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Countering Holocaust denial

and distortion through education

A guide for teachers

Education
2030

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In partnership with

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ISD Powering solutions to extremism, hate and disinformation

A toolbox to uphold the truth

Antisemitic hate speech, disinformation, and conspiracy theories thrive during crises, making it vital for teachers to address these issues in school curricula. Social media has significantly amplified the spread of such harmful content, including Holocaust denial and distortion. These falsehoods, rooted in antisemitic prejudice and conspiratorial thinking, threaten our shared historical memory and promote hatred.

To effectively combat these issues, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust —how and why the genocide of the Jewish people occurred. This knowledge helps us recognize the causes and risk factors, contributing to the prevention of future atrocity crimes and the fight against antisemitism. In the digital age, it is also imperative to be able to decipher the manipulation of history, and the misrepresentation of the past.

The guide provides teachers with the necessary tools and guidance to prevent the spread of Holocaust denial and distortion. It equips teachers with knowledge, teaching principles, and strategies to foster digital literacy, historical understanding, and critical thinking in learners. Aimed primarily at history and social sciences teachers, it outlines key concepts, teaching methods, and approaches to counter Holocaust denial and distortion.

17%
of TikTok content about the Holocaust either denies or distorts the facts
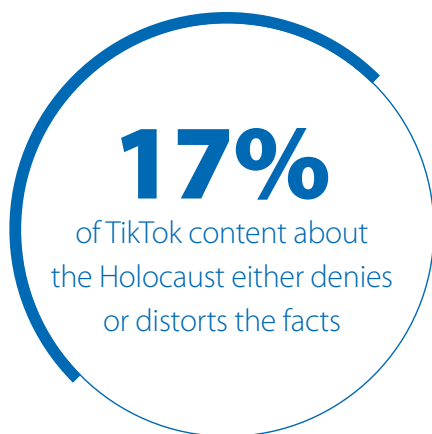
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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

Countering Holocaust denial

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The Holocaust remains one of the darkest chapters in human history, a profound tragedy that claimed the lives of six million Jews and millions of others persecuted under Nazi rule. As time passes and the number of survivors who can bear witness to this atrocity dwindles, the responsibility to educate future generations about the Holocaust becomes ever more critical. Tragically, Holocaust denial and distortion have gained traction on social media, fueled by misinformation, conspiracy theories, and prejudice. These harmful narratives not only insult the memory of the victims but also erode the very foundations of truth, justice, and human dignity.

As the guardians of historical truth, teachers play a vital role in fostering understanding, empathy, and critical thinking among young people. This guide, prepared by UNESCO in collaboration with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, aims to equip educators with the knowledge and guidance they need to effectively counter Holocaust denial and distortion in the classroom. By doing so, they help cultivate a generation capable of drawing from the lessons of the past to resist the dynamics of hatred and bigotry that continue to threaten peaceful societies today.

The belief that education can be a powerful force against ignorance is at the heart of this guide and its accompanying *Countering Holocaust denial and distortion through education: Lesson activities for secondary education*. Through thoughtful and informed instruction, teachers can challenge the myths and lies that seek to obscure the truth about the Holocaust. The tools included in this guide are designed to help educators navigate these difficult conversations with sensitivity and rigor.

It is our hope that this guide will serve as a valuable resource for teachers in their crucial work of protecting the values of tolerance, respect, and human rights, ensuring that the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten.

Stefania Giannini
Assistant Director-General
for Education
UNESCO

Martin Polaschek
Federal Minister for Education,
Science and Research
Republic of Austria

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Introduction

Antisemitic hate speech, disinformation and conspiracy theories flourish during crises and times of fear, making it crucial for teachers to include combatting these phenomena in school curricula to strengthen students' resilience. The spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories has been fuelled by the increasing use and influence of social media in our daily lives. While these influences can be found in nearly all types of content, they also desecrate the memory and remembrance of the Holocaust. A study by the United Nations and UNESCO (2022) found that nearly half (49%) of all content addressing the Holocaust on publicly accessible channels on the Telegram platform denies or distorts the historical facts. This rate rises to over 80% for messages in German, and to around 50% in English and French. These posts, easily accessible to people looking for Holocaust-related information on the platform, are often explicitly antisemitic. On consistently moderated platforms, denial and distortion are also present, but to a lesser extent – appearing in 19% of Holocaust-related content on Twitter, 17% on TikTok, 8% on Facebook, and 3% on Instagram.

While all history is open to reanalysis to consider new evidence or perspectives, those who deny or distort the established facts of the Holocaust do not do so in pursuit of truth and knowledge. Fuelled by antisemitic prejudice and conspiracy myths, the falsification and manipulation of the history of this genocide should concern everyone. Its normalization on social media encourages an ecosphere of hatred, distrust in science and expertise, and the fragmentation of a shared memory

and history of universal value. The swastika and other symbols of fascism are often reintroduced in memes and videos by those hoping to rehabilitate this hateful ideology. In societies implicated in the Holocaust, these myths and lies are further propagated by those motivated by long-term guilt and resentment about national or local responsibility in the genocide – including by governments. The need to address disinformation about this past is a pressing agenda, because 'tyranny wins when it succeeds in shaking our confidence in the basic notions of truth' (Wineburg, 2018, p. 158).

Like other manifestations of antisemitism and hate speech, both online and offline Holocaust denial and distortion can influence young people, impacting their intellectual, emotional and social development. Therefore, schools have a special responsibility to address them (Bildungsstätte Anne Frank, 2023, p. 17). Schools provide unique environments for students to explore, reflect and develop perhaps their participation in digital spaces as well as the real world.[1] Teachers have a special role to play to help learners 'decode the cultural messaging, stereotypes and coded signals used to convey hate in the traditional and new social media, in textbooks and curricula, political speeches, and so on' (UNESCO, 2023, p. 33). This guide provides support to teachers with a specific focus on Holocaust disinformation. While it is primarily aimed at teachers of history and social sciences, it also contains approaches that can be helpful for teachers of other subjects, such as ICT, languages, and media studies, or in extracurricular education.

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1   On the role of school and education see: UNESCO, 2021; Evan Schofer points out the connection of schooling with individualism, science and democratization: Schofer, 2019. See also UNESCO. 2023. Addressing hate speech through education: A guide for policy-makers. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384872

Aim of the guide

This guide seeks to help teachers prepare and design lessons about the Holocaust that prevent and counter Holocaust denial and distortion. It provides teachers with background knowledge related this this subject, teaching principles and concrete pedagogies to educate about complex histories and to navigate related classroom discussions. It aims to support teachers in strengthening digital literacy skills, historical literacy, critical thinking, and solidarity among learners to overcome prejudice and to contribute to more peaceful and inclusive societies.

Objectives

1. Develop teachers' understanding of key concepts, facts and debates on Holocaust denial and distortion.

2. Advance teachers' skills to navigate the complexities of these phenomena and facilitate classroom conversations around topics connected to Holocaust denial and distortion.

3. Familiarize teachers with appropriate pedagogies and approaches to prevent and counter Holocaust denial and distortion.

The guide is written for teachers with varying experiences, professionally and personally, of teaching and learning about the Holocaust. It takes into consideration that some teachers may be more familiar with the topic than others. While this guide provides some information about the role of antisemitism in the transmission of Holocaust denial and distortion, it is also recommended that teachers familiarize themselves with the various forms and functions of contemporary antisemitism, as well as with pedagogical approaches to address conspiratorial thinking.[2]

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2   It is recommended to review the UNESCO and OSCE resources on Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education, available at https://www.unesco.org/en/education-addressing-antisemitism

Structure of the guide

The present guide consists of three chapters:

Chapter I focuses on explaining the phenomenon of Holocaust denial and distortion, and how teachers can recognize it. It deconstructs the most common patterns of Holocaust denial and distortion to provide teachers a clear overview of the discourse on denial and distortion, and its forms and functions.

Chapter II focuses on pedagogical and methodological considerations for addressing Holocaust denial and distortion in an education setting. It uses the methodological framework of digital citizenship education to foster higher-level critical thinking skills. It also addresses some of the main pedagogical challenges, ranging from effective classroom management when dealing with sensitive topics to how to engage in historical comparisons related to the Holocaust and other atrocity crimes.

Chapter III aims to offer a toolkit to prepare teachers to engage robustly with the new challenges arising from online disinformation, in particular related to Holocaust denial and distortion. It acknowledges that the school environment has undergone profound changes in the digital age and new approaches are needed to fill the gaps.

The guide also offers a list of useful and reliable resources for teachers to further explore the topic.

Chapter I
Recognizing and understanding Holocaust denial and distortion

The increasing use of social media by young people raises concerns about the growing prevalence of Holocaust denial and distortion. A study by UNESCO and the United Nations (2022) on the presence of Holocaust denial and distortion on social media platforms has shown that a large amount of content referring to the Holocaust distorts historical facts. This includes memes, jokes and videos that spread quickly as a form of dark humour. This is supported by the results of a 50-state survey on Holocaust knowledge in the United States conducted in 2023, in which 49% of Millennial and Gen Z respondents reported encountering Holocaust denial and distortion online.[3]

As mainstream platforms such as YouTube are increasingly banning Holocaust denial and other extremist content, both are shifting to alternative video hosting sites. Meanwhile, references or links embedded in fairly inconspicuous content on the mainstream platforms lead to the extreme content on alternative platforms.[4]

As recent research has shown, the online threat landscape has further deteriorated since 7 October 2023. The terrorist attack on Israeli civilians on 7 October, followed by the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza strip resulting in a humanitarian crisis, has led to a significant increase in prejudice against communities globally, including a rise in Holocaust denial and distortion.[5] The data indicates that Holocaust imagery and memory continue to be misused to glorify Hitler, employing Nazi symbolism and eugenics language, and to engage in Nazi-inspired vandalism. Additionally, the problematic framing of contemporary conflicts and events – such as a politically motivated equation with the Holocaust – is only adding to confusion and misunderstanding around Holocaust memory (Bricman, 2024).

1.1 What is Holocaust denial and distortion?

The international community has denounced resoundingly Holocaust denial. Holocaust denial started before the end of the Second World War, when the perpetrators of the genocide tried to hide or obfuscate their crimes. Nazi sympathizers have continued to deny, excuse or glorify these crimes ever since.

The United Nations and UNESCO have adopted several resolutions condemning Holocaust denial and distortion, and urging United Nations Member States to counter such distortion and denial.[6] A resolution on Holocaust denial adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in January 2022 unreservedly condemned Holocaust denial

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3   Claims Conference 2020: www.claimscon.org/millennial-study/. See also: Anti Defamation League. 2023: A Closer Look at the Relationship between Holocaust Knowledge, Education and Antisemitism, 04.04.2023. https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/closer-look-relationship-between-holocaust-knowledge-education-and-antisemitism

4   'Signposting': UNESCO, 2022, p. 52; Guhl et al., 2020.

5   Institute for Strategic Dialogue. 2024. The Fragility of Freedom: Online Holocaust Denial and Distortion https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/the-fragility-of-freedom-online-holocaust-denial-and-distortion/

6   United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 60/7 (2005), 61/255 (2007) and A/RES/76/250 (2022). UNESCO General Conference Resolution 34C/61 (2007) similarly condemned distortion and denial of the Holocaust.

and distortion, and urged all United Nations Member States to do so.[7]

The United Nations resolution of January 2022 defines Holocaust denial and distortion as referring to:

> "Discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during the Second World War, known as the Holocaust or Shoah;
>
> Any attempt to claim that the Holocaust did not take place, and may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people;

> Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany;
>
> Gross minimization of the number of victims of the Holocaust, in contradiction of reliable sources;
>
> Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;
>
> Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event;
>
> Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups."[8]

Box 1: What does the term 'revisionism' mean in the context of Holocaust denial and distortion?

Historical revisionism is a necessary and ongoing process in scientific research, meaning that existing findings are constantly re-evaluated and possibly corrected (revised) when new theories, observations, sources or questions arise. The term is misused by Holocaust deniers in order to create the false impression of a scholarly based contradiction to the accepted knowledge about the Holocaust.

1.1.1 How does Holocaust denial spread?

For decades, Holocaust denial has been spread by individuals who ignore, dispute and argue about the established historical facts. Using a conspiratorial logic and often

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pseudo-academic language, deniers attempt to discredit historians, Holocaust survivors and the vast body of records and evidence that document this genocide. Examples include claims that the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau could not have existed because they would have been too scientifically advanced for the time despite historical evidence that the technology was developed before and during the Second World War. These arguments are designed to undermine the historical record of the Holocaust by misrepresenting evidence to sow doubt and spread an antisemitic worldview that Jewish people are untrustworthy and deceitful, and a refusal to acknowledge them as victims. While these arguments have been repeatedly refuted by scientific studies, they continue to spread as conspiracy theories online.

Deniers use a wide range of strategies, from disingenuously 'just asking questions' (known as *JAQ*ing on social media and forums) to demonizing witnesses and reputable historians as part of a broad conspiracy. Most of these tactics are effective because they appeal to basic psychology (natural curiosity) or to deep-seated mistrust of authority and science (anti-science populism). Underlying these conspiracy theories are often deep antisemitic beliefs that see Jews as deceitful and all-powerful and refuse to see this community as victims.

Holocaust denial and conspiracy theories

Holocaust denial functions as a conspiracy theory, asserting that extensive research and witness testimony regarding the Holocaust has been falsified, and often suggesting that Holocaust commemoration serves ulterior motives. Holocaust distortions similarly misrepresent the Holocaust.

Box 2: What is a conspiracy theory?

According to Prof. Dr Michael Butter, a conspiracy theory is the belief 'that a group operating in secret, namely the conspirators, seeks to control or destroy an institution, a country or even the entire world for malicious motives' (Butter, 2018).

Conspiracy theories can be propagated in two main ways: top down, by influential figures such as politicians, leaders and media personalities, who may seek support by scapegoating certain groups for their country's troubles; or from the grassroots (bottom up), by isolated individuals feeling anxious and disempowered. Holocaust denial has often been promoted in a top-down

manner by prominent public figures, but also by some governments and officials. However, in recent years the internet has greatly fuelled bottom-up disinformation by democratizing access to the tools to spread news (social media, blogs, etc.).[9]

There are many different reasons why people may be drawn to conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories offer simplistic

9   https://evidencehub.net/chart/top-down-versus-bottom-up-misinformation-100.0 (accessed 21 August 2024).

explanations in times of uncertainty. They cater to a human need for security by seemingly placing control in the hands of an individual, presenting a comforting illusion amid chaos.

> ### Box 3: Conspiracy narratives fulfil certain needs
>
> Belief in conspiracy narratives has nothing to do with a person's intelligence or psychological makeup. People who believe in conspiracies are neither 'stupid' nor mentally ill (Nocun and Lamberty, 2020). Conspiracy narratives, however, can fulfil needs that arguably many people have. Pia Lamberty and Katharina Nocun distinguish three types:
>
> - Existential needs: the quest for control and security.
>
> - Epistemic needs: the desire to understand the world around you.
>
> - Social needs: the striving to be perceived positively by others.
>
> Teachers can build resilience to conspiracy theories by asking their students to reflect on why and how conspiracy narratives fulfil certain needs.

1.2 Recognizing Holocaust distortion

While open denial of the Holocaust is easier to recognize, the distortion of the Holocaust is more diverse, often less obvious and serves other purposes. It recognizes some aspects of the Holocaust as fact while questioning others. For example, it alleges that the figure of six million dead Jews is an exaggeration, or that deaths in concentration or extermination camps were the result of disease or starvation rather than deliberate killing, in an attempt to reduce the responsibility of the perpetrators.[10]

The UNESCO and United Nations report 'History under attack: Holocaust denial and distortion on social media' produced a typology to understand different types of Holocaust distortion: *celebrating, blaming, delegitimizing, smearing, equating and omitting*. These different forms are illustrated below using examples; sections II and III provide guidance on how they can be discussed with young people.

Celebrating: Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. For example, Robert Keith Packer, an American far-right insurrectionist and Nazi sympathizer, was wearing a 'Camp Auschwitz' sweatshirt with the words 'Work Means Freedom' on the front and the word 'STAFF' on the back when he forcibly entered the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021. On the same day, he also wore a 'Schutzstaffel' shirt,

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10   https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/holocaust-denial-key-dates (Accessed 11.03.2024)

which referred to the paramilitary SS that enforced the persecution of Jews, and also ran concentration and extermination camps. Other apparel trading on similar online platforms to where the 'Camp Auschwitz' sweatshirt was sold featured slogans such as '6MWE' (6 Million Wasn't Enough), which imply agreement with the genocidal aims of the Holocaust. These statements, usually circulating within extreme right groups, clearly frame the Holocaust and Nazi policies as aspirational.[11]

Blaming: This type of distortion of the Holocaust is expressed as attempts to deflect responsibility and guilt for the Holocaust onto the Jews, by accusing them of causing their own genocide, arguing that they were actively complicit in the Holocaust (for example to use it to gain a national state), or that they somehow 'deserved' or provoked their fate. Victim-blaming and victim-perpetrator reversal strategies are commonly used to deny and minimise the Holocaust and other atrocity crimes.

Box 4: Letter from Ella Blumenthal to Simone Kriel

The common trope that Germany acted in 'self-defence' has been spread by among others Simone Abigail Kriel, a relatively well-known South African social-media influencer, who posted on her Instagram account that 'it was the Jews that bombed, raped, sodomised and burned all people in Germany alive. Hitler innocent. Our history has been twisted to favour the Jews without question'.[12]

Ella Blumenthal, a 98-year-old Holocaust survivor, wrote an open letter to Simone Kriel to address her antisemitic posts as a response to the manifestation of distortion. The letter can be studied as an example of a form of response to Holocaust distortion, and to reflect on the harm it causes Holocaust survivors and their families. Students and young people can be empowered to write their own letters in response to hate speech and the spread of disinformation.

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11   https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/proud-boys-bigotry-full-display (Accessed 20.08.2024).
12   www.news24.com/News24/hitler-was-innocent-pretoria-fitness-queen-charged-for-her-comments-against-jewish-people-20200611 (Accessed 03.01.2024).

Dear Simone,

I was so saddened to hear your comments.

Saddened, because I was about your age in 1945 when I was liberated from that pit of hell they called Bergen-Belsen.

I had lost everything that I had ever had. I had lost almost everyone that I had ever loved.

I, like millions of others, had fallen victim to the vicious propaganda machine the Nazis relied on to advance their evil agenda.

Today they call propaganda 'fake news' but it is the same thing.

And it is no less virulent or dangerous.

Simone, the link you saw was fake news.

It was a lie.

I know this because I lived the truth and I have carried it with me, in my heart, for more than 7 decades.

You see Simone, you can never forget what I saw, what I endured and what I survived.

I am sad because, like me, you too were a victim of lies that seek to breed hatred and disgust. Lies that seek to divide us and make us fearful of one another.

And I am also angry. Not at you, but at those who still seek to make others the victims of their own fear.

Simone, I am 98 years old. And if I have learnt one thing, it is that to live as a victim of fear is to live in pain.

I do not wish this on you any more than I wish it on myself.

I would love to meet with you when circumstances permit.

Maybe I will tell you my story, and you will tell me yours.

I know we will learn that far more unites us than divides us.

And maybe together, Simone, we will find a way to shine light into our fractured world.

I send you my love,

Ella Blumenthal

Source: SAJBD - © 2024 SA Jewish Board of Deputies
https://www.sajbd.org/media/holocaust-survivor-ella-blumenthal-writes-open-letter-to-simone-kriel-in-response-to-her-antisemitic-posts

Delegitimizing: Distortion by depicting Israel as a Nazi state, equating Israeli policy towards the Palestinians with the gas chambers, death camps and mass murder used in the Holocaust. It is not antisemitic per se to criticize an Israeli government for its policies – all countries need to be scrutinized for their human rights records, especially in times of conflict. The issue is therefore not criticism of Israeli policy, but that equating Israel with a Nazi state goes far beyond legitimate discourse or reasoned debate. Such a charge is not only ahistorical but also at its core antisemitic, as it renders the Jewish national homeland itself illegitimate, thereby denying Jews the right to self-determination.

Like the claim that the Jews themselves are to blame for their persecution, the assertion that 'the Jews' in Israel today are behaving exactly as the National Socialists did in the past can offer psychological relief to those who feel guilt or shame about their society's involvement in the Holocaust.

Smearing: Distortion by accusing Jews of exploiting or seeking to benefit from the Holocaust. This includes claims that the Holocaust is given more importance than it deserves, or that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust and use it to manipulate others.

Equating: Distortion by appropriating the emotional and rhetorical force of the Holocaust for a political, social or moral agenda by equating the Holocaust with another event, without regard for the integrity of the historical past or the suffering of the Nazis' victims.

Equations are harmful as they trivialize the Holocaust. This may promote 'organized forgetting' to evade collective accountability, foster 'deflective negationism' to shift blame away from a nation, and facilitate 'strategic revisionism'. These endeavours, akin to propaganda and denial, can inadvertently contribute to cultural misrepresentation (Lengel et al., 2023).

Box 5: COVID-19 and Holocaust distortion

Widespread trivialization of the Holocaust online is highlighted by the use of Holocaust imagery by COVID-deniers, who compare their perceived hardships with those faced by Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. For instance, conspiracy theorists like Kate Shemirani and Piers Corbyn have equated National Health Service vaccination efforts with internment at Auschwitz-Birkenau[13] and were quoted online. Particularly offensive is the adoption of yellow Star of David badges by anti-vaccine activists in various countries, including France, Germany, the UK and the US. This symbol has also been circulated on social media platforms, including as profile picture overlays. Neo-Nazi activists sold yellow Stars of David labelled 'unvaccinated' through online stores for the use at COVID-denial demonstrations (Amadeu Antonio Foundation, 2021). Additionally, recent United Nations and UNESCO research found posts that called COVID-19 a 'Holocough' – a widespread dogwhistle (UNESCO, 2022). A 'dogwhistle' is

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13   https://www.belltower.news/antisemitism-in-the-digital-age-conspiracy-ideologies-covid-19-and-antisemitism-123559/ (Accessed 08.01.2024).

coded, suggestive language, only understandable to groups with specific knowledge – as the ultrasonic whistle is audible to dogs but not to humans. These coded posts did not go on to say anything about the Holocaust itself, but they implied that both COVID-19 and the Holocaust were invented (and possibly by the same group of people).

Omitting: Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany. This might include deflecting the guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust onto the Nazis and/or a 'marginal fringe', rather than acknowledging the participation, collaboration and complicity of one's own nation. It includes distortions such as omitting aspects of the Holocaust that are too difficult to bear because they conflict with a strongly held sense of identity (often linked with national myths held by nationalistic, illiberal movements).

Since the Second World War, some countries have erased or diluted knowledge about the genocide of the Jewish people by the Nazis in favour of a more general narrative of victimization. For example, in the Soviet Union the targeted and racially-motivated persecution of Jews was omitted from historiography, and discussions of the Holocaust were often silenced, as illustrated by the banning in 1948 of The Black Book of Soviet Jewry prepared by Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasilij Grossman, which contained detailed accounts of the Nazi atrocities against Jewish people.[14] A similar pattern can be observed in some other formerly occupied countries where a myth prevailed that the local authorities and/or population

had played no part in the Holocaust. This obscuring of national responsibility is an example of Holocaust distortion that inhibits the processes of national reckoning and historical justice.

In other contexts, the complicity or active participation of national figures in the genocide remains a taboo or contested subject, particularly when such individuals are recognized as heroes of the Second World War. This can include the glorification of perpetrators who also fought for their country's independence or against the Soviet Union, where the memory of Jewish victimhood is felt to compete or disrupt memories of national (non-Jewish) suffering.

Holocaust distortion can therefore be rooted in a competition for victimhood. The attempt to downplay the Jewish character of the Holocaust and the central role of antisemitism in Nazi genocidal ideology is often motivated by the legitimate desire to acknowledge and recognize the suffering of other national, ethnic or religious groups (De Guissmé and Licata, 2017). However, it frequently results in biased commemorations, distorted impressions, inaccurate education and historical misrepresentation.

14   Pratt, Mike (2020). Soviet Russia's Reaction to the Nazi Holocaust and the Implications of the Suppression of Jewish Suffering. *The Saber and Scroll Journal*, 8(3).

Box 6: Psychology of Holocaust denial and distortion

Holocaust denial and distortion are supported by two intricate psychological mechanisms, which are present across different nations, groups and individuals to varying extent. Understanding these mechanisms sheds light on the distorted perceptions of this genocide.

1. **Challenging collective identity**: Historically, teachers have sometimes divided nations involved in the Holocaust into three roles: perpetrators, bystanders and victims. For many, especially those with strong ties to their national identity, the historical roles of perpetrators and bystanders can pose a significant threat to this identity. Acknowledging the role would force them to confront the moral transgressions committed by their compatriots or ancestors, challenging the need to perceive our own nation as moral and righteous. This can be particularly difficult when this national identity is shaped in a defensive manner. The struggle to acknowledge historical wrongs committed by an in-group can instead result in denial, which not only distorts or rejects the facts of the Holocaust but also fuels other tropes of antisemitism (Hirschberger et al., 2016), for example deflecting the blame for their nation's misbehaviour onto the Jewish victims of the Holocaust (Imhoff and Banse, 2009). To be 'workable' and instil a sustainable sense of identity, a national historical narrative cannot only be built on negative facts; so historians and teachers must find a way to reckon with difficult or dark elements of national history and to honour its achievements.

2. **Competitive victimhood**: People's perception of genocide is often influenced by their knowledge and memory of the Holocaust; their minds often conjure images of death camps, gas chambers, ghettos and deportations (Mazur and Vollhardt, 2016). This association suggests that for many people in countries affected by the Holocaust the Nazi genocide of Jews serves as the prototype for any act of genocide. While this may not be true for all people worldwide, it is reinforced by the global recognition of the Holocaust and its prominent position in historical education. This, in turn, can contribute to a sense of relative neglect of the suffering of other communities in countries affected by colonial crimes, injustices, occupations and ethnic cleansings, as well as other atrocities committed in Europe. Many individuals from such communities may feel that their own hardships are not as widely acknowledged. This perceived and/or real lack of recognition can foster what psychology calls a sense of competitive victimhood, leading some to desire the censorship or silencing of Holocaust history (Bilewicz et al., 2017).

Addressing these psychological mechanisms requires strategic educational interventions:

A. Promoting inclusive national identities: To combat defensive national identity, teachers can emphasize local identities and promote more inclusive national identities in their classrooms (Bilewicz et al., 2017). Fostering diverse national identities can boost understanding that Jewish victims are integral members of the national in-group, reducing defensiveness and increasing openness to acknowledge the darker chapters of history, including the complicity of their own nation in the Holocaust. Remembrance culture can also highlight stories of courage and resistance during the Holocaust by both Jewish and non-Jewish historical actors. While teachers should be careful not to exaggerate the number of rescuers, which can in itself distort understanding of the Holocaust, teaching and learning about the Righteous Among Nations – individuals who saved Jews – can invoke a sense of civic pride about national figures who resisted and opposed antisemitism and fascism, and open discussions about their motivation and choices.

B. Acknowledging diverse suffering: To counter Holocaust denial rooted in a lack of recognition, teachers must ensure there is also comprehensive acknowledgment in the curriculum of the suffering of all ethnic, political, religious or other groups persecuted. Just as Holocaust denial and distortion is fuelled by antisemitism, the silencing and distortion of other atrocity crimes is usually anchored in prejudice. Communicating clearly that recognizing the Holocaust does not diminish the importance of other atrocity crimes – including against other groups persecuted under the Nazi regime – but rather draws attention to them, can dispel fears that acknowledging one atrocity might overshadow others. A compelling example is the development of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was inspired by a shared will to never repeat the horrors of the Holocaust, and which serves as a fundamental legal basis to more effectively address the consequences of atrocity crimes and prevent them. When teaching about the Second World War and the Nazi regime, teachers should ensure they address all Nazi crimes and acknowledge the specific history of all victim groups, and foster an understanding of policies targeting them. Teachers should find space in the curriculum to discuss the histories and legacies of atrocity crimes that are important to their students' identities and interests.

1.3 How does Holocaust denial and distortion cause harm?

When the history of the Holocaust is denied or manipulated, it harms the victims and survivors of this genocide, as well as their families. Recognizing the suffering of Jews in the Holocaust and that of all other individuals and groups persecuted by the German Nazis and their allies and collaborators is an essential part of restorative justice and a prerequisite for Jewish communities to thrive.

Holocaust deniers depend on, and reinforce, antisemitic ideas (Rosenfeld, 2011). Antisemitic harassment, violence or discrimination targets Jews and those perceived to be Jewish within societies, as well as on the internet and through social media.[15]

It also causes harm to young people and societies:

■ Hateful comments online have a significant impact on young people's well-being. They can cause emotional distress, fear or anxiety, and allow the 'haters' to achieve their goal – to suppress other voices in the online public sphere (Bildungsstätte Anne Frank, 2023, p. 20).

■ Holocaust denial and distortion create a normalization of hate speech within online communities that entrenches and spreads prejudicial attitudes and beliefs, sometimes leading to discrimination, hate crimes and violence.

■ Denial and falsification of an established historical record also foster an anti-democratic political agenda that threatens human rights and weakens trust in democratic institutions, undermining trust in public discourse about the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity.

■ By attacking historical truth, denial and distortion undermine the processes of justice, and threaten our understanding of other genocides and atrocity crimes around the world.

■ The denial and distortion of the Holocaust can also go hand in hand with a fundamental rejection of the sciences, which are accused of serving elites who allegedly dominate and rule the world. These elites are often imagined as secret, hidden from those not privy to the inner workings of this supposed power, and frequently imagined as Jewish.[16]

15 The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States, adopted a non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism that states: 'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.' The definition is accompanied by a set of examples that can be found at www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism. The definition has not been adopted by UNESCO.

16 On science and pseudo-science see Hansson, 2008.

1.4 Gender-based hatred within Holocaust denial and distortion

Holocaust denial and distortion is also regularly found together with other forms of disinformation and hateful content (United Nations and UNESCO, 2022). In antisemitic online forums and spaces, racism, anti-LGBTQ hatred and misogyny are widespread. Anti-LGBTQ hatred and misogyny fuel antisemitism when Jews are held to be the source of any perceived 'problems' and 'threats,' such as feminism or the LGBTQ rights movement. Although both male and female Holocaust survivors who have publicly shared their testimony have been targeted by Holocaust deniers, female Holocaust survivors have experienced both antisemitic and misogynist comments (Antisemitism Policy Trust, 2021).

Experiences of sexual violence during the Holocaust have historically been silenced because of persisting shame and stigma about such crimes. Though not motivated by antisemitism, the presence of sexism and anti-LGBTQ hatred in contemporary society leads to the perception that sexual violence is a lesser or only of interest to women and LGBTQ communities.[17] This limits our comprehensive understanding of the genocide, and how it affected women and men differently.

1.5 Holocaust denial and distortion in the digital age

How the Holocaust is portrayed on the internet, and particularly the discourse about the Holocaust in social media, has a significant influence on the current and future memory of the Holocaust. The images, textual elements and uses of this history, which are generally accessible without any curatorial moderation by the traditional custodians of historical knowledge, provide a rich library of set pieces from which users can draw for very different communicative purposes (Pfanzelter 2017, p. 140). Holocaust memorials and museums contrast this arbitrariness with the extensive, carefully curated information they offer on their websites and social media. The internet media have changed from tools for the marketing and presentation of information to a central instrument for mobilizing different groups and asserting specific values, and as a tool for political debates (Pfanzelter, 2023).

Memorial sites and museums dedicated to the Holocaust often have an extensive online presence, reaching an audience that goes far beyond the number of physical visits to their premises.[18] Yet, these authoritative social media accounts and webpages compete with individual users and influencers who can create and publish content of varying quality and accuracy.

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17   https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/reckoning-sexual-violence-sexual-terrorism-and-sexual-trauma-holocaust
18   In 2022, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) website had 34 million visitors representing 243 countries and territories. The Holocaust Encyclopedia, which is part of USHMM's online resources, was visited by 25.7 million people worldwide in the same year. Its Facebook page had 1.7 million followers and the X (Twitter) account close to half a million. For the same year, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum provides comparable figures with 1.5 million followers on Twitter and 23 million page views on the museum's website.

1.5.1 New challenges: the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on Holocaust memory

Another major challenge relates to the way artificial intelligence (AI) shapes understanding of the Holocaust, especially among the younger generations. A growing number of online platforms are adopting AI to expand their functionality, in particular to make it easier for users to navigate the massive volume of available content. Given the widespread use of digital media to find information about the past, AI is becoming an essential gatekeeper of historical information, determining what information sources are prioritized by the platform algorithms (e.g. the Google search algorithm or the YouTube recommender algorithm). AI systems also determine the visibility of particular aspects of the historical event.

UNESCO's report 'AI and the Holocaust: rewriting history? The impact of artificial intelligence on understanding the Holocaust' highlights five major concerns[19]:

1. **AI automated content may invent facts about the Holocaust**
   AI models have produced misleading or false narratives about the Holocaust. Data voids and biases have led to 'hallucinations' in generative AI systems, producing incorrect content or invented events. Without AI literacy and research skills, users may not know how to verify AI-produced texts, recognize the unreliability of the data, or search for verified information.

2. **Falsifying historical evidence: deepfake technology**
   Deepfake technology can manipulate audio and video to fabricate Holocaust-related content. Mechanisms are needed to prevent the misuse of AI to purposefully create fake 'evidence' that undermines the veracity of the established historical record of the Holocaust and spreads hate speech. Deepfakes of celebrities have been used to spread Nazi ideology, or to simulate conversations with Nazi leaders, including Adolf Hitler. As the deepfake technology improves and manipulated audio and video become harder to distinguish from genuine recordings, such mechanisms are increasingly important.

3. **AI models can be manipulated to spread hate speech**
   Targeted campaigns by extremist online groups can exploit AI flaws to promote hate speech and antisemitic content about the Holocaust. Chatbots and search engines have been hacked or manipulated by bad actors to spread Nazi ideology.

4. **Algorithmic bias can spread Holocaust denial**
   Biased data sets have led to some search engines and AI chatbots downplaying Holocaust facts or promoting far-right content, including Holocaust denial.

19   UNESCO. 2024. AI and the Holocaust: rewriting history? The impact of artificial intelligence on understanding the Holocaust

5. **Oversimplifying history**
   AI's tendency to focus on the most well-known aspects of the Holocaust oversimplifies its complexity. The omission of lesser-known episodes and events in the history of the Holocaust reinforces stereotypical representations of the Holocaust and its victims, and limits our understanding of a complex past that affected people in every country in Europe and northern Africa, and whose legacy continues to be felt worldwide.

1.6 What about freedom of expression?

When Robert Keith Packer was on trial for taking part in the 2021 attack on the US Capitol while wearing clothing with slogans that glorify Nazism and deny the Holocaust, his sister asked for clemency on the grounds that his shirt 'could be considered in poor taste ..., but it's is not a crime for freedom of expression'.[20] Based on the evidence of his participation in the attack on the US Capitol, the court nevertheless convicted him.

The challenge of addressing hate speech is particularly complex when it affects the parallel need to foster freedom of expression as a fundamental human right protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other human rights conventions. International standards on the protection of freedom of opinion and expression cover, among other things, criticism or speech that is offensive, disturbing, demeaning or shocking, but they do not permit restrictions to be imposed solely on the basis of a comment that has caused a particular individual or identity-based group to take offence.[21] Holocaust denial is illegal in several European countries and in Israel, whether covered by direct reference to Holocaust denial or as part of wider hate-speech laws.[22] Although such legislative means of tackling the phenomenon remain controversial (on the grounds of effectiveness and protecting free speech), the criminalization of Holocaust denial is a strong indication that it remains firmly outside acceptable mainstream discourse in many societies.

Several countries have also introduced 'memory laws' that attempt to advance specific narratives of the Holocaust, deflecting guilt and responsibility from the nation to Nazi Germans, 'marginal fringe' groups or Jewish people.[23]

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20   https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/rioter-wore-camp-auschwitz-sweatshirt-sentenced-rcna47797 (Accessed 03.01.2024).
21   UNESCO outlines the difference between hate speech and free speech in the following explainer video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JirA4suOdXI
22   In the European Union, a 2008 Framework Decision on racism and xenophobia sought to align national legislation on Holocaust denial. Laws against Holocaust denial also exist in Israel and the Russian Federation. Some courts in the United States and the United Kingdom have taken judicial notice that the Holocaust occurred. In some contexts, national legislation may criminalize Holocaust denial while states propagate or encourage other forms of Holocaust distortion. See also: European Parliamentary Research Service. (2022). Holocaust denial in criminal law: Legal frameworks in selected EU Member States, accessed 23 May 2022.
23   See also: IHRA, Recognizing and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Recommendations for Policy and Decision Makers. https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/countering-holocaust-distortion-policy-recommendations

"[Memory] laws advance Holocaust distortion when they deny national or communal complicity in atrocity crimes, and protect those narratives from criticism or refutation … National memory debates have also included efforts to rehabilitate the perpetrators of the genocide, by portraying their ignorance of Nazi crimes, conjecturing about their 'secret opposition' to genocidal acts, or representing the perpetrators as victims … In several instances, such laws have been used to prosecute or have significantly restricted legitimate historical inquiry by researchers, scholars and on the victims of atrocity crimes, which infringe upon international standards of freedom of expression." (United Nations and UNESCO, 2022)

Box 7: The right to freedom of opinion and expression – An overview

Freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental right enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)[24] and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[25] The latter was ratified by almost all Member States of the United Nations and entered into force in 1976. It states that everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. States are primarily responsible for protecting and ensuring this right.

Holocaust denial and distortion, but also any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred, therefore raises questions about possible limits of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Can everything be said? Can I say anything I want? Can the Holocaust be denied or are there any limitations under international law?

Article 19 of the ICCPR states that exercising the right to freedom of opinion and expression carries with it duties and responsibilities.[26] Therefore, according to international law, this right can be subject to certain restrictions that (a) must be provided by law and (b) are necessary to respect the rights or reputations of others and for the protection of national security or public order or public health or morals. Restrictions must also conform to the principle of proportionality. Moreover, Article 20 of the ICCPR states that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law. Articles 19 and 20 complement each other.

Some states criminalize Holocaust denial and/or speech promoting the Nazi ideology, for instance in the form of Holocaust denial laws. Some regions have developed a comprehensive legal system addressing Holocaust denial, such as the European Court of

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24   https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights
25   https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights
26   For more information see Article 19. 2021. *'Hate Speech' Explained: A Toolkit - ARTICLE 19*. https://www.article19.org/resources/hate-speech-explained-a-toolkit/

Human Rights[27], which interprets the European Convention on Human Rights.[28] However, such systems do not exist in all countries and are not applied consistently across regions.

Article 19

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

   A. For respect of the rights or reputations of others;

   B. For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

Article 20

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.

2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

Source (Articles 19 and 20): United Nations General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI). Adopted 16 December 1966. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights

Schools and teachers need to strike a balance between teaching the norms and rights related to freedom of expression – a pedagogical component that is essential to learning, critical debate, classroom dialogue and conversations with teachers – and simultaneously protecting learners from hate speech.

Questions about when legitimate speech becomes hate speech have additional considerations in educational environments: is the comment based on a lack of understanding and a result of students expressing themselves poorly, without the intention of causing harm? Is the comment made as a provocation and intended to incite fellow pupils? Is it meant as an attack, and is

27   https://www.echr.coe.int/ (Accessed 11.03.2024).
28   https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/convention_ENG (Accessed 11.03.2024).

there a victim who needs protecting and safeguarding? Are there prejudices at play that need to be addressed? Is the comment prohibited by law, under the ICCPR or national legislation, and what are the duties of a teacher in this regard?[29]

When faced with incidents of Holocaust denial or distortion, the school has a dual role to play: first and foremost, teachers and the school leadership must reject Holocaust denial, distortion and hate speech, and provide support for targeted students. Clear boundaries and policies must be set out about what forms of speech are appropriate in school settings, and which forms of speech and behaviour go against the ethos of the school community. Guidance on responding to such incidents is provided in Sections II and III.

Dealt with sensitively within appropriate learning environments, such comments may offer learning opportunities that can lead to deeper insights. Pedagogical processes that foster learners' self-determination

and maturity focus on individual learning, by including questions and misconceptions that come from outside the school context, from historical culture, local communities, from families and peer groups – and also from the virtual space and its communication channels. By being given the opportunity to safely discuss the Holocaust denial and distortion that they have encountered, and to engage in debates about the right to freedom of expression, its limitations and hate speech, learners will be able to make more informed decisions about how they debate and engage with controversial topics.

In understanding these issues, teachers can promote digital citizenship and can empower students to think about how best to respond when encountering Holocaust denial and distortion online: what are the risks of responding to, commenting on or sharing a post? Can this unwittingly amplify the message? When and how should a post be reported? How can young people exercise self-care online? How to change the culture of an online community?

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29 See UNESCO. 2023. Addressing hate speech through education: a guide for policy-makers. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384872

Chapter II
Addressing Holocaust denial
and distortion through education

2.1 What are the objectives of addressing Holocaust denial and distortion through education?

Teaching about Holocaust denial and distortion can work towards the broader aim of increasing learners' resilience and willingness to engage with historical falsehoods in general, and falsehoods about the Holocaust in particular. When teaching to prevent Holocaust denial and distortion, teachers should aim to:

■ Familiarize learners with the multifaceted phenomenon of denial and distortion of the history and memory of the Holocaust, including the history of Holocaust denial and distortion, and typical content, techniques and forms of disinformation/ distortion and denial of the Holocaust.

■ Enable learners to recognize the damage that Holocaust denial and distortion causes to victims, human rights, peace, respect for diversity, and the political culture of democracy.

■ Strengthen learners' respect for the value of historical truth, and historical methods and research, and empower them to act against the warning signs of distortion of historical truth and the goals associated with it. This also means that learners become aware of and understand their responsibilities as global citizens.

■ Provide essential knowledge and skills so that learners can recognize and counter Holocaust disinformation online, identify reliable sources of information, and be aware of the diverse approaches of various social media platforms in dealing with disinformation or hateful content.[30]

■ Develop skills to evaluate information, including an understanding of the basic principles of historical comparison.

2.2 Teaching and learning approaches

2.2.1 Using the Global Citizenship Education framework,

UNESCO promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCED) to help learners understand the world around them and work together to fix the major challenges of the 21st century (UNESCO, 2015). It supports a transformative pedagogy that provides a strong basis for education to counter hate speech, educate about the Holocaust and

encourage responsible online behaviours – by holistically developing the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural domains of learning. It offers a 'pedagogy that empowers students to examine critically their beliefs, values and knowledge, with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives,

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30   An important quality criterion for internet platforms is whether they redirect users searching for 'Holocaust', 'Holocaust denial' or 'Holohoax' to credible websites that refute Holocaust denial.

and a sense of critical consciousness and agency'.[31]

Teaching objectives and learning outcomes that emerge from GCED are adaptable to a variety of educational contexts. The objectives and outcomes provide guidance to teachers on how to prevent and counter Holocaust denial and distortion across the domains of learning. At the same time, these objectives and outcomes can be put in context with national policies and priorities, along with teachers' specific goals.

Box 8: Three domains of GCED

Learning goal 1: Developing cognitive skills. The cognitive dimension of GCED aims to provide knowledge, understanding and critical-thinking skills about global issues. To combat Holocaust denial and distortion, individuals should first and foremost be equipped with the correct historical information. Disinformation often exploits ignorance, taking things out of context to make arguments appealing and convincing. Teachers must impart historical accuracy and an understanding of the context of the Holocaust, as well as understanding of how it has been remembered, researched and taught, allowing learners to deconstruct and refute false narratives and recognize possible errors and manipulations.

Learning goal 2: Developing socio-emotional competences. Holocaust denial often uses emotional triggers and biases to exploit individuals' vulnerabilities. In contrast, Holocaust education strives to cultivate empathy and ethical consciousness, notably through exposure to survivor testimonies and personal narratives. By engaging with authentic stories and empathetic portrayals, learners develop emotional resilience to the manipulative tactics of Holocaust denial. Holocaust education fosters a profound sense of responsibility towards remembrance and the prevention of future atrocities, anchoring individuals morally.

Learning goal 3: Developing behavioural competences. Transforming knowledge and emotions into action is fundamental in the battle against Holocaust denial and distortion. The behavioural dimension emphasizes active engagement within the media landscape. This includes advocating for policies that curb hate speech and disinformation, as well as participating in online 'counter-speech' initiatives. Empowering individuals to challenge falsehoods and promote historical accuracy in public spaces ensures that education can lead to proactive involvement.

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31   O. Ukpokodu, 2009, The Practice of Transformative Pedagogy, T*he Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 20, 2. p. 43.

2.2.2 Critical thinking and education about the Holocaust

One of the objectives of Holocaust education is to foster critical thinking. Critical thinking is an example of a higher-level order of reasoning that enables an individual to conduct an analytical, rational and open investigation into an issue. Such skills are central to building resilience to Holocaust denial and distortion, but they demand innovative pedagogical approaches that go beyond simply listing historical facts. This entails developing a dynamic, interactive and scientific approach, enabling students to find – and understand – the truth about history and the Holocaust.

From reading to 'doing' history

The textbook and the teacher are often presented as the authoritative source, as if there is one narrative of the past that must be learned and recited (Wineburg, 2018, p. 108). While some school history textbooks may contain sources, encourage questioning and lead to interpretations that can be discussed, some textbooks do not foster critical thinking that would allow students to develop nuanced beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the processes of knowledge construction in history (Buehl & Alexander, 2001). History education should not merely present what happened in the past but also ask questions about what we know of the past, and how we know it.

Schools offer the invaluable opportunity for students to learn 'to read like a historian'[32] and acquire 'historical literacy', which is understood as substantive ('know your facts') and procedural ('know how to do')

knowledge (Puustinen and Khawaja, 2021). As a result, they can learn to understand the workings of history as a science: how data is collected, sources are verified and interpreted, and facts are transformed into a historical narrative. By 'doing history', students can also learn how historical texts are reviewed and how controversies are dealt with in academic discourses. They can only then identify deviations from these methodological norms.

'Doing' history in the digital age

Developing these skills relies on the student managing the precarious balance between trust and mistrust, and recognizing the reliability of a source in terms of its authorship, purpose, intended audience, time and social context. This assessment, which can be developed in history lessons, can also be applied to information found and shared on social media, where students need to be able to differentiate between an error or a misinterpretation of sources on the one hand, and lies or deliberate manipulation of history on the other. Disinformation spreads on social media, because its short-form format and algorithmic nature favour simplistic and emotive narratives. The voice of the expert and the individual seem equally valid in the social media era, with implications for knowledge and truth.[33] Exposed to a constant stream of information, many people find the truth-checking approach exhausting – and only tend to make the effort when the knowledge truly matters to them, or when it has tangible

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32   The Reading Like a Historian curriculum of the Stanford History Education Group encompasses lessons with central historical questions and primary documents: https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons (Accessed 11.03.2024).

33   On 'reality' and 'truth' as required criteria see Friedlander (1992), Introduction.

consequences for their lives (Morisseau et al., 2021, p. 42; Fuchs and Otto, 2022, p. 192). Teachers can support their students to learn simple and quick methods to assess the veracity and reliability of online information that will become less onerous if embedded as habits.

Understanding 'historical truth'

History education – and by extension Holocaust education – is bound to encounter the question of 'historical truth'. What we know and understand about the past may change over time as past errors are recognized, new sources become available, or new questions arise. There is therefore not one fixed historical truth but many perspectives, arguments, theories and debates that historians and researchers tussle over in an aimable quest for a fuller and more accurate understanding of historical reality. This does not mean, however, that what is regarded as historical truth is arbitrary. The legitimate differences of opinion between historians should not be confused with those of people seeking to distort our understanding of the past, or who are motivated by antisemitic prejudices. Historiography – the study of the writing of history – can be a great aid in helping learners to assess and interpret different historical claims.

Teachers can support their students to apply caution when:

- Historians use a biased selection of sources and/or exclude important literature; for example, when researchers only include sources and literature that confirm their pre-existing opinion or hypothesis, rather than considering

other sources or literature that do not fit their narrative.

- Historical facts are taken out of their original historical, cultural and social context, and placed in a false context.

- Historians are so biased that they no longer question their positions openly and critically, but instead bend historical facts to fit their world view.

- Historical evidence or sources are manipulated (altered or taken out of context) to support a historical narrative that distorts historical truth.

- The results of historical research are not based on verifiable sources and logical arguments but on unfounded assumptions or speculation.

If any of these scientific principles of historical thinking and research are violated, then the trustworthiness of the information should be treated with scepticism.

Common strategies to manipulate historical truth

- **Ignoring evidence that contradicts the preferred narrative**
  Holocaust deniers ignore the wealth of historical sources, including eyewitness accounts from victims and perpetrators about the gas chambers at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and claim that these are all lies. In 1979, a well-known Holocaust denial institute promised a reward of $50,000 to anyone who could prove that Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. Mel Mermelstein (1926–2022), a survivor of Auschwitz, submitted his own testimony as evidence, but it was ignored. Mermelstein sued the institute for breach of contract

for ignoring his evidence (a signed testimony about his experiences at Auschwitz), and the institute had to pay both the prize money and damages.[34] Holocaust deniers also like to emphasize that Hitler did not give an explicit order for the genocide of European Jews, calling into question his responsibility. They ignore, for example, numerous reports in which Hitler himself speaks of his plans for the future extermination of the European Jews.[35] This example illustrates a widespread logical fallacy that is frequently encountered in the denial and distortion of the Holocaust: the absence of explicit documents attributed to Hitler does not conclusively rule out the possibility of his having given verbal instructions to key personnel charged with carrying out the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'.

- **Manipulation of historical evidence**
  Holocaust deniers and distorters who claim that no Jews were gassed at Auschwitz II often focus on the structural remains of Auschwitz II, which the Nazis destroyed as the Red Army approached. They claim that there are no holes to inject the Zyklon B gas ('no holes, no Holocaust'). They often present a 1940 plan of the main camp, Auschwitz I, as proof that 'there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz'.[36] In 1940, however, the Auschwitz camp system was still under construction. The use of gas as a murder weapon in Auschwitz-Birkenau only started in 1941, while the mass murder of Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau started in 1942.

- **Cherry-picking evidence**
  The technique of 'cherry picking' is frequently used in Holocaust denial and distortion narratives to undermine public confidence in the accuracy of the facts about the Holocaust. Cherry-picking is a typical feature of pseudoscientific arguments. Conspiracy theorists in particular use it as a rhetorical strategy to make their claims attractive and plausible (Stangl, 2024). Cherry-picking is biased source selection: only evidence that supports the claim is presented, while contradictory or counter-evidence is wilfully ignored. The challenge for students is that the information is factually correct, but the conclusion is wrong, because it builds on fragmentary, partial evidence, often presented without context. Examples of cherry-picking include saying that Winston Churchill's monograph *The Second World War* (1948–1952) does not mention the Holocaust. While factually correct, this statement disregards crucial elements: at the time Churchill published his work, which indeed focused on political and military aspects of the Second World War, historical research into the Holocaust as a historical event had only just begun and the terms 'Holocaust' or 'Shoah' were not yet used to refer to the genocide of the Jews. However, it is well documented that Churchill was aware of the genocide of the Jews; he spoke out on several occasions in speeches and letters.

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34   Oral history interview with Mel Mermelstein in USHMM: https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn512013 (Accessed 03.03.2024).
35   See sources documenting Hitler's threat against the Jews in https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hitler-s-threats-against-the-jews-1941-1945 (Accessed 03.03.2024); see also Longerich, 2001; van Pelt, 2002.
36   Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Auschwitz_1_1940.jpg (Accessed 03.03.2024).

Holocaust deniers also try to dispute the number of Jewish victims in the Auschwitz concentration camp by relying on fragmentary evidence from camp records. They argue, for example, that the last prisoner admitted to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp on 18 January 1945 was numbered 202,499, so there could not have been about a million Jews in the Auschwitz concentration camp. This is an example of decontextualizing evidence: firstly, many different series of numbers were used in Auschwitz; secondly, only deportees not selected for the gas chambers on the ramp were given numbers; and thirdly, registration became less precise after 1944.[37] In general, many prisoners were murdered there without being registered.

- **Using logical fallacies**
  Holocaust denial and distortion often uses the techniques of logical fallacy. These are fallacious or false arguments that seem stronger due to psychological persuasion. They usually consist of a premise and an argument that do not support the conclusion. An example of a logical fallacy concerns Elie Wiesel's tattoo: as Elie Wiesel never showed his prisoner number to photographers (though it is recorded in the Auschwitz archives as A-7713[38]), it is alleged that he lied about his experience in Auschwitz. The fallacy lies in the fact that even if Elie Wiesel did not have a tattoo on his arm, this would not necessarily mean that he was not a prisoner in the Auschwitz camp. In May 1944, when Wiesel was deported to Auschwitz, the systematic administration of the prisoners had already partially collapsed. Many of the newly arrived prisoners deemed fit for work were no longer tattooed.

- **Using a pseudo-scientific style and faking expertise**
  Holocaust deniers and distorters often use a pseudo-scientific style to give the impression of serious scientific research and increase the credibility of their claims. However, these texts are often characterised by complicated technical jargon that hides inaccuracies and makes precise understanding difficult, and the frequent use of footnotes, citations and bibliographical references (Pigliucci, 2018). An examination of the cited literature will show that the bibliography mainly refers to works by authors who deny and distort the Holocaust, and that the works they attack are often inaccurately or incorrectly cited. The 'experts' on whom Holocaust deniers rely often lack scientific qualifications: for example, the German Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel argued that bricks from the Auschwitz gas chambers did not contain traces of Zyklon-B, based on an analysis produced by a self-styled chemist, Fred Leuchter. Leuchter had in fact no formal training or relevant qualification as a chemist, and he was simply a manufacturer and salesman of execution equipment.[39]

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37 Cf. https://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/auschwitz-prisoners/prisoner-numbers/
38 https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/USHMM-Timeline-Elie-Wiesel.pdf (Accessed 03.03.2024).
39 https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/ernst-zundel (accessed 20.08.2024).

Box 9: Reflective discussion activity: what is the difference between legitimate historical debate and Holocaust denial and distortion?

Historical disputes are essential for historical research.[40] They help to develop new questions and deepen our understanding of the past. Indeed, two scholars who carefully analyse the same sources can arrive at different interpretations and thus create a debate. However, this is not the case with Holocaust denial and distortion. Claims that violate the scientific principles of accuracy and impartiality, and that do not rely on evidence, are not just 'controversial opinions'. Historians may be incorrect in their interpretation, but that is different from lying about the past. If Holocaust denial and distortion deny the validity of essential findings about the Holocaust without offering convincing alternatives, then it is clear that their proponents are pursuing agendas other than the acquisition of new historical knowledge.

Asking students to reflect on how and why Holocaust deniers present their false claims as legitimate debates can help them to recognize the techniques and motivations, making learners more resilient against the manipulation of historical evidence.

Example reflective essay questions for upper secondary education:

- Can a historian be free of bias in the selection and interpretation of material? How can historians address this?

- Do historians have a moral responsibility to try to ensure that history is not misused and distorted by people for their own ends?

- Are there some historical truths that are more difficult for people to hear and accept?

- How can we gauge the extent to which history is being told from a prejudiced perspective?

- Does social media help or hinder our understanding of the past?

- Who should take responsibility if historical knowledge is being misused?

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40   Cf. about the teaching of controversial issues Oulton, 2004; Christensen, 2020.

2.3 Preventing and countering Holocaust denial and distortion

Teaching that builds learners' resilience to Holocaust denial and distortion can take place both in *proactive* lessons and in *reactive* and responsive actions. 'Proactive' learning implies that the lessons and activities are an intended and designed part of a broader curriculum. 'Reactive' means that the teacher must respond to unexpected incidents in the classroom where learners express or report instances of Holocaust denial and distortion, either from ignorance or for provocation.[41]

> **Box 10: Proactive practice**
>
> Action expressed through intended and planned learning activities and teaching approaches.

Planned lessons may address the issue *indirectly* or *directly*. 'Indirectly' means the teacher not necessarily addressing Holocaust disinformation explicitly, but rather building the skills and knowledge that create resilience against it. In this approach, they will therefore structure their teaching about the history of the Holocaust with an awareness and knowledge of the phenomenon of Holocaust denial and distortion. 'Directly' refers to lessons that explicitly focus on Holocaust denial and distortion. These lessons may occur in curricula about the Holocaust, or in lessons that focus on hate speech, disinformation, human rights or citizenship.

This leads to three different scenarios:

Table 1: Teaching about Holocaust denial and distortion

Proactive approach	➜ Planned indirect approach	Preventing Holocaust denial and distortion by teaching critical thinking and historical literacy through Holocaust education.
	➜ Planned direct approach	Planned teaching about Holocaust denial and distortion to build awareness.
Reactive approach	Reactive responses to unexpected incidents related to Holocaust denial and distortion in the classroom.	

41   For further information on proactive and reactive actions, see: UNESCO & OSCE/ODIHR. 2020. *Addressing anti-semitism in schools: training curriculum for secondary education teachers, p. 62-3.*

2.3.1 Planned indirect approach: Preventing Holocaust denial and distortion by teaching critical thinking and historical literacy through Holocaust education

The most effective way to prevent students being vulnerable to Holocaust denial is to teach the history of the Holocaust in a well-structured and source-based way, using learner-centred pedagogies that help the learner understand why we know what we know.[42] Teaching factual knowledge about the Holocaust helps to make students more resilient to disinformation from Holocaust denial and distortion, by providing a sound knowledge base of facts and evidence.

Being aware of common disinformation narratives allows teachers to tackle misconceptions and falsehoods through their teaching without directly addressing them. When planning lessons on the history of the Holocaust, teachers should therefore familiarize themselves with the most common patterns of Holocaust denial and distortion in their region or locality. For example, teachers should be aware of the role of local as well as Nazi German actors in perpetrating the genocide. By deepening historical awareness in these areas, teachers build a strong foundation of knowledge to serve as a defence if their students encounter manipulative or false accounts.

This guide offers two approaches to prevent Holocaust denial and distortion:

- Building critical thinking about historical truth, evidence and its manipulation.

- Strengthening historical literacy about the past when working with primary sources.

Building historical literacy skills: understanding and using primary sources as evidence

Given these myriad distortions and misrepresentations of the Holocaust, Holocaust education can be enhanced if students not only work with historical sources themselves but also develop an understanding of the quantity and variety of primary sources on the Holocaust. The main groups of sources where historians and students can study the Holocaust are:

- Written sources, such as letters, personal documents (e.g. diaries), blueprints, maps, orders, speeches, deportation train schedules and lists, registers and other files kept by the concentration camp administration, statistical summaries prepared by the SS.[43]

- Visual sources, such as photographs (official and clandestine), aerial photographs, paintings by prisoners, film footage (e.g. of the liberation of camps).

- Physical evidence, such as the ruins of concentration camps or historical artefacts (clothing, shoes …), thousands of mass graves with the bodies of those murdered in the Holocaust.

- Witness testimonies of the Holocaust.

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42   Learner-centred pedagogy follows a constructivist approach, thus it 'places students at the centre of the teaching-learning process. Students are more active and participative, and the process turns knowledge into a negotiation between teachers and students. Furthermore, this pedagogy starts from students' interests and objectives, and it carries out a learning process based on real situations and materials, using the current technologies to favour this process.' (IGI Global). This type of pedagogy encourages debates, discussion and critical thinking between all the actors.

43   Cf., for example, the list of Jewish populations in Europe by country used at the Wannsee Conference in 1942, prisoner lists. See also (with examples) https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/search?query=evidence&languages[]= USHMM Holocaust.

> **Box 11: Holocaust records**
>
> Although the perpetrators of the Holocaust tried to destroy the evidence of genocide, the amount still available provides an immense and irrefutable historical record for study by historians and students.
>
> In 2019, the German Federal Archives, the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History and the Chair of Modern History at the University of Freiburg, in collaboration with Yad Vashem, launched a landmark 16-volume collection of primary sources, providing unique first-hand insights into the persecution and murder of the Jews of Europe under Nazi rule. It presents and annotates 5,500 historical sources from 20 (contemporary) countries, written in 21 languages, and is the result of research in more than 100 European archives. Many of the sources relating to the approximately 4.8 million murdered Jews from the former Soviet Union became accessible for the first time after 1989.
>
> For more information, visit: Institut für Zeitgeschichte. The Persecution and Murder of the European Jews by Nazi Germany, 1933-1945. https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/publikationen/editionen/the-persecution-and-murder-of-the-european-jews-by-nazi-germany-1933-1945; and https://pmj-documents.org/

Such sources only become evidence when students put them to use. Sources are records that contain various data. They can be read or interpreted to provide information about the past. No one source is complete, or can tell a full picture or history of an event. Students should be guided to analyse a source and assess its:

■ creator;

■ intended audience;

■ reliability;

■ accuracy;

■ bias or prejudice; and

■ historical context.

After analysis, evidence can be obtained from other sources and used to support a claim or develop a hypothesis. These skills enable learners to form a judgement that is informed by reason and evaluate information that they can use to argue and defend.

This can prevent students being susceptible to false claims about the past, by enabling them to think critically about the complexity of the past and the nature of historical knowledge, rather than seek simplicity.[44] These practices are critical to democratic life.[45]

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44 F. Walden et al., 'Critical Historical Enquiry for a Socially Just and Sustainable World' in *Teaching for Social Justice and Sustainable Development Across the Primary Curriculum* (2021).

45 Barton, K.C. & Levstik, L.S. (2004). 'Teaching history for the common good'. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. P. 189.

2.3.2 Planned direct approach: teaching about Holocaust denial and distortion

Teaching about Holocaust denial and distortion can be integrated into various subjects (e.g. history, civics, literature) and contexts (e.g. Holocaust education, global citizenship education, human rights education, information and media literacy) or it can be interdisciplinary. Chapter I provides information about the forms and varieties of Holocaust distortion that can be addressed with learners. This section aims to address pedagogical and content-related concerns, as well as specific competences that are important for the topic, such as understanding the difference between historical comparison and equation.[46]

Challenges of teaching about Holocaust denial and distortion

Teaching about the denial and falsification of the Holocaust is not part of the standard repertoire of Holocaust education. Many teachers have not encountered the topic in their training or professional development and therefore do not feel familiar with it. They may be afraid of giving unnecessary space to the hateful messages of Holocaust denial and distortion. Others may be concerned that the reactions in the classroom may overwhelm both the group of learners and themselves. Or they may fear that learners will use the topic for targeted provocation or propaganda. These concerns are not unfounded, because, as Shermer and Grobman (2009) have shown, Holocaust denial is not about research-based historical discourse, but rather about ideological and political agendas that are often highly emotionally charged.

- **Avoiding hateful content**
  It is not possible to completely avoid hateful content when teaching about the denial and falsification of a genocide. To understand why and how these false claims spread, learners should be aware of the role of antisemitism – which students are already exposed to on the internet. The basic rule is: as little hateful content as possible; as much as necessary.
  Holocaust denial is a conspiracy myth. Trying to limit the spread of conspiracy theories is more productive and effective than trying to undo the damage in someone who already believes in conspiracy theories. Before engaging with this harmful content, it is helpful to consider the following points adapted from the UNESCO guide 'Addressing conspiracy theories: what teachers need to know' (UNESCO, 2022):

- State from the outset that the Holocaust is one of the most well-researched and documented events in recent history.

- Warn students about the existence of claims that deny or distort the history of the Holocaust. Stress that these claims are false and contradict the aforementioned facts. By alerting students early that false claims and conspiracy theories exist, they will have more resilience against disinformation that is shared with them.

- Encourage rational thinking, questioning and fact-checking.

46   See also: Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: Tackling Holocaust denial and distortion in the classroom https://www.hmd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Tackling-Holocaust-denial-and-distortion-in-the-classroom.pdf (Accessed 10.01.2024).

■ Explain how these claims are linked to antisemitic prejudice, such as false claims of Jewish greed for power and wealth.

■ Alert students to the arguments behind disinformation and its manipulation techniques, to build up their resilience to them.

When discussing examples of Holocaust denial and distortion with learners:

■ Highlight typical patterns of Holocaust denial and distortion, and disinformation strategies, so that learners can apply their insights to other examples they encounter.

■ Refute disinformation in a simple and convincing way, so that learners develop a fundamental distrust of claims that call into question the facts of the Holocaust.

■ Be cautious when using antisemitic images and propaganda. These images are designed to be powerful. They should be avoided.

■ Assess your learners' prior knowledge, socio-emotional development and ability. Holocaust denial is emotive and may be alluring to some students. Holocaust distortion can include complex narratives that need to be unpacked. The age and maturity of learners should be carefully considered.

■ **Enabling classroom discussions about addressing Holocaust denial and distortion**
Holocaust denial and distortion is a sensitive subject. Whether a discussion is planned or not, it is very important for teachers to steer and facilitate the whole process by developing a learning environment in which learners feel safe and respected. Learners are more likely to reflect critically on sensitive topics if they believe their position, feelings and perspective on the issue will be fairly considered.
One way to build a community in the classroom is for teachers and learners to draw up a list of ground rules together, to guide the discussion process. Only rules agreed on by the majority of the classroom should be adopted. These rules can be reviewed before and during any discussions. Teachers can prepare students by explaining the topic and its aims to students in advance. Provide time to discuss students' experiences with Holocaust denial and distortion, their attitudes towards it, and whether they have any concerns or suggestions and questions they would like to address.

Box 12: Ensuring a safe space in the classroom

A 'safe space' is an inclusive social environment that creates a supportive, respectful and empathetic atmosphere in which learners can feel safe and comfortable (Salend, 2020). In such a space, participants, particularly learners who have experienced discrimination, should feel free to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions without fear of judgement, discrimination or harassment. This means that the teacher and the class will not tolerate violence, harassment or hate speech. Creating a 'safe space' is also about constructive communication and conflict resolution strategies. Encourage the class to address conflicts openly and look for solutions together.[47] Finally, offer all learners the opportunity to talk to trusted adults in the school if they feel worried or hurt.

To prepare for classroom management, consider your students' possible reactions to the topic:

■ Have learners already made provocative statements about Holocaust denial and distortion, or expressed antisemitism, racism, or extreme right-wing positions?

■ Might students in your classroom feel distressed by the topic of Holocaust denial and distortion? Perhaps some have a Jewish background and are directly affected by antisemitic discrimination. Have any students been affected by other forms of social or racial discrimination? Have any of your students been affected by conflict or atrocity crimes, including genocide?

■ Are any students being confronted with Holocaust denial and distortion in their homes and communities, and may they experience an inner conflict when the views of trusted family members are questioned and discredited?

■ Expressions of Holocaust distortion are sometimes made about the situation in the Middle East. Are your students engaged by this situation, and do they feel that they have adequate space to discuss and understand it? Do you feel confident in your knowledge about this conflict and how to encourage discussions that prevent and counter prejudice and bias?

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47   For guidance, see UNESCO. 2017. Transformative pedagogy for peace-building: a guide for teachers. https://unesdoc. unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261349

> **Box 13: Good practices**
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> It is helpful to invite eyewitnesses, historians, academics, museum professionals or other experts to deliver a talk and discuss the basics of knowledge about the historical facts of the Holocaust in the class. This can be done before the lessons about Holocaust denial and distortion.
>
> If you are unsure of the best approach to overcome these challenges, talk to experienced colleagues or seek support from educational psychologists. Trained Holocaust educators from museums, memorials and educational centres may also be able to provide targeted practical support.

■ **Historical comparisons: common pitfalls and methodologies**

While Holocaust memory is relevant worldwide, across many different cultures and societies, many people, especially students without a direct connection with this history, may feel it is not a priority or legitimate object of study. This has created specific challenges that teachers must navigate. One of these challenges is the comparison of the Holocaust with other atrocity crimes.[48] While comparative approaches are legitimate and necessary, teachers should be careful not to **equate** the Holocaust with other events. In equations, 'the Holocaust and other issues are collapsed in ways that gloss over differences and obscure rather than clarify understanding. The Holocaust is widely invoked in comparisons that (intentionally or not) can trivialize and diminish it through false equivalencies or misappropriate the Holocaust or in furtherance of a political or moral agenda.'[49]

To equate the Holocaust with a way of expressing outrage, abhorrence and condemnation of another event or phenomenon may draw attention to a particular cause or issue, but doing so without respect for the historical integrity of the Holocaust or the nature of the other event or phenomenon does a disservice to our understanding of both. This can play into the hands of those who spread disinformation. When confronted with such equation, it is very helpful for learners to have a solid understanding of the specific characteristics of the Holocaust. This will enable them to critically assess such claims and be able to identify misleading or distorting equations, and explain why they are reductive or historically inaccurate.

It is important not to shut down conversations or questions that students may raise about other atrocity crimes (such as the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement) and systems of violence (such as colonialism, racism). Indeed, the study of the Holocaust as a historical event can be

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48   For further guidance, see IHRA. 2024. *Reflections on Terminology for Holocaust Comparison*, https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/terminology-holocaust-comparison
49   https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382159/PDF/382159eng.pdf.multi

a 'bridge' to asking questions about other experiences that are otherwise difficult to raise. Learners may have legitimate questions about the exclusion of these histories from public discourse. In these moments, teachers should emphasize that we should not see these histories in competition with each other but as events that both carry universal importance, and that the memory of the Holocaust helps us to draw attention to other painful pasts. As much as possible, teachers should find time to study histories that are important to their students' identities. However, teaching and learning about this history should be provided with its own dedicated curriculum time, as examining and comparing different cases of genocide and mass atrocities requires a thorough historical understanding of all the events. It is important to enable learners to distinguish clearly between comparisons that serve the legitimate interest of better understanding the Holocaust and/or the historical phenomenon being compared, and those comparisons that aim to denigrate the memory of the Holocaust, the dignity of the victims, and respect for their descendants.[50]

How to compare the Holocaust with other genocides, crimes against humanity and mass atrocities?

Comparison is a necessary method of historical research and understanding. Without a comparative approach there can be neither a systematic contextualisation of a historical phenomenon, nor an assessment of its potential uniqueness. While Holocaust and genocide studies engages with this discipline, Holocaust education in general rarely engages in comparative analysis because of the complexity of the approach and the need for substantive knowledge of both histories in question. Should a teacher engage with a historical comparison, they must introduce students to the proper method of comparison for them to understand the historical significance of the Holocaust and the other history in question accurately and in their full complexity.

50   See for further information: IHRA, 2024, Kluessien and Ramos, 2021; IHRA, 2016.

Box 14: Definitions of genocide

It is helpful if students can distinguish genocide from other atrocity crimes. Definitions matter because they allow phenomena to be compared objectively rather than by an arbitrary 'hierarchy of suffering'.

'Genocide' was codified as an international crime in 1948 with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Article 2 defines it as:

' … any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.'

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide has been adopted by 153 States. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has repeatedly stated that the Convention embodies principles that are part of general customary international law. This means that all States, regardless of whether they ratified the Convention, are bound as a matter of law by the principle that genocide is a crime prohibited under international law.

Source: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948.

For the methodological approach, four steps are necessary, which should be carried out using an example chosen by the teacher.[51]

Step 1:[52] In 2023 the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance published Reflections on Terminology for Holocaust Comparison as a tool that offers questions for reflection on the topic of comparison. First, consider these questions to assess whether introducing a comparison is appropriate:

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51 A comparative approach to genocide through testimonial observation can be found at: Bruner, J., Benkert, V., Harris, L. M., Hutchinson, M., & Lundin, A. E. (2017). 'Developing a critical comparative genocide method'. *World History Connected*, 14(2). Available: http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/14.2/forum_harris.html

52 https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/terminology-holocaust-comparison

- Does the choice of terms respect the historic particularity of each of the events that are being discussed?

- Does the choice of terms respect the historic particularity and unprecedented character of the Holocaust?

- Does the word choice reflect the meaning that while there are common patterns between genocides, each case of genocide or mass atrocity crime differs from the Holocaust and from each other? Could [umbrella] terms such as 'other genocides' or 'other victim groups' be interpreted as disrespectful regarding the specificity of a particular atrocity? Do these terms create a hierarchy of victim groups, where some are named and others just subsumed into an abstract term?

- Which terms would survivor communities prefer to use/would rather use?

- When the term 'compare' is used, can you specify your intention? For example, is your intention to find similarities and differences between the Holocaust and other events? Or do you aim to identify common patterns in order to combat genocide today? Or do you intend to compare certain topics or processes (such as the role of ideology, mass violence, war, or gender issues)? Or is there anything else that motivates your intention?

- Does your choice of words unintentionally hide certain aspects of history and exploit the Holocaust or different mass atrocity crimes for contemporary political purposes, or trivialize them?

Step 2: Preparing the comparison

- Ensure that the factual basis for the historical comparison is sound. Identify a *tertium comparationis*: The *tertium comparationis* is a significant element that the two phenomena have in common. In the case of a comparison with the Holocaust, this would include concepts such as the process of atrocity crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

- Determine the *criteria for comparison*, in this case using definitions of each historical event, and historical knowledge about the processes of the atrocity crime.

Key consideration: As the class will be making a comparison involving the Holocaust, it is important to familiarize students with the history of the Holocaust and the other history in question. Unless both histories are prescribed in the curriculum, it is rarely achievable.

Step 3: A systematic historical comparison

- Explain to the students that a proper historical comparison requires a systematic examination of *similarities and differences*. One way to do this is to have students work with a six-column table. In one column they should note the specific features of the Holocaust as criteria for comparison, in the other columns similarities, differences and questions they cannot decide.

- In such an exercise, the learners should be alerted to the dangers of making crude comparisons. Comparison should be used as a tool to better understand how and why an event happened. It should not be used to create a

hierarchy of suffering. A comparison of the numbers of victims may help learners understand the scope, speed and magnitude of a genocide, but it should not be used to suggest that one atrocity crime is 'worse' than another, which is grossly offensive to its victims.

Table 2: Comparative grid

Context to compare	Similarities	Differences	Evaluation
What atrocity crime occurred?			
Who were the victims?			
Who were the perpetrators?			
Which ideologies motivated the atrocity crime?			
What mechanisms were used to spread hate, exclusion?			
How did the atrocity crime affect men, women, and children?			
What was the role of the state in the atrocity crime?			
What is the legacy of the atrocity crime?			

Step 4: Evaluation and discussion of the results of the comparison

■ The students compare and discuss the similarities and differences.

Students can then discuss whether and to what extent the Holocaust can be **equated** with the case compared. This should lead to the conclusion that a historical equation is not possible, as each historical event is unique. The crucial moment is to reflect on the different criteria and to justify the reasons for each criterion. The value of this kind of historical comparison lies in differentiation (rather than generalization) and reasoning (rather than moralizing). A comparison may also lead to the decision that the two cases are not comparable, as there are few similarities.

2.3.3 Reactive approach: how to respond to students who express Holocaust denial and distortion

Any teacher may unexpectedly encounter expressions of Holocaust denial and distortion or antisemitism in the classroom, stemming from ignorance, as provocation, or from genuine adherence to the belief. UNESCO and the OSCE/ODIHR provide guidance on how to respond to such incidents:

'Antisemitic or otherwise prejudiced statements can and do appear at unpredictable moments in teaching. Equally, they can appear in various ways – as "jokes", as arguments in a discussion, or just randomly. In all cases, the teacher needs to respond to these incidents in a way that simultaneously manages four conflicting demands:

■ The response must protect any potential victim(s);

■ The response should not belittle or insult the individual for the views they hold. This is both about the rights of the child and due to the fact that the teacher and learner will, in all probability, need to work together in the future;

■ The response should defuse any conflict that may arise over a comment, while leaving space to revisit the issue at a later date; and

■ The response should not, if at all possible, interfere with the natural flow of the lesson. It should not be allowed to sidetrack the lesson and detract from the other learners' right to an education.'[53]

This situation requires a professional and sensitive response from the teacher. Young people's opinions are often not yet fully formed. While there can be no tolerance of antisemitic or racist incidents, teachers should be careful not to 'label' learners who express antisemitic, neo-Nazi or racist views simply because of their behaviour. Restorative pedagogical approaches focusing on behaviours rather than individuals, and on opportunities to make amends, are more effective than punitive

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53   UNESCO and OSCE/ODIHR. 2020. *Addressing anti-semitism in schools: training curriculum for secondary education teachers*, pp. 64–5.

Remain calm and objective: It is important to remain calm and composed when addressing such incidents. An emotional reaction could escalate the situation and hinder a productive dialogue. Avoid counter-productive reactions such as moralizing, blaming and stigmatizing students.

Intervene immediately: If students in your class are being bullied or targeted by others, intervene immediately and stop the incident. Take care of the needs of any potential victim(s).

Interrupt in an appropriate manner: If a student makes an antisemitic remark or denies or distorts the history of the Holocaust, interrupt the conversation immediately but calmly. Make it clear in a neutral tone that such remarks are not acceptable in the classroom.

Reaffirm classroom values: Remind the class of the values of tolerance, respect and empathy that are expected in the classroom. Emphasize that all students deserve to feel safe and respected, regardless of their background or beliefs.

Try to assess intention: Try to assess whether the student's statement stems from ignorance, thoughtlessness, provocation or firm conviction. Depending on the severity of the incident, you may consider having a private conversation with the student(s) concerned after class, but it is important to address the prejudice in front of the whole class.

Consider your response: The incident may serve as an opportunity to educate the student(s) about the meaning of their words, to explain the harmful effects of antisemitism and Holocaust denial, both historically and in the present, and to provide factual information and resources to debunk any misconceptions. You will need to decide whether to address the challenge immediately and interrupt your lesson, or schedule the topic for the next lesson. This depends on various factors. Among other things, do you feel you have enough knowledge to effectively address the claims? Can the claims be rejected briefly and convincingly, or will it be better to return later after taking time to prepare? If you are not sure, tell the class that you will come back to the topic later.

Engage the administration: Record the incident as antisemitic in school log books. In cases of repeated or severe antisemitic behaviour, including the use of Nazi symbols, codes, slogans or songs, involve the school administration. Take guidance from senior teachers, school leadership and expert organizations.

Box 15: How to talk to learners in the classroom when critical classroom situations occur?

Avoid using tones that induce feelings of guilt, as this may prompt resistance from those who have not yet developed sufficient awareness or sensitivity towards the Holocaust. The tone should not be too formal, but rather encourage dialogue and acknowledge the possibility of mistakes. It is crucial to foster a space that promotes dialogue and understanding, rather than one characterized by attack or judgement, especially for those encountering the topic of the Holocaust for the first time (Manca et al., 2022).

Instead of immediately correcting or admonishing, or trying to convey a 'correct' perspective, asking questions provides the opportunity to learn more about the students and their backgrounds, life experiences and perspectives. Students feel their opinions, experiences and emotions are valued. It often helps to engage the group in discussion to reveal different assessments and perspectives on the topic: 'Does everyone see it this way?' In most cases, students will speak up with dissenting views.

It is crucial to distinguish between responses to Holocaust denial and distortion. Teachers should unequivocally oppose Holocaust denial. However, reactions to Holocaust distortion stemming from a lack of knowledge should be addressed differently.

It is also important to consider that the classroom should be a safe space for all students, including those who might be the target of harmful statements. In these cases, it might be useful to have a separate conversation outside the classroom with the learner who is raising a topic.

Questions avoiding judgement:

- 'I see things differently, but I'm interested. What do you mean by this statement?'
- 'Do you know more about it?'
- 'What do you feel when you see or hear something like this?'

Important: Distinguish between the identity of the learner and the statement.

- For example, 'What you are saying is antisemitic, because …', instead of 'You are an antisemite …!'

Chapter III
Teaching about and against Holocaust denial and distortion in a digital world

In today's digital era, young people in particular find themselves deeply immersed in an ever-evolving technological landscape. This gives unrestricted access to a global network of people and an abundant source of information. In this internet and app-centric culture, their primary social, cultural and political interactions unfold online, often exceeding the time adults spend online. According to a recent Eurostat report,[54] 96% of young Europeans use the internet daily, compared with 84% of the entire EU population.

Why is it necessary to equip young people with the tools and knowledge to respond appropriately to digital threats, for instance to stand up against Holocaust denial and distortion, and express solidarity with Jewish communities? The advantages of digital tools come with heightened challenges. Dissemination of false information, proliferation of extremist ideologies, and propagation of conspiracy theories – with antisemitism often glueing these harmful phenomena together, have become common, posing significant threats to societal cohesion and public safety.

3.1 Digital citizenship education

Digital citizenship education, a component of Global Citizenship Education, emphasizes the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to responsibly navigate the digital sphere. This includes understanding online rights and responsibilities, critically evaluating information, and responding effectively to hate speech and offensive content,[55] including Holocaust denial and distortion.

3.2 What is media and information literacy?[56]

Media and information literacy is a set of interrelated information, digital, and media competencies that help people to maximize advantages and minimize harms. Media and information literacy covers skills that enable people to engage – critically and effectively – with: information; communication content; the institutions that facilitate information and content; and the use of digital technologies. Competence in these areas is indispensable for all citizens, regardless of age or background.

54 Eurostat 2023: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC_CI_AC_I__custom_6640856/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=e4c1a296-0aab-4458-bc8d-356e5aaa8c53 (Accessed 22.02.2024).
55 The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed guidelines and handbooks for educators to teach good digital citizenship in schools and non-formal settings: https://www.iste.org/areas-of-focus/digital-citizenship (Accessed 09.12.2023).
56 Media and information literate citizens: Think critically, click wisely! (Second Edition of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy for Educators and Learners), UNESCO, 2021. https://www.unesco.org/mil4teachers/en/curriculum?hub=750

> **Box 16: Definition of a digital citizen**
>
> A digital citizen is someone who, through the development of a broad range of competences, is able to actively, positively and responsibly engage in both on- and offline communities, whether local, national or global. As digital technologies are disruptive in nature and constantly evolving, competence building is a lifelong process that should begin from earliest childhood at home and at school, in formal, informal and non-formal educational settings. (Council of Europe, 2019, p. 11f.)

3.3 Online manipulation strategies behind Holocaust denial and distortion

A primary goal in tackling Holocaust denial and distortion in classrooms might be to heighten awareness of the strategies and motives behind online manipulation, which can draw learners into cycles of conspiracy theories and misinformation. By fostering a basic understanding of how Holocaust denial and distortion are used in online manipulation tactics, learners are better equipped to recognize and mitigate potential harm, both to themselves and others in the future.

While Holocaust denial seeks to negate established facts of the Holocaust by trying to rewrite history, distortion often involves misrepresenting or trivializing the

crimes perpetrated by the Nazis, thereby complicating recognition. This trend is particularly noticeable within far-right internet circles, where Holocaust memory is an attractive subject for those seeking to provoke reactions. Individuals with such intentions do not necessarily aim to academically disprove the Holocaust, but rather to ridicule, mock, diminish or even 'ironically' celebrate it. Other manifestations include trivializing the Holocaust by incorporating its imagery and narratives into discussions about present-day political conflicts, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict (Baumkötter, 2024).

3.4 How to counter online disinformation

To combat the spread of false information, it's essential to recognize the typical tactics used for manipulation. False information often relies on deceitful strategies and familiar storylines, making it challenging

to discern truth from falsehood. However, **prebunking**[57] (a communication strategy that builds resilience against online manipulation) offers a proactive approach to counteract false information

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57   Prebunking is a technique gaining prominence as a means to build pre-emptive resilience to misinformation, cp. Harjani et al., 2022; See additional guidance in UNESCO. 2022. Addressing conspiracy theories: what teachers need to know.

before it gains traction (UNESCO, 2022). By educating individuals about the methods of disinformation, and providing analytical tools, prebunking strengthens their ability to withstand misleading content.

A digital citizen should not merely focus on verifying the truth of news but also evaluate the intentions of those who circulate it. As well as attempting to verify information directly, it's important to scrutinize the credibility and potential biases of the source.

3.4.1 Differentiating between misinformation and disinformation – recognizing harmful intent

It's useful to clarify that misinformation is false information unknowingly spread by someone who believes it to be true, whereas disinformation is deliberately false information spread by someone who knows it's false. It is an intentional lie, disseminated by malicious actors to deceive others. While the consequences of both may be similar, such as undermining democratic processes

or reducing vaccination rates, understanding the distinction is essential because the causes, methods, and solutions may differ (UNESCO, 2018). Holocaust denial is a form of disinformation. Holocaust distortion, when spread with antisemitic intent, or to purposefully downplay the history of the genocide, is also a form of disinformation.

Box 17: Definition of Disinformation and Misinformation

Disinformation is false information that is deliberately created or disseminated with the express purpose of causing harm. Producers of disinformation typically have political, financial, psychological, or social motivations (Wardle and Derakshan, 2017).

Misinformation is false information unknowingly spread by someone who believes it to be true (UNESCO, 2018).

The UNESCO resource Media and information literate citizens: Think critically, click wisely! (Second Edition of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy for Teachers and Learners) offers many related activities that teachers or trainers can adapt.

- Media and information literacy curriculum: https://www.unesco.org/mil4teachers/en/curriculum

- Fully audio-based MOOC: Think Critically, Click Wisely: Media and Information Literacy in the next normal: https://www.unesco.org/mil4teachers/en/moocs

- Podcasts on media and information literacy linked to mis- or disinformation and hate speech: https://www.unesco.org/en/podcasts/media-information-literacy

3.4.2 Assessing the credibility of a source

When faced with new information, it's essential to ask: where does it come from? Does the source have credibility? Who supports it? Why do I trust these supporters? These questions help gain a better understanding of reality, rather than trying to directly verify the information. In a highly specialized knowledge production system, it's impractical to investigate every detail independently, such as the correlation between vaccines and side effects. Focusing on the legitimacy of information sources instead provides a more effective approach to critical appraisal.[58] Our critical appraisals should be directed not only at the information but also at the institutional and social factors that have shaped that content, and given it a certain deserved or undeserved 'rank' in our system of knowledge.

Several steps can be taken to verify the credibility of an online source:

- **Identify the author, poster or video creator**: Research the author. What is the poster's expertise on the topic? Are they local to the event they're posting about or do they have scientific expertise? Are they a journalist? A scholar? An activist? Someone you know personally? What do others say about this poster?

- **Verify the source**: For news stories – is the source reputable? Does it have ideological biases? Is the content sponsored? Does the article cite sources or provide other supporting evidence? For primary sources (photos, audio, video) – look for visual clues to see if they match the situation portrayed.

- **Fact-check**: Are other news outlets reporting the same story in similar ways? Has a fact-checking site addressed any specific claims in the article?

- **Check the tone and style**: Is the language sensationalist, simplistic or emotionally manipulative? Does it demonize different opinions? Does it use ideologically charged terms?

- **Assess intention**: Ask why was the post made? What emotions did it try to evoke (anger, compassion, etc.) Was there a call to action? What is the action, and who benefits from it?

Learners can be encouraged to use **fact-checking resources** to help them determine whether what they read or hear is true. They can check whether the information has already been fact-checked using national or international fact-checking resources. When disinformation circulates on the internet, there may already be rebuttals.

Box 18: Fact-checking networks

The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) is an organization that monitors trends in fact-checking, provides training resources, and hosts a yearly conference on fact-checking called #GlobalFact. It aims to promote best practice in fact-checking,

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58   See Caulfield and Wineburg (2023).

and provide a place for collaboration between fact-checkers worldwide. IFCN has a Code of Principles that the organization Full Fact helped develop in 2016.

The European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) is the voice of European fact-checkers who uphold and promote the highest standards of fact-checking and media literacy in their effort to combat misinformation for the public benefit. The EFCSN and its verified members are committed to upholding the principles of freedom of expression. It has 48 verified members across Europe.

For more information, visit: https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/

3.4.3 Decontextualization and reverse image search tools

Decontextualization intentionally puts texts, images or videos in a false context. For example, if only a short statement is quoted from a longer interview; without the context of the entire interview, the impression might be created that the interviewed person has controversial views, even though they argued with balance and thoughtfully in the interview. Search engines can help uncover decontextualization.

Search engines can help trace additional information about a statement, image or video. For example, a simple reverse image search via Google[59] can determine whether an image depicts the situation as claimed, or not. If you are unsure about a news report, check if reputable news outlets are also reporting on the matter. If a report is only found on social media and nobody else is reporting it, caution is warranted. It could be false information.

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59   Reverse Image Search via google: https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/1325808?hl=en&co=GENIE. Platform%3DAndroid (Accessed 13.02.2024).

Box 19: Disinformation and deepfakes

Deepfakes are recordings of individuals created using computer programs. While the term mostly refers to videos, it can also include images or audio recordings. These manipulated videos depict people doing or saying things that never actually happened. There are various reasons why people create deepfakes. Some want to spread false information, while others create them as jokes. Many deepfakes are also found in pornography.

Some deepfakes are very obviously not genuine. However, in some deepfakes it's not easy to recognize that the recordings have been altered. The emphasis should not only be on the seemingly endless possibilities of manipulation but also on the limits of what is possible. Above all, it's crucial to demonstrate how students can uncover deepfakes using their own skills or fact-checking websites.

In most cases, it has so far been possible to recognize deepfakes with the naked eye. As impressive as the technology is behind deepfakes, it's not yet perfect. Typical give-aways include unnatural facial expressions, vacant stares, or incorrect shading on the face. Viewing the relevant videos in full screen mode can help identify these flaws. However, we must assume that the technology will continue to improve, and deepfakes may cease to be easily recognizable. There is debate about whether computer programs can help uncover manipulated videos in such cases. Regardless of these technical solutions, there are traditional methods to verify the authenticity of deepfakes.

The greatest danger posed by deepfakes is not that people might mistake fake recordings for real ones but rather the exact opposite – that they may consider real recordings to be fake. Often, when it comes to deepfakes, the impression is created that we can no longer be certain whether we are seeing real or fake content. This can quickly lead to the feeling that we can no longer trust any source. This is a dangerous development for democracy, because trust in information sources is crucial for political decision-making. This dynamic opens further possibilities for political propaganda. If many people believe that videos may be unverifiable fakes, it becomes easy to simply declare any inconvenient recording to be a deepfake.

Several methods can help us to identify misinformation applied to deepfakes:

- Can the video be found on reputable news sites, or only on dubious websites or social media platforms?

- Have fact-checking platforms already verified the video?

- Can I use a search engine to find out when and where the video first appeared?

- Do the statements and behaviour of the person shown contradict what they usually say and do?

3.4.4 Countering hate speech related to Holocaust distortion

Counter strategies (counter-speech, reporting and blocking) can be a good way to respond to Holocaust denial and holocaust distortion online in many cases. In counter-speech, those affected and their allies engage with hate messages instead of ignoring them or only reporting them. Derogatory comments, false statements, insults or threats are not left unchallenged online. They are specifically countered with good arguments. At the same time, everyone engaged in the counter-speech shows solidarity with the person under attack. If it is safe, teachers could encourage students to actively engage in discussions, express their viewpoints, and contribute to the creation of digital heritage within collective memory. This might include interviewing local/national minority groups that face hate speech, to better understand the issues they face and how to support them, focusing on what would be most beneficial to them.[60]

How to promote safety and resilience to disinformation among students?

■ **Teach elements of digital citizenship and information and media literacy**, with an emphasis on Holocaust denial and distortion. Talk to your students about digital risks, such as disinformation, but also risks to their own security. Encourage them to be cautious in online interactions.

■ **Teach internet 'etiquette'**. Encourage students to abide by the same standards of ethical behaviour online and offline.

■ **Practise 'critical ignoring'**. Critical ignoring involves selectively filtering and blocking out information in order to control one's information environment and reduce one's exposure to false and low-quality information (Kozyreva & Wineburg, 2023).

■ **Pay attention to your students' digital safety, well-being and security**. It is inadvisable to encourage them to engage directly with hateful content. Counter-messaging does not have to respond directly to hate speech, but can be posted independently. This is safer for young people, who should not be encouraged to engage online with those sharing hateful content. In all cases, it's important for young people to protect their profile so that strangers can see as little personal or private information as possible. Regularly ask your students: what information about you is publicly available? What can be found about you in search engines?

■ **Be a role model**. Post positively and empathetically, prioritizing information from recognized and legitimate sources.

■ **Encourage students to use safe ways to report, block or act against hate speech and disinformation**. Most online platforms and communities have rules to keep user discussions respectful, and will let users easily and anonymously report hate messages to administrators or moderators. For more serious cases – which may constitute incitement to violence, harassment, and/or threats

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60 Valuable resources offering guidance on using social media for educational purposes include websites such as https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2021/09/08/the-holocaust-and-social-media/ (Accessed 12.02.2024).

prohibited by law – refer your students to civil society organizations or competent authorities. Some countries have online tools to make reporting hate speech easier. Be a facilitator by providing information and emotional support, especially to students who have been impacted emotionally or have suffered discrimination and harassment online.

Annex I
Further resources for teachers

4.1 Resources on teaching and learning about the Holocaust

■ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum encyclopedia provides comprehensive information about the history of the Holocaust.
https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/

■ The Yad Vashem website offers a wealth of resources and educational material in many languages.
www.yadvashem.org

■ The website The Holocaust Explained, managed by The Wiener Holocaust Library, has been created to help learners understand the essential facts of the Nazi era and the Holocaust, as well as its causes and consequences.
https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/what-was-the-holocaust/what-was-genocide/

■ The website of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance contains various types of teaching materials.
https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/index.php/educational-materials

■ The Mémorial de la Shoah offers extensive educational materials in French and in English.
https://www.memorialdelashoah.org/pedagogie-et-formation/outils-pour-enseigner.html

■ Nazi-era memorial sites are active in Europe with a variety of educational programmes. An overview of these memorials is available in German, English and Spanish.
https://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de

4.2 Resources on addressing antisemitism through education

UNESCO collaborates with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to promote effective practices, key policies and pedagogies to address antisemitism through and in education:

■ UNESCO and OSCE/ODIHR. 2018. Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education. Guidelines for Policymakers.

■ UNESCO and OSCE/ODIHR. 2020. Addressing anti-Semitism in schools: training curricula
https://www.unesco.org/en/education-addressing-antisemitism

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has also developed a variety of teaching aids on education to address antisemitism. They offer guidance for responding effectively to challenging questions or behaviour from students on the topic of antisemitism.
https://www.osce.org/odihr/441146

4.3 Resources on countering Holocaust denial and distortion through education

■ Protect the Facts is an international initiative of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the United Nations, and UNESCO, who have joined forces to raise awareness of Holocaust distortion – both how to recognise it and how to counter it.
www.againstholocaustdistortion.org

■ The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Toolkit Against Holocaust Distortion is designed to help policy and decision makers and civil society take steps towards recognizing and countering Holocaust distortion. It provides leaders with practical tools, guidance and example activities to empower them to be ambassadors for change – in their institutions, governments, and communities.
https://againstdistortiontoolkit.holocaustremembrance.com/

■ The website 'Holocaust Denial on Trial' (hdot.org), was created by Professor Deborah E. Lipstadt and colleagues, and is a joint project of Emory University and Emory's Tam Institute for Jewish Studies. Its mission is to ensure perpetual access to the evidence, transcripts, judgement and appeal documents that made the case in the David Irving v. Penguin Books UK and Deborah Lipstadt trial, and to refute the misleading claims of Holocaust deniers with historical evidence. Alongside these goals, hdot.org strives to educate the public about the threat that Holocaust denial poses to history, society, law, and identity.
https://www.hdot.org

Annex II
Working Definition of Holocaust denial and distortion adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)

'Holocaust denial is discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place.

Holocaust denial may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people.

Holocaust denial in its various forms is an expression of antisemitism. The attempt to deny the genocide of the Jews is an effort to exonerate National Socialism and antisemitism from guilt or responsibility in the genocide of the Jewish people. Forms of Holocaust denial also include blaming the Jews for either exaggerating or creating the Shoah for political or financial gain as if the Shoah itself was the result of a conspiracy plotted by the Jews. In this, the goal is to make the Jews culpable and antisemitism once again legitimate.

The goals of Holocaust denial often are the rehabilitation of an explicit antisemitism and the promotion of political ideologies and conditions suitable for the advent of the very type of event it denies.

Distortion of the Holocaust refers, inter alia, to:

1. Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany;

2. Gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources;

3. Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;

4. Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. Those statements are not Holocaust denial but are closely connected to it as a radical form of antisemitism. They may suggest that the Holocaust did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of 'the Final Solution of the Jewish Question';

5. Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups.'

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Countering Holocaust denial

and distortion through education

A guide for teachers

A new UNESCO guide for teachers, in partnership with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, provides information and guidance on how to prevent Holocaust denial and distortion. In the digital age, the memory and fundamental facts of the Holocaust are under new threat from manipulation, falsification and the spread of violent ideologies. This guide provides pedagogical principles and practical strategies to support teachers in their approach to countering and preventing the spread of Holocaust disinformation and antisemitism.

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