,86%), and Grade C's is the center location (50,00%). Therefore, the preferred and dominant locations regarding the three religion textbooks are the center and left spots of the books.

- g. The correlation issue being developed between visual and textual formations was thoroughly examined. Abstract picture themes, the unsuccessful content relationship between text and images, lack of captions, or inaccurate topics of images are the main reasons that frame a low correlation index (Grade A and C, Chart 5.1). However, the above sample generates a general idea about the illustration technique used. On the other hand, their pedagogical utility might dispose of a few different functionalities regarding the reception issue, the stimulation of the brain, and the generation of ideas, enhancing the students' capability.
- h. Disregarding the dominant research frequencies and locations and going further from the correlation issues between textual and visual formations as depicted, it might be interestingly argued that the modern and abstract tendencies and options of Grade A and B's religious textbooks consist of a pole of appealing to otherness in an individualistic and spiritualistic level of discussion.
- i. Finally, the "otherness" idea could also be embraced in the educational activities of Greek (upper) secondary schooling by linking the religious visual textbook's stimulations with other school disciplines, structuring a whole new mindset for the students, including all their background knowledge in the same cognitive package. The latter demands multi-level individual work on behalf of the Greek teacher and working in groups among teachers of different disciplines to find new pedagogical communication and interaction areas.

In summary, the traditional pictorial material (hagiographical illustrations) is balanced with the more modern depictions among the three grades of religious textbook material. In contrast, in location terms, the center-left textbook spot is preferred for the illustrations' depiction as such. There is also a descending page course comparing the number of pages of the three grades, which might be correlated with the intention of a smoother learning course instead of a heavy study one. There are no traces of the older learning methodologies, while the illustrations are regarded as prominent tools for enhancing students' learning and social bonds.

Under the lens of the present research conclusions and given the fact that school textbook illustration studies have not been cultivated systematically yet, the emphasis on the structure and importance of a new school optical language for the benefit of the learning issue (Chuah et al., 2021, pp. 1356-7) seems to be also in an infant stage; it would not be a hyperbole to claim that the present study may consist of a vantage point for further academic analysis and stimulation for further research in the field.

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