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## **Editorial**

### **History teaching, pedagogy, curriculum and politics: dialogues and debates in regional, national, transnational, international and supranational settings**

Robert Guyver, University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth, UK

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#### **Dynamic similarities in pedagogy, curriculum and research**

The articles collected here, in this special edition of IJHLTR (Vol. 11.2), provide evidence of some remarkable and dynamic similarities in pedagogy, curriculum and research, and in the inter-relationships of stakeholders. Examined across these contributions are not just the positive opportunities afforded by the teaching and learning of history in these settings, but also the shared problems and difficulties experienced in negotiating and reconciling curriculum research and development across the raw realities of schools and classrooms, and across the sometimes powerfully confusing pressures of central and local (macro- and micro-) politics. Indeed, in the examples given here there are often conflicting expectations among politicians, the general public, history teachers or educators, and historians, about what the purposes of history education are.

The world in its broadest sense is well-represented in the fifteen articles presented here. There are two contributions from the *Americas* (Québec, Brazil), four from *Asia* (Turkey, Israel, the Republic of Korea [South Korea], and Hong Kong), two from *Australasia* (Australia and New Zealand), and seven from *Europe* (but from eight different jurisdictions) (Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia, Catalonia, England, Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland, and Iceland).

Rather than take each situation separately, this editorial will summarise and synthesise in the contexts of the common themes that arise in the articles.

#### **Two apparently irreconcilable models of the history curriculum**

Behind much of the *Angst* reported in the papers here, is the tension between two apparently irreconcilable models of the history curriculum: on the one hand an approach which promotes knowledge of national history and national values in the interests of preserving collective memory and fostering national identity (Lukas Perikleous reminds us in the context of this same debate in Cyprus, that Peter Seixas named this, *the best story* approach), and on the other a model based on a disciplinary focus supported by historical thinking, where the content is not dominated by the nation but has become diversified and globalised. Barton & Levstik in *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004) describe these as two 'stances': the identification stance and the analytic stance. The middle ground between these apparently irreconcilable models lies, partly at least and as will be explored below, in the discussions about criteria for the concept of 'significance'.

#### **Pedagogy and politics – getting the balance right between quality and quantity**

In their article about Turkey, Gülçin and Dursun Dilek highlight a common problem of a curriculum that is so full of content 'to be covered' that opportunities for teachers to explore an innovating disciplinary approach, using aspects of historical thinking, are much reduced by the pressure to deliver along *quantitative* lines. In England too the current debate has involved a political commitment to return schools to a 'back-to-basics' history curriculum which has within it a natural tendency to measure effectiveness by *how much* is known, particularly of a two thousand year-long national narrative. This tension is also apparent in debates highlighted in Brazil by Maria Auxiliadora Schmidt, and in Australia by Tony Taylor. Indeed, Taylor describes how a 'mile long and inch deep' survey approach was avoided in Australia.

On the other hand, in contrast to this predominantly quantitative approach there are strong pedagogical arguments in favour of a set of underpinning *qualitative* principles which counterbalance a drive towards 'mere' coverage. These focus on different ways of understanding and different approaches to history involving active and experiential learning, including inquiry, dialogue, discussion and a variety of forms of

reconstruction. The heated debate in the media in England is often about ways of constructing knowledge and understanding, and how appropriate they are, including recently whether it is valid to stimulate interest by using comic cartoon films or basing lessons on well-known characters in children's books. Also pedagogy can offer experience of organisational devices that can be structured into the curriculum, such as has happened in Australia but which have been seen across the world, including such mechanisms as overviews and depth studies, core and choice. Examples of organizational, discipline-based structures being used in Australia are given on pages 12 and 13. Similarly it is useful to think of content in terms not only of 'contextual frames' but also of scaffolding. Spiralling is another concept that can link quantity to quality whether it involves returning a later stage of development to a topic examined before, or if it means a spiralled use of discipline-based historical thinking with situations and related sources chosen for their age-appropriateness. The problem of what periods of history are best for different age-groups to study is a difficult one, and it might be advisable for those responsible for curriculum design to be aware of the dangers of allocating earlier periods only to the youngest children and more recent ones to the oldest. A balance may well be a sensible policy, despite its departure from the notion of a sequential, chronological syllabus. In support of chronological understanding a deliberate focus on periodisation can be effective.

Quality has another aspect that has an impact on quantity, and that is in the work of historians to promote excellence in standards of historical writing and research. It is clearly important to foster a relationship between those who teach history in schools, not only with those who specialize in it at university level, but also with those who may be outside institutional academic life who write books which explore and investigate aspects of the past using a disciplinary and scholarly approach. This would include at a local level all involved in different aspects of historical enquiry, including local history societies, museums, art galleries, archives, libraries and 'heritage' (site) providers and managers, all working together for the benefit of schools, perhaps using professionals with local knowledge (like architects to explain buildings).

Nevertheless there are further aspects of 'quantity' that remain important in any debate about school history, particularly dimensions that relate to the *amount of time* allowed within schools for the teaching of history, and, importantly the school years across which history is compulsory. In England history stops at 14, whereas in Australia it continues to 16. The article by Yosanne Vella about Malta shows how time for history can be reduced if curricular parameters and priorities change to reduce history's status.

It would be true to say that 'history wars' are often about getting the relationship right between quantity and quality. One aspect of quantity is about location – how much local, national, regional and global history is embedded into a curriculum. To have no national or regional history could be regarded as being just as wrong as having no international history. It is particularly about *how much* national and how the national should be handled, particularly with what perspectives (political, economic, social and cultural, etc), and indeed what proportions of those elements should contribute to an overall scheme. There can however be problems in negotiating a professional relationship between governments, teachers and historians.

### **Historians and politicians – promoting and questioning the landmarks**

Indeed, the relationship between the body politic and historians, glimpsed with such intensity in the example provided by the English case, has also been a feature elsewhere, not least in Israel as described by Tsafir Goldberg and David Gerwin, but also in Catalonia, Malta, Iceland, Brazil and Turkey. In an *Ha'aretz Israeli Daily* article by Or Kashti, highlighted by Goldberg and Gerwin, Professor Hanna Jablonka, senior historian and chairman of the professional history group at the Ministry of Education in Israel, dared to suggest that there were problems about the way the Holocaust was being taught ('Prof. Jablonka: "Apart from 'pornography of evil', learning the technical details of the Holocaust has no educational value"', 22 March, 2010). Set against this (Goldberg and Gerwin also noted), in relation to the teaching of the Holocaust, that Arabs living in Israel were expected to learn about the Holocaust, but not about the *Nakba* [or *Naqba*] (for the Palestinians Nakba Day [from Arabic *Yawm an-Nakba*, meaning 'Day of the Catastrophe'] on 15 May, is an annual day of commemoration of the displacement that preceded and followed the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948).

Historians were also involved in controversies affecting the aspirations of the Catalans to achieve

autonomy. The way history was taught in Catalonia came to be influenced by a small group of historians, radical but perceptive, owing much to the influence of the *Annales* school. However there emerged a strongly felt interpretational debate, in which Jaume Vives Vicens challenged Ferran Soldevila, and by so doing encouraged more self-awareness about internal conflicts (social and economic) in Catalonia, moving away from a position where *all* blame was apportioned to Madrid or Castile.

In Turkey, according to Gülçin and Dursun Dilek, academics Kenan Çayır and Mithat Sancar have both addressed the issue of 'getting even with the past'. Gülçin and Dursun comment on Çayır's recommendation that, '... it is necessary to bring sensitive and conflict-related topics into the classroom and discuss them. But teachers do not feel sufficiently educated to do that. He suggests that more field-studies should be undertaken in order to prepare education materials for teaching the sensitive and conflict-connected topics whose importance he emphasized for a democratic and pluralist education'. Similarly, Sancarsuggests that, '... in spite of a belief that our history might be full of glory and honour, goodness and fairness, it is necessary to develop a language that respects the pains of victims of the savage and dark sides of our past. In this perspective, he suggests that historiography, history education and text books should be revised'.

In England, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education chose two celebrity historians who were well-known for their television programmes to help him write the history curriculum: Simon Schama and Niall Ferguson. However, another historian, Richard J. Evans, supplied a parallel counter-narrative to these developments, contributing an impressive corpus of journalistic combativeness to the debate. He was slightly outside this charmed inner circle, but nevertheless in two coveted and prestigious academic positions at the University of Cambridge, being simultaneously Regius Professor of History and President of Wolfson Hall. Like La Trobe University historian John Hirst who had been a key player in the curriculum debate in Australia, Evans was or would be supplying the *questions* to the canon of *landmarks*.

After a very long gestation period (altogether from when the Coalition Government took office in May 2010 to February 2013, 3 months short of 3 years) the new English history curriculum, but still in its draft form, finally appeared, and reactions were, to say the least, mixed, falling along predicable lines, roughly corresponding to two different models of history teaching *and* at least two different schools of British history narrative, but also reflecting deeper attitudes to quantity and quality. Richard J. Evans felt justified in venting his historiographical ire in order to bring the other historians (although mainly Ferguson), and the hapless minister, Mr Gove, to account.

### **Citizenship and democracy**

The political issues latent in interpretations of citizenship have some significance in global debates about the history curriculum, especially as both history and citizenship concern themselves with aspects of political theory and indeed political action, either historically or as a force in present day politics, and particularly in notions of democracy. Democracy as experienced in what can broadly be called 'the West' (although 'the West' is a problematic construct), includes much that relates to the study of history, including certain cherished freedoms of access and expression, particularly access to the historical record (archives, libraries, museums, etc.), the freedom of historians to publish, broadcast and discuss their findings, and the freedom of teachers to teach different versions of history based on records of the past. The articles about both Malta and Hong Kong clearly show the strength of local feeling about wanting to defend the study of history against imposed constructs of citizenship.

Into this mix must go the whole debate about the relationship between history education and citizenship education, and the extent to which governments are seeking to use school history in order to centralise or decentralise – centralising to enforce a uniform or politicised view of the nation (and of the citizen within that structure), or – by contrast – decentralising to encourage regions or localities (some of which may already regard themselves as *nations* in their own right, or may aspire to independence and actual nationhood) to develop their own distinctive histories and identities, not necessarily to the exclusion of other histories, but perhaps alongside those of their neighbours, and those of peoples who have lived

even further afield. There is of course a danger in this, in that a multiplicity of microhistories may neglect some bigger events, further afield, *of significance*, which affect the local picture.

### **First nation peoples, plural identities and cosmopolitanism**

Across this debate is another which recognises that the world has become cosmopolitan: that people travel across oceans, nations and continents – for leisure, business or profession, life-style choice, or just economic or even political necessity; that people now communicate with speed and immediacy within ever expanding social media networks (that clearly includes Hong Kong in the example given here). This diversity and cosmopolitanism applies within nations, where plural identities make it more problematic to define a unifying narrative, unless the narrative itself can be stretched to respond to a multiplicity of human experiences. Negotiating appropriate juxtapositions of the Indigenous and settler narratives has caused difficulties in New Zealand and Australia. Sometimes settlers have been interpreted as ‘invaders’, or the narratives recontextualised, as contrasting accounts of settler ‘settlement’ and Indigenous ‘unsettlement’. Within both New Zealand and Australia (and indeed Canada) there are regions where the ‘first nation’ citizens continue to see themselves as belonging to an original concept of nation which may well fall outside that strictly defined as such by governments in Wellington or Canberra (or Ottawa). However, as has been noted, it might be possible to see this as an example of the growth of hybrid or plural identities. Indeed some governments are beginning to recognise that it might be politic to allow such autonomous community structures to co-exist alongside the more formal modern or central state as a viable set of alternatives, and to enshrine this in law, even in the Constitution. The sense of belonging which may be lost or undermined as a result of marginalisation is well explored by Stéphane Levesque, Jocelyn Létourneau and Raphaël Gani in their analysis of students’ experience in Québec, just as it is by Antoni Santisteban Fernández in his article about Catalonia.

Levesque, Létourneau and Gani argue that ‘Social Identity Theory (SIT) is important to the study of historical consciousness because it provides a critical lens for looking into the categorization process of narrating the history of the nation’. In the context of Francophone students in Québec, they examine the role of history as ‘a vital part of one’s own ingroup, the way one categorizes the past can tell us something about how he or she establishes a foundation for defining personal and collective identity’. We see how ‘young Québécois categorize actors and events into dichotomous or harmonious groupings and, as a corollary, structure their narration of Québec’s history’. There is certainly here in this categorizing pattern a strong sense of collective victimhood which seems to persist and draws a great deal of power and significance from the iconic event of 1759. This is very similar to the psychology experienced in Catalonia (a definite ingroup and outgroup identification has occurred here) and undoubtedly within Israel as described by Goldberg and Gerwin.

The tension between the Hong Kong government and protesters against the introduction of Moral and National Education [MNE] as a mandatory subject (so well described by Zardas Lee, Phoebe Tang and Carol Tsang) is about which narratives of Chinese and Hong Kong history can be taught. This is also a story of public reaction to a partial interpretation of history. Members of the public had come to believe that MNE might limit Hong Kong’s flexibility to define and perform their cultural and national identity, because they fear that the subject would focus on China’s successes and avoid its problems. The case of Hong Kong shows the strength of feeling among young people there about how their own values and identity as Hong Kong citizens are linked to cherished freedoms, including freedom of access to a fuller version of Chinese history in which Hong Kong’s own history is not seen only through a politicised lens.

Sometimes of course there can be deep tensions between these centrifugal or centripetal forces – as can be seen especially in the articles about Catalonia, Quebec and Cyprus: Catalonia’s relationship with Spain/Madrid, Quebec’s with Ottawa and the rest of Canada, and Cyprus’s with Greece/Athens. There are clearly issues here about control, particularly where there are dominant central governments and autonomous regions.

### **The legacies of past conflicts – internal or between neighbours**

The legacies of past conflicts can act as barriers to transnational understanding, and it is encouraging to

note within the articles about Turkey (Gülçin and Dursun Dilek) and the Republic of Korea (Sun Joo Kang) that there are moves to write common histories collaboratively as shared experiences across national frontiers, for example the history of the Ottoman Empire (experienced by many Arabian countries).

Sun Joo Kang describes how territorial disputes among the Republic of Korea (South Korea), China, and Japan have had historiographical implications as well as considerable impact on the current history curriculum, evoking intensified nationalistic perspectives in each country. She describes how, in order to ease the tension among the three countries, historians from all three have collaborated in writing a book on the modern history of East Asia (*Han Joog Il Gong dong Yuk sa Pyun chan Uiwon Hwai*, [The Committee on Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Collaborative Writing of East Asian History], 2007). She writes, '... although this book has not been widely read, scholars and educators anticipate that continuing efforts to build a consensus on a common past among the three countries will narrow historiographical and political gaps and reduce or eliminate conflicts'.

In their article, 'A question of identity? Purpose, policy and practice in the teaching of history in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland', Alan McCully and Fionnuala Waldron achieve a remarkable set of parallel commentaries on curriculum developments in history before and after partition and during and after 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland which had an effect on both sides of the border. What emerges is a paradigm for reducing conflict in societies where identity-related politics had been fed by partisan interpretations of history. With analogous developments in history-related pedagogy which welcomed the multi-perspectivity and critical enquiry that went hand-in-hand with postmodern and postcolonial interpretations of history, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland embraced plurality with a much greater tolerance of difference. However some differences remain, significantly in Northern Ireland's reluctance to teach political history to younger age-groups. Nevertheless research in the field (e.g. by Keith Barton and Alan McCully) has pointed to the ability even of primary students to bring a surprisingly sophisticated understanding to the political dimensions of Northern Ireland's and Ireland's histories.

### **Regional and supranational re-alignments on small and large scales**

The European Union features in some of these papers, and in Danijela Trskan's article the EU plays a part in the re-shaping of Slovenia's history curriculum where its influence can be seen in sharp contradistinction to the old 'communist bloc' alignments of the Cold War. Clear evidence of the impact of the EU is in a move away from Slovenia being seen mainly as part of Yugoslavia and in its transformation to being part of a wider and transnational Europe. As a result the history curriculum itself places Slovenia in a wider setting with its centre more to the north and west than as it had been in the past when its centre had been both to the south and to the east.

Somewhat differently, Catalonia, while still in the dying days of the Franco regime in the early 1970s, felt the effect of Madrid's drive to rewrite Spanish history in order to present the trajectory of the Spanish past as being part of a pan-European project right up to the present. Indeed the composite monarchies at the time of Charles V and Philip II had a trans-European feel to them. However, this kind of anachronism was a form of wishful thinking that did not entirely convince, especially locally in Catalonia and in Spain's other autonomous regions, mainly because of the as yet unresolved legacies of the Spanish Civil War.

Turkey is taking the possibility of its future membership of the EU very seriously. It would however be unfair to compare the situation in Turkey now with Spain in the early 1970s, especially as there seems to have been a genuine shift both in pedagogy and historiography – which definitely had not happened in Franco's Spain. The Council of Europe criteria so carefully described by Gülçin and Dursun Dilek are having an impact on the study of the past and elide with moves already being initiated to find ways of teaching a common past (e.g. the Ottoman Empire) across national boundaries, thus reducing the potential for using the past to feed continuing conflicts.

It is interesting to take the history curriculum situation inside Cyprus as described by Lukas Perikleous as evidence of tension between two narrative models – *Hellenocentric* and *Cyprocentric*, indeed not unlike the situation as seen in Israel (according to Tsafirir Goldberg and David Gerwin) who describe an ongoing *liberal-conservative pendulum*. The essence of the *Cyprocentric* model, which at the moment challenges the dominant Hellenocentric one, is that it has a great deal in common with the new Turkish model.

It is about understanding rather than blaming or labelling, and it is about history teaching and learning having an eirenic purpose, i.e. for peace rather than conflict.

### **The nature of the narrative**

One point of contention is the nature of the narrative itself, who peoples it, and what focus it might take. Politicians, partly because politics is their business, tend to favour a narrative that is dominated by political and quite often military events or landmarks. This was noted by Antoni Santisteban Fernández in Catalonia, and has certainly been a temptation for Michael Gove in England. But a narrative does not have to be mainly political. It can include the social, the economic and indeed the cultural, religious, scientific and technological. A narrative can and clearly should include women and children as well as men. It also has the potential to embrace the histories of other socio-economic groups to supplement or counter-balance the inevitable ruling classes. A narrative can use local examples to illustrate the national.

However, as has been seen in the case of Northern Ireland it is important not to neglect political history in order to protect younger children from the possibility of being tainted by partisan identity politics. If explanation rather than anachronistic celebration is at the heart of history learning and teaching, then the dangers of politicizing school history can be avoided.

Neither does a narrative have to be 'ethnocentric', although this label needs to be unpacked. It would be correctly used if it meant an exclusive focus on the story of a particular (or majority) ethnic population of the nation, although – and more problematically – it is sometimes used just to mean the centrality supplied by an exclusively national focus, even though that focus may include plural identities. In which case *Anglocentric* – as an example of a focus on the history of a nation, namely England – although implying a certain narrowness of focus (i.e. English rather than British), does not necessarily also mean ethnocentric, particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, given England's diversity. Such a diversity was also seen as a feature of Catalonia's history, and this plurality together with the sense of Catalonia being (like other parts of the world discussed in this journal-edition) a place of 'passage', has acted as a counterbalance to those wanting a less enlightened form of Catalan nationalism or Catalanism.

### **Significance**

In seeking to find a middle way between a mainly national approach and one characterised by history as a discipline, it is necessary to unpack some of the component parts of the most influential envelope into which these concepts have been placed, which is probably Peter Seixas's six 'benchmarks for historical thinking' (Establish historical significance, Use primary source evidence, Identify continuity and change, Analyze cause and consequence, Take historical perspectives and Understand ethical dimensions of history). As Mark Sheehan has pointed out in his New Zealand case study, there can be constructive links between 'national' events and international events in which (national) citizens took part, especially when examining which events and developments in the past have been significant. It would be interesting to debate the extent to which there is a relationship between significance (or criteria for the selection of significant events or developments) and metanarrative.

Nevertheless, significance, although it can be appropriated by politicians for the nation (and, it could be argued, understandably so, but with some caveats) is a factor which is played out on stages and in arenas which are not just national, but are also local, regional, international and transnational. Gallipoli, for example, as a military event with significance [from 25 April 1915 to 9 January 1916, during the First World War], is not just about the role of the Anzacs (from New Zealand and Australia, as well as all of their dependencies) but affects, or is affected by, the histories of many European countries, and – of course – by the history of the Turks and the Ottoman Empire. As Stéphane Lévesque, Jocelyn Létourneau and Raphaël Gani, have pointed out, the loss of French Québec to 'les Anglais' (*bataille des plaines d'Abraham* or *première bataille de Québec*) in 1759, was not just a local event with significance for *les Québécois*, but was a battle linked to a wider war (the Seven Years War, *La Guerre des Sept Ans*) with *global* significance affecting many nations and peoples, although acutely felt, and with long-term consequences, in Québec.

Interestingly, J.H.Elliott, who was born in 1930, in his recent reflection on a long life as an historian, *History in the Making* (Yale, 2012) (especially Chapter 2, 'National and transnational history', pp. 40-79), and using many examples from his researches into the histories of Catalonia and Spain, makes a strong case for an alliance of national and transnational history, not least because the transnational throws a fresh and comprehending light on the national. However, Sun Joo Kang mentions the writings, in a similar vein, of Peter Stearns, but points out that over-internationalising the history of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) might reduce its national history to a position of relative insignificance, rather problematically.

### **The media**

The role of the media in history curriculum debates can be seen in sharp focus in the articles about Australia, Israel and England. We also see in these pages that history teacher educators, including those contributing to these pages, have been willing *themselves* to go to the media to express strong views about developments in history education. We see this for Malta as well as the others mentioned above. Newspapers tend to occupy determinable, predicable political positions, but are also predisposed to simplify or polarise the stances of the players, indeed as David Cannadine suggested, to 'irreconcilable simplicities'.

Tony Taylor is right to juxtapose, in the title of his piece, *politics* and *professionalism*, because politicians, in their drive to impose a party-political model of the history curriculum on schools, are often egged on by the press. With the press possibly therefore suspecting the professionals themselves of having political agendas, politicians have a tendency to over-ride or ignore the professional concerns of historians, history teacher educators and teachers of history. Taylor provides an example of where the good sense of professionals involved in the construction of Australia's history curriculum held on to professional commonsense to frame a curriculum that was teachable. Australia had adopted a model that owed a great deal to the 'disciplinary' principles of Peter Seixas, and, in a workable compromise had retained national history but in a global and transnational setting across a largely sequential set of chronologies that would not have been unfamiliar to those favouring a more traditional approach. YosanneVella demonstrates that going public on her deep concerns over the future of history in Malta's schools paid dividends in that notice was eventually taken.

### **What young people know – and how they know it**

Many of the nations, aspiring nations or autonomous regions represented in these papers give examples of politicians, often encouraged by agitating sectors of the media, deploring the lack of traditional historical knowledge among young people. An example of this, described by Súsanna Margrét Gestsdóttir was a prime minister of Iceland who was shocked that students visiting his official residence were unable to name former prime ministers.

Despite having history education cut back at various stages, once in order to incorporate it within Social Studies, Icelandic students did remarkably well in analyzing sources in a joint project with students from Portugal and Italy. Like many other places (e.g. Turkey, Israel, the Republic of Korea) Iceland has suffered from over-dependence on textbooks, and the textbook market has been slow to change, especially to incorporate new approaches to history. In common with other experiences described in these articles there is a move away from seeing history as being there merely to reinforce a national heroic myth about the continuation of an ethnocentric way of life that goes back to the sagas. An increase in the development of historical consciousness in schools also reflects a move to a more pluralistic approach which embeds a democratic and inclusive way of life.

As Maria Auxiliadora Schmidt explains in her article on Brazil, there is a need to understand the difference between teachers' knowledge and the pupils' or students' knowledge (*saber escolar* in Portuguese). She writes, 'The process of internationalization and the rites of passage by which historical consciousness can be developed are important factors and will undoubtedly be different within the range of school age-groups. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, attempts at a reconstruction of the history disciplinary code have been taken, not only in Brazil, but also in different countries, and this can be seen in debates and proposals which, dialogically, try to establish articulations and more organic networks linking the

dimensions of historical culture and scholar (school) culture, not in an instrumental sense, but in a perspective that will prove to be more emancipating'. A more organic underpinning of the relationships between politicians, historians and teachers would certainly be a recommendation which would benefit history teaching in many countries.

There does seem to be a continuing problem however, which has been noted by Sun Joo Kang (on the Republic of Korea) and by Gülçin and Dursun Dilek (Turkey), that there is sometimes just not enough time to bring a critically evaluative approach to these long lists which represent canons of collective memory. Landmarks only become valid within history education, as has been seen, when they are accompanied by critical enquiry – indeed by questions.

### **Schemes which subsume history in other subjects (Social Studies and Citizenship)**

In some of these articles (e.g. Malta by Yosanne Vella) either citizenship studies or social studies have been seen, often with some justification, as being a threat to the time allowed for history, or even as a threat to the very existence of history as a distinct subject in its own right.

In Malta, Yosanne Vella points out the intervention of historian Henry Frendo (*Times of Malta*, 27 March, 2009) who reacted in this way when hearing rumours that history was to be part of integrated studies: 'But what is now in store for the rising generation is very probably greater illiteracy in so far as Maltese history goes – an ignorance as to who and what Malta and the Maltese are or have become; the shared past that has seen Malta and the Maltese emerge as a people, a nation and a state. Without a sense of nationality and nationhood based on an empirical non-dogmatic account of past times, especially the last few centuries, there can be little self-identity, self-esteem, affinity, communion, motivation or aspiration or, indeed, critical appreciation or understanding, in any "national" sense'.

As in other countries the New History approach was encouraged by historians, and in the case of Malta by Michael Sant who built source work into public examinations. Thus there were two strands – a vigorous fight to keep history in the curriculum, appealing to what would be lost to future Maltese citizens, and on the other a reform of history teaching itself. After much lobbying and fighting in the press, in the end in Malta history did not have to be squeezed into a minimum amount of time within Citizenship studies and was retained as a subject.

Nevertheless in some successful examples given in these articles, and where history has been under less threat than in Malta, without losing its integrity, and demonstrating a more effective model than being a small (and slowly disappearing part of citizenship studies) – history has been effectively *combined* with aspects of citizenship, especially where both content focuses *and* associated procedural approaches have reflected critical enquiry as well as democratic inclusiveness and plurality.

### **Conclusions: transnational debates and transnational action in learning, teaching and research**

There seems to be a growing consensus about what makes for a good history education across the world. This includes getting the balance right between quantity and quality, an increasingly eirenic (peace-oriented) approach to neighbours, setting aside a tendency to stress old conflicts, and a growing use of the critical tools of historical thinking when approaching content, whether the contextual frames are local, national or international.

David Cannadine ended his just published *The Undivided Past – History beyond our Differences* (Allen Lane, 2013) with this paragraph (p. 264):

... the history of humankind is at least as much about cooperation as it is about conflict, and about kindness to strangers as about the obsession with otherness and alterity. To write about the past no less than to live in the present, we need to see beyond our differences, our sectional interests, our identity politics, and our parochial concerns to embrace and to celebrate the common humanity that has always bound us together, that still binds us together today, and that will continue to bind us together in the future.

## **Scarcely an Immaculate Conception: New Professionalism Encounters Old Politics in the Formation of the Australian National History Curriculum**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper deals with the political and educational background to the formation of the Australian national history curriculum first under the auspices of a newly-formed National Curriculum Board (2008-2009) and then under the auspices of the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2008-date) during the period 2008-2010. The author describes and analyses the political and educational circumstances that have led to interventions in the curriculum design process that may well vitiate the original intentions of the curriculum designers. The process of curriculum design began in 2008 with the formation of a professionally-based History Advisory Group of which the author was a member (2008-2012). The author outlines the activities and contribution of the History Advisory Group and its sometimes fraught relations with the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The author argues that these interventions which have been both political and educational, together with the well-intentioned process of consultation has led to unfortunate design changes and to politically-motivated delays in curriculum implementation which could lead to its being overturned by a successor conservative coalition government.*

**Keywords:** Educational Reform, History Curriculum, Australia, Consultative Process, Political Interference, Professionalism

### **Prologue**

On December 8<sup>th</sup> 2010, Peter Garrett, Commonwealth Minister for School Education, former lead singer in Midnight Oil and onetime environmental activist, announced that the draft national curriculum in English, mathematics science and history had been unanimously endorsed by the states and territories and would be subject to final agreement in October 2011. Additional drafts would emerge from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and agreement on the other curriculum subjects was expected to follow in due course.

In a memorable TV news clip of the occasion, the gangling, shaven-headed and smiling Garrett gazed down at his flock of eight grinning state and territory education ministers who were clustering around him in an apparent show of solidarity. Garrett was smiling because, as a politician under pressure, his federal department had come up with consensus agreement on December 8<sup>th</sup>, just before a revised pre-Christmas deadline. The state and territory ministers were grinning because they had bought time to carry on blocking, ducking and weaving until the nascent Australian curriculum was shaped to suit their own localised interests, a position that would especially be the case when it came to the national history curriculum.

As it happens, December 8<sup>th</sup> is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in the Catholic liturgy. What had happened prior to Garret's announcement however was far from immaculate in conception. The proposed history curriculum was the consequence of a combination of diligent and unprecedented curriculum planning by ACARA professionals, whimsical interference by ACARA board members and, most importantly of all, political interference by the states and territories.

### **ACARA and the new professionalism**

Previous attempts to devise a national curriculum in Australia stretched as far back as 1836 when Governor Bourke, progressive Whig governor of the then colony of New South Wales, attempted to introduce the non-denominational Irish National System into the new colony. In a battle that will be very familiar to students of English history, the local Anglican hierarchy blocked the move on the grounds that Anglican taxpayers should not be expected to subvent a controversial system that supported even limited cross-denominational religious instruction in schools<sup>1</sup>.

It was 137 years before another attempt to develop a national approach to education when, in 1973, the reformist Australian Labor Party (ALP) government led by its charismatic leader Gough Whitlam, set up the Canberra-based Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), a small agency whose job it was to provide, on a permissive basis, model curriculum materials for the eight states and territories. However, budget cuts during the subsequent 1975-1983 Malcolm Fraser-led conservative Liberal/National Party coalition (LNP) diminished the CDC's operations and it was finally closed down in 1984 during the early years of the Hawke 1983-1991 ALP administration. Between 1991 and 2006, there was very little mention of national curriculum, that is until early in 2006 when the LNP government led by John Howard, a prime minister who took a personal interest in history education, proposed a national approach to the teaching and learning of Australian history – as a precursor to adding in English, mathematics and science as the other 'core' subjects. This solipsistic 2006 initiative foundered when Howard was defeated in a late 2007 general election, to be replaced as prime minister by (Blair clone) Kevin Rudd.

What had characterised that period of national curriculum development in school history 1973-2007 therefore was the curious combination of tentative, haphazard and sporadic materials provision such as the highly regarded, but Victorian schools-only, Social Education Materials Project (SEMP) and key 2006-7 direct personal interventions in curriculum construction by Prime Minister Howard. This latter event saw Howard's office attempting to guide closely and firmly the detailed design of Australian history education in ways that satisfied the then prime minister<sup>2</sup>.

In contrast, what characterised national curriculum development during the Rudd government years (2007-2010<sup>3</sup>) was first, a coordinated approach to comprehensive national curriculum that involved all states and territories as partners, second, a publicly announced schedule of national development, consultation and implementation and third, the 2008 creation of an apolitical arm's length curriculum agency, the National Curriculum Board, to be retitled the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Agency in 2009. The NCB/ACARA board had full representation of states and territories as well as of non-government education systems. In the space of one year, the federal approach to national curriculum had changed from the ad hoc non-consultative improvisation and personal intervention LNP approach to the systematic and consultative policy-framing and professional ALP approach.

In the new curriculum formulation, school history was to be a core subject, with English mathematics and science in Years Foundation -10 (age 5 through ages 15/16). Furthermore ACARA would develop national senior (Years 11 and 12) curriculum frameworks in ancient and modern history. The F-10 history curriculum was to be implemented in 2011 and two senior history frameworks (Years 11 and 12 Modern and Ancient) were set for implementation in 2014 as complementary offerings to already established local courses at that level.

### **Framing the Australian Curriculum in History**

Briefly, the construction of the Australian Curriculum in history began its public life in late 2008 when it was announced that eminent historian and president of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia Professor Stuart Macintyre was, appointed as 'Lead Writer' to draft a 'Framing Paper' which would outline the proposed aims, principles and structure of ACARA's history curriculum F-10. Working with the author and other colleagues, Macintyre drew up a concise but comprehensive document that was published for consultation in November 2008<sup>4</sup>. In the NCB's Framing Paper, Macintyre made it quite plain that the F-10 program would be based on a world history perspective, that students would develop discipline-based historical *Knowledge, Skills and Understandings* through inquiry-based learning and that *Overviews* linked to *Studies in Depth* were to form an essential part of the secondary (Years 7-10) curriculum. Knowledge and Understandings were to be linked together in a single category and key Understandings were to be discipline-specific. What follows is an edited version of the proposed Understandings:

- Historical significance: the principles behind the selection of what should be remembered, investigated, taught and learned.

- Evidence: how to find, select and interpret historical evidence. This involves understanding the nature of a primary source, locating its provenance and context.
- Continuity and change: dealing with the complexity of the past. This involves the capacity to understand the sequence of events, to make connections by means of organising concepts including periodisation
- Cause and consequence: the interplay of human agency and conditions. This involves an appreciation of motivation and contestation
- Historical perspectives: the cognitive act of understanding the different social, cultural and intellectual contexts that shaped people's lives and actions in the past.
- Historical empathy and moral judgement: the capacity to enter into the world of the past with an informed imagination and ethical responsibility.
- Contestation and contestability: dealing with alternative accounts of the past. History is a form of knowledge that shapes popular sentiment and frequently enters into public debate.

The origins of these Understandings lay in the 2003 Australian historical literacy framework (twelve elements) devised by the author (with Carmel Young) in 2003<sup>5</sup> and the 2006 onwards Peter Seixas-led Canadian project on historical thinking (six elements)<sup>6</sup>. For example, Contestability is an Australian inclusion and Perspectives is a Canadian inclusion. Interestingly, empathy, which had been dying a slow death in the UK's various versions of a national history curriculum, was still regarded as a key component in the NCB paper. This was arguably because in Australia, empathy, as a concept had none of the Thatcher-era political baggage it had acquired in the UK. As for Contestability, evidence gleaned by the author in his work as director of the Australian national history centre 2001-2007 clearly showed that school students from Year 5 onwards could engage with and benefit from an examination and discussion of varying views and representations of the past.

It was at that time, in late 2008 and early 2009 that the then NCB set up a history advisory group (AG) that consisted of Stuart Macintyre, Paul Kiem (president of the History Teachers' Association Australia) and the author. A highly capable NCB project officer, a former history/geography teacher, was assigned to the AG to assist with drafting and liaison. The AG was told that the curriculum design would be based on 40 hours per annum at the primary school level (Years F-6 within an integrated curriculum) and 80 hours at the secondary level (Years 7-10). On that basis, the AG began its work.

### **The Shape Paper**

As the Framing Paper went out for national consultation – over the Christmas (summer) holiday period unfortunately – the AG worked with two writing teams and with NCB officials in devising the next key NCB document, the draft Shape Paper, a 'scope and sequence' document in the parlance of Australian education systems. The draft Shape Paper, published in May 2009 under the aegis of the NCB's replacement, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA – headquarters by now moved from Melbourne to Sydney) was to form a consultation guide for teachers and other interested parties who were to respond throughout the rest of that year prior to the publication of the close-to-final draft curriculum document in 2010.

The Shape Paper added the more generic skill of problem solving to its Understandings, an idea that was later dropped. What then followed was, in effect, an F-10 syllabus. Years F-6 were to be based on four 'focus questions':

- What do we know about the past?
- How did Australians live in the past?
- How did people live in other places?
- How has the past influenced the present?

Ideas and themes that would underlie the F-6 course were to be:

- A capacity to move from local to regional, national and global contexts
- A focus on Australian social history
- An opportunity to study North American, European and Asia-Pacific topics

In essence, F-6 was laid out as a predominantly Australian set of themes, with the opportunity to develop global contexts.

As for Years 7-10, four major (year-by-year) topics were scheduled for development. These were to be:

- History from the time of the earliest human communities to the end of the Ancient period (c. 60,000 BC–c. 500 AD)
- History from the end of the Ancient period to the beginning of the Modern period (c. 500–1750)
- The Modern World and Australia (1750–1901)
- Australia in the Modern World (1901–present)

Within that framework, key themes to be explored were:

- movement of peoples
- human transformation of the environment
- characteristics of civilisations — early forms of government, religion, society and culture
- rise and fall of large empires
- heritage
- nature of history, role and methodologies of the historian

Important problems that needed to be dealt with here were content overload, repetition of primary level Australian topics, Australian exceptionalism and challenging levels of abstract thinking implied in the Years 9 and 10 themes and topics.

Once published, the Shape Paper received, as anticipated, mixed reviews and the consultation process led to refinements in the proposed course of study and throughout 2009 and 2010 the AG worked with ACARA project officials in attempting to refine the document and provide the basis for a fully-fledged F-10 curriculum framework in time for the pre-Christmas 2010 deadline. It was at this stage that the AG realised that these refinements were seemingly arrived at in a whimsical way within ACARA itself. Meanwhile, there was informed and constructive feedback from the professional education community together with some uninformed and unconstructive commentary from the press, politicians and from fringe think tanks, the contributions of the former were treated seriously and the fulminations of the latter were noted and largely ignored.

### **Capricious interference**

During that process of refinement in 2009, it became clear to members of the AG (Macintyre, Kiem and the author) that there were other, anonymous drafting and redrafting hands at work beyond the confines of the small, known and highly capable NCB writing teams. Over that year, numerous primary and secondary drafts were despatched to the NCB for comment. All too frequently, these AG-endorsed drafts that had been sent on for NCB approval were returned with major changes that were unexplained and seemed (to the AG and to the writers at least) arbitrary in nature. Over the course of the year, members of the AG and successive writing teams<sup>7</sup> became increasingly frustrated at this unattributed form of intervention, so much so that the AG queried the lack of transparency and confusion about ownership – which is when the AG discovered for the first time that the NCB had set up a Curriculum Committee whose job it was to oversee the drafts and, where necessary, redraft for further work. It was explained to the AG and to the writers that several members of the anonymous Curriculum Committee had ‘an interest or background in history’.<sup>8</sup> A brief example of the kind of problem the AG faced was the deletion of topics and themes and replacement of these deletions with new, out-of-the-blue alternatives. A good case in point was the initial inclusion of the Vikings in the primary curriculum as topic that had exploration/expansion elements, beliefs

and values aspects and gender perspectives as well as being an area of study that had a long track record in fostering student engagement. Submitted to the NCB in an early 2009 draft, the document returned with the usual quota of lesser modifications but with Vikings now deleted and replaced by the Celts. There was no explanation for such a significant change. Not only that but a Year 7 'What is History?' introductory Depth Study had also vanished without trace. This latter unit of work was intended to provide a common disciplinary starting point for students beginning high school with a wide variety of primary school historical experiences, allowing for the states that began secondary education at Year 8 – in which case the unit was to be a common end-of-primary experience.

The AG's response was first that there were serious historical issues with the Celts as a topic at this Year 8 stage, not least the debate about whether or not the Celts actually existed as a self-identified group. A second reaction was general consternation about what had happened to the 'What is History?' unit.

At this time, another problem arose. The original figures of 80 hours of history per annum for secondary schools and 40 hours for primary, were modified down to a notional 70 hours for secondary and then revamped to a lower figure of 60 hours. Eventually, formal mentions of indicative figures for either sector were dropped altogether. The AG's conclusion regarding this lowering of timetabled expectations for history as a core subject was that the state and territory representatives on the ACARA Board were reluctant to give any kind of commitment to history time slots because this would put pressure in existing and established subject areas that were considered to be more important. These were the other core subjects English, mathematics and science, as well as the timetable-heavy subject such as the arts and physical education. By the time this whole process finished in late 2010, the figure for primary schools had disappeared altogether and the secondary school figure had dropped to an unofficial 50 hours, but with nothing stated in the curriculum documentation. This slow abandonment of NCB/ACARA's commitment to establishing a clear space in timetable of history was regarded by members of the AG as a betrayal of the NCB's original intentions and as an invitation to schools to bury the subject in a corner of their timetables. As it happens, in its trial of the new curriculum, a government high school situated close to both of the authors has allocated 20 hours per annum to history and geography and economics and civics education.

By this time (early 2010), the AG was becoming increasingly exasperated with this kind of arbitrary intervention, so much so that the author spent a weekend drafting his own version of what an F-10 curriculum might look like which he then distributed to the AG, the writers and to the relevant ACARA officials. This illustrative (not pre-emptive) initiative provoked an immediate response. ACARA officials flew down to Melbourne from their new headquarters Sydney and convened what could only be called a crisis meeting. During that meeting, the AG forcefully made the point that the curriculum design process was being inappropriately and adversely affected by absence of process, non-consultative decision-making and lack of transparency. Assurances were given but the interventions and lack of transparency continued on into 2010, so much so that in May 2010, Stuart Macintyre spoke out publicly in *The Australian*, a Murdoch paper not normally eager to provide a platform for Macintyre's thoughts:

Professor Macintyre told *The Australian* the consultation process set up by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority had become derailed by 'capricious' decisions made to change the course without reference to the expert advisory groups or the writers. 'Some of the changes appeared out of nowhere and were difficult to deal with', he said. 'There would be no consultation or explanation, and we didn't have a chance to explain why we did things a certain way.'<sup>9</sup>

It was at this stage a new senior manager responsible for history and science was appointed and more transparent processes were immediately set up, a frankness regarding decision-making processes came into play and status/ownership of drafts became more negotiable. Under this new regime, the AG quickly began to gain more confidence that its work and the work of several newly-appointed writers was being taken seriously by ACARA. Throughout that whole period of uncertainty and exasperation in 2009 and early 2010, it is important to point out that the AG's project officer had earned and retained the unqualified support and respect of the AG and of the history writers.

In retrospect, the NCB/ACARA bedding-down period 2008-2010 was bound to produce problems. NCB/ACARA, newly-formed national body that was recruiting from eight different jurisdictions each with its own organisational culture, was also trying to hire experienced staff in mid-career, staff who might be reluctant to abandon their own career routes and their homes for what could turn out to be a short-term and domestically expensive diversion from their established work and life trajectories. Having said that the AG was very fortunate in the NCB's initial selection of its project officer and in ACARA's 2010 appointment of its senior curriculum manager. It did however take a year and a half to settle the accumulating issues that Stuart Macintyre finally felt compelled to raise publicly in May 2010.

### **New federalism, old rivalries**

If we look more closely at the political interference issue, Garrett was very much a junior minister in a Kevin Rudd Australian Labor Party (ALP) government that had, in late 2007, defeated the Liberal National Party (LNP) coalition led by Prime Minister John Howard. When novice prime minister Rudd came to power, he promised a new approach to federal politics that would eschew the customary blame game in which jurisdictions condemned federal policies for their own difficulties, and vice versa and used their local claims as blockers to force concessions out of Canberra. In this game, much local political capital can be made out of being parochially stubborn. Yet, at the same time, the jurisdictions have a history of being only too happy to receive annual federal grants from Canberra, a phenomenon that provoked the frequently acerbic ALP federal treasurer (later prime minister) Paul Keating into famously remarking that it was unwise to stand between a state premier and a bucket of money<sup>10</sup>.

In *Yes Minister* style, the political rhetoric applied in these circumstances follows a familiar pattern. An unwelcome (initially, that is) federal intervention may attract one or more of the following parochial positioning descriptors. It can go too far; it doesn't go far enough; it is too soon; it is too late; it doesn't provide enough funding; it provides unequal funding to the different jurisdictions; it is heading in the wrong direction – and, finally, it does not meet the high standards required of our 'world's best practice' operations<sup>11</sup>. Unless, of course, much larger buckets of money are sent down the highway from Canberra.

Of the state premiers, it is the leader of New South Wales (NSW) who normally carries most political clout. NSW is the most populous state in Australia, was the nation's oldest colony and is a jurisdiction with a reputation for brashness, sharp practice and for playing hardball politics. So wary are Canberra governments, of whatever political stripe, when dealing with NSW that, whenever some major, national policy issue is under consideration, almost the first question asked in the Canberra planning period is 'How will NSW take it?' And so dominant in national education decision-making is NSW that the obstructionist comment, 'We don't do that in NSW' has become a standing joke with educators in the other states and territories<sup>12</sup>.

In education matters, NSW has a reputation for being conservative. For example, NSW is the only jurisdiction to retain the title 'inspector' for its curriculum officials, was the last state to retain public examinations at Year 10 (until 2011) and retains a high stakes examination regime at Year 12 known as the High School Certificate (HSC). Not only that but NSW has, on several occasions refused to join in federal initiatives, almost invariably using the rationale that federal policy, even that of a politically-aligned national government, would adversely affect NSW's 'world class' education system.<sup>13</sup> As far as the national curriculum is concerned, this approach was adopted by the then ALP state premier Maurice Lemma as early as 2008. Three years later, a characteristic example of the continuing nature of the 'world class' discourse was offered by conservative coalition education minister Adrian Piccoli from this debate in the NSW Legislative Assembly (lower house) on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2011<sup>14</sup>:

This [by now conservative coalition] Government remains committed to a national curriculum but wants it to be done properly. New South Wales has a world-class education system and a world-class curriculum. What replaces the existing New South Wales curriculum has to be at least as good as what is presently in place and the Government is not confident that what is currently on the table meets that very high standard.

At the time of writing (September 2012), while all the other jurisdictions have agreed on an implementation schedule, NSW has just committed itself formally to a full implementation of the national curriculum by the end of 2016, three years later than most other jurisdictions.

As for the other jurisdictions, Victoria, the second most populous state, has, in the past, generally been regarded as a jurisdiction run by an old-money, conservative, establishment. At its simplest, Victoria was the Protestant-Scottish state, in contrast to a Catholic-Irish NSW. Modern Victoria however is a much-changed society with its capital Melbourne an attractive and multiculturally varied city with a relatively progressive education system. In federal terms, after expressing initial doubts, Victorian governments tend to see what they can get out of Canberra's education funding, but with minimal changes to their existing *modus operandi*.

At the other end of the scale, the two territories (the Australian Capital Territory, or ACT, and the Northern Territory) have such small populations and so few schools that they carry very little clout in the political scheme of things. Much the same goes for South Australia and Tasmania.

There are two anomalous states and these are Western Australia (WA) and Queensland. Each of these states has been the home of anti-centralist (and sometimes over-heatedly secessionist) tendencies and each has had a recent history of strong-willed radical conservative leadership<sup>15</sup>. More recently, WA gained new authority thanks to the strength of its mining boom and has ramped up both real and confected anger about the dominance of Canberra and the eastern states (collectively referred to as 'Over East').

Queensland, on the other hand, has, since demagogue Joh Bjelke-Petersen's political demise in 1987, been more amenable to ideas from 'Down South', as long as they are accompanied by money.

What this means is that federal governments have to play two games at once when dealing with the states and territories. Game One is dealing with premiers/ministers of the same political persuasion who may or may not be sympathetically disposed to Canberra's policies. Game Two is dealing with politically hostile premiers/chief ministers, who also may, or may not be, sympathetically disposed to Canberra's policies. In 2012, the ALP federal government faces a governance nightmare, low in popularity (thanks to its talent for serial acts of public relations incompetence) and faced by a rampant federal opposition supported by conservative premiers in the four major jurisdictions of NSW, Victoria, Queensland and WA.

When it comes to curriculum policy, the major states of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia each has a semi-autonomous, state government-funded curriculum agency that oversees curriculum design, assessment and reporting. These are, respectively the NSW Board of Studies (NSW BoS), the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA), the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (TQA) and the Curriculum Council of Western Australia (CCWA). The smaller jurisdictions, South Australia, ACT and NT have departments or sections that deal with curriculum design and implementation.

Of the major curriculum agencies, the NSW BoS, until late 2010, maintained a warily cautious approach to the Australian Curriculum, the Victorians exhibited a similarly careful response, Queenslanders jumped on the national curriculum bandwagon with some eagerness and with a great deal of professionalism and WA slowly accepted the inevitability of change.

Having said that, the two largest agencies, the NSW BoS and the VCAA each played an important part in blocking and revamping the history curriculum to suit their own established approach to syllabus design. Knowing that the ACARA deadline for a national sign-off across all four core subjects was October 2010, in September of that year, the NSW BoS began a public campaign on 13<sup>th</sup> September to adjust the Australian Curriculum to meet its own purportedly exacting standards. This last-minute attack came with weeks to go to final agreement and notwithstanding continuing and consistent NSW official representation on the NCB and in ACARA since 2008.

As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, the NSW BoS's objections were as cited as follows:

[The history draft was] far too ambitious to be taught effectively. It is not possible for all students to reach high standards in deeper understandings and skills development with the current content overload....There is no scope for differentiation of curriculum to cater for the full range of student ability...excessive history content will impinge on the time needed to develop and practice foundational skills... there is an overlap of content in years 5 to 6 and years 9 to 10....The curriculum is not feasible as there is too much content for the time available, particularly in years 4 to 10.

The timing was perfect. With only a few weeks to go until the proposed October sign-off deadline, the NSW BoS had fired a broadside claiming that it had been prevented from making any criticisms about the national curriculum before the [August 2010] federal election. This latter justification was a completely disingenuous justification for this last-minute arm-twisting since, at any time from late 2008 onwards, behind-the-scenes haggling with the more stubborn jurisdictions had been a constant feature of NCB/ACARA tactics.

In any event, as far as history was concerned, this intervention lay in a serious objection by the NSW BoS to the amount of time allowed for Overviews in the 7-10 programme.

Originally, the idea had been that Overviews would take up about 25% of the class time, with an equivalent amount of time for each Depth Study. The idea at this stage was that Overviews would be linked to Depth Studies but not in a simplistic mechanical way. The importance of the Overviews has been stressed by the AG in the early days of the curriculum design as a way of avoiding disjointed patch histories and also as a way of fitting in a brief look major topics that might have been omitted through option choices. For example, in Year 7 students might choose to do Egypt as their optional ancient history Depth Study but could contextualize that choice by looking at other key Mediterranean societies such as Greece and Rome in their Overview.

The NSW BoS was adamant that 25% of class time was too much for the Overviews and the recommended time should be cut to a mere 10% – this amounted to about eight lessons in a whole school year. To reinforce the point, the NSW government began to make public noises about not signing the federal document due for ratification in just over a month's time. ACARA caved in, thus vitiating what was a key element in dealing with the depth vs. breadth dilemma. The AG was deeply dissatisfied with this outcome since it would encourage, at a national level, the inch-deep and a mile-wide survey approach to high school history that was the very opposite of the AG's original intentions.

Meanwhile, Victoria started making similar noises about Years 9 and 10. Their complaint was that there was not enough sequencing of Australian history from Years 7-10 and that World War One (a hugely popular history topic in schools and in the public domain) should be moved from Year 10 where it sat (at that stage) in an overall 20<sup>th</sup> century examination of 'Australia and the World'. Victorian politicians, as with their NSW counterparts began to make threatening public comments about not signing off on the draft. With what seemed like indecent haste, the World War One topic was dropped out of Year 10's 'Australia and the World' and parachuted into Year 9's 'The Making of the Modern World' as a final Depth Study, bringing it more into line with the already existing Victorian curriculum framework. Not that the decision was a bad one, unlike the NSW/ ACARA judgment about Overviews since it made the revamped Year 10 far less weighed down out by major wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The process however was a characteristic state vs Canberra arm-twisting struggle, briefly fought and quickly conceded.

On a lighter note, in early November 2010 when the AG and the writers were busy working on yet another draft, Western Australia intervened in the shape of a ministerial adviser who contacted ACARA and made amiable representations to the AG on behalf of his minister asking for the Celts (as well as the Saxons, the American Revolution, the French Revolution and influence of Irish political culture on Australian Federation) to be introduced at Years 9 and 10. He was politely informed that his minister could be

reassured that topics such as these could be dealt with in the curriculum 'Elaborations' (elucidations of main and complementary topics that teachers could use as a teaching guide).

As things stand at present (September 2012) with Phase One (English/mathematics/science/history), the ACT has already introduced the Australian history curriculum, Queensland and Victoria are currently trialling the curriculum, NT will introduce history F-10 in September 2013, South Australia and Tasmania will introduce the national curriculum in 2013 and WA has introduced it gradually in 2012, NSW, whose car number plate slogan once was 'The First State' plans to bring in Phase One only – in 2014<sup>16</sup>.

If, that is, Canberra gives NSW enough money.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, when it comes to history in schools across the whole nation, the conventional but discipline-focused primary programme may well succeed if only because history will have freed itself from the shackles of the past twenty years of the generic social education model Studies of Society and Environment, a well-meaning but misdirected curriculum concept that all but obliterated the humanities at the primary school level.

As for secondary schools, essential contradictions remain. As we have seen, the final secondary school draft was designed for a minimum of 80 taught hours of history per annum. As things stand at the moment, the current lack of indicative time will seriously reduce the opportunity for authentic history teaching at this level. Further, the dropping of the original percentage allocation for secondary Overviews from 24% to 10% will compound the problem by leaving many students with a distorted and abbreviated version of what was, within an 80 hour framework, a very good, well-conceptualised and well planned program. This means that history Y 7-10 will, in many schools, effectively be turned into a Reader's Digest Condensed Version of the past, thus rehashing all those school-level complaints of racing through the curriculum in order to cover the key events, and back to 'history is boring' all over again.

There are however powerful survivals of this process of intervention. To begin with, history education in the national curriculum retains a powerful and professionally derived presence in schools. Second, that presence has clear expectations in terms of historical understandings, the syntax of the discipline. Third, the Australian curriculum in history remains a world history programme that is investigative and open-ended and is certainly neither celebratory nor exceptionalist. And there is hope. As one curriculum official from WA reported to the author on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013, 'At this stage I only have anecdotal evidence, but the F-10 AC seems to be rolling out fairly smoothly across the subjects. There has not been any adverse publicity in the press so I can only assume a fairly widespread acceptance. Those schools which have adopted the 7-10 History are really enthusiastic as the students and the teachers are enjoying the [Depth Study] electives'.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Bourke's entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bourke-sir-richard-1806> [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>2</sup> For more details of Howard's interventionist approach see Taylor, T. (2009) 'Howard's End: a narrative memoir of political contrivance, neoconservative ideology and the Australian history curriculum', *Curriculum Journal*, vol. 20 no. 4 pp. 317-329.
- <sup>3</sup> Following a period when Rudd's government was faced by a poll-driven decline he was replaced in June 2010 by his education and employment minister Julia Gillard in what was generally regarded as a brutal and premature coup. Since the coup, the ALP's ratings have continued to decline.
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Australian\\_Curriculum\\_-\\_History.pdf#xml=http://search.curriculum.edu.au/texis/search/pdfhi.txt?query=history+shape+paper&pr=www.acara.edu.au&prox=page&rorder=500&rprox=500&rdfreq=500&rwfreq=500&rlead=500&rdepth=0&sufs=0&order=r&cq=&id=502b5a6ed](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Australian_Curriculum_-_History.pdf#xml=http://search.curriculum.edu.au/texis/search/pdfhi.txt?query=history+shape+paper&pr=www.acara.edu.au&prox=page&rorder=500&rprox=500&rdfreq=500&rwfreq=500&rlead=500&rdepth=0&sufs=0&order=r&cq=&id=502b5a6ed) [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>5</sup> Taylor, T. & Young, C. (2003) *Making History: a guide for the teaching of history in Australian schools*, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne.
- <sup>6</sup> Seixas, P. & Morton, T. (2012) *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts*, Pearson, Toronto.
- <sup>7</sup> Initially there were two largeish (6 or so – it varied over time) writing teams – primary and secondary. In early 2010 the original teams were phased out and replaced with two smaller groups (2 only in each team).
- <sup>8</sup> We never did discover who was on the Curriculum Committee and there is no sign of its presence and membership on the ACARA website.
- <sup>9</sup> Ferrari, J. (2010) 'Historian Stuart Macintyre slams school course', *The Australian*, 25 May, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/historian-slams-school-course/story-e6frgczf-1225870764841> [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>10</sup> Speech to a state premiers' conference 31<sup>st</sup> October 1990. On this topic, Keating is frequently misquoted. What he actually said, in the context of a tax reform debate was, 'One place not to be in this system is between a premier and a bucket of money'. To contextualise this remark, the total amount made available by Canberra to the states and territories in, for example, 2011-2012 was \$95 billion [http://www.budget.gov.au/2011-12/content/bp3/html/bp3\\_01\\_executive\\_summary.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2011-12/content/bp3/html/bp3_01_executive_summary.htm) [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>11</sup> See for example then education minister Verity Firth's attack in Anna Patty's article 'NSW cans 'inferior' national curriculum' *Sydney Morning Herald* 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/nsw-cans-inferior-national-curriculum-20100916-15eqw.html> [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>12</sup> Observations based on the author's 13 years experience of curriculum politics at the federal level.
- <sup>13</sup> The term 'world class' is vague piece of parochial puffery frequently used by various education systems in Australia and elsewhere. See for example former ALP premier Maurice Lemma's comments in the NSW lower house 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008, 'We are committed to ensuring that New South Wales students continue to receive a world-class education.' Hansard: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC20080515012> [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>14</sup> Hansard: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LA20110809009> [Accessed 27 May, 2013]
- <sup>15</sup> In WA, Sir Charles Court dominated the political scene as state premier from 1974-1982 while in Queensland Sir Joh Bjelke-Peterson, who, in 1991, came within a whisker of being found guilty of perjury, ran the state from 1968-1987. Queensland was at that time characterised as the 'Deep North', an Australian version of Huey Long's Louisiana.
- <sup>16</sup> 'NSW delays national curriculum until 2014' *Australian Teacher Magazine* 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012, [http://ozteacher.com.au/html/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1362:nsw-nsw-delays-national-curriculum-until-2014&catid=1:news&Itemid=69](http://ozteacher.com.au/html/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1362:nsw-nsw-delays-national-curriculum-until-2014&catid=1:news&Itemid=69) [Accessed 27 May, 2013]

## **Learning and the Formation of Historical Consciousness – a Dialogue with Brazilian Curricular proposals**

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### **Abstract:**

*This is a report of research about the development of concepts of historical learning in Brazil from 1917 until 2006, but especially in the period 1931 to 2006. The aim of this investigation is to examine the learning concepts which have been behind the structure of the Brazilian curricular proposals across a long period of time, indeed from the Francisco de Campos (1931) reforms until the present curricular proposals. The outline proposed in this work includes an analysis of curricular documents from the National History Curricular Parameters for elementary and high schools (1997; 1998). The methodology adopted is a combination of qualitative investigation through case studies as well as documentary and bibliographic investigation. Some studies which had been undertaken to appraise the curriculum and school subjects as socially constructed (Goodson, 1997) were used as models to guide the critique. The curriculum can be seen as a visible text within the concept of the 'disciplinary code of history' (Fernandez Cuesta, 1997; 1998). Initial results indicate the predominance of the concept of historical learning as a set of competences based on educational psychology, rather than on the proper (formal, orthodox) science of history (Lee 2003; 2006).*

**Key words:** Historical Consciousness, Brazilian Curricular Proposal, Historical Learning, Historical Education, Disciplinary Code, Social Construction

### **Introduction**

In Brazil, studies about curriculum have been undertaken by researchers and specialists across several areas of knowledge. In the area of history teaching these papers and their related findings focus mainly on specific periods or curricular reforms and the relationship with educational politics, as can be seen in the work of Fonseca (1993), Siman (1997), Reis (2001), Martins (2002), and Rocha (2002). Moreover, there have been systematised reflections on this theme, such as those of Abud (1993) and Bittencourt (1998). Moving from the analysis already completed about different history curricula, the object of study proposed in the present paper includes an analysis of Brazilian curricular documents directed to schools from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary teaching. The focus of the section 'concepts of history learning' is part of a project financed by CNPq, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, which has been developed under a sub-category, 'Learning to write and learning to write in history', whose objective is investigating concepts of learning and their relationship with the teaching of history.

### **Theoretical and methodological presuppositions**

The problem being addressed in the present research results from the situation and associated demands which arose from the lack of success experienced by schools when taking part in field studies in historical education, and, in particular, when planning for learning through the construction of historical consciousness. According to Mészáros (2007:196),

... the educational processes and the social processes [which are] easier for reproduction are intimately linked and a significant reformulation of education is inconceivable without the correspondent transformation of the social structure in which the educational practices of the society must perform their vital and historically important function of change (p.196).

One analysis of the educational objectives, and, therefore, the historical learning, is to see them as opportunities for the internalisation of historical consciousness by the students. However, we can point out the advantages and disadvantages of different possibilities. On the one hand, the internalising can be about keeping and maintaining an already fixed or pre-determined canon. Or we can talk about the possibility of internalising as an independent activity, that is, internalising which is designed to lead to

action by the students, with a view to practising transformatory interventions in their lives. Thus, the ways of internalising knowledge can be defined either as performing the function of maintaining certain long-standing traditions of knowledge, belief, attitudes or behaviour, or, as preparing students to be agents of change, where they are empowered to challenge the dominant forms of cognition. Echoing Rüsen's thoughts (2007:101), the formation of historical consciousness:

... isn't, consequently, being able to have the use of ways of knowledge, but of forms of knowledge, of cognitive principles which determine the application of the ways of knowledge to the problems of orientation. Naturally these competences depend on the contents of knowledge. They cannot be empty of the experience of the past time, elaborated and cognitively interpreted.

This becomes a question of cognitive competence in the temporal perspective of the practical life, of the relation of each subject with themselves and the communicative context with others.

The most recent debates in the field of historical education have been about developing the role of fundamental concepts (or historical concepts), of temporal historical categories and second order concepts, such as are discussed by Lee (2001, 2003, 2006, 2011), Ashby (2003, 2006), Cooper (2006; 2012), and Schmidt and Barca (2009). Moreover, these concepts are, according to Rüsen (2007:91), *the linguistic resources which underpin historical statements*, and, therefore, can be considered as fundamental in the formation of historical consciousness, that is, in the process of internalising as providing ways to organise and give sense to both individual and collective experiences. And these experiences are important for helping the individual to understand the trajectory of their lives and indeed fates. The concept of 'historical consciousness', according to Rüsen (2001:58), *is the way through which the dynamic relation between experience of time and intention in time come true in the process of the human life*.

Thus, for Jörn Rüsen, history has a didactic function to formulate the historical consciousness, meaning that it can supply the elements both for an orientation and an interpretation (building identities inwardly, and supplying senses outwardly for action in private life). These presuppositions can be references for conceptions of learning which guide curricular proposals of history in contemporary society, incorporating, as well, the given presupposition that any learning is self-education and inseparable from the important practice of self-management, in which children and young people become active agents of their own education.

On the one hand, studies about learning conceptions present in curricular proposals justify themselves, in the sense of analysing and evaluating proposals for the internalising of knowledge, besides providing (a) a reconstruction of the methods of knowledge and practices related to history teaching, and (b) an historical reconstruction of history as school subject. In this sense, the curriculum can be understood as having elements of school culture, products and producers of school knowledge; as a creator of ways to make or to build schooling while being builders of personal and professional identities while elaborating views of the world. One can affirm that the curriculum consists of school knowledge, in a sense largely pre-determined, but nevertheless a special type of knowledge, that is, history as subject of teaching, which can be explained by the idea of a broad social tradition, invented and recreated in the 'history disciplinary code'. According to Fernandez Cuesta, (1998:8-9):

The history disciplinary code is, therefore, a social tradition which characterises itself historically and which is composed of a group of ideas, values, suppositions and routines, which legitimate the educational function given to history and which regulate the order of the practice in its teaching. It contains, thus, speculation and discursive rhetoric about its educational value, the contents of its teaching and the archetypes of teaching, which follow each other in [the] time and which consider themselves, inside the dominating culture, valuable and authentic. Summing up, the disciplinary code understands what is said about the educational value of history, which is considered formally as historical knowledge and what is really taught in the school. School discourses, regulations, practices and contexts impregnate the institutionalised action of the

professional subjects (the teachers) and of the social addressee (the students) who live and live again, in their daily action, the uses of historical education in school time and their own time –the uses which are not naturally strange, on the contrary, to the production and the distribution of knowledge.

On the other hand, these studies link curriculum analyses with conceptions of historical learning. These can also be considered characteristics of the 'disciplinary code' because certain key elements of this complex problem need to be put in relief or perspective. In particular this concerns the relationship between references to scientific (or disciplinary) knowledge on the one hand and, on the other, the theoretical support originating from pedagogy and from psychology. Moreover, the curriculum, while a product of the culture, is part of the 'selective tradition' which, according to Fernandez Cuesta (1998, p.102), arises from actions recontextualised by several social agents, converts academic knowledge into authentic school understanding, and changes the teacher's knowledge into knowledge which can be taught. In this sense, these analyses of the curriculum can elucidate aspects related to the theories of forms of knowledge, about how knowledge was intended, received, dealt with or used. As Rüsen states (2007, p.101), 'education consists not in the ability just to dispose of knowledge, but in understanding forms of knowledge, of cognitive principles which determine the application of knowledge to the problems of orientation'.

For Rüsen (2004), the cognitive principles – experience, orientation and interpretation– play the role of the differentiating function of the cognitive process of the science (or discipline) of history. These principles presuppose and determine the resources or materials through which the historical theories are built. These resources or materials are named by the author as historical concepts and historical categories (Rüsen, 2007). In the path of these reflections, Lee (2005) establishes some principles of historical cognition, such as the fundamental (or *first order*) concepts which would be the specific contents of history, like the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution etc.; and the *second order* concepts, which are involved in any history, it doesn't matter which content. These are the *temporary* categories which designate general *temporal* contexts of the condition of things which, according to Rüsen (2007b, p.93) do not refer directly to any particular condition of things, but establish the historical quality of temporal change and also of those related to the forms of historical understanding, like the concepts of historical explanation, evidence, inference and historical imagination (Lee, 2005; Topolski, 1973; Aróstegui, 2006).

### **Historical perspectives**

At the beginning of the Brazilian republican period (1889-1930), the Decree 19.890/31, better known as the Francisco Campos Reform, was used to impose, among other resolutions, that the Ministry of Education would produce programmes for the different school subjects for the country's high schools, giving the tone of its centralising and unifying character. According to Abud (1993, p.165), the programmes 'were accompanied by "Methodological Instructions", which indicated the objectives of the school subjects and the techniques of work the teacher should use'. These Methodological Instructions, according to studies undertaken by Hollanda (1957), absorbed some pedagogical principles considered innovative at the time, particularly learning that was student-centred and not teacher-centred.

This perspective becomes evident when, concerning the learning of history, the Instructions incorporate certain kinds of guidance, such as: in the first grades of the high school, when it was considered that the student does not have the ability to devote themselves to more abstract and systematic studies, it should be advisable that history be taught from the biography of great lives, with episodes from their lives, which would articulate events related to the history of Brazil and of the American Continent. This way, also, in the second grade, when, hypothetically, a focus on the more abstract concepts would be more emphasised, and, alongside biographies within the history of Brazil and of the American Continent, the systematic study of the History of Civilizations would be included. (As we can see in the Olympic symbols there are 5 circles which represent the 5 continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania and America, where are included North, Central and South America.)

Student-centred learning was supported by the Government in Brazil. In the wake of this came the project

known as *Escola Nova* (New School), and, specifically in the teaching of history, the works of Professor Jonathas Serrano (1917; 1935) were significant, as, according to Schmidt (2004), Serrano was an academic who collaborated with the Francisco Campos Reform. In this direction, the 'Methodological Instructions' suggest that the teacher should develop in the students the capacity of observation, criticism and autonomous or independent work. Furthermore, all the issues considered in the lessons should be appropriate for the mental age of the students and be accompanied by activities which stimulate historical learning, but much more through the students' eyes than through their ears. These activities would be of the type of visits to museums and exhibitions, excursions to historic places, and appreciation of monuments, which would happily replace the traditional transmission style with its didactic lecturing, very frequently used in history teaching.

In 1942, indeed 11 years after the Francisco Campos Reform, a new Organic Law of High School was enacted, also known as Gustavo Capanema Reform. One of the main principles of this law was based on the proposal of didactic autonomy for the teacher, a principle also defended by Jonathas Serrano, one of the writers of the law. Dividing each school subject from the didactic programmes and units was among his principal proposals. In this law there was no attempt, because of prevailing government attitudes at the time, to gather history and geography with or within social science (eliminated from the high school by this Capanema Reform), but nevertheless *Civil Instruction was renewed, in a broader group and better articulated, similar to the 'Social Studies' of the North American curricula* (Hollanda, 1957, p.156). What is revealing is the maintenance of an emphasis on specific contents of history as compulsory curricular components, a fact and a trend that was gradually being absorbed by the implementation of projects which would end up in the imposition of social studies by the military government in 1971.

This centralising principle applied to the specific contents of history was also incorporated by Edict 1.045 (1951), which reformed the Brazilian High School. Here the basic principles for the teaching of history were: to begin with understanding the present, and then retrospectively to go to the past; developing an intuitive and critical style of teaching; focusing on the students as individuals who are products and expressions of their social environment. The main aims were to develop processes of consolidation, investigation, reasoning and illustration as well as covering schemes through different forms of representation, for example literature, examination and discussion. Through all of this the judgement of values was recommended. Appealing to the pedagogy of the new school system, the edict highlighted and emphasised the importance of studies of history of the past for the comprehension of the present. The underlying intention of this edict by MEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) reflects the philosophy of a group of measures underpinning the process of re-democratisation of Brazilian society after Getulio Vargas's dictatorship, known as the *Estado Novo* (New State) period (1937-1945). In the educational field, one of the main investments of the Brazilian government in the period (1945-1961) was the valuing, expansion and modernization of the high school (Nunes, 1980).

Already in 1946, the Ministry of Education and Culture had created the *Diretoria do Ensino Secundário* (High School Director Board) whose objectives were, among others, scrutinising the application of the laws, the improvement of teaching materials and of teaching conditions, the inspection of schools, the improvement of high school teaching and its practical suitability to meet the interests and needs of the increasing urban clientele. Due to the great volume of work, the monitoring and supporting activities had to be decentralized and different organs of public administration to do this were being created. Among them, *the Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos* (National Institute for Pedagogical Studies) and the *Campanha de Aperfeiçoamento de Difusão do Ensino Secundário- CADES* (Campaign of Improvement and diffusion of Secondary Teaching) (both created in 1953) deserve to be highlighted. Among the principal actions of these organs were the publishing of periodicals and manuals intended for the continuing training and education (professional development) of Brazilian – teachers.

According to Nunes (1980), the Decree n. 34.638, of the *Diretoria do Ensino Secundário do Ministério da Educação* (Directory Board of the Secondary Teaching of the Ministry of Education), of 17 November, 1953, and still in the period of Getulio Vargas's second government (1951-1954), created the *Campanha de Aperfeiçoamento e Difusão da Escola Secundária (CADES)* (The Campaign of Improvement and

Diffusion of the Secondary School), with the principal objective of increasing the level of high school teaching in Brazil. In this sense, the author highlights some objectives of CADES:

- a) Making high school education more adjusted to the interests and potential of the students, as well as to the real conditions and necessities of the environment the school meets, giving high school teaching more efficacy and social sense;
- b) Allowing the biggest possible number of Brazilian young people to have access to high school.

To reach these targets, the CADES would develop some initiatives, such as:

- (i) organisation of courses and training courses for the improvement of teachers and other school workers;
- (ii) distribution of scholarships to high school teachers for professional development in courses and training courses sponsored by national and foreign entities;
- (iii) technical assistance to high school establishments; carrying out of studies of the programmes of high school courses and of the methods of teaching, in order to better adjust the teaching to the students' interests and to the conditions and demands of the environment;
- (iv) development of teaching material;
- (v) measures for the improvement and for making cheap teaching material;
- (vi) development and application of evaluation of the students' learning;
- (vii) organisation of educational orientation service in high schools establishments;
- plan for the allowance of scholarships to both intellectually gifted and to deprived students;
- (viii) renewal of furniture, school workshops and laboratories;
- (ix) studies about the needs and possibilities of high school teaching in the country;
- (x) diffusion and publishing of experiences of interest in high schools; and
- (xi) promotion of national and international school exchanges and disseminating information for the public about the importance of a good high school.

During the decades of 1950 and 1960, CADES was very active in promoting teacher training courses for the high school. This consisted of the organisation of symposiums and working days for the teaching of technical staff of the schools and the production of publications for teachers' professional development, especially the official *Revista Escola Secundária* (High School Magazine), which circulated between 1957 and 1963 with 19 issues. To support history teaching, the *Revista* (Magazine) included, in all its issues, work produced by history teachers and intended for a readership of history teachers, in total 13 authors and 21 articles. For example, in Issue 14 (September 1960), in the section *Noticiário* (News section), the following piece of information about seminars taking place was published, among them one for history. The Directory board of the High School, through CADES, had organized for the months of September and October, in the auditorium of CADES, 115,9<sup>th</sup> floor, Av. Rio Branco, mathematics, English, history and drawing seminars intended specially for teachers who have taught in the courses of Orientation sponsored by CADES, being offered for any other high school teachers and for students of the didactics courses of the philosophy colleges (CADES, Seminars, 1960, p.39).

The programme for the history seminar was the following:

1. Objectives for history teaching in the high school: Prof. Guy de Hollanda (6<sup>th</sup> September);
2. Methods and processes of history teaching in high school: Prof. Hugo Weiss (13<sup>th</sup> September);
3. History teacher education: Prof. Eremildo Luiz Vianna (w/d);
4. Motivation in history teaching: Prof. Arthur Bernardes Weiss (w/d);
5. The verifying of historical learning: Prof. James Braga Vieira da Fonseca (4<sup>th</sup> October);
6. Guided study in historical learning: Prof. Vicente Tapajós (11<sup>th</sup> October);
7. Teaching material and its use in history teaching: Prof. Cláudio José de Figueiredo (18<sup>th</sup> October);
8. History in the Brazilian high school curriculum: official programmes, its interpretation: Prof. Roberto Accioli (25<sup>th</sup> October).

The definitions and choices here as well as the emphasis on items like methods and processes of teaching, motivation, guided studies and teaching material are evidence of the valuing of methodological aspects in the teaching of history.

Thus, from the point of view of how history was to be taught at this time, the methodological perspectives are explicit and are highlighted in the *Reforma de 1931* (Reform of 1931), as well as in Jonatas Serrano's pioneering work. Questions like the use of didactics units in history teaching, the use of museums, the use of historical documents in the classroom and even the proposal of creating a *Bossa Nova* (New Trend) in history teaching, are also present in the publishing of CADES, in this period.

However, as new changes got near, and even as the announcement of *Estudos Sociais* (Social Studies) was already making its presence felt on the not-so-distant horizon, it must be stressed that, officially, the law had not accepted it as a proposal. It is important to remember that, since 1934 there had been a suggestion that Social Studies was intended for the elementary school, integrating the reform made by Anísio Teixeira in the former *Distrito Federal* (Federal District).

Simultaneous with the dissemination by CADES of the ideas and proposals related to one determined vision of history didactics, the other organ for disseminating the policies of the *Ministério da Educação e Cultura* (Ministry of Education and Culture) was the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos* (National Institute of Pedagogical Studies) (INEP), which circulated and defended (for teachers' continuing professional development), certain principles for history teaching which were more linked to the social studies project, intended for the education of elementary school teachers. With this perspective, the INEP published, in 1964, Castro and Gaudenzi's work (1964), *Social Studies in the Elementary School*, aimed at *Escola Normal* (Professional Teaching School) teachers and others who had already worked from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> grades (former primary course). In contrast to the manual intended for high school teachers, this manual did not highlight any relationship between the work of historians and the work of teachers, neither did it include any references to historiography or to any official or published histories.

The central perspective of this work was the 'Social Studies' model, influenced by the United States of America, which was used, and took as central ideas for the history teaching, the interdisciplinary approach and the conception of curriculum as concentric with an expanding horizons perspective, through family, school, neighbourhood, city and country. The principle of child-centred teaching was clearly expressed in this proposal, but the history contents were separated in relation to the other school contents. Furthermore, the aim of learning was to place the learner in an increasingly extended environment, and as in the U.S.A., having the question of nationality, or national consciousness, built from the 'legacy knowledge' of past generations.

In the path of what Fernandez Cuesta (1998) describes as *código disciplinar de história no Brasil* (the disciplinary code of history in Brazil), the configuration of history as school subject was consolidated within the boundaries of strong power relations created by the *Estado* (State). These relations could be detected, mainly, in organic discourse among intellectuals whose experience had been based on the practice of teaching and on the production and diffusion of certain governmental educational policies of the 1950s and 1960s decades.

It is worth highlighting that it is just in this period that one observes the beginning of a crisis in the *código disciplinar de história* (history disciplinary code), made explicit by the clash between, on the one hand, plans related to 'Social Studies', and on the other, with the maintenance of history as an autonomous school subject (in its own right).

### **The Period of Social Studies**

A diagnosis made by Leite (1969) can be considered an indicator of the beginning of a change in the history teaching in Brazil, provoked essentially by increasing the consolidation of Social Studies in Brazil. According to Leite (1969, p.10):

From 1960 on, it was proposed to substitute Social Studies for history and geography teaching. In the gymnasium, the alterations were deeper: the proportion of general history teaching decreased, and the teaching of national and local history increased. Social Studies, introduced in the vocational and experimenting courses in 1959, tended to spread and to be a substitute for the autonomous [independent] history and geography teaching, complementing it with notions of economics and social science.

It was the military dictatorship regime (1964-1984), during the Government of General Emilio Garrastazu Médici, which imposed the Law 5692, of 1971, in which the teaching of Social Studies was made compulsory and extended for the eight years of the former *Primeiro Grau* ([first grade] Elementary School). The *Parecer 853/71* (The Opinion 853/71) imposed by *Conselho Federal de Educação* (Federal Council of Education), stated what was to be the compulsory common nucleus for the curriculum of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. The doctrine of the Law 5692/71 (Curriculum) imposed Social Studies as school subject. This way, the contents could be treated as activities (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> years under the name of *Integração Social* (Social Integration), areas of study – (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> years – under the name of Social Studies) and school subject-history (only in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade). As one can observe, the teaching of history was now restricted to second grade, inserted in the curriculum framework as maximum teaching period of two hours weekly, during one year of this course

There was a belief that the adoption of Social Studies should develop in the students the notions of space and time from the studies of the school, neighbourhood, house and street, in order to expand, reaching the study of the city, state and so forth. It was still reinforced by Social Studies' notions like: homeland, nation, equality, liberty, as well as the valuing of national heroes with a view to trying to legitimate, through the control of teaching, the politics of the *Estado* (State) and of the dominating class, annulling the liberty of education and of thought (Urban, 2011, p.10).

In proposals for Social Studies, the learning was based on the need to reach teaching objectives. These objectives used to have as reference Benjamin Bloom's theory of taxonomy, whose application for historical learning was based mainly on the development of cognitive objectives. This foundation was used to render concrete (forms or examples of content) from six categories, as follows:

1. Knowing: identifying and describing the fact and the piece of historical information: who, what, when, where, how.
2. Understanding: organising and selecting historical facts and ideas, for example, under a system of schemes;
3. Applying: using rules or principles to explain a historical happening;
4. Analysing: separating, classifying historical facts;
5. Synthetising: organising groups of historical facts, comparing historical facts;
6. Evaluating: giving opinions about historical happenings.

The compulsory enactment of Social Studies teaching would go through the whole period of Brazilian Military Dictatorship (1964-1984), an era when history teachers and history professionals were objects of persecution and censorship. The imposition of Social Studies was accompanied by a great resistance movement and a fight for the return of history teaching in Brazilian schools, thus configuring a new phase in the construction of history teaching in Brazil.

The phase of *reconstrução do código disciplinar da história* (reconstruction of the history disciplinary code) can be contextualised from two main events. The first refers to the movement of resistance in the country during the period of Military Dictatorship in 1984, and the second to the movement characterised by criticism of Social Studies, a stance which had existed officially in the fundamental school system (6-14) since 1971. This movement counted on the participation of history and education professionals, being specially led by *Associação Nacional de Professores de História* – ANPUH (National Association of History Teachers).

After the end of the Military Dictatorship, there was a growth of the movement for the called *volta do ensino de história* (return to history teaching) in the elementary school. In this context, one must highlight the existence of several curricular proposals, 23 in total, according to Bittencourt's studies (1998), developed by different state and municipal education systems, and its discussion by history teachers of public [state] schools, in different Brazilian states.

### **The actual national curricular parameters and the learning conceptions**

Next there was a defining landmark in this project of reconstructing the history disciplinary code. This was the proposal of History Curricular Parameters sent by the Ministry of Education for Brazilian education professionals, in 1997 and 1998, containing in its structure the Thematic Axis suggested for history teaching from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle [years], of fundamental teaching (i.e. within the range for 6-14 year olds). The introductory document of the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (PCNs) (National Curricular Parameters) (Brasil, 1998a) came from the presupposition that educational failures had been indicators of the necessity to take as reference a new teaching and learning concept which would provide greater interaction between students and the realities of life. From these presuppositions, the student:

... [w]hen learning how to solve problems and to build attitudes in relation to the targets which s/he wants to achieve in the most diverse situations of life, makes acquisitions of the cognitive and linguistic domains, which include forms of communication and of spatial, temporal and graphic representation. (Brasil, PCNs, 1998, p.73).

The document emphasises the forms by and through which young people can have access to historical knowledge, such as: living in social and family situations; festivities of local, regional, national and world character; and by means of communication, like television. It comes, still, from the presupposition that young people always take part, in their way, in the task of constructing memory, by recreating and interpreting both time and history, thus adding to their experiences the information, explanations and values that are offered in the classroom. It indicates, this way, a second understanding, that pieces of information and historical questions can be incorporated significantly by teenagers who associate them (and synthesise them), through relating, confronting and generalising, because *what becomes significant and relevant consolidates their learning* (Brasil, PCNs, 1998b, p.38). The document also establishes the difference between the knowledge the students acquire informally and another, which is named as *saber escolar* (scholarly knowledge, in the sense of the scholar's or [school] student's knowledge). In this perspective, there is a reaffirmation that despite:

... [t]he appropriation of notions, methods and themes proper to historical knowledge, for the scholar's historical knowledge, does not mean that there is an intention to make the student either a 'small historian' or that s/he must be able to write research papers. The intention is that s/he develops the capability of observation, of extracting pieces of information and interpreting some characteristics of the reality of her/his surroundings, of establishing some relations and confrontations among actual and historical pieces of information, of noting the dates and of locating her/his actions and those of other people in time and in space and, to a certain extent, being able to make specific questions of his time relative. (Brasil, PCNs, 1998b, p.40).

Here there is the appropriation of a concept of teaching and learning that, in the first place, differentiates 'scholar' knowledge from the scientific [or purely academic], in the very process of learning, although there is some confusing of the learning with the teaching, as the single object of the didactic transposition or transaction. This final point does not take into account that, in the cognitive perspective situated in history as a science [or discipline] (which indicates how the learning of the student should proceed), the key point is that the way through which the knowledge needs to be learnt by the student must have as a basis the student's own historical reasoning, and the cognitive processes must be the same as the epistemology of history as a science, as a discipline.

Another question to highlight in the theory of learning referred to in the history PCNs (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* or National Curricular Parameters) is the emphasis on chronological temporality

(chronological understanding) as a way of temporal orientation (contextualizing in time). According to Rösen (2004), orientation *in* time and *about* the time organises itself from cases drawn from the past and its articulation with the present – from historical categories, the notation of dates being one strategy only. Still, in relation to the third cycle of fundamental teaching, the objective of historical learning is the formation of procedures and attitudes which favour the comprehension of the themes in historical dimensions, by means of different activities, such as researches and studies of the environment. However what is still missing in this are ways to incorporate the cognitive processes which constitute historical learning itself.

Furthermore, by describing the objectives of historical learning, the document selects some objectives, such as 'knowing', 'characterising', 'reflecting' and 'using historical sources', indicating one delimitation [and delineation] of thought-categories which indicate actions to be developed in relation to certain contents, and not (merely) ways of historical comprehension. This same perspective is present in the presuppositions and objectives for the fourth cycle, in a manner which progressively expands the students' horizons. According to Rösen (2010), the processes of history learning need to be considered not just as driving and controllable processes, but bearing in mind the fact that a theory of historical learning is still under construction, and needs to be referenced in a cognition situated in history itself. This can be fertilised by theoretical conceptions of historical learning which have as a main objective the formation and development of historical consciousness, and by constituting itself in this way, thus making possible the creation of a more organic relationship between the historical culture and the 'scholar culture' or school culture of a society.

### **Final considerations**

In a general manner, it can be affirmed that, from the mid of the 1980s until the end of the 1990s, a conflict of proposals was happening in a search for new references for history teaching in Brazil. On the one hand there were different reformist projects which embodied theoretical and methodological perspectives more pertinent to the history of social and labour movements; on the other hand there were innovative projects which suggested adoptions of new methodological conceptions like the introduction of thematic history as articulated by some authors of the national Brazilian Annals, as can be seen and suggested, among many, by the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (National Curricular Parameters, 1998b). This confrontation is related to the context in which Brazilian society, recently moving away from a dictatorial period, can be seen to be undertaking a search for new ways to suit a new age.

The construction of the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (National Curricular Parameters), specifically the one on history, can be seen as evidence of this confrontation. One can see this clash anticipated in the document of the history curricular proposals for teaching the 'fundamental' age-group (of 6-14 year olds) (Bittencourt, 1998b). This document was written with the aim of subsidising the development of national curricular parameters for 'fundamental' teaching and bases itself on the analysis of proposals developed by the *Secretarias de Educação* (Education Secretaries) of several Brazilian states, between 1984 and 1995.

One of the points to be highlighted in this document is the criticism which it makes concerning the contradictions among the predominant discourses in these proposals, which it considers 'very generic' and unable to provide guidance on how to decide which approach to adopt when using a theoretical focus in certain fields of knowledge. Furthermore, it considers that the positioning of the reforms in favour of the working class is not sufficient. The reforms do not address deficiencies in the school system, especially in terms of teachers absorbing a disciplinary approach to transform the way that history is taught and learnt. Continuing professional development is much needed in order to shape the kind of discipline-based 'scholar knowledge' that should be an outcome of the reforms. As has been explained through the perspective of this current analysis, it is about a discourse with clear political connotations in which there is an ongoing tension involving concerted efforts to get the balance right between what is needed in the classroom and the curriculum structure being written by specialists.

One observes, in these statements, some of the presuppositions which underpin the guidance for Brazilian

education within the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (National Curricular Parameters) as a whole and, in particular, the directions suggested for history teaching, in which predominate the emphasis on the conception of curriculum elaborated by specialists of the pedagogical area who have proposed the development of abilities and of attitudes instead of the learning of contents and historical cognitive competences. The transformation of certain procedures and attitudes, in contents pertinent to history teaching, can be understood from the paradigmatic references in which the notion of contents is impoverished, fragmented and rendered pragmatic, and where the themes have lost their conceptual values, becoming only words, as they are not organically articulated with the plurality of the experiences of those who on a daily basis struggle and make the history of Brazilian people, in the present and in the past and, therefore, do not speak to their demands for the transformation of contemporary society.

One can notice, gradually, that the separation between history didactics and academic history was contributing to the need for the formation or creation of a history disciplinary code with specific characteristics in each different period of Brazilian society, but which, in a general way, has tended to push the history teaching and learning questions away from the public domain to the perhaps more closed professional ambit of school culture. Thus it has been, from this readjustment, that the cognitive dimension of history teaching started to articulate with the political dimension of historical culture. In this process, the questions related to historical learning, and, therefore, to the teaching of history, have come from the direction of historians, and have come, with priority and greater immediacy, into the parameters of educational politics, causing a displacement between historical culture and scholar (or school) culture, in which the instrumental perspective has been given a privileged place. This is of concern if didactic transposition (transmission) dominates teaching methods. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, attempts at a reconstruction of the history disciplinary code have been taken, not only in Brazil, but also in different countries, and this can be seen in debates and proposals which, dialogically, try to establish articulations and more organic networks linking the dimensions of historical culture and scholar (school) culture, not in an instrumental sense, but in a perspective that will prove to be more emancipating.

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### **Teaching the history of Catalonia: past, present and 'futures'**

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#### **Abstract:**

*The history which is taught in Catalan schools is not on the margin of the political, economic and social situation which is being shared by those living in Catalonia. There is an on-going debate about citizenship between the Catalans and the Spanish, which has had a major impact in the media, and has had repercussions for the future of Catalonia within the Spanish state. Teaching the history of Catalonia and Spain is an issue that has a strong resonance within this debate. The problem is not new and has deep historical roots. It has re-emerged, on the one hand, because of the attitude of the state government, which represents the most centralist Spanish nationalism. Moreover, the current economic situation has made the latent problem even more urgent. However, the debate has also served to mask other important problems.*

**Keywords:** Teaching the history of Catalonia, Catalan history curriculum, National identity, Catalan nationalism (Catalanism), Spanish nationalism, Patriotic values, Stereotypes, Manipulation of the history, Controversial topics, Ideological indoctrination, Dictatorship, Democracy, Historical Memory Law, Educational reform associations, Plural identities, Universal/global identity, September 11 (National Day of Catalonia), Pro-independence demonstration, Historical thought, Historical consciousness.

#### **A starting point**

Until 1988, seven years after the first Catalan Autonomous Government, there was no history of Catalonia included in the official curriculum, when a decree added Catalan content to the already existing history of Spain and the world in secondary education. And until 1990 there was no education law for the democratic period nor was there a Catalan history curriculum developed by the Catalan Government. Approximately 60 years earlier, during the Second Spanish Republic, there had been a very short period of time when the history of Catalonia was taught, and when teachers were trained to teach the history of Catalonia in Catalan. This time, for the Government of Catalonia, between 1931 and 1939, was exceptional when very little could be developed because of the Spanish Civil War and, later, as a result of the imposition of the military dictatorship. Having waited 50 years, with the restoration of democracy Catalonia at last had its own history curriculum. Until then there had been sectors within Spanish politics sectors that wanted to impose a fictitious ('imagined') nation state. For Fontana (2005) this is one of the biggest aberrations of contemporary history, which has led, worldwide, to wars and millions of deaths.<sup>1</sup>

#### **1. Teaching history, Spanish and Catalan Nationalism**

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries within Spain, as in other European countries, a process was taking place to construct a liberal state. It also involved the development of building a Spanish national identity, for which a public (state) education system was needed (Pozo Andrés, 2000). For López Facal (2010) there was a deliberate purpose behind this which meant undertaking a nationalizing literacy programme in a common language that until the late nineteenth century was only spoken by a minority in Spain. For Hernandez Cardona (1993) the teaching of history becomes an important subject, as it helped convey patriotic values and respect for the established order. The aim was to disseminate an 'imagined community'. But the impotence of the Spanish state and the permanence of privileges of the *ancienrégime*, weakened the centralizing project (Riquer, 2001), which had been intended to produce a widespread state school system. Otherwise this plan favoured the emergence of an extensive network of private religious schools.

History textbooks had been appearing in Spain with a nationalist discourse since the mid-nineteenth century (López Facal, 2001). Some intellectuals produced history textbooks of a more liberal or progressive nature, for example the 'Free Institution of Education' (Boyd, 1997), which offered a more secular and flexible interpretation. But the movement to centralize Spain was strongly influenced by

religious fundamentalism, which imposed its own agenda on the situation. A history of Spain was developed which valued above all the unity of the state. This sense of unity was intended to demonstrate the positive during all historical periods, from the Romans to the Visigoths or the Catholic Monarchs. The fragmentation was associated with the decline [of the state] (López Facal, 2003). Thus were created a series of stereotypes that would last until the 1970s, for example, the *Reconquista* against Muslims in the Middle Ages, the culmination of 'national union' that made the Catholic Monarchs<sup>2</sup> or Spanish imperialism of the Modern Age. Fontana (1988), Colominas (1990) and Pagès (2010) have pointed out that the history of Spain has been manipulated to create a national past that did not exist.

In the nineteenth century Catalonia made rapid progress in industrialization, and this went alongside significant social and economic transformations, whereas Spain was dominated by the most archaic rural structures. In Catalonia there was a revival of the Catalan language and culture, called *Renaixença* (Renaissance), which also influenced research into the history of Catalonia and its dissemination. For Fontana (1988) Catalan historiography and the formation of a national consciousness walked together. But this revival of culture and of history did not reach those in state education. It only had an impact within the world of private primary education.

In the political world, Catalan nationalism ('Catalanism') was born. This was described by Ainaud Lasarte (1993, p.31) thus:

It is a movement that defends the personality of Catalonia. It is a complex movement, which has economic, cultural and legal dimensions and pays special attention to the language and history with the participation of all social classes, and is manifested especially at the political level after the second half of nineteenth century, as with similar movements in Europe. It proposed the re-creation of the peaceful cultural and political situation which Catalonia had before it was destroyed by the force of arms in 1714.

Within the history of Catalonia the date of September 11, 1714, the day of the defeat of Barcelona by Felipe V, is configured as a symbolic historical landmark to remember the loss of self-governing institutions. These had been held for nearly seven hundred years, since the early Middle Ages to the late fifteenth century, and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Catalonia remained a distinct territory with its own laws, governing bodies and its own language, within the dominions of the House of Austria. The year 1886 saw the beginning of the holding of September 11 in remembrance as the Day of the Feast of the Catalan Nation.

The structure of Catalanism in politics began to take shape in the late nineteenth century. In 1880 Congress held *el Primer Catalanista*, and in 1885 the 'Memorial of Greuges'<sup>3</sup> was presented to the King of Spain. Through this, a structure was put in place in 1892 for a Catalan Regional Constitution, which formalised demands for political autonomy, the use of Catalan as the official language, and the creation of a Catalan school system. In the early twentieth century the industrial bourgeoisie was organized and indeed motivated to influence teaching, this being achieved through a concerted effort by the Barcelona City Council, the Barcelona Provincial Council and the *Mancomunitat*<sup>4</sup> (Community Association), directed by Enric Prat de la Riba. Through his policy advanced pedagogical reforms were promoted in Catalonia. A Pedagogical Research Council was created, as well as Summer Schools for the training of teachers. In 1916, in the Summer School for teachers, the first course in the history of Catalonia was held. However, the putsch of Primo de Rivera in 1923 put an end to this process.

## **2. Teaching history, The Republic and dictatorship**

With the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939), Catalonia had a very short period of democracy and autonomy. The Statute of Autonomy which had been approved by the Catalan Parliament ('Statute of Núria' 1931) was cut short by Congress in Madrid (and transformed into the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 1932). The question about who should have the responsibility for education in Catalonia was very controversial and was debated among legislators, both Spanish and Catalan. Nevertheless, the Catalan government did great work towards school modernization in Catalonia. In 1939 Catalonia, which

was the last territory to resist the fascist occupation, was defeated by Franco's troops. Thus began a dictatorship that lasted until the death of General Franco in 1975. During this time the dictatorship persecuted Catalan culture and the Catalan language was banned, most Catalan teachers were imprisoned and their positions were filled by Spanish appointments. The teaching of history returned to reproducing the Spanish nationalist stereotypes created in the nineteenth century, and the church again had a major role in education.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1951 saw a restructuring of secondary education. A new programme on political education was introduced. The newly created 'Formation of National Spirit', was a course of indoctrination in the tenets of the political regime of the dictatorship with the purpose of conveying the idea of Spanish nationalism. As a result, history education lost a part of its function in serving ideological indoctrination (Hernandez Cardona, 1993). The new history education had a large amount of world history contents, and therefore some Catalan textbooks written by Catalan historians as Sobrequés or Vicens Vives – whose writing (broadly within the tradition of the *Annales* School) demonstrated an important benchmark of quality even within this sterile universalist discourse – managed to gain some advantage by circumventing the fascists. In the 1960s a great economic development produced profound changes in society. Technocrats owing allegiance to *Opus Dei* came to power and promoted a new education law, the Education Act of 1970, which lengthened the compulsory school age (6-14 years) and sought to respond to the new social and economic needs of Spain.

An important historical development in Catalonia at this time was a great increase in the number of immigrants arriving from other parts of the Spanish state to work in the Catalan textile industry. Catalonia doubled its population between 1950 and 1960 and in the early part of the 1970s. This immigration would change the sociological structure of the country and would be accompanied by unplanned and chaotic urban growth, with many new neighbourhoods appearing in the outskirts of Barcelona and in the surrounding metropolitan city areas. At the same time many groups of teachers, who were part of educational reform associations, were developing joint proposals regardless of the official curriculum, and sought to introduce content which included the history of Catalonia in their classes.

The law of 1970 obviously did not include the history of Catalonia, but there was a significant change. In primary education, the influence of other countries in recommending the study of the immediate social environment, opened the door for some teachers to introduce content using the history and geography of Catalonia in their classes. Along these lines, in 1965 the teachers' association had created *Rosa Sensat* which promoted educational renewal through local knowledge, running parallel with the educational movement known as 'the active school', which followed the proposals of progressive pedagogy (e.g. Dewey, Freinet, Montessori). These movements supported both the teaching of Catalan history<sup>6</sup> and the teaching of the Catalan language.

In Spain, According to López Facal (2010), the Education Act 1970 in primary and secondary education, marked the end of historiographical nationalism. The political elites of Franco wanted there to be a sea-change for Spain to get closer to Europe. Gone were nationalist stereotypes created in the nineteenth century. The *Annales* approach (which had influenced Vicens Vives) replaced the old political history. The past was re-written and re-invented. The wars against invaders or towards Spanish independence, were transformed into processes towards European unity. Thus, at this point in history, these events were not being seen from any nationalist point of view. Social contents became more important and as a consequence, they have less nationalist connotations.

### **3. Democracy, self-government and the history of Catalonia**

After the end of the dictatorship and with the support of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, Catalonia approved a new Autonomy Statute in 1979. In 1981 the elections to the Catalan Parliament were won by a centre-right nationalist party. The various interest groups and professionals who had long asked for the teaching of the history of Catalonia expected its immediate incorporation into the curriculum. But it took almost ten years to issue a limited order, so that all it did was to include some relevant content of history and geography in the curriculum, adding some new content of the history of Catalonia to the already

existing contents about Spain and the world. For Hernandez Cardona (1993) this situation was caused by a weakening of national consciousness and a lack of experience in using habits of democracy after suffering such a long dictatorship.

The coming to power of the first socialist government (1982) initiated a process of change in the Spanish educational system. This process that was carried out involved the testing of new educational programmes and invited participation in initial discussion among broad sectors of teachers, educational reform movements and the university, motivated by the new democratic situation, which culminated in the Law on the General Education System (known as LOGSE) in 1990. This education law, the first of the democratic stage, defended an education based on freedom, diversity and plurality.<sup>7</sup> The Spanish State regulated the so-called 'minimum contents' common to all the autonomous communities. For the teaching of history, these minimum contents had to focus on developing skills related to evolution, change and continuity, multi-causality, and the use of the locality in time and space, etc. These concepts were applied to plural communities in the history of Spain, its regions and its historical nationalities. It recognized the existence of different nationalities and territories in the teaching of history. It defended the plurality of identities.<sup>8</sup>

The government of Catalonia, in the hands of a centre-right Catalan nationalist party, produced a history curriculum for primary to secondary education, with the main purpose of instilling awareness of belonging to the Catalan nation. Within the objectives of primary education, most of the contents of history were based on political events. Social groups, such as peasants, workers, women, ethnic minorities, etc., had a marginal presence. It stressed conflicts over Spanish centralism as it included the Catalan Revolt (1640) and the War of Succession (1714), but it did not address internal conflicts (conflicts between social classes inside Catalonia). This is an example of how Catalan nationalism at this time highlighted conflicts with Spain rather than conflicts within Catalonia. Thus, for the Catalan Revolt the fact that Catalans complained about the presence of the Castilian army in Catalan territory was stressed. The Catalan Revolt (1640) as well as the War of Succession (1714) were interpreted and explained by Catalan nationalists as a conflict between Catalonia and Spain (Castile). The content submission was based on political periodization and linear chronology.

This curriculum could be identified with the history written by Ferran Soldevila, with a romantic or a positivist approach, but it was completely different to the histories written by Jaume Vicens Vives or Pierre Vilar. For example Jaume Vicens Vives had an *Annales* School approach, while Pierre Vilar's historiography evolved from historical materialism to new social history (close to the *Annales* School). It prioritized above all Catalan identity-building. To Pagès (2011a) it had set a standard model, i.e. history in the service of national identity. For López Facal (2010) Spanish nationalism had been replaced by Catalan nationalism, without any essential changes in the teaching and learning of history. To counteract this, others openly defended the use of the teaching of history to form Catalan national identity (Alcoberro and Trepà, 1992). Nevertheless, the curriculum allowed some freedom for teachers to make decisions, and they could adapt programs according to the reality of their school and its students. This creates alternative materials that will lead to very different practices within the same curriculum.

#### **4. Teaching the history of Catalonia against the teaching of the history of Spain: return to the past**

In 1996 the rise to power of Spanish conservatives had a significant impact on the teaching of history. The Spanish Conservative Government's goal was to reduce the presence of the history of the regions in the curriculum, especially the history of Catalonia. In 1996 the Minister of Education, Esperanza Aguirre, supported by the Royal Academy of History,<sup>9</sup> declared that there was an excessive presence of the history of the regions in the curriculum and textbooks.<sup>10</sup> This speech had a considerable impact and it was followed by a government project called 'Improvement Plan for the Humanities', which amounted to a new proposal for common content for history in all of Spain's autonomous communities (Gavaldà & Santisteban, 1998). When this project was announced there was widespread controversy among historians and teachers in all their intellectual forums, and in the media.<sup>11</sup>

The project was seen to be justified because it was believed that the history of Spain was not represented or was perceived to be under-represented in the history curricula of the regions, for example, in the history

curriculum of Catalonia. These statements made by the Minister of Education, by the Royal Academy of History – and by much of the Spanish media – are not true, as studies have shown. A report by the prestigious Bofill Foundation (Segura, 2001) showed that the history of Catalonia did not exceed 10% of the content of the curriculum, when according to the law it could reach 45%. It showed that what the Conservative Government (of Spain) really wanted was to control the selection of content, so that it could impose its own version of contentious issues such as the teaching of the Civil War or the problem of historical nationalisms. This attitude is closely related to the pact of silence and reconciliation imposed during the transition to democracy (Llobet, et al, 2004).

The same research (Segura, 2001) is also the most rigorous that has been done so far on the contents of history textbooks used in Spain. This research shows that in all of the autonomous regions the publishing market is fully in the hands of big publishers, Vicens Vives, Santillana, SM and Anaya, which account for over 70% of sales and reach 90% by adding other publishers with less of the market share (Ecir, Oxford, Editex, Teide). All these publishers publish the same texts for Spain, with a small annex (appendix) of differentiated content for each of the Autonomous Communities. The percentage occupying Catalonia's own history content, for example, is well below the maximum allowed by law. The only difference is the Basque Country, where there is a non-state publisher (Erein), which has reached a share of the market of over 30%, but this editorial position cannot be identified or equated with national independence.

But, despite the lies and manipulation that occurred in the media, the Spanish Conservative Government could not carry out its project because it was in a minority in the Spanish Parliament, and the Conservatives needed Basque and Catalan nationalist political parties to agree, and there was in fact no agreement to reform. The Central Government had to withdraw the project for lack of support and announced that it would convene a group of experts to assess the current status of the teaching of the humanities in Spain. The resulting advice of the experts was very poor (Conference of Education, 1998), and their proposals were limited to proposing more time for history lessons. But in the elections of 2000 the Popular Party (Conservative Party) won an absolute majority and then approved a Royal decree amending the state minimum content prescribed for all the autonomous communities.

In 2002 the Catalan Government adapted the content of the Catalan curriculum according to the law imposed by the Spanish government, but tried to keep control over some training issues and over the definition of the Catalan nation. To Pagès (2011a), comparing the two proposals of the Spanish Government and the Catalan Government,

... there is no difference in the treatment of identity and diversity. There is a commitment to Spanish national history, and the other adds the necessary elements to formulate Catalan identity. What is happening is a domination of political and military events over those of an economic, social or cultural nature. (p.176)

For Valls (2005, 2007a), a very important question of law was that which minimized the contents of contemporary history in secondary education (high school). The aim was to avoid controversial topics such as the Second Republic, the Civil War, the Franco dictatorship and the transition to democracy, which are fundamental historical periods for the understanding of the present. In addition, the curriculum is fixed and closed, and what has been stopped is the notion of freedom in choosing historical content.

##### **5. Changes and continuities in the teaching of the history of Catalonia in the 21st century**

In 2003 the Spanish Conservative Government developed a new education law (known as LOCE), which was rejected by all educational sectors of the country. But in 2004 the Popular Party lost the general election. Some negative examples of the law that was intended to be passed were, for example, that there was no reference to the Franco dictatorship and the concepts of democracy or democratic education appeared to be very underdeveloped. After the election victory of the Socialist Party (PSOE), a new education law was constructed, the LOE (Education Act), passed in 2006. Although its organization using historical competencies and objectives is interesting, its structure and its contents do not differ too much from the one proposed by the Conservatives (Valls, 2007b). The historical stages are divided

chronologically for each of the courses, finishing with today's world.

In Catalonia political changes occurred in the 2003 elections, with the Catalan Government experiencing the displacement of the Conservative Nationalists, who had occupied that position since 1980 for 23 years. They were replaced by a coalition of the Left.<sup>12</sup> The curriculum of social sciences, geography and history for compulsory secondary education approved by the new Catalan government in 2007 includes, for the first time, concepts such as territorial [which could be interpreted as regional – in the sense of ‘in historic communities’] and cultural identity, historical consciousness, critical social thought and education for democratic participation (Pagès and Santisteban, 2011). These are new concepts in the Catalan curriculum and are absent in the Spanish general curriculum.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of national identity is shaped differently to those in previous Catalan nationalist governments (Pagès and Gonzalez-Monfort, 2010):

The role of the teaching of history in the formation of identities has to take into account the plurality and complexity of our world and the choices of individuals freely and autonomously to take decisions related to the construction of their personality and their future. These features – the plurality, complexity and freedom – explain the need for elements of social cohesion and preserve the memories of the protagonists’ plural past, and all the evidence to facilitate better understanding of the men and women who have preceded us in time and have played a key role in the construction of what is here in the present – who they were, how they lived, how they thought.<sup>14</sup>

Plural identity is defended against a single national identity in the context of the great cultural diversity which thrives within Catalan citizenship, after a heavy immigration of people from other countries. Although the Madrid Government sets prescriptive parameters for Spain, the Catalan curriculum has allowed the introduction of innovative approaches to teaching history.

In 2011, Zapatero (prime minister 2004-2011, PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party) announced early elections because of the economic and social crisis that had been affecting Spain since 2008. The Popular Party (Conservative Party) won the 2011 Congressional (Parliamentary) Elections – and those for the Spanish Senate, with a wide majority. Earlier, in 2010, after two terms of the left-wing coalition government, the Catalan centre-right nationalist party won the elections to the Parliament of Catalonia, but without having obtained an absolute majority. In recent years, relations between the governments of Catalonia and Spain have deteriorated. A major cause was the approval process for a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia, which was finally adopted in 2006. The process ended up being traumatic because, as had happened during the Second Spanish Republic (1932), the Catalan Parliament approved a statute, but the Spanish parliament cut many of their aspirations. In addition, the Popular Party was against giving it their final approval. This involved a denouncement by the Constitutional Court, but the Popular Party nevertheless organized a campaign against greater claims for self-government in Catalonia.

To understand the attitude of the Popular Party regarding the teaching of history, it must be understood, for example, with regard to the Law of Historical Memory. When all political parties advocated the development of this law on historical memory – directly related to the Civil War conflict – the Popular Party refused to approve it claiming that ‘such laws only serve to arouse hatred among Spanish people and break the consensus established during the Spanish democratic transition’. It could be said that this ideological position is not shared by political exiles (*exiliates*), people who didn’t have a fair trial or for those who lost some family members buried in mass graves. In spite of the Popular Party position, the Historical Memory Law was passed by the House of Representatives on October 31, 2007.

In spite of the limitations introduced by the Spanish Government, the new Statute of Autonomy approved in 2006 generated many expectations regarding political and economic self-government. Nevertheless, neither the previous socialist government nor the current Conservative government have accomplished these expectations. In this context, the pro-independence demonstration was called ‘September 11, 2012,

the National Day of Catalonia', with the slogan 'Catalonia: new state of Europe'. It was certainly the largest demonstration ever held in Catalonia. The reaction of the Spanish Popular Party government after September 11 was not to determine the causes of the problem or increase either dialogue or negotiation, but to blame the Catalan Government's manipulation of history taught in schools. The Minister of Education, José Ignacio Wert, said it is necessary 'to Hispanicize (exert Spanish hegemony over) Catalan students (*españolizar los alumnos catalanes*)'.<sup>15</sup> The reason for these statements, which have been met with widespread political and social rejection in Catalonia, is that according to the Spanish Minister of Education: 'in some communities the contents of history textbooks attempt to transfer nationalist attitudes, and tilt the children toward a particular ideology', misusing autonomy in education.<sup>16</sup> Clearly this refers to the history taught in Catalonia, although this is not cited.

At this time the Spanish government is preparing the draft Organic Law for Educational Quality Enhancement (LOMCE), also called 'Wert's Law'. This proposal has led to demonstrations against this law not only in Spain but especially in historic communities like Catalonia. The bill wants to reduce the educational powers of the regional governments. The law also degrades the teaching of official languages (Catalan, Galician, Basque), because they are no longer compulsory but optional subjects. The Spanish government is thus effectively seeking to radicalize their positions towards a centralizing Spanish nationalism, reminiscent of the attitudes and stereotypes of the nineteenth century. The Catalan government has also radicalized its own position by proposing a consultation on the independence of Catalonia in 2014. It currently has the support of another nationalist party, of the Left, Republican and Independence (ERC). In addition, a social movement outside the official political parties, known as 'Assembly of Catalonia', has been organized as a result of the pro-independence demonstration of September 11, 2012.

#### **In conclusion: how will the future of history education in Catalonia be written?**

The fighting between different forms of nationalism in Spain in recent times has hidden the real problems of the teaching of history and history teacher training. In a study conducted by the research group GREDICS<sup>17</sup> the students of several compulsory secondary education schools were asked to construct a story about the history of Catalonia. In these stories there are mostly isolated characters, politicians and men, some of whom were mythological. There were no minorities in the stories, nor women (González, Santisteban, Pagès & Oller, 2012). These stories show that the problem of teaching and learning of history in this debate is not about whether more or less Catalan or Spanish history is taught, but it is about the role of history education in the formation of democratic citizenship.

In other work on the formation of historical thought we demonstrated the difficulties experienced by students in forming their own historical consciousness, in using the past to understand the present, in developing a capacity for empathy, for the interpretation of sources or for historical explanation (Santisteban, 2006; Santisteban, 2010; Santisteban, Gonzalez & Pagès, 2010). To Pagès (2011b) nationalist history made sense in the beginning, in the nineteenth century, but today, in a globalized world, the needs of democratic citizenship are sometimes very different. For him, national consciousness should be replaced by public awareness, and national identity by a universal/global identity. This does not mean that we should not build our own identity, local or national, but it should be a starting point, to live with other identities (Pagès and Santisteban, 2011). This means getting to know ourselves well in order to get to know other people and other cultures.

Teaching the history of Catalonia should demonstrate within it the most significant feature of the country throughout its history, i.e. its capacity to assimilate different cultures as a place of passage and transition, of meeting and mixing (among other authors, Vicens Vives, 1964; Vilar, 1964 and 1987). And, as also stressed by Pierre Vilar (1997), we must teach students to think historically, to think not just about relationships in time, but also relationships in space. The current situation is not easy, but we must be convinced and persuaded that to learn history can help build a better future.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Of all the aberrations that have been attributed to modernity, making it responsible for the majority of contemporary ills, from dictatorships of one type or other to instances of systematic killings, there is one idea that has produced and continues to produce today millions of dead, many even more than the wars of religion, and that seems to have happened as a result of a kind of higher thinking: I mean the invention and consolidation of the nation-state, this monstrous alliance between a cultural phenomenon above the dimensions and the political machinery of the state, which tries to legitimize it, giving it an ethnic background to make it 'natural' and necessary, sidelining the healthy old doctrine that the basis on which the state had to sustain itself was none other than the social contract.' (Fontana, 2005, 11-12).

<sup>2</sup>Catalonia (hidden away at this time) had institutions of government, its own laws and its own language.

<sup>3</sup>Also called 'Defensive memory of the moral and material interests of Catalonia', claimed the right to a difference as a region within the unity of Spain, to use Catalan in teaching and in public.

<sup>4</sup>The union of the four Catalan provinces for government to improve the administration and resources: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona. The *Mancomunitat* was dissolved in 1925.

<sup>5</sup>To compare the type of history that was taught during the Republic and after the dictatorship, the historian Fontana (1999) recovered two manuals for the teaching of history for children (Linacero, 1933 and Institute of Spain, 1939). His analysis of the purposes of these led him to believe that they were intended as citizenship training. The Republican text is an attempt to understand reality through knowledge. The text of the early years of the dictatorship is a typical manual of nationalist Spanish indoctrination.

<sup>6</sup>Marta Mata is one of the leading figures in the creation of the association *Rosa Sensat* and she then became an MEP (representing Catalonia and Spain). See Benejam (2006).

<sup>7</sup>The GLSES stated in the preamble: 'The first and fundamental goal of education is to provide boys and girls, young people of either sex, full training to enable them to form their own essential identity and how to build a conception of reality that integrates both knowledge and ethics and moral assessment of it. Such training must be targeted towards the full development of their ability to exercise, critically and axiologically [relating these studies to values], plural society, freedom, tolerance and solidarity'(Preamble of the Act).

<sup>8</sup>The objectives of the curriculum of Social Sciences, Geography and History in Secondary Education. Objective 3: 'Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity as the right of peoples and individuals to their identity, expressing attitudes of tolerance and respect for other cultures and opinions that do not match their own, without sacrificing the critical judgment on them'.

<sup>9</sup>This institution is very conservative. In recent times, it has caused great controversy over the Spanish edition of the Biographical Dictionary, a dictionary of history, funded by the Spanish government, in which the articles on the dictator Francisco Franco and fascism are intolerable, for the indulgence they extend to him and his regime.

<sup>10</sup>Education Minister Esperanza Aguirre writes in one of the daily Spanish newspapers (which is monarchist and conservative): 'A student may pass through the entire ten years of compulsory schooling without hearing once a lesson on Julius Caesar or Felipe II' (*ABC* [a newspaper], 27 May, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> According to López Facal (2010), more than 650 articles were written in the press between 1997 and 1998.

<sup>12</sup>'Catalan Socialist', 'Republican Left of Catalonia' (pro-independence) and 'Initiative for Catalonia' (evolution of the Communist Party majority in Catalonia).

<sup>13</sup>*Generalitat de Catalunya*, Compulsory Secondary Education Curriculum – *Decret* (Decree)143/2007 DOGC. 4915.

<sup>14</sup>ditto, p.7.

<sup>15</sup>*La Vanguardia*, October 10, 2012. The term *españolizar*: General Franco used it for the first time in 1936, at the start of the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>16</sup>*La Vanguardia*, October 26, 2012.

<sup>17</sup>(Research Group in Didactics of Social Sciences of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2009SGR468).

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## **A game of Identities: debates over history in Greek Cypriot education**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discusses the ways in which a battle which lasted over a century between the Hellenocentric and Cyprocentric approaches in Greek Cypriot education manifested itself in debates over history education during the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These were mostly about the version of the past that should be taught to students. The debates over the selection of the story to be taught were essentially disputes over the identity that should be promoted through history education. On one hand the supporters of a Hellenocentric orientation argued in favor of promoting a Greek national identity, while the supporters of a Cyprocentric orientation supported the idea of promoting a Cypriot civic identity common for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The dominance of the Hellenocentric approach during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is being challenged by the Cyprocentric one at the beginning of the new millennium. At the same time a new disciplinary approach in history education has emerged. Although at the moment this is wrongly associated by many with the Cyprocentric one, it is essentially radically different from both traditional approaches. Although during the last 4 years history education has not been at the centre of attention, political agendas and the current implementation of the New Curriculum 2010 for history education can produce new debates.*

### **Keywords**

Greek Cypriot education, history education, National identity, Disciplinary approach, Historical thinking, Debates over history education, Hellenocentric, Cyprocentric.

### **Introduction**

Although most debates over history education within the Greek Cypriot educational system took place during the last decade, their roots can be traced in debates over Greek Cypriot education back to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Since then the issue of the ideological orientation of Greek Cypriot education has been a divisive one. In the 1890s the issue of the establishment of the first comprehensive secondary school for Greek Cypriots (Pancyprian Gymnasium) became the arena for two opposing views battling for the character of Greek Cypriot education. On one hand there were those who claimed that such a school should be identical with the ones in Greece, with an emphasis on classical education. On the other hand there were those who argued that the school should be a vocational one which would provide its graduates with the professional qualifications and skills needed to make a living in Cyprus. This was not merely a confrontation between classical and vocational education, but more importantly a confrontation about the orientation of Greek Cypriot education in relation to Greece. In a more general level, this was essentially a collision between the idea of Cyprus as part of Greece and the one of Cyprus as a distinct entity.<sup>2</sup>

Debates over education within the Greek Cypriot educational system continued through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In most of these the main rivals were a) those who favoured a close relationship with the Greek educational system and a Hellenocentric orientation of Greek Cypriot education and b) those who claimed that the Greek Cypriot educational system can and should prosper on its own; hence the orientation of education should be a Cyprocentric one. The former were usually the Church of Cyprus and groups and individuals who politically and ideologically supported close relations with Greece which, according to this point of view, was considered the motherland for Greek Cypriots. One would expect these to be mainly right-wing groups and individuals. The same perspective, however, was, in many cases, shared by the centre-right and democratic-socialist parties in Cyprus. This shows the great influence that the Hellenocentric approach had and has in Greek Cypriot education and society in general. The supporters of a Cyprus oriented education were usually left-wing groups and individuals who favoured a loose relationship with Greece and, after 1974, reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriot community on the island.

Obviously such debates were also related to the issue of national identity. Historically, national identity was the foundation on which nation-states were built, hence, as Smith (1991) points out, nations needed 'a

measure of common culture and civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas that bind population together in their homeland' (p. 11). The case of Cyprus is not an exception, thus the issue of Greek Cypriots' identity has always been at the core of these debates. The supporters of a Hellenocentric approach favoured the promotion of a Greek national identity. The advocates of a Cyprocentric one essentially rejected the idea of a national identity and instead argued for a promotion of Cypriot civic identity: a common Cypriot citizenship which binds Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots together.

Although for many decades the Hellenocentric approach dominated Greek Cypriot education, during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and especially after 1974) the orientation of Greek Cypriot education shifted from a completely Hellenocentric one (in the sense of essentially copying the Greek educational system) towards a Cyprocentric one (in the sense of Greek Cypriots implementing their own educational policy). In terms of the kind of identity promoted by education, however, the dominance of the Hellenocentric ideological orientation has been relatively undisrupted until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Koutselini-Ioannidou, 1997; Perikleous, 2010; Persianis, 2010; Philippou, 2009).<sup>3</sup> This article attempts to discuss how these opposing views of the ideological orientation of Greek Cypriot education manifested in debates over history education in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### **The debate over the 1935 curriculum for primary education**

In 1935, the changes in educational legislation which gave full control of primary education to the British Governor of the island caused the first conflict over history education in Cyprus.<sup>4</sup> The main issue was the substantial reduction of the Greek history in the substantive content prescribed by the 1935 curriculum for primary education. According to the British authorities this was necessary in order to a) address the problem of history being distorted by either Greek or Turkish teachers and b) give the proper attention to the history of Cyprus through the 'correct' perspective of the island's past (Palmer, 1936 cited in Persianis, 2010; Cullen, 1936 cited in Polydorou, 1995). According to Yiangou (2004), unlike the British educational policy in other colonies, in which British history was compulsory in order to challenge local nationalism, in the case of Cyprus, the teaching of the island's history was encouraged to suppress Greek Cypriot nationalism. This was because while in other colonies local nationalism reinforced demands for independence, in the case of Cyprus, Greek Cypriot nationalism reinforced the demand for union with Greece.

These changes caused much reaction. The Church of Cyprus claimed that the new curriculum was an attempt by the colonial government to corrupt the national consciousness of Greek Cypriot children by abolishing Greek history and geography (Myriantopoulos, 1946; Persianis, 2010). The Greek Cypriot members of the Board of Education also protested claiming that the teaching of Ancient Greek history in only 2-3 lessons is an insult to 'the history of the country which produced the most glorious civilization' (Polydorou, 1995, p. 95). The Greek Cypriot teachers' trade union also reacted and demanded the reinstatement of Greek history.

Despite these reactions the British colonial government was unwilling to negotiate. Particularly in the case of the Church of Cyprus, it responded by rejecting the Church's role in secular education (Persianis, 2010). This attitude was in contrast with British educational policy in Cyprus during the previous decades. Until the 1930s, the British colonial government was quite tolerant towards the Hellenocentric orientation of Greek Cypriot education and allowed a considerable degree of autonomy to the two communities in terms of handling their own educational affairs (Persianis, 2010; Polydorou, 1995). This change though can be explained by the general change in the British colonial policy in Cyprus which became extremely strict and intolerant to any signs of nationalism after the 1931 uprising of the Greek Cypriots.<sup>5</sup> British educational policy changed once more with the 1949 curriculum in which Greek history was reinstated as a distinct subject (Polydorou, 1995). This again coincided with a new phase of colonial policy in Cyprus after the end of WWII whereas the British partly abandoned the strict policy enforced after 1931 and also attempted to negotiate a new constitution with increased self-administration for Cypriots. According to Kelling (1990, cited in Faustmann, 1999) this was due to the realization that Cyprus could not be ruled in the dictatorial manner of the previous years anymore. Greek Cypriots expected that union with Greece would be

awarded to them after their contribution during the war. The Soviet Union's increasing influence among Cypriots was an additional element which increased anti-British incidents and the possibility of a revolt. Therefore '[l]oyalty through development and political reform' (Faustmann, 1999, p. 75) became the new goal for British policy on the island.

As Soysal and Schissler (2005) observe, historically, 'subjects were transformed into citizens through the teaching of history, geography, and the language of the nation' (p. 1). Therefore, one would expect that history education would be a central issue in debates over education after the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Interestingly, within the Greek Cypriot educational system, after the conflict with the British administration in 1935, history education was not a serious issue of debate again before 2004.<sup>6</sup> This was not because history's role has been underestimated. On the contrary this is an example of the dominance of the Hellenocentric approach during the 20<sup>th</sup> century which did not allow the emergence of alternative perspectives of teaching history. In fact, even during periods that the leftist party was in a politically privileged position no discussions about changing the ethnocentric approach in which history was taught took place.

As a result history teaching in Greek Cypriot education during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> was an example of what Seixas (2000) calls a 'best story' approach; the transmission of a single definite narrative (the best story of the past) which reinforces the sense of belonging and promotes the dominant values of the society. In the case of Greek Cypriot education, this was the story of Greeks and Greek Cypriots who either civilize the world or fight for freedom. It was the story of mainly political and military events in which the only agents were Greek (and much less frequently Greek Cypriot) male politicians and soldiers. This story taught Greek Cypriot students that they are Greeks and that their duty as future citizens is to serve their country (Cyprus) and nation (Greece).<sup>7</sup>

#### **The debate over the report of Educational Reform Committee in 2004**

At the dawn of the new millennium, history became the epicentre of many debates over Greek Cypriot education. In 2003, the Ministry of Education and Culture (under a centre-right president who was also supported by the left-wing and the democratic-socialist parties) appointed an Educational Reform Committee (ERC) to prepare a report for a comprehensive reform of Greek Cypriot education. Among others, in its report titled *Democratic and Humanistic Education in the Euro-Cypriot State*, the ERC argued in favour of a) abandoning the Hellenocentric (ethnocentric) orientation of Greek Cypriot education, b) promoting interculturalism and multiculturalism and c) acknowledging the existence of the Turkish Cypriot community (Educational Reform Committee, 2004).

In its references to history education, the committee criticized the import of textbooks from Greece and suggested the introduction of new history textbooks written by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot experts. It also argued for the need of a 'more systematic teaching of history through programs and textbooks which are in accordance with the contemporary European standards (peaceful coexistence, multiculturalism, respect of difference and abolition of chauvinism, intolerance and interracial hatred)' (Educational Reform Committee, 2004, p. 157).<sup>8</sup> In addition, the ERC emphasized the need for 'multiperspectivity' in history education as a means to promote rapprochement between the two communities on the island (Educational Reform Committee, 2004).

The report was supported by the political parties of the coalition government and groups and individuals who favoured a Cyprocentric approach and rapprochement. However, only the left wing party and those who traditionally supported reconciliation on the island agreed explicitly with the committee's claims for a change of ideological orientation and an approach to history education which would promote peaceful coexistence and rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriot community (United Democratic Youth Organisation, 2007).<sup>9</sup> The Church of Cyprus, right-wing groups and individuals and those who traditionally rejected any possibility of reconciliation and favoured an ideological identification with Greece, although they acknowledged the need for educational reform, argued that the manifesto proposed a reform which would essentially de-hellenize Greek Cypriots.

Arguments voiced during this debate from both sides were mostly ideological ones. The first group argued that history education can and must contribute to reconciliation with Turkish Cypriots and abandon ethnocentric approaches which promote chauvinism and nationalism (Educational Reform Committee, 2004; Iakovides, 2008; United Democratic Youth Organisation, 2007). The second one argued that the kind of history education proposed by the committee would lead to the abolition of national identity which would endanger the Greek Cypriot's existence on the island. Furthermore, they considered the ERC's suggestions for history education as the unfortunate result of the ideological pressure exercised by globalization and foreign powers (Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus, n.d.; Iakovides, 2008; Pastelas, 2009).

### **The debate over Year 6 history textbooks**

The next history battle was one which took place both in Cyprus and Greece and it was about the introduction, in 2006, of a new textbook for Year 6 history.<sup>10</sup> This new textbook included a narrative radically different from the one of the previous textbook. The old textbook contained a quite ethnocentric narrative which emphasized on the hardships that the Greeks suffered during the Ottoman rule, Greek heroism and Turkish brutality. The new one painted a much more positive picture of the Ottoman rule with less emphasis on Greek heroism and Turkish brutality.

The central issue of debate was the degree to which this new textbook presented historical events in the appropriate way and with the 'correct' interpretation. Its opponents claimed that the textbook essentially distorted the history of Greece, while its supporters argued that its presentation of Greek history was a long due change that provided a more balanced interpretation of the past. The intense public reactions against the book that came from even some leftist groups led to the withdrawal of the new textbook and the decision to reprint the old one.<sup>11</sup> The final blow was inflicted by the Academy of Athens which argued that the textbook downgraded and even distorted scientific truth and also did not serve education's goal for promoting national consciousness (Academy of Athens, 2007).<sup>12</sup>

The supporters of the 2006 textbook claimed, and still do, that it represented a radical approach in history education in Greece and Cyprus in the sense that it promoted historical thinking through the use of sources (Koulouri, 2007; Stogias, 2012). However, such a claim is quite debatable. Although the textbook included primary and secondary sources, in most of the cases the prescribed activities asked students to merely find information in them. The way sources were used in the textbook did not substantially contribute to the construction of historical knowledge. More importantly, it did not provide any opportunities for developing students' understanding of the tentative nature of historical knowledge while the need of interpreting (instead of just reading) the sources was usually neglected.

### **The debates over educational reform**

After the debates of 2004 over educational reform, the issue did not receive serious attention for 4 years. In 2008 the government, under a newly elected left-wing president, announced the beginning of a curricular reform.<sup>13</sup> History education was at the epicentre of disputes once more. As in the past, the main issue was the kind of identity that history education should promote. Should history teaching 'promote the Greek national identity and maintain the desire for liberation of the semi-occupied island or... promote a common Cypriot identity and the reunification of the island through the reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriots [?]' (Perikleous, 2010, p. 321). Besides the rehearsal of the theoretical arguments about the role of history in the formation of Greek Cypriot students' identity, the debate was also about the interpretation of specific events of Cyprus' recent history (especially the 1955-59 and 1963-1974 periods).

The same period also marked the emergence of voices that argued for a disciplinary approach in history education. According to this new point view, history teaching should not aim to promote social values or any kind of identity. Advocates of this approach claimed that history education should primarily aim to develop students' understanding of the methods and logic of the discipline, as a way to understand the social world beyond the confines of ideological doctrines and pre-defined values (Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, 2009; Perikleous, 2008).<sup>14</sup> It should be stressed, however, that such an approach does not reject the idea of values and neither does deny the existence of identities. What distinguishes it

from the approaches described earlier, however, is that its goal is to develop understanding of the social world instead of 'social engineering' (Shemilt, 2011).<sup>15</sup> In the case of values:

[w]hilst a disciplinary approach does not guarantee the promotion of particular social values, in many cases, one can argue, it does incorporate them in practice as an intrinsic component of disciplinary learning. An example is the case of democracy. The discipline of history shares common values with democracy since thinking historically involves a commitment to open argument, to the public examination of evidence, and also a commitment to debate (Chapman & Perikleous, 2011, p. 9)

Also, although a disciplinary approach cannot promote a specific kind of identity, it does aim to help students understand why and in what ways the past (ours and the one of others; individual and collective) influences the way people (including us) define their selves and the way others define them. As Shemilt (2011) puts it, such an approach 'requires students to look at "identities" from the outside and to understand them as constructs that can arise from the grassroots or be manufactured and imposed from above, that can persist through millennia or prove as evanescent as celebrity' (p.103).

Finally, regarding the political situation in Cyprus, the advocates of the disciplinary approach claimed that although history should not be used as a means to overturn one ideological agenda (promotion of Hellenocentric orientation) in favour of another (promotion of Cyprocentric orientation and reconciliation of the two communities), it could promote understanding and mutual respect (AHDR, 2009; Perikleous, 2008). The latter was not a reference to a superficial approach of merely acknowledging equal responsibilities of past injustices and celebrating the two communities' common past. Instead, it referred to an effort to promote sophisticated understanding of each other's behaviour in the past. This demands knowledge and understanding of the different ideas and beliefs held by each group, their different situation and how each groups seen their own situation.

At that moment, these views did not receive much public attention mainly because they were not part of the discourse of any of the two traditional rivals. An additional reason was that such views are in many cases misunderstood as being the same with the ones advocating for cooperation and peaceful coexistence. In this sense, it is likely that the advocates of the Hellenocentric approach did not particularly attack these views because they considered them as merely a by-product of the Cyprocentric approach, while the advocates of promoting a Cypriot identity considered the disciplinary approach an ally.

### **The issue of the relationship with the Turkish Cypriot community**

In August 2008, a circular by the Ministry of Education and Culture declared that the central aim for the upcoming school year would be the '[c]ultivation of a culture of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, with the purpose of the ending the occupation and the reunification of our and country and our people' (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008, p. 1).<sup>16</sup> In the same circular, the Ministry of Education stressed that 'Greek Cypriot education will remain Greek since the cultivation of the Greek language, traditions and cultural attributes which identify us as Greek Cypriots will continue' (ibid., p. 2). Although this circular did not explicitly refer to history education, it argued that the past should be approached in ways which support the aim for peaceful coexistence; mutual recognition of each other's injustices in the past and emphasis on the aspects of the past that unite the two communities (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008).

This circular essentially marked a radical change in the way that Greek Cypriot education officially handled the issue of the relationship between the two communities on the island. Although during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the relationship between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities was the main political issue on the island, it was essentially not an issue for Greek Cypriot education.<sup>17</sup> The principal approach, especially after the division of the island, was one in which the existence of Turkish Cypriots was not acknowledged. The dominant narrative in Greek Cypriot education treated the Turks as the rival of the Greeks and Greek Cypriots and the reason for all the suffering that was brought to Cyprus in 1974. Furthermore, it did not distinguish between Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community and included no

references to the Turkish Cypriot community's existence on the island beyond the one about the existence of a pseudo-state in the northern part of the island. The circular, although it did not reject the idea of education's Hellenocentric orientation, essentially introduced strong elements of a Cyprocentric one by prioritizing the aim for the rapprochement with the other Cypriot community.

Although the left-wing political administration was a decisive factor for this change, it would be naïve, and in fact unhistorical, to conclude that it was the only one. The removal of travel restrictions in 2003 which allowed the contact between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots for the first time since 1974, the debates over the 2004 referendum for the solution of the political problem which allowed claims in favour of reconciliation and coexistence to be voiced, and the phenomenon of nationalism being challenged globally contributed to the creation of a climate that allowed such a decision which was essentially a political one.

The main argument for this radical approach was that cultivating positive feelings towards the other community is a necessary condition for a) the success of the efforts for a political solution and the reunification of Cyprus and its people and b) the sustainability of such a solution (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008). Its supporters argued that this was a legitimate aim because educational systems should aim to prepare students to overcome the crisis caused by nationalistic approaches (Achniotis, n.d.). They also emphasized that the aim for peaceful coexistence did not contradict the aim for ending the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus, but instead contributed to it (Fragkos, 2009).<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand those opposing the ministry's aim argued that this would essentially lead to the de-hellenization of Greek Cypriots (Chrysostomos II, 2009; Papastylianou, 2008).<sup>19</sup> In addition, although they did not explicitly reject the aim for peaceful coexistence, they claimed that this cannot and should not be discussed before a solution of the political problem is achieved and before the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus is ended (Aggelidou, 2009). Furthermore, they claimed that such an aim would potentially undermine the aim for the ending of the occupation (Fragkos, 2009). Despite these strong objections, the aim remained and in fact reappeared in the respective circulars for the following schools year (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009; 2010; 2011). In practice, however, it was up to each school's administration and personnel to decide whether and how this aim would be pursued.

This was the latest 'big battle' over Greek Cypriot education in the sense that it was the most recent occasion in which education was the issue of a public debate widely covered by the media with the fierce involvement of politicians and public figures. Although different in content with the one which took place more than a century ago, it was fundamentally the collision of the same opposing approaches to Greek Cypriot education. On one hand the advocates of the Hellenocentric orientation of education argued for the protection of the Greek national identity of the Greek Cypriots, while on the other hand those who favored a Cyprocentric education argued for the need to reunite all Cypriots (Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots). More importantly, this last debate showed that although the Hellenocentric approach is still a very powerful one within education, it is being seriously and officially challenged by the Cyprocentric one.

#### **'Private' debates over the new history curricula**

Moving with its intention for curricular reform, the Ministry of Education and Culture formed academic committees for each subject to propose new curricula. The formation of the committee for history education took much more time than the rest of the other subjects and it was the result of the consensus of all political parties (Perikleous, 2010; Persianis, 2010). It consisted of five academic historians (three Greeks and two Greek Cypriots). Unlike most of the other subjects, the committee for history education did not include any academic experts in education. As in the case of other subjects, a working group of teachers was formed to cooperate with the academic committee for the design of the new history curriculum.

The process of designing the proposal for the new history curriculum was not without tensions, albeit that these remained away from the public spotlight. Based on rather outdated ideas about children's cognitive abilities, the academic historians claimed that younger children cannot think historically; therefore the main aim of primary history education should be the acquisition of substantive knowledge. This does not mean

that historical thinking was a priority for the academics for secondary education ages. On the contrary, their idea of history education in secondary education was again essentially one of accumulating substantive knowledge. Naturally, the members of the teachers' working group reacted to this point of view arguing that the academic's claims underestimate younger children's abilities and that educational research during the last four decades shows that historical thinking is not confined in secondary education ages.<sup>20</sup> Despite the exchange of arguments, and despite the repeatedly expressed academics' appreciation of teachers' expertise, productive dialogue was essentially absent. This was mainly because academics were not willing to discuss these different views in depth.

Disagreements were also present within the academic historians' committee. These stemmed from the very different perspectives of the past held by its members. This was a natural consequence of the fact that the committee was formed to reflect the different points of view which existed among political parties. These disagreements combined with the academics' approach to history education which demanded the selection of a single narrative to be taught (the 'best story'), made the consensus between the members of the committee an impossible task. As a result two of the members of the committee (the left-wing ones) left and decided to submit their own separate proposal which was never published. The proposal for a new history education curriculum, which was submitted with a great delay, was signed only by the three members of the committee who remained and who were supporters of the Hellenocentric approach. This proposal, with no substantial amendments, has become the New History Curriculum. Although, the official position is that this is not the final version, this is what stands as the curriculum, at the moment.

The New History Curriculum, although it includes general references to historical thinking, multiperspectivity, the use of sources and understanding change and continuity, does not decisively move away from the previous curriculum's traditional approach. This is evident in its focus on promoting national identity and social values and the mainly ethnocentric (Hellenocentric) single narrative, prescribed in terms of content to be taught. The latter remains essentially the same as the one prescribed by the previous one (Curriculum 1994), albeit less explicit in terms of its Hellenocentric orientation.<sup>21</sup>

This is possibly the reason why, unlike the announcement for reform in history education, the publication of the New Curriculum went unnoticed by the media and politicians. Those who feared national identity would be undermined feel safe with a story in which is still largely about Greece. The fact that this story is not as Hellenocentric as the one of the Curriculum 1994 makes the advocates of a less Greek dominated and less divisive version of the past feel comfortable too. To claim that the New Curriculum has settled the issue, however, would be a rather premature conclusion. The current lack of reactions does not preclude the possibility of future turmoil; when certain groups and individuals (mainly politicians) will believe that such a debate can be useful in terms of reaping political benefits or if the ministry decides on changes in the current version of the curriculum.

The experience of the history curriculum reform was another example of the over a century old collision between the Hellenocentric and Cyprocentric approaches in Greek Cypriot education. It proves that the Hellenocentric approach within the Greek Cypriot educational system remains a powerful one. It also provides strong evidence that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it will be seriously challenged not only by its traditional rival, but also (in the case of history education) by a new approach: the disciplinary one.

The latter has already become evident during the implementation phase of the new history curriculum in primary education. Implementation for primary history focuses on developing historical literacy through the parallel development of both substantive and disciplinary knowledge and seems to abandon the ethnocentric narrative of the curriculum. In fact, the way the new curriculum is implemented through the production of teaching material and in-service training for history teachers in primary education is clearly adopting a disciplinary approach. In other words, unlike the New Curriculum its implementation challenges the established approach in history teaching within the Greek Cypriot educational system and suggests new ways of helping students to learn about the past. Anecdotal evidence (mainly from teachers' feedback) suggests that this approach appeals both to teachers and students. Although, obviously this needs to be substantiated with research evidence, research findings from other educational systems seem

to support the claim for such an approach being what teachers and students demand in order for history to become more relevant and interesting (Clark, 2009).

One would expect that this diversion from what was described earlier as a curriculum which makes the advocates of both traditional approaches feel safe would have caused reactions. This did not happen though and it could be explained by the fact that so far the implementation takes place only in Year 3 during which students study mostly prehistory. This is not part of the ethnocentric narrative that is being used to promote the Greek national identity and pride. Also the 'enemies' of the Greek nation are not 'here' yet. In other words, the tentative nature of historical knowledge, the freedom to reach out to different interpretations of the past and the inclusion of accounts that challenge the established narratives are manifest in terms of exploring 'harmless' issues that do not threaten anyone's view of the present. There is no guarantee, though, that everybody will feel equally safe if this approach is implemented in the teaching of other topics end especially 20<sup>th</sup> century history.

### **Conclusion**

Debates over history education in the Greek Cypriot educational system, so far, are essentially different occasions of the same game of identities. As in the case of many other educational systems around the world, the rivals in this game share the same idea about history's role in education.<sup>22</sup> This is the idea of history as a means to promote values and prepare students to become citizens who will abide by a specific moral framework through a specific version of the past which proves the importance of these values and the necessity for this moral framework.

Within Greek Cypriot education, the prevalence of this assumption makes the selection of the story to be told the main issue of dispute. Those who wish Greek Cypriot students to feel Greek argue in favour of history which tells the story of our 'glorious' past as part of the Greek nation and the hardships that we have suffered from our enemies and especially the Turks. Those who aspire to create students who feel primarily Cypriots prefer a story of our island being at the crossroads of civilisations; a phenomenon which at some point brought Turkish Cypriots onto the island and with whom we lived peacefully for centuries.

This explains why the substantive content to be taught (prescribed in curricula or textbooks) is the issue that attracts public attention and causes public debates, while issues of pedagogy and methodology are neglected. In this approach, historical learning is merely the acquisition of factual knowledge which does not necessitate something more than finding ways to make students remember the version of the past decided for them by the authorities. An additional reason for methodological issues not being discussed is the involvement of people outside education (mainly politicians and public figures) which, for obvious reasons, attracts the attention of the media and public opinion. Furthermore, until now, the lack of an active community of history education experts and researchers also contributed to this phenomenon.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this game was dominated by the Hellenocentric approach in history education which promoted a Greek national identity. The Cyprocentric approach's rise to the level of a serious contender at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century shows that the issue of ideological orientation of education in the Greek Cypriot education cannot be considered as settled. It also shows that, as in the case of other educational systems, changes and debates in history education are closely related to wider changes and debates in education and society.<sup>23</sup> The fact that since 2008 history education stayed out of the spotlight of public debates should not be considered as the result of a compromise, but rather as an interval before the next battle. Issues such as a) the implementation of the New Curriculum which at some point will have to take the form of specific suggestions in terms of content to be taught, and b) the way the issue of the lack of textbooks for Cyprus history for some year groups will be dealt could be possibly the material of future debates.

The emergence of the disciplinary approach adds a new element. It is radically different from the two traditional ones in the sense that considers history education not as a way to cultivate identities, but a way to transform students' view of the world through the teaching of the logic and methods of the discipline. Through this transformation it aims to 'change how we see political or social opportunities and constraints,

our own or others' identity, our sense of the wounds and burdens we inherit, and the adequacy of explanations of major features of our world' (Lee, 2011, p.130). So far this approach is not considered as a distinct one and it is usually wrongly associated with the Cyprocentric one. This is mainly because as in the case of the latter challenges the so far dominant Hellenocentric narrative. Depending on how this new approach will be understood and implemented in Greek Cypriot education, it can potentially become a serious alternative for both of them. In this case it is highly possible that it will be part of future debates.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the nature of future debates, what is quite imperative for the Greek Cypriot educational community (educational authorities, teachers, academics etc.) is to discuss the rationale of school history and its aims and purposes in terms of pedagogy. Of course, this is not a simple matter since different perspectives of pedagogy, the past, history and history education exist also within the educational community. Therefore the pedagogical nature of the discussion cannot be considered as a guarantee for a consensus. It can, however, be a shield for protecting history from being abused for the sake of political and ideological agendas. Such a discussion should aim to primarily answer a crucial question. Should history education teach a specific version of the past to cultivate specific kinds of future citizens or should it develop students' understanding of the past and the present world hoping that this will help them prosper in the unknown future one?

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For the better part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1878, the Ottomans gave control of the island to Britain which declared Cyprus a Crown Colony in 1925. Following a 4 year anti-colonial struggle, Cyprus became an independent state in 1960. At that time 82% of the population identified themselves as Greek Cypriots and 18% as Turkish Cypriots. In 1963 inter-communal conflicts broke out and continued sporadically until 1967. In 1974 a military coup staged by Greek Cypriot (GC) right-wing extremists led to an invasion by Turkey which divided the island and caused population displacements. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot (TC) authorities declared the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has since remained internationally unrecognised except by Turkey. Contact between the two communities did not exist until 2003 when the TC authorities decided to allow transportation through specific checkpoints. Despite the fact that this allowed contacts between GC and TC after three decades, the political division between the two communities remains until today.

<sup>2</sup> For more about this first debate see Persianis (1994; 2010).

<sup>3</sup> An example of the dominance of the Hellenocentric approach in education is the case of textbooks. During the British rule the Church of Cyprus and other groups and individuals with the same ideas on education insisted that only textbooks from Greece should be used (Persianis, 2010; Polydorou, 1995). Books written by Cypriots were usually considered inferior to the ones written in Greece (Educational Board of Ethnarchy, 1951 cited in Polydorou, 1995). During this period reading-books were imported from Greece and they were the same ones used in Greek primary schools. In 1948, an attempt by the British colonial government to introduce new reading-books, written by Greek Cypriot educators, failed due to the intense reactions caused by this decision (Polydorou, 1995). History textbooks were written and published in Cyprus until 1956 when they were replaced by ones imported from Greece too (ibid.). Even though during the last decades the textbooks for most of the school subjects are being published by the Greek Cypriot educational authorities, textbooks for Greek language and history are still imported from Greece. This shows that during the whole duration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Hellenocentric approach has been a dominant one in the subjects that essentially mattered (language and history) in terms of forming the Greek Cypriot students' identity.

<sup>4</sup> Until the 1930s, Greek Cypriot education was modelled on the Greek one, both in primary and secondary

education, and consequently its character was a Hellenocentric one. This did not mean merely following the Greek example of education, but a much closer relationship, especially in secondary education. Greek Cypriot secondary schools were recognized by the Greek government as equivalent to the ones in Greece and they were inspected by the educational authorities of Greece (Persianis, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> A dispute between the colonial government and the Greek Cypriot members of the Legislative Council over taxation, which was imposed against the council's opposing vote, led to a revolt in October 1931 during which the protesters burned down the Government House. Although this began as a protest against the imposition of new taxes it developed to riots during which the protesters demanded union with Greece.

<sup>6</sup> Debates over education during the 20<sup>th</sup> century were mostly about a) the relationship of the Greek Cypriot educational system with the Greek one, b) the balance between classical and vocational education, and c) the establishment of a Cypriot state university and its character (Persianis, 2010).

<sup>7</sup>For a detailed discussion of history education within the Greek Cypriot context at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century see (Perikleous, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> The influence of the Council of Europe's guidelines for history education (Committee of Ministers, 2001) is obvious in what the ERC described as the 'contemporary European standards'.

<sup>9</sup>The fact that the ERC's references to the ideological orientation of Greek Cypriot education did not represent the ideas of all the coalition government parties is also evident by the fact that in 2007, after the left-wing party's withdrawal, the government (which remained a coalition of the centre-right and democratic-socialist parties) published a new plan for educational reform titled *Strategic Design for Education*. Although this new document included many of the suggestions of the ERC's report, it did not include any references to its claims for ideological re-orientation of education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) provides the schools with official textbooks for all subjects. Most of these are written and published by the MoEC. Until now, in the case of primary history for Year 3 and 4, textbooks from Greece were used for the teaching of Greek history (from prehistory to Hellenistic period) and mythology, while other published in Cyprus were used for the teaching of the history of Cyprus. With the current educational reform (which is currently being implemented in Year 3 and 4), although textbooks are not completely abandoned, they are not the main educational material. In Years 5 and 6 (from Roman period to the present) teachers use mainly the textbooks for Greek history (imported from Greece). Although there is a textbook for Cyprus history this was written almost forty years ago and even its own author recognized at some point that it was not suitable for history teaching anymore. Consequently the teaching of Cyprus history in the last two years of primary school has been seriously neglected.

<sup>11</sup> The Greek Communist Party accused the textbook for an attempt to impose an imperialist view of revisionism in the teaching of history (Greek Communist Party, 2007). This example, and also the Greek Cypriot democratic-socialist's support of the Hellenocentric approach, supports Kitromilides' (1979) claim that the identification of nationalism with the political right is an oversimplified approach of the phenomenon.

<sup>12</sup>Although the discussion of Greek and Greek Cypriot historiography is not within the scope of this paper, it can be claimed that the arguments used by the Academy of Athens reveal a rather traditional approach to the discipline of history and its role within society.

<sup>13</sup> The new government was led by a left-wing president who was elected with the support of the same coalition who won the 2003 elections

<sup>14</sup> This approach emerged in the UK in the 1970s and gained prominence mainly through the work of the School Council History Project (Shemilt, 1980). For a discussion of the role of disciplinary understanding in history teaching see Lee (2011) and Shemilt (2011).

<sup>15</sup> In the words of Denis Shemilt this is a 'model in which specific lessons from the past are taught with the intention of shaping students' attitudes and behaviours in the lived present' (2011, p.70).

<sup>16</sup> The use of the term 'occupation' refers to the fact that since 1974 Turkish troops have the military control of northern Cyprus.

<sup>17</sup> During the British rule, education for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots was separate and educational issues were considered as internal affairs of each community. The same situation continued even after the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. The new state did not have a central ministry of education and educational issues were handled separately by each community through two separate

bodies called Communal Changers. Consequently the two educational systems developed completely independently. The division of the island, which begun in 1963 and became permanent in 1974, was obviously an additional reason for the lack of any kind of relations between the two educational systems.

<sup>18</sup> The supporters of this new aim were, as in the case of the ERC's claim for ideological re-orientation, mainly left-wing groups and individuals and also groups and individuals (mainly political activists) who for decades supported the rapprochement of the two communities and reconciliation.

<sup>19</sup> The opposers of the aim were mainly right-wing and centre-right groups and individuals, the Church of Cyprus and the main Greek Cypriot democratic-socialist party.

<sup>20</sup> The reactions came from the primary education teachers while the secondary education teachers were more concerned about the amount of prescribed content and how this could be handled in terms of exams. This does not support any claims that primary education teachers were a homogenous group which supported a disciplinary approach in history teaching. Different ideas of history's role in education existed within this group too. They all agreed though, at least verbally, on the idea that younger children can think critically and historically.

<sup>21</sup> One could claim that this is in contrast with the picture of the committee painted earlier by the author. This though could be explained by the fact that at some point the committee is likely to have compromised in order to avoid (critical) reactions. The inclusion of references to aspects of historical thinking which were absent in the committee's views (as expressed during the meetings with the teachers' working group) it is more likely to be due to the adoption of the rhetoric of the teachers' working group proposal than a substantial shift of the academics' view of history education. These, of course, are speculations based on a) the author's experience of attending the committee's meeting with the teachers' working group, b) the fact that the final proposal was submitted almost a year later than the ones for the other subjects and c) the fact that despite the dominance of Hellenocentric approach within the committee the proposal was submitted to a left-wing government. Nevertheless the phenomenon necessitates a more detailed investigation which is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>22</sup> For examples of debates over history education in other educational systems see Nakou & Barca (2010), Taylor & Guyver (2011), Lakshmi (2000), Ogawa & Field (2006), Foster (1998), Dunn (2000).

<sup>23</sup> For the relation between history education debates and changes and broader ones within societies see for example Dunn (2000) and Taylor (2004).

<sup>24</sup> The case of history education in England is an existing example of a disciplinary approach being the main rival of an ethnocentric one. See for example Dunn (2000), Foster (1998) and Ashby & Edwards (2010).

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### **Landmarks with questions – England's school history wars 1967-2010 and 2010-2013**

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#### **Abstract:**

*This is in two parts and provides a background to national curriculum developments mainly from 1967 to 2010 as well as a focus on debates since 2010. It seeks to make links between previous curriculum debates and the current ones in the areas of pedagogy, method and content. The earlier debates had features of many issues that would arise again in the 2010-2013 period, especially: quantitative versus qualitative approaches to education; the place of nation vis-a-vis the rest of the world; the relationship between a disciplinary approach and substantive contexts; the role of historians, government and professional associations; and the role of the media. Progress in planning for the 2013 draft history curriculum in England has been slow, but the nature of the speculation before, and of the reaction after the publication of the draft shows that there are some strongly held and deeply entrenched positions about what function a national history curriculum should fulfil. The debate has involved a Government Minister (Michael Gove) and a range of teachers and academics, and – particularly – historians: from the celebrity academics chosen by him to advise, to others whose response has been divided but public, involving letters and articles in the media. A major concern has been how to organise and rationalise for an English curriculum a national narrative for students 7-14 that encompasses not only a disciplinary approach but also both British and international contexts. Complaints from all groups however show disappointment that the Minister failed to secure his earlier interest in extending compulsory school by two years to the age of 16.*

**Keywords:** Qualitative and quantitative approaches, Significance, Landmarks, National history curriculum, Historians, Political, Historiography, Historical Association, Royal Historical Society, Media, English, British, Anglocentric, Global, Disciplinary, Narrative, Chronological, Chronology, Sequential, Consultation, Discourse of derision, HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate), Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)

#### **Introduction**

The battle over school history which has been revived under Education Secretary Michael Gove (in office under a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition since May 2010) is part of a much larger debate which is between quantitative and qualitative approaches to education. The aim of defining, measuring and, of course, raising *standards* for testing is what defines the *quantitative* argument. This is naturally subject to political influence and may well lead to reductionism. By contrast, the predominantly *qualitative* concern of the teaching profession itself is about providing education for development and empowerment through internalization. It involves elaboration and 'flow' rather than reduction. The quantitative approach has been associated with a 'back-to-basics' campaign which has informed neo-conservative educational discourse since the so-called 'Black Papers' of the late 1960s and 1970s<sup>1</sup>. It has also been described as 'essentialist' or even 'fundamentalist'.

A simple version of these positions of binary opposites might go like this: (a) when the 'back-to-basics' principle is fed into a machine called 'school history' what is likely to emerge will be rather distorted, as has indeed happened with the February 7<sup>th</sup> (2013) draft history curriculum; (b) while focusing on basics it adopts a default position of national history, a chronological and sequential approach to narrative, and a reductionist list of landmarks; (c) this is not reductionist because it is a short list, it is reductionist because by its very nature and because of time allowances in schools, it seems to prevent not only elaboration and flow but it also seems to lack opportunities for development, empowerment and internalization (in the sense of intrinsic motivation). Taylor (2013) describes this as a 'mile-wide and inch-deep' approach'.

However, the difficult task is negotiating a middle way between these two positions. Defining the 'basics' for history was not a simple project, although one attempt was Staff Inspector HMI Roger Hennessey's quasi-essentialist search for the 'heartlands' of historical content, evident in the Raspberry Ripple (series)

*History 5-16* HMI report of 1988, and fed into the reports produced by the History Working Group (1989, 1990) (see also Hennessey, 1988). There are layers of complexity in the 'heartlands' idea, as it does have some similarities with the current prioritization of the search for 'significance', and where events of national significance – although dismissable as a 'canon' – are landmarks which have had historical or historiographical mileage. Nevertheless, there was then and there still is, a great deal of tension between the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Ironically enough the emergence of a *public* debate over 'the basics' occurred not under the Conservative Party, but at the time of a Labour Government, and after a scandal in the mid-1970s involving the staff of the William Tyndale Primary School in London, where freedom of curricular choice was taken literally, to the detriment of children's knowledge of basics like reading and arithmetic. James Callaghan, Labour Prime Minister (1976-79), in his Ruskin College (Oxford) 'Great Debate' speech tried to put the dispute into a broader social context, managing to stress *both* the quantitative and qualitative approaches to education:

The balance was wrong in the past. We have a responsibility now to see that we do not get it wrong in the other direction. There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills. Nor at the other extreme must they be technically efficient robots. Both of the basic purposes of education require the same essential tools. These are basic literacy, basic numeracy, the understanding of how to live and work together, respect for others, respect for the individual. This means acquiring certain basic knowledge, and skills and reasoning ability. It means developing lively inquiring minds and an appetite for further knowledge that will last a lifetime. It means mitigating as far as possible the disadvantages that may be suffered through poor home conditions or physical or mental handicap. Are we aiming in the right direction in these matters? (Callaghan, 1976):

What follows is an analysis of broadly two sets of curriculum debates (1967-2010; 2010-2013) and an attempt will be made to identify similarities and differences between them. Because of the May publication date of this number of IJHLTR it will be impossible to bring news within this piece of how the problems examined here will have been resolved, or legislated for, if indeed legislation does resolve the issues.

## **Part 1 1967-2010**

### **Curriculum reform in history and the humanities in England and (some of) the rest of the world before 1989**

#### **The Plowden Report**

The Labour administration of Harold Wilson (1964-1970) saw the publication of the Plowden Report (*Children and their Primary Schools*, CACE, 1967). Although the Hadow Report of the late 1920s and early 1930s had already shown signs of recognising the influence of progressive teaching methods, in 'Plowden' (as the report came to be known) many traditional shibboleths of primary education were questioned, especially the purity of individual subjects and the notion of the teacher as an authoritarian transmitter of knowledge. Cross-curricular topics (characterised by child-centred or discovery methods) and group work were encouraged. In paragraph 521 the names of Baldwin, Isaacs, Luria, Bruner and Piaget are mentioned alongside the importance of offering concrete situations (and by implication experiential learning) as bases for children's learning and development.

Catherine Matheson (2004) interestingly comments on the philosophy of this report as being the triumph of psychological harmony over intellectualism, although clearly in some circumstances a primary classroom can have both. Colin Richards (1999) believes that despite the recommendations of the Plowden Report many, if not most, primary schools continued to prioritise literacy and mathematics in the morning and only taught the afternoon subjects (the rest of the curriculum) with a Plowdensque approach.

#### **The School History Project, Bruner and key concepts**

The 1970s witnessed a major project which mirrored Bruner's MACOS (Man a Course of Study) which fed into the Schools History Project. Supported by the ideas of Joseph Schwab (1964, 1978) and Californian Hilda Taba (whose philosophy was based on many of the ideas of John Dewey; see Taba, 1962 and Taba

et al., 1971) there was a move towards letting the curriculum be driven by syntactic rather than substantive knowledge – skills and concepts with content illustrating these principles rather than letting content drive the whole curriculum. What emerged that was particularly influential both in history and geography, was the notion of key concepts, for history a harbinger of later developments that fed into historical thinking. Alan Blyth's University of Liverpool team used the notion of paired key concepts as the motors of enquiry: causes and consequences, change and continuity, similarity and difference (Blyth et al. 1976). Running parallel with these were other major key concepts such as evidence, chronology and interpretation. Drawing on Bruner's spiral curriculum belief that any subject can be taught in an honest form to a (school) child of any age, those who selected content could be influenced by sources as evidence, narratives or stories as interpretations, and chronological and contextual frames supported by timelines. Sources could be written, oral, pictorial, artefactual or environmental (sites). Local history and its immediacy took on more significance especially for younger children.

Alongside these developments some landmark Historical Association publications appeared, particularly Jeannette Coltham and John Fines's *Educational Objectives for the Study of History* (1971), and Peter Rogers' *The New History – Theory into Practice* (1979). Cotham and Fines's work crystallised the importance of syntactic objectives, and this as well as Rogers' work has been amply evaluated in a whole number of IJHLTR in single focus articles by Bage, Chapman, Cooper, Hawkey, Haydn, Lee, Nichol, Oral & Aktın, and Sheldon (all 2010). But what is significant for this narrative is that in Rogers' interpretation his recontextualisation of the 'new history' for schools represents a scholarly approach to the layers of epistemology which, if fully understood, would defy attempts at political manipulation and reduce any temptation to resort to derision. An example of this is Margaret Thatcher's identification of the New History as radically left-wing, undermining traditional, sequential and essentially national (patriotic) school history. Rogers however, as has been incisively demonstrated by Arthur Chapman:

does not set out to turn pupils into 'mini-historians' (Rogers, 1979(a) pp.24-25 and p.40);  
is opposed to decontextualised empathy exercises (Rogers, 1979(a) pp.20-21 and 32-33);  
is opposed to the rehearsal of decontextualised historical 'skills' (Rogers, 1979, p.34);  
is focused on the development of substantive understandings as much as procedural understandings (Rogers, 1979(a) p.12);  
is focused around extended enquiry involving the meaningful use of historical documents and the development of contextual knowledge (Rogers, 1979(a) pp.40-57);  
and ... argues that history education must enable pupils, from ... [the] earliest stages, to engage in representations of the past and, in time, to construct complex historical narratives (Rogers, 1979 (a) p.10 and pp.48-50). (Chapman, 2009, p.50)

Sheldon (2010) places Rogers' 1979 work in the historical context of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1969 to the 1990s), and Rogers' identification of 'strategic importance', using an Ulster example, as his contribution to what became Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). Rogers' interpretation of the 'New History' was if anything conservative (with a small 'c') and a far cry from Mrs Thatcher's later caricature of it as dangerously radical. In particular Rogers' espousal of a continuing relationship between historical scholarship and pedagogy and his insistence on the importance of context, as well as his recognition, later theorized by Shulman (1986, 1987) and refined by Turner-Bisset (2001), that a teacher's repertoire of 'knowledge bases' included a balance or amalgam of substantive ('propositional' in Rogers' terms – broadly about content) and syntactic ('procedural' according to Rogers) knowledge and understanding – broadly about process and knowledge of the discipline. Significantly, according to Rogers, quality in the substantive or propositional knowledge of teachers required the maintaining of an awareness of (and association with) the work of historians. Fostering and supporting this inter-relationship in its publications, local branches and annual conferences, was already the aim of the key organisation, the Historical Association, which included in its membership a healthy mix of historians, teachers, history teacher educators and the general public.

The late 1960s and 1970s also saw the publication of the Black Papers (Cox & Dyson, 1969, 1970; Cox & Boyson, 1975, 1977). The ideas and demands of the Black Papers writers would be fed into Conservative

Party education policy in the 1980s and 1990s, especially (a) the need for a national curriculum with a focus on basic literacy and numeracy, and (b) a rigorous and regular school inspection system. Their concern over appropriate teaching methods for delivering the basics was (apparently) mirrored by academic research in a study by Neville Bennett, *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress* (1976).

### **The work of John West**

Despite these concerns in the 'back-to-basics' 'quantitative' camp, developments in the 'qualitative' field continued, although ironically this involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. Using 'new history' ideas in the context of primary school history, John West working in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley in the West Midlands, provided a research-based rationale for a radical approach to curriculum organisation. West challenged an apparently widely held belief that younger children, because of limitations to their understanding of time, could not engage effectively with history. His tests, undertaken as part of his PhD research (West, 1981) and also extending his role as Chief Inspector (not an HMI) for the Dudley Local Education Authority, showed that when stimulated with artefacts, pictures, stories, documents and time-lines, children would demonstrate an understanding of evidence and sequential time. He espoused Bruner's spiral curriculum approach to the discipline of history and undermined the limitations of Piaget's interpretations of what children could do and understand at certain ages and stages. A talented published historian himself, he brought the rigour of historical method to the primary classroom.

Subsequently West converted his package of sources and tests into a green-covered curriculum handbook (his 'green goddess') for schools in the Dudley area (West, 1980). His ideas were certainly influential and had an impact on Key Stage 1 in the 1991 version of the National Curriculum (and subsequently in the 1995 and 2000 changes). His dismissal of a chronological syllabus in favour of looser designs which would encourage more free-flow across – and in and out of – chronological periods in order to achieve an understanding of chronology was only partly incorporated into Key Stage 2 by the History Working Group. John West's work has since been followed by new developments in history-specific primary pedagogy, with significant contributions from Rosie Turner-Bisset. Other key figures over the last twenty years have been Joan Blyth, Hilary Cooper, Jon Nichol, Penelope Harnett and Roy Hughes. Not only has research into primary pedagogy in history been extended into the international sphere, but the Historical Association's journal *Primary History* has played an influential role in examining good practice and giving it an academic rationale.

### **HMI 1978-1988**

The knock-on effect of the Plowden Report (1967) and the state of 542 primary schools was examined by HMI in a report that was published in 1978, *Primary Education in England – a Survey by HM Inspectors of Schools*. The history section of this reported on various disappointments in the quality of teaching and indeed of curriculum organisation, including poorly chosen reference books for 7 year olds, copying, repeating topics so that children might for example get Romans more than once, maybe even in consecutive years. There was a call for a more coherent and less fragmented rationale, although some good work was noted, especially where local sources and sites supported themes.

It was rare to find classes where the work, even in a simple way, was leading the children towards an understanding of historical change and the causal factors involved, or where children were becoming aware of the nature of historical evidence. (HMI, 1978, p.73, para. 5.127)

On how a curriculum for primary schools might be organised there was this comment:

Where history was taught through topics of general interest there was the danger of a fragmented approach. A framework is required to provide some ordering of the content being taught. This may be a single path through a chronological sequence or a more complex series of historical topics which, while not necessarily taught in chronological order, should give a perspective in terms of the ordering of events or by means of comparison with the present day. (HM, 1978, p.73, para. 5.128)

Advisors and inspectors in local authorities would use this report as a default definition of good practice when visiting schools and would expect to be shown schemes of work which reflected the HMI comments.

The change-over in Secretaries of State for Education from Keith Joseph to Kenneth Baker, which happened in 1986, marked the beginning of the period which culminated in the national curriculum, and the change in direction can be seen in differences in emphasis in the nature of the official reports on history which emerged at this time. John Slater HMI had been Staff Inspector for History and had produced *History in the Primary and Secondary Years* (DES, 1985). It recommended a balance of local, national and international history and a balance of chronological periods for a history curriculum. Tapping into what has become a continuing debate about chronology, this publication stressed that periods studied should be long enough to illustrate the dimension of change. Also, it recognised that history was a controversial subject, and in its pages and appendices provided more than one model for how a school history programme might be organised. It cemented into official government policy the marriage between historical skills and concepts and historical content.

By contrast, but nevertheless by realigning (not abandoning) the skills-content relationship, the period of Roger Hennessey's incumbency as HMI Staff Inspector, in which he oversaw the publication of *History 5-16* (DES, 1988) and the two reports of the History Working Group (*Interim* [DES, 1989] and *Final* [DES, 1990]), was characterised by a commitment to what he termed the 'heartlands' of history, placing content at the heart of the curriculum. This corresponded with Kenneth Baker's commitment, later placed in the guidance to the Chairman of the History Working Group (Michael Saunders Watson), to British history being at the core of the curriculum.

### **The back-story 1989 – 2010**

#### **The first national curriculum for history in England**

The first national curriculum for history in England, and in Wales (although the Welsh curriculum was different) became law for the school term (semester) beginning in September 1991. During the first phases of its construction (January 1989 – April 1990: the work of the History Working Group and the publication of two reports [The Interim Report, August 1989, and the Final Report, April 1990] until her resignation in November 1990) Mrs Thatcher was prime minister.

The story of this curriculum development project (for that is essentially what the first national curriculum for history was) has been told elsewhere (Prochaska, 1990, Thatcher, 1993; Baker, 1993; Graham & Tytler, 1993; Phillips, 1998; Saunders Watson, 2008; Guyver in Taylor & Guyver, 2012). It was in development: January 1989 - January 1991; implemented (and experimented with): 1991-1995. The brakes were beginning to be applied as early as 1993 when a review was announced to cut back the content and synthesise (and harmonise) the templates of the whole national curriculum, and the Dearing revisions were published in 1994, for schools to teach from September 1995).

What is significant about the work of the Department of Education and Science (DES) National Curriculum History Working Group (January 1989 – January 1990) is (a) its *modus operandi* and (b) the creation of various templates, especially the so-called PESC formula for different perspectives (political, economic, social and cultural [also embracing scientific, technological, and even religious]). Alongside this was a pattern which embedded a separation of first order and second order concepts – one in programmes of study and the other in statements of attainment (which were later rebranded as 'key elements' but which have much in common with Peter Seixas's (six) benchmarks of historical thinking. Significance as such would not feature until the 2007/8 Key Stage 3 revisions.

As far as its *modus operandi* is concerned it represented a planned set of official and unofficial dialogues of a collaborative nature between historians, teachers, teacher educators, librarians, archivists, education officers, and 'heritage' providers. There were three periods of consultation, two expected (after the Interim report and after the National Curriculum Council (NCC) redrafted the Secretary of State's Proposals, a standard procedure with national curriculum subject reports) and one unexpected (after the new Secretary of State for Education, John MacGregor [who followed Kenneth Baker in August 1989], decided not to

accept the Final Report as his own set of Proposals [as had happened with all of the other subjects to date], but, after seeing Mrs Thatcher and his own officials in March, to build in an extra consultation of three months after the eventual publication of the Final report in April 1990 (he had received it about the beginning of February 1990). So the general public had glimpses of *three* drafts before the Statutory Order was legislated for early in 1991.

In a remarkably open process senior members of the Historical Association (Keith Robbins, President and Martin Roberts, Chair of the Secondary Education Committee) had been invited in November 1989 to a meeting where the public feedback after the Interim report consultation was discussed. Keith Robbins played an important role, although not a member of the Working Group. On the one hand he encouraged a transnational ('multiple kingdom') approach to British (rather than English) history. On the other, he fully supported a British 'core' as opposed to a fully globalised approach. Explaining his position he said he preferred a curriculum that was anchored locally and nationally to one that wandered around the world (Robbins, 1990). This was not an 'either ... or' belief, but a more subtle one where the nation's history in its remarkable complexity (Scotland, Wales and Ireland as well as England) was a starting point.

The History Working Group offered some solutions to conundrums which would later plague the David Cameron administration (from 2010). In particular, although British history would be at the core of the curriculum, there would still be room for the histories of other countries. Also because of concerns about giving only earlier periods of history to younger children Key Stage 2 (for children aged 7-11, over four school years), this group would have discontinuous sets of British history: broadly 55BCE-1066, 1485-1714 (originally, to be reduced to 1485-1603 by 1995), 1837-1901, and 1930 to the present. Thus the 'high' middle ages were missing as well as the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However at Key Stage 3 (for students 11-14, over 3 school years) the programme would start at 1066, but it originally included the Roman Empire. Unlike the 2013 proposals, Key Stage 2 would include, as well as ancient Greece, a list of six non-European (and largely pre-modern) societies. As noted above, in two (either ... or) units it would include modern British history: either Victorian Britain or Britain since 1930.

It is perhaps not surprising that Mrs Thatcher herself devoted some pages of her autobiography, *The Downing Street Years* (1993, pp. 593-599 on the National Curriculum), to express her dislike of the history curriculum proposed (at the time of the *Final Report* of the History Working Group) in April 1990. She preferred (as indeed did the Secretary of State for Education who carried this forward from 1986, Kenneth Baker) the patriotic model of history teaching and learning: history as a series of narratives of great events, heroes and heroines, supported by dates. There was another agenda too in that she approved of a more quantitative approach to the teaching and learning of history. This aspect of Conservative policy had filtered down or across to senior civil servants in the Department of Education and Science and caused some friction in debates with the History Working Group especially over (a) the title of the first attainment target (knowledge or understanding?) and (b) in the relationship between the attainment targets and the programmes of study. The History Working Group was in effect seeking a middle way between the quantitative and qualitative positions. The story is told by Phillips (1998) and Saunders Watson (2008). It is worth pausing to remember an article by Robert Skidelsky (a pro-knowledge historian and supporter of a patriotic view of history) entitled 'Make them learn the landmarks' (1990 [*The Times*, 4 April]):

The working group understands perfectly well that knowledge *includes* understanding and that test for knowledge must include testing for understanding as it always used to, but its nerve failed in face of the caricature of knowledge among teachers and the media. (Skidelsky, 1990)

### **Changes under John Major (1990-1997): The Dearing review 1993-4 (for September 1995)**

Not long into John Major's premiership the quantitative v. qualitative debate raised its head again in a DES Discussion Paper, *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools* (1992) authored by the so-called 'Three Wise Men', Robin Alexander, a professor, Jim Rose, the HMI Chief Inspector and Chris Woodhead, Chief Executive of head of a government-funded quango, the National Curriculum Council. Within the following twenty years all three men would exert a considerable influence. Rose and Alexander would effectively move into the qualitative camp, producing rival but strangely complementary

reports in 2009, whereas Chris Woodhead moved even more deeply into the quantitative camp, becoming Chief Inspector of Schools as Ofsted emerged, and would gain a reputation as a scourge not only of teachers seen by Ofsted as weak, but also of (mainly 'qualitative') educational researchers. The burden of this report was to recommend not only *subjects* as opposed to *cross-curricular topics*, but also whole class teaching rather than group work. There were echoes here of the Black Papers and an indication of changes to come, with the Literacy and Numeracy 'strategies' recommending not only what was to be taught but also how, and for how long.

The stage was set for a number of developments and non-developments which would affect future versions of the national history curriculum. John Major's Government decided on a trimming down of the whole national curriculum under the chairmanship of Sir Ron (later Lord) Dearing, and this was implemented from September 1995. The three history attainment targets of 1995 were reduced to one, and the content became even more focused on British history, the *Roman Empire* having been dropped from the secondary (Key Stage 3, 11-14) syllabus, and *Exploration and encounters* (the mainly Spanish story of Columbus, Cortes and the Aztecs) from the 7-11 (Key Stage 2) programme, although *Aztecs* was retained as a non-European study alongside *Benin, Egypt, the Indus Valley, the Maya, and Mesopotamia (Assyria or Sumer, later to be two separate choices after the changes of 2000)*. Despite obvious political interest and indeed intervention, the curriculum retained a remarkable balance of the substantive (content) and syntactic (process).

Despite other policy initiatives like those foretold in 'The Three Wise Men Report', nevertheless the influence of the School History Project was confirmed. There were five 'key elements': chronology, range and depth of historical knowledge and understanding, interpretations of history, historical enquiry, and organisation and communication. There were dissenting voices however, significantly Chris McGovern (with Robert Skidelsky and Anthony Freeman a founder of the lobby-group, the History Curriculum Association) who published a minority report and subsequently expressed wider concerns about national curriculum history, placing himself in a patriotic narrative camp and showing a preference for a quantitative approach to knowledge (McGovern, 1994; 2007).

### **Changes under Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Gordon Brown (2007-2010)**

The Blair New Labour Government (1997-2007) which was followed by the brief, but still New Labour, premiership of Gordon Brown (2007-2010) initially changed direction slightly from the Dearing promise that nothing would be changed for 5 years. In January 1998 David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, announced that teaching the exact detail of the programmes of study for all the foundation subjects (those subjects that were not English, Mathematics or Science) at Key Stage 2 (8-11) was to be *suspended* in the interests of having more time to teach the new Literacy and Numeracy 'hours' or strategies. But when the new national curriculum was published in 1999 for implementation from September 2000, little had changed from the 1995 Dearing version. The wording of one key element had become 'knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past', but the content at Key Stages 2 and 3 remained essentially the same.

During the 'War on Terror' period, Gordon Brown, premier from 2007 to 2010, but previously Chancellor of the Exchequer (Treasurer) from 1997 to 2007, made two important speeches (Brown, 2004, 2006) about the meaning of Britishness in which he provided a critical analysis of the subtle interplay between British identity, British history and British exceptionalism, drawing on a very wide range of references.<sup>2</sup>

### **Curriculum revisions and debates to 2010**

The last piece of curriculum reform in history that took place (to date, May 2013) began to be discussed in December 2005, accompanied by the usual fanfare of alarmist media reports stretching into January 2006, and was implemented from September 2008. This involved changes to the structure of Key Stage 3. A revised framework of concepts and processes was to shape all national curriculum subjects at Key Stage 3, and this clearly owed something to the increasingly influential work of Peter Seixas on historical thinking. The *key concepts* in history would be: chronological understanding; cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; change and continuity; cause and consequence; significance; interpretation. The *key processes*

would be: historical enquiry; using evidence; communicating about the past. What I wrote about the status quo of the history curriculum 2000-2010 and the curriculum changes of 2007-8 can be found in Appendix 1.

There was a very strange and quite sudden break with developments after the final days of the New Labour administration. A fresh primary curriculum had been planned for, under the Rose Review (2009), which adopted a very non-doctrinaire and flexible approach to history, although perhaps not necessarily enhancing its status within the overall curriculum. Alongside this the results of a large scale research project into primary education was published (Alexander et al., 2009), recommending that developments in primary education be research-based. These findings would have no official status and did not necessarily co-incide with the dominant philosophy of the next government, but Alexander's support for dialogic teaching and learning would carry on having a life of its own in professional circles.

## **Part 2 – The current history curriculum debate 2010-2013**

### **Phase one – May to November 2010: a resurrection of the discourse of derision**

In May 2010 Michael Gove took over the Education Department from New Labour's Ed Balls and rebranded it (his predecessor had been Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families). The new minister immediately scrapped the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Association (QCDA, previously the QCA) and abandoned plans to implement the expensively researched Rose Review of Primary Education (2009), which had already but perhaps unwisely, in view of the impending May 2010 General [Parliamentary] Election, been flagged up for 'definite' implementation. Schools which had already started on its programmes were told to change course and carry on with the old 2000 Key Stage 1 and 2 curricula.

Ironically, while seeking to bring greater definition and a stronger national narrative focus to the history curriculum, Mr Gove was also, at the same time encouraging head teachers and their governing bodies to opt out of the national curriculum by attaining 'free school' or 'academy' status which virtually gave these schools freedoms and privileges over curriculum matters that were the equivalent to those enjoyed by independent schools. As Catherine Matheson (2004) has commented, there is a perpetual tug-o-war in education between egalitarianism and elitism. In this case those who attain elite status no longer need the egalitarian curriculum (which might be seen as 'caviare to the general' [Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II ii, 438]).

### **Core knowledge and democratic intellectualism – compatible or incompatible?**

#### **Core knowledge and Ed Hirsch**

Gove, a Scot, had already expressed support for American Ed Hirsch's principles of core knowledge, but also (and to some extent in contrast) his approval of the Scottish educational principles which drove democratic intellectualism. Gove's liking for Ed Hirsch's educational philosophy seemed to stem from an almost evangelical (and perhaps egalitarian) concern about bringing various forms of intellectual, literary and cultural capital to children from lower socio-economic groups. The theory behind it was that even rote learning was acceptable if the facts so learnt could then at the next stage be used. History was rich in potential as far as cultural and literary capital was concerned. This linked with claims from David Cameron, from May 2010 Coalition Prime Minister, that when he had been at school (Eton or earlier) his favourite book had been Henrietta Marshall's *Our Island Story* (1905), a series of short narratives about heroes, heroines and events written (according also to Marshall herself in an explanatory note at the beginning) almost as mythic legends rather than pure history. These indeed could be facts to be learnt and known, not – initially anyway – necessarily discussed, although in Gove's terms they clearly needed to be known before they could be debated (or used). Nevertheless, critics of Hirsch's ideas focus on the difficult relationship, and possible gap, between knowledge and understanding.

The difference between the ideas of Ed Hirsch and the tenets behind the democratic intellect (see George Elder Davie, 1961, 1986) is crucial to the problems that would arise while the history curriculum was in Michael Gove's hands. In fact the 19th century dispute over the reform of Scottish universities has within it a paradigm of the current crisis. The essence of the discrepancy between the Scottish system and the English was that philosophy as taught in Scottish universities included an initiation into philosophical

*method* as well as philosophical *content*, and there was encouragement to use the method thus learnt in discussion and debate in university seminars.

### **Michael Gove, Niall Ferguson and Simon Schama – the first phase**

Michael Gove's first foray into controversy over the history curriculum took place at the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival in late May 2010, when he was less than a month in office. Niall Ferguson was talking at the festival about what was wrong with history education in English schools. Gove seemed to agree with Ferguson's basic thesis that there was a need for history to be taught in chronological sequence. But the Oxford and Harvard historian had more to say: it is important that the structure is there to get at 'big picture history', or put another way, at significant history. Ferguson was convinced that the big story had been the rise of the West, but now it should include the rise of the East, as well as the causes and consequences of that, one of which might be the decline of the West. Ferguson was writing a book that would come out early in 2011, *Civilization – The West and the Rest*, which would develop some ideas he had already written about in a chapter, 'The decline of history and the futures of Western civilisation', in *Liberating Learning: Widening Participation*, edited by Patrick Derham and Michael Worton (2010).

The theme of the West and the Rest would also be televised in 2011. Whatever else Niall Ferguson might be accused of – and he has been accused of having neoconservative sympathies – he cannot be criticised for too narrow a focus, and in his career he had clearly been interested in synthesising histories of different countries to achieve a composite big picture, as he did in *The War of the World* (2006). Even his forays into British history have had scope (*The Pity of War*, 1998, and *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 2003). His recent short television series on China (*Triumph and Turmoil*, 2012) takes a long look at Chinese history, and in so doing emphasises the importance of studying it.

Indeed, both the USA and Britain in the period after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 had shown a preoccupation with the Middle East, and had taken their eyes off what had been happening, especially with the economy, in China. In the light of the financial crisis across many parts of the world, and particularly within parts of the European Union, this was possibly unwise. Although China has not conformed with Fukuyama's general thesis of the advance of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992), it had changed from over-politicisation and collectivisation to more freedom in land tenure and a great commitment to a market economy. According to Paul Ropp (2010, p. 154), '... many Asian countries, for the first time since World War II, ... see China as politically and economically more important than the United States'. In contrast to a theme of western exceptionalism – even the West's espousal of liberal democracy, another equally valid theme might be along the lines of the title of Kishore Mahbubani's *The Great Convergence – Asia, the West, and the Logic of one World*. According to Mahbubani the great achievement of the EU had been the continuing prospect of peace in Europe. Similarly ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a mini-replica of the EU, had played a crucial role in delivering peace (Mahbubani, 2013, p.6). A history curriculum provides an education to help young people understand how their world came to be, not just how their nation came to be (important though that is), and should track into and from the past issues and related places which are becoming significant worldwide. Given these arguments, there is a case for China and southeast Asia to be included.

Despite the invitation having never been made formal, both Ferguson and Gove were submitted to a ferocious attack by journalist Seumas Milne of *The Guardian* (Milne, 2010). Milne was to go on to attack Gove again in 2013, again using perhaps rather intemperate language. Milne's 2010 article inevitably drew a response from Ferguson himself (Ferguson, 2010). It was a familiar set of criticisms: Britain's crimes under imperialism have compromised any attempt to resurrect history for patriotic reasons, and any idea of celebrating British history is to be deplored. Gove came under criticism from Milne for even considering that such a neo-conservative (and neo-imperialist) as Niall Ferguson would be the right person to help. The piece in the article that drew most fire (from Ferguson himself) was the suggestion that Hitler admired the British Empire for its racism, with its implication that the British had promoted fascist values.

In the light of what has happened since then, Michael Gove's invitation to Ferguson to help him with the history curriculum can only be seen in as a smokescreen, because it has turned out that Gove's and

Ferguson's views of what components make a relevant narrative are quite different. Ferguson would clearly want to place Britain in a global setting, and would not want only the history of Britain to be taught. This became apparent in a debate filmed at the Law Society, London between Ferguson and [Sir] Richard J. Evans, Regius Professor of History, University of Cambridge) dating from March 2011 (University of Oxford Podcasts, 2011; Lay, 2011; YouTube, 2013). Ferguson can be heard saying that British history should be no more than 50% of the curriculum. Evans was to comment on this situation in *The New Statesman* in March 2013.

He initially asked the historian Niall Ferguson to come up with ideas for a new curriculum but Ferguson's response, based on a positive presentation of Europe's – and especially Britain's – global ascendancy since the early modern period, did not appeal to Gove, because it advocated history with a global sweep instead of history focused on supposedly key personalities and events within the British past. Sidelining Ferguson, Gove then asked another expatriate British television historian, Simon Schama, to take a lead. (Evans, 2013d)

To this can be added Evans' other critical and significant contributions to the debate from 2011 (see Evans 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; and 2013d).

The announcement referred to above that it was Simon Schama (and apparently not Niall Ferguson) who would be the 'History Tsar' was made after a period of relative calm following the May-June media furore, and not until the Conservative Party Conference (in October 2010). Schama had already in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century presented on BBC Television his *A History of Britain* (note the 'A' not 'The'), which was followed up by three substantial books under that title. Later he justified some of his BBC series content choices giving the reason that a selection had to be made, and it was a personal one (Schama, 2010a). At the autumn party political conference Gove presented his caricature version of the existing history curriculum, claiming that students left school knowing only about Henry VIII and Hitler and had no sense of a connecting narrative. This was at odds with the most recent Ofsted report on history (*History for all – History in English schools 2007/10*, March 2010) and with the findings of an Historical Association survey.

## **Phase 2 – November 2010 to February 2013: speculating in the dark**

Simon Schama was quick to respond, but not in an official report or rationale, although his piece has all of the eloquence, panache, wit, wisdom and insight expected of him. As has become customary in recent years this debate would be undertaken in the printed or online pages of the media. In this case it was *The Guardian*. He defended the place of history in the curriculum and as an essential ingredient of citizenship:

The seeding of amnesia is the undoing of citizenship. To the vulgar utilitarian demand, 'Yes, all very nice, I'm sure, but what use is it?', this much (and more) can be said: inter alia, the scrutiny of evidence and the capacity to decide which version of an event seems most credible; analytical knowledge of the nature of power; an understanding of the way in which some societies acquire wealth while others lose it and others again never attain it; a familiarity with the follies and pity of war; the distinctions between just and unjust conflicts; a clear-eyed vision of the trappings and the aura of charisma, the weird magic that turns sovereignty into majesty; the still more peculiar surrender to authority grounded in revelation, be that a sacred book or a constitution invoked as if it too were supernaturally ordained and hence unavailable to contested interpretation. (Schama, 2010b)

There were subtle messages here to acknowledge the part already played by Ferguson ('an understanding of the way in which some societies acquire wealth while others lose it', and the title of one of Ferguson's books, 'the pity of war'). Schama showed recognition of history as inquiry and expressed caution about its use to enhance identity politics:

To the retort that teachers have enough on their hands in the state system getting their students to be literate and numerate, I would respond that in a pluralist Britain of many cultures, vocational skills are the necessary but insufficient conditions of modern civility. Kids need to

know they belong to a history that's bigger, broader, more inclusive than the subject they imagine to be the saga of remote grandees alien to their traditions and irrelevant to their present. A truly capacious British history will not be the feeder of identity politics but its dissolvent. In the last resort, all serious history is about entering the lives of others, separated by place and time. It is the greatest, least sentimental, least politically correct tutor of tolerance. (Schama, 2010b)

He selected six landmarks, but if these are examined carefully in the original article it will be seen that each has at least one question attached. His vision is not of a narrow view of English or British history, but makes links to multiple British kingdoms and the British Empire's far-flung corners and spaces. It is not always a sanguine view of British history (his comments under these headings can be read in full on the related *Guardian* website [[www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/nov/09/future-history-schools](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/nov/09/future-history-schools)]):

What every child should learn: Murder in the cathedral; the black death, and the peasants revolt in the reign of Richard II; the execution of King Charles I; the Indian moment; the Irish wars; the opium wars and China. (Schama, 2010b)

What Schama did not do was to suggest at what age school students should examine these events. However the initial choice of Schama seemed inspired because of his underpinning sense of humour as well as his eclectic interests and ability to link history to his other major concern, Art (e.g. Schama, 2009).

This period was characterised by high profile historians and educationalists having their say. It has already been noted that Sir Richard Evans had taken a very active role, although as was the case with all historians it was largely speculative as it would be undertaken before a draft curriculum had become available, but in one significant instance it involved reporting on a funded research (and therefore evidence-based) enquiry into history teaching in the 20th century, published as *The Right Kind of History*, which was available from November 2011. This had been completed by another high profile historian, Sir David Cannadine with his two co-authors and researchers, Jenny Keating and Nicola Sheldon. Michael Gove himself attended the book launch at the Institute of Historical Research in Senate House, London, and both Gove and Cannadine gave speeches.

The main message of the research project was that there had been no 'golden age' of history teaching, and there had been both good and bad examples from those interviewed of both progressive and traditional teaching of history. David Cannadine wanted to communicate to the Secretary of State that the current history curriculum did not in itself need any real change. However, the change that Cannadine wanted was an extension to the programme so that history would be taught to the age of 16, requiring history to be given two more compulsory years (as in Australia). Michael Gove was not in principle against this but stated that he would envisage a single examination board for whatever the 16 plus exam would be called (to date it is called the GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education]), including the possibility that it might be some form of baccalaureate. However, neither of these suggestions (an extension of history to 16 and single exam boards) would come to pass.

### **Phase 3 – After the publication of the draft on February 7th 2013**

There were strong reactions to the draft curriculum when it was finally published after an announcement in Parliament on February 7th 2013 (see Appendix 1). There was a recognition that the curriculum was sequentially chronological and that the main focus was English rather than British history, and that little room had been given to the histories of places outside Britain. Key Stage 2 (for 7-11 year olds) had all of English history from before the Romans to the end of the Stuarts (1714). It also had Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Key Stage 3 (for 12-14 year olds) would start in the early 18th century and reach up to 1990. Thus, if the Government wanted this to be taught in chronological order, understanding of the Greeks, Romans and the Roman Empire would be at level suitable for Year 3 (age 7-8); the Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans would be pitched for Year 4 (age 8-9), the rest of the Middle Ages (1154-1485) for Year 5 (age 9-10), and the Tudors and Stuarts for Year 6 (age 10-11). An online BBC report gave the flavour of the reactions from education professionals, including Professor Chris Husbands who commented that:

If you teach chronologically you end up with a seven-year-old understanding of the Saxons, a 10-year-old understanding of the Middle Ages and a 14-year-old understanding of the industrial revolution. But history is more complex than that. There's no evidence that teaching chronologically produces an understanding of chronology. What we want young people to have is a usable map of the past. There are well-trying ways of handling these issues, which are currently being ignored. (Sellgren, 2013)

Husbands, while making an important point, performs a neat polemical trick by eliding 'understanding chronology' with 'understanding history', although clearly these macroconcepts are not quite the same. Also responding to the proposals, Rebecca Sullivan, chief executive of the Historical Association, after acknowledging that Michael Gove had confirmed history's importance in the curriculum, reiterated disappointment that the upper age limit of history in the national curriculum has not been extended to 16, commenting:

... our main concern with these proposals has to be primary, where most teachers are not history specialists, and are being expected to teach complex areas of history such as religion, war, identity and nation building without any training or resources and possibly little historical knowledge of their own. This is more likely to muddle chronological understanding. This particular problem will only be exacerbated in small rural schools where classes are made up from more than one year group making sequential teaching difficult. So whilst we sympathise with the signatories of the [*Times*] letter [of 27 February], as it stands this curriculum is unworkable and we will be making serious recommendations for further review. (Sellgren, 2013)

The reactions of teachers, as reported on the Historical Association website, but which were integral to the HA's own response<sup>3</sup>(published immediately after the formal consultation closed), indicate high levels of concern about the draft curriculum.

The letter in *TheTimes* (text in Appendix 4) from historians (including Niall Ferguson) referred to above makes one key point, that teaching a connected national narrative needs to be restored to schools. This argument is partly based on seeing a need for this aspect of historical knowledge as intellectual and cultural literacy for understanding identity, although it is clearly underpinned by a belief in the need for the study of British history as a key element in an overall education. The letter criticised current arrangements in schools as being unfit to achieve this end, and welcomed Mr Gove's plans to reform this.

By contrast, the letter from representatives of the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association (Appendix 3), including both of their presidents (Peter Mandler and Jackie Eales) deplored the lack of formal consultation in the process as well as the lack of a global dimension to counterbalance the focus on a particularly English view of national history. There was a sense that the events and developments were too skewed to the political, and overseas events were too often seen just through British or even English eyes. The signatories highlighted the problems associated with an age-related continuous narrative, pointing out that each age group would miss out either on the earlier or the later periods. Again, the decision to stop formal history at 14 rather than extend it to 16, as had originally been mooted, was criticised.

David Cannadine had been keeping his powder dry while fellow historians took sides, but by March 13 even he felt driven to make some very critical comments not just about the proposed curriculum itself but also about related conditions for teachers in the schools:

To cover English history from the Stone Age to the early eighteenth century in four academic years at primary school in at most one hour a week cannot be done; and the proposal to go from the mid-eighteenth century to the late twentieth at Key Stage Three with no more teaching time is equally unrealistic. The only way to deliver such a curriculum would be to abandon any pretence that history is about understanding as well as about knowing, and to teach it in just the patchy, simplistic, superficial and disconnected ways that the Secretary of State deplores about

the present arrangements. His proposal does not solve that problem: instead it intensifies and exacerbates it. (Cannadine, 2013)

Not surprisingly, the response to this proposed history curriculum from most professional historians and schoolteachers has been deeply critical – notwithstanding Niall Ferguson’s recent defence of Gove’s syllabus in the *Guardian* [Ferguson, 2013], which was distinctly unconvincing; while his spat with Richard Evans merely exemplified the unhelpfulness of argument by anecdote and excessively polarized posturing, which has for too long occluded serious discussion of the subject. Of course the media love it when professors fall out in public, and Gove may well be enjoying the spectacle of two distinguished historians apparently so divided.

Yet behind all the bluster and the point-scoring, it is clear that Evans and Ferguson actually agree on several important matters: namely that the draft curriculum is too prescriptive, that it is too Anglocentric, that it pays insufficient heed to the broader world, and that more time needs to be given to history in schools if the subject is to be better taught – which is exactly what most informed people have been saying since the document was first published. In truth, there is much more consensus on this subject than such media-driven disagreement suggests, and it is a consensus with which Michael Gove urgently needs to engage. Like him, we all wish history to be better taught, and for pupils to leave school knowing more about the past than they do at present; yet what he is proposing in his new draft curriculum will not bring that about, but would only make things worse. (Cannadine, 2013)

In another co-ordinated letter, this time in *The Daily Telegraph* on March 20th, from one hundred academics involved in teacher education, the old battle between the qualitative and quantitative approaches comes out, providing a classic description of the qualitative position:

**The dangers of the new National Curriculum proposals** (*Michael Gove has prioritised facts over creativity*)

SIR – As academics, we are writing to warn of the dangers posed by Michael Gove’s new National Curriculum, which could severely erode educational standards. The proposed curriculum consists of endless lists of spellings, facts and rules. This mountain of data will not develop children’s ability to think, including problem-solving, critical understanding and creativity. Much of it demands too much, too young. This will put pressure on teachers to rely on rote learning without understanding. Little account is taken of children’s potential interests and capacities, or that young children need to relate abstract ideas to their experience, lives and activity. In its volume of detailed instructions, this curriculum betrays a distrust of teachers. Whatever the intention, the proposed curriculum for England will result in a ‘dumbing down’ of teaching and learning. Mr Gove has clearly misunderstood England’s decline in the Programme for International Student Assessment tests. Schools in high-achieving Finland and Massachusetts emphasise cognitive development, critical understanding and creativity, not rote learning. (Bassegy et al., 2013)

Mr Gove’s reaction was to condemn the authors as ‘bad’ academics (Shepherd, 2013a), although there are some well-known figures here: Guy Claxton, John Furlong, Richard Pring, and not only Colin Richards (who had been an HMI), but also Andrew Pollard who had served on Mr Gove’s own national curriculum panel until, after disillusionment, he resigned (with Mary James) in October 2011. Michael Bassegy’s reflections on this episode were the subject of a subsequent interview with *The Guardian* (Wilby, 2013).

**Further controversies**

Michael Gove in a speech on May 9<sup>th</sup> (Gove, 2013), going over a much older debate about the value of play, empathy and imagination in the teaching and learning of history, clearly dismissed almost altogether the qualitative approach to teaching history. Conflating two publications, one from *Primary History* (a journal published by the Historical Association, with Jon Nichol as editor) and another from a website run by Richard Tarr ([www.activehistory.co.uk](http://www.activehistory.co.uk)), see Tarr2013), he implied (perhaps having not checked the

provenance of his sources) that they were both from the Historical Association. His first criticism was about a recommendation to use a cartoon about King John in an article by a teacher, Jane Card (2012), and the second was about the use of Roger Hargreaves' 'Mr Men' type cartoons in teaching the history of Germany. Mr Gove's interpretation of both pieces seemed to lack balance and contextualization as well as a sense of humour. The responses to the speech were swift, both from the media itself, where newspapers of all political orientations were reporting the negative reactions to Mr Gove's interventions (*The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph*, see Hurst, 2013; Levy, 2013; Meredith, 2013; Shephard, 2013b; and Wholehouse, 2013), and from 54 historians who defended the Historical Association (Amber et al., 2013). Playing an active role in this was Richard Toyne, professor at the University of Exeter, currently researching the use of rhetoric in politics, to whose blog the Historical Association had redirected its own report on Mr Gove's comments. Linked into this blog was an e-petition initiated by Katherine Edwards, a secondary history teacher who was already playing an active part in opposing the new draft curriculum (Edwards, 2013a, 2013b). This is the text of the e-petition:

### **Keep the history curriculum politically neutral**

We strongly object to the government's proposed new history curriculum and want it to be scrapped on the following grounds:

- 1) An almost exclusively British history course encourages insularity, needlessly narrows the horizons of pupils and is a poor preparation for later life.
- 2) The content of the course is impractical to deliver, dry and likely to disengage pupils from history.
- 3) The proposals have been made without adequate consultation with professionals.
- 4) The use of the education system to promote a nationalist political agenda will stop history being a vehicle for teaching critical thought and is an assault on academic freedom.

Mr Gove has carried forward a 'discourse of derision'<sup>4</sup> between government and teachers (characterized by a lack of trust on both sides) which shows features of a *mêlée* that stretches back to the late 1960s. In adopting both a dominantly quantitative approach to education generally and a 'patriotic' stance to history he has concocted a potentially toxic mix in this particular cauldron. Alternative and more reconciliatory approaches might consist in working organically with professional bodies and seeking to get a consensus on how best regulation of the profession might work, based on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation, of the sort that is already operational in the world of academy schools. That something is wrong can be seen in opposition to his plans tabled by both of the professional bodies closest (a) to the classroom teachers and (b) to the world of historians, i.e. the Historical Association and the Royal Historical Society.

In a *volte face* reported in *The Sunday Telegraph* (May 19, 2013), Michael Gove is reported to have said at the NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) conference in Birmingham that 'the curriculum, currently almost entirely focused on British history, would allow "studies into other civilizations and countries"' (Paton, 2013). By the end of May it became apparent that a new draft was being written.

### **Conclusion**

In seeking to find a middle way, and perhaps drawing on the wisdom of James Callaghan's remarks in 1976, an 'either ... or' approach will not solve this problem. On the 'patriotic' narrative embedded in the draft proposals, of course 'national' does not have to mean 'nationalist', and national history at its best will tap into current debates among historians, including J.H. Elliott (2012), whose view is that transnational history will feed back into the project of achieving a clearer (and in effect more scholarly) vision to understand the nation's past. Other issues include just how much time should be given to history in schools. But the battle over the syntactic or procedural side of history as inquiry (with strong features linking to historical thinking) seems to have been won, and has certainly had a presence in national curriculum history since its outset in 1991. However, decisions over suitable contexts, in terms of when (chronology), where (location), and indeed how much (in content terms), for the different school age groups are still subject to discussion.

In many ways pedagogy itself offers organizing solutions. Bruner's spiral curriculum is still valid, just as the

notion of scaffolding or contextual frames for structuring content (perhaps in overviews with depth-studies, as in Australia) offers a more teacher-friendly and indeed student-friendly set of solutions. The work of Alexander et al. (2009), published just before the current Coalition came to office and in parallel with, but independent from, the official but later rejected Rose Review, stresses dialogue and a research-based approach to professional knowledge. Dialogue can enrich many aspects of history teaching and learning, including the handling of historical sources and the ideas of inquiry and interpretation. This also demonstrates an organic link between what has to continue to be research-based pedagogy and scholarly history. Knowledge and understanding that are co-constructed between teacher and class, getting inside the source, the event, and the different narratives, and drawing on the work of Vygotsky, will provide as good a way as any of proceeding. The shape of the overall curriculum structure is not yet clear, however.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Black Papers debates can be found in Cox & Dyson (1969, 1970) and Cox & Boyson (1975, 1977).
- <sup>2</sup> Gordon Brown's Britishness lectures: These addressed issues of the place of Britain in the modern world, and almost by accident the role of the past, and indeed history, in defining the meaning of citizenship. Brown had a doctorate in history from the University of Edinburgh (1982), the title of his thesis being, *The Labour Party and Political Change in Scotland 1918–29*. Among matters being discussed at the Fabian Society conference in January 2006 (which I attended) was the possibility of hybrid or multiple identities, and, significantly, whether citizens could be for example both Pakistani and British, or Cornish and British. His discussion in the 2004 'Britishness' address to the British Council about different views on whether Britain was in decline, was impressive, drawing on the work of Jonathan Freedland, George Orwell, Andrew Marr, Neal Ascherson, Tom Nairn, Linda Colley, Norman Davies, Roger Scruton, Simon Heffer, Ferdinand Mount, David Goodhart, Melanie Phillips, Sir Herman Ousley, Sir Bernard Crick, Tom Nairn, Montesquieu, Adam Nicholson, Matthew Arnold, Adam Smith, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Edmund Burke, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Babbage, Alan Turing, and David Cannadine. In addition, in the 2006 *Future of Britishness* address to the Fabian Society, he included references to James Joyce, Voltaire, Milton, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Henry Grattan, Thomas Rainsborough (of the 17th century Putney Debates) and Francesca Klug. This was a multi-layered and complex debate backed up by wide reading.
- <sup>3</sup> The HA's consultation results can be found: [http://www.history.org.uk/resources/primary\\_news\\_1779.html](http://www.history.org.uk/resources/primary_news_1779.html)
- <sup>4</sup> The idea of a 'discourse of derision' comes from Stephen Ball (1990).

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## Appendix 1

(Extract from Guyver in Taylor & Guyver, 2012, pp. 174-175)

### **The National Curriculum for History [as it was] in England 2010**

#### **Key Stage One History (for ages 5–6) (Implemented from September 2000)**

This has four areas of content making up the 'breadth of study', the first of which corresponds with an 'expanding horizons' agenda, starting with the child and moving outwards and backwards in space and time. The second looks at 'way of life' in the more distant past (locally or elsewhere in Britain). The third is about significant lives (men, women and children); and the last focuses on past events from the history of Britain and the wider world (with non-statutory examples given for the last two categories). This broad content goes alongside a set of syntactic principles, which are the same headlines (but different sub-definitions for each age group) as in Key Stage 2 History (i.e. chronological understanding; knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past; historical interpretation; historical inquiry; and organisation and communication).

#### **Key Stage Two History (for ages 7–11) (Implemented from September 2000)**

The breadth of study content for this 'key stage' is more defined and consists of six units (one local study; three national or British studies—Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain; Britain and the wider world in Tudor times; and either Victorian Britain or Britain since 1930); a European (although in this case Ancient Greece, therefore a classical) study; and one world history study drawn from a menu of seven (Ancient Egypt, Ancient Sumer, the Assyrian Empire, the Indus Valley, the Maya, Benin, or the

Aztecs). The Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings unit is an example of overview and focus, where all three settlements need to be introduced, but only one has to be studied in depth. Within 'Britain since 1930' the focus can either be on the Second World War or on the impact on men, women and children of social and technological changes that have taken place since 1930. Thus there is choice, but there are considerable chronological gaps, the missing periods being: pre-Roman; 1066–1485; 1603–1837; 1901–1930. The rationale here is sampling in depth, not a continuous narrative. The syntactic principles are as in Key Stage 1.

### **Key Stage Three History (for ages 12–14) (Implemented from September 2008)**

The content for this key stage is subdivided into two, first British history and then European and world history. The rationale has an embedded continuous narrative from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, with more of an emphasis on political developments around crown and parliament and the growth of democracy. The different histories, dimensions, and changing relationships among England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are mentioned, as well as the movement and settlement of peoples to and from the British Isles. The old PESC perspectives formula from the 1991 curriculum is preserved as an attempt to counterbalance the more political emphasis of the 1066–2000 master narrative with a corresponding focus on forces of economic and technological change as well as changes in war, religion and culture. As a result of the Britishness debates (2004, 2006), another parallel focus is the British Empire alongside a study of the development of trade, colonization, industrialization and technology (in this imperial phase context), but also the notion of 'impact' on pre-colonial populations, and a consideration of the nature and consequences of the slave trade as well as resistance in colonial settings and the subsequent narratives of decolonisation.

The European and world history content makes demands of the teacher to make choices about significance in a range of impacts in political, social, cultural, religious, technological and/or economic developments and events on past European and world societies. This certainly does not exclude war, but juxtaposes conflict and changes in the nature of war with co-operation between countries and peoples and the lasting effect of this working together on national, ethnic, racial, cultural or religious issues. Compulsory content consists of the two world wars and the Holocaust (and their consequences), and the role of European and international institutions in resolving conflicts.

As has been seen in all three key stages, the statutory content goes alongside a set of syntactic principles. For Key Stage 3 these are key concepts (chronological understanding; cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; change and continuity; cause and consequence; significance; and interpretation) and key processes (historical inquiry; using evidence, and communicating about the past).

### **Appendix 2– The draft of national curriculum history (Feb 7 2013)**

#### **Purpose of study**

A high-quality history education equips pupils to think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. A knowledge of Britain's past, and our place in the world, helps us understand the challenges of our own time.

#### **Aims**

The National Curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the story of these islands: how the British people shaped this nation and how Britain influenced the world
- know and understand British history as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the story of the first settlers in these islands to the development of the institutions which govern our lives today
- know and understand the broad outlines of European and world history: the growth and decline of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; the achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a historically-grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'

- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
- understand how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

### **Attainment targets**

By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.

### **Subject content**

#### **KeyStage1**

Pupils should begin to develop an awareness of the past and the ways in which it is similar to and different from the present. They should understand simple subject-specific vocabulary relating to the passing of time and begin to develop an understanding of the key features of a range of different events and historical periods.

Pupils should be taught about:

- simple vocabulary relating to the passing of time such as 'before', 'after', 'past', 'present', 'then' and 'now'
- the concept of nation and of a nation's history
- concepts such as civilisation, monarchy, parliament, democracy, and war and peace that are essential to understanding history
- the lives of significant individuals in Britain's past who have contributed to our nation's achievements—scientists such as Isaac Newton or Michael Faraday, reformers such as Elizabeth Fry or William Wilberforce, medical pioneers such as William Harvey or Florence Nightingale, or creative geniuses such as Isambard Kingdom Brunel or Christina Rossetti
- key events in the past that are significant nationally and globally, particularly those that coincide with festivals or other events that are commemorated throughout the year
- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality.

#### **KeyStage 2**

Pupils should be taught about the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome.

In addition, across Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils should be taught the essential chronology of Britain's history. This will serve as an essential frame of reference for more in-depth study. Pupils should be made aware that history takes many forms, including cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history. Pupils should be taught about key dates, events and significant individuals. They should also be given the opportunity to study local history.

Pupils should be taught the following chronology of British history sequentially:

early Britons and settlers, including:

- the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages
- Celtic culture and patterns of settlement

Roman conquest and rule, including:

- Caesar, Augustus, and Claudius
- Britain as part of the Roman Empire
- the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire

Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlement, including:

- the Heptarchy
- the spread of Christianity
- key developments in the reigns of Alfred, Athelstan, Cnut and Edward the Confessor

the Norman Conquest and Norman rule, including:

- the Domesday Book
- feudalism
- Norman culture
- the Crusades

Plantagenet rule in the 12th and 13th centuries, including:

- key developments in the reign of Henry II, including the murder of Thomas Becket
- Magna Carta
- de Montfort's Parliament
- relations between England, Wales, Scotland and France, including:
  - William Wallace
  - Robert the Bruce
  - Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffydd
  - the Hundred Years War

life in 14th-century England, including:

- chivalry
- the Black Death
- the Peasants' Revolt

the later Middle Ages and the early modern period, including:

- Chaucer and the revival of learning
- Wycliffe's Bible
- Caxton and the introduction of the printing press
- the Wars of the Roses
- Warwick the Kingmaker
- the Tudor period, including religious strife and Reformation in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary

Elizabeth I's reign and English expansion, including:

- colonisation of the New World
- plantation of Ireland
- conflict with Spain
- the Renaissance in England, including the lives and works of individuals such as Shakespeare and Marlowe

the Stuart period, including:

- the Union of the Crowns
- King versus Parliament
- Cromwell's commonwealth, the Levellers and the Diggers
- the restoration of the monarchy
- the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London
- Samuel Pepys and the establishment of the Royal Navy
- the Glorious Revolution, constitutional monarchy and the Union of the Parliaments.

### Key Stage 3

Building on the study of the chronology of the history of Britain in Key Stage 2, teaching of the periods specified below should ensure that pupils understand and use historical concepts in increasingly sophisticated ways to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts. They should develop an awareness and understanding of the role and use of different types of sources, as well as their strengths, weaknesses and reliability. They should also examine cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social aspects and be given the opportunity to study local history. The teaching of the content should be approached as a combination of overview and in-depth studies.

Pupils should be taught about:

The development of the modern nation

Britain and her Empire, including:

- Wolfe and the conquest of Canada
- Clive of India
- Competition with France and the Jacobite rebellion
- the American Revolution
- the Enlightenment in England, including Francis Bacon, John Locke, Christopher Wren, Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, Adam Smith and the impact of European thinkers

the struggle for power in Europe, including:

- the French Revolution and the Rights of Man
- the Napoleonic Wars, Nelson, Wellington and Pitt
- the Congress of Vienna

the struggle for power in Britain, including:

- the Six Acts and Peterloo through to Catholic Emancipation
- the slave trade and the abolition of slavery, the role of Olaudah Equiano and free slaves
- the Great Reform Act and the Chartists

the High Victorian era, including:

- Gladstone and Disraeli
- the Second and Third Reform Acts
- the battle for Home Rule
- Chamberlain and Salisbury

the development of a modern economy, including:

- iron, coal and steam
- the growth of the railways
- great innovators such as Watt, Stephenson and Brunel
- the abolition of the Corn Laws
- the growth and industrialization of cities
- the Factory Acts
- the Great Exhibition and global trade
- social conditions
- the Tolpuddle Martyrs and the birth of trade unionism

Britain's global impact in the 19th century, including:

- war in the Crimea and the Eastern Question
- gunboat diplomacy and the growth of Empire
- the Indian Mutiny and the Great Game
- the scramble for Africa

- the Boer Wars

Britain's social and cultural development during the Victorian era, including:

- the changing role of women, including figures such as Florence Nightingale, Mary Seacole, George Eliot and Annie Besant
- the impact of mass literacy and the Elementary Education Act.

The twentieth century

Britain transformed, including:

- the Rowntree Report and the birth of the modern welfare state
- 'Peers versus the People'
- Home Rule for Ireland
- the suffragette movement and women's emancipation

the First World War, including:

- causes such as colonial rivalry, naval expansion and European alliances
- key events
- conscription
- trench warfare
- Lloyd George's coalition
- the Russian Revolution
- The Armistice
- the peace of Versailles

the 1920s and 1930s, including:

- the first Labour Government
- universal suffrage
- the Great Depression
- the abdication of Edward VIII and constitutional crisis

the Second World War, including:

- causes such as appeasement, the failure of the League of Nations and the rise of the Dictators
- the global reach of the war – from Arctic Convoys to the Pacific Campaign
- the roles of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin
- Nazi atrocities in occupied Europe and the unique evil of the Holocaust

Britain's retreat from Empire, including:

- independence for India and the Wind of Change in Africa
- the independence generation – Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Kenyatta, Nkrumah
- the Cold War and the impact of Communism on Europe
- the Attlee Government and the growth of the welfare state
- the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth immigration, and the arrival of East African Asians
- society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalization of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act

Economic change and crisis, the end of the post-war consensus, and governments up to and including:

- the election of Margaret Thatcher
- Britain's relations with Europe, the Commonwealth, and the wider world
- the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Royal Historical Society Statement on the Draft National Curriculum for History (12 February)**

As representatives of the principal organizations for historians in the UK, we would like to respond to the publication of the draft Programmes of Study for History in the national curriculum released by the Department for Education on 7 February 2013. We want to voice significant reservations both about the content of the Programmes of Study which have been proposed, and about the process by which the Programmes have been devised.

First, we believe that the Programmes of Study are far too narrowly and exclusively focused on British history to serve the needs of children growing up in the world today. History is of course an important and necessary tool for teaching future citizens about the making of their localities and nations. But it is not only that – it is also the treasure-house of human experience across millennia and around the world. Students should learn about British history: but knowledge of the history of other cultures (and not only as they have been encountered through their interactions with the British Isles) is as vital as knowledge of foreign languages to enable British citizens to understand the full variety and diversity of human life. The narrowness of the Programmes deprives children, many of whom will not continue with the study of History beyond the national curriculum, of the vast bulk of the precious inheritance of the past.

Secondly, we welcome the inclusion within the Programmes of Study of topics concerned with social, economic and cultural history. Students should certainly be taught political history; but they should also be taught the histories of economies, societies, ideas, beliefs and cultures. As the writings of historians over the past hundred years have eloquently demonstrated, it is in any case impossible properly to understand political history without an appreciation of these other histories. It might still be debated whether the specifications set out in the Programmes of Study have yet found the ideal balance between political history and other aspects of the past, not least in relation to conveying to students a proper appreciation of what the discipline of History now encompasses. This is especially important with reference to how the subject is studied and taught in the higher level qualifications delivered in both schools and universities for which these programmes of study must in part be seen as preparation (a point of equal relevance in consideration of the concentration on British history).

Thirdly, we regret that the construction of the Programme in a strictly chronological sequence from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 ensures that many students will not be properly exposed to the exciting and intellectually demanding study of pre-modern history other than in the very earliest stages of their studies. This risks promoting even if only inadvertently the naive assumption that human society and culture become more sophisticated and complex through time, and also potentially encourages students and teachers to neglect pre-modern history as they move on to study history at GCSE, A-Level and beyond.

We recognize that there are limits to the capacity of a curriculum to encompass all desiderata, and that a balance must be struck between ambition and practicality. It is partly for this reason that we also regret the way in which the curriculum was drafted. Despite much interesting debate in the media about the future of the curriculum, and especially the History curriculum, in the early days of the current government, the details of the curriculum have been drafted inside the Department for Education without any systematic consultation or public discussion with historians, teachers or the wider public. The contrast with the practice of the Conservative government of the late 1980s when it drafted the first national curriculum is striking. Then, a History Working Group including teachers, educational experts and academics worked in tandem with the ministry of the day to produce first an interim report and then a final report in the midst of much public discussion. The curriculum that resulted was widely supported across many professional and political divisions in the teaching and academic professions and by the general public. The current government was certainly right to feel that after many interim changes it was time for a fresh look.

Unfortunately, it has not attempted to assemble the same kind of consensus, and as a result it has produced a draft curriculum which it can be argued could still benefit from extensive discussion about how to ensure that it best serves both good practice and the public interest. Rather than find ourselves cast necessarily in the role of critics, we would welcome an opportunity to engage constructively with the

government in fashioning Programmes of Study which could seek to deliver outcomes equally acceptable to politicians, working historians, the public at large and above all students, their teachers and parents.

Professor David D'Avray, Chair, Medieval Studies Section, British Academy  
Professor Jackie Eales, President, Historical Association  
Professor Mary Fulbrook, Chair, Modern History Section, British Academy  
Dr Keith McLay, Co-Convenor, History UK  
Professor Peter Mandler, President, Royal Historical Society  
Professor Hamish Scott, Chair, Early Modern History Section, British Academy

#### **Appendix 4**

#### **The full text of the historians' letter to *TheTimes*, Wednesday 27 February 2013**

Dear Sir,

We believe that every pupil should have the opportunity to attain a broad and comprehensive knowledge of English and British history. Alongside other core subjects of the curriculum, mathematics, English, sciences and modern languages, history has a special role in developing in each and every individual a sense of their own identity as part of a historic community with world-wide links, interwoven with the ability to analyse and research the past that remains essential for a full understanding of modern society.

It should be made possible for every pupil to take in the full narrative of our history throughout every century. No one would expect a pupil to be denied the full range of the English language; equally, no pupil should any longer be denied the chance to obtain a full knowledge of the rich tapestry of the history of their own country, in both its internal and international dimensions.

It is for this reason that we give our support in principle to the changes to the new national curriculum for history that the government is proposing. While these proposals will no doubt be adapted as a result of full consultation, the essential idea that a curriculum framework should ensure that pupils are given an overall understanding of history through its most important changes, events and individuals is a welcome one. Above all, we recognise that a coherent curriculum that reflects how events and topics relate to one another over time, together with a renewed focus in primary school for history, has long been needed. Such is the consensus view in most countries of Europe. We also welcome the indication that sufficient freedom will in future be given to history teachers to plan and teach in ways which will revitalise history in schools.

We are in no doubt that the proposed changes to the curriculum will provoke controversy among those attached to the status quo and suspicious of change. Yet we must not shy away from this golden opportunity to place history back at the centre of the national curriculum and make it part of the common culture of every future citizen.

Yours sincerely,

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## **Searching for an Identity: Debates over Moral and National Education as an Independent Subject in Contemporary Hong Kong**

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### **Abstract:**

*The government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region [HKSAR] announced the introduction of Moral and National Education [MNE] as an independent and compulsory school subject in May 2011. The content of MNE's consultation draft and the teaching material produced by government-funded organizations incited about 100,000 people to demonstrate outside the Hong Kong government headquarters for eight consecutive days in early September 2012. Protesters including teachers, parents, students, and concerned members of the public described MNE as 'brainwashing', and demanded the curriculum's withdrawal. This article presents the historical development of national education in Hong Kong, the various challenges the MNE curriculum faced, and the conflicts and negotiations between the government and the public. It first explores the background of national education reform in Hong Kong since 2000. It then examines how the government instructed local schools to teach national identity in subjects of Chinese History and the newly proposed MNE. The next section discusses the declining importance of Chinese History education since 2000. The article concludes by reviewing the voices supporting and opposing MNE, the most recent development in Hong Kong's education today.*

**Keywords:** History, History of history education, Moral and National Education (MNE), Hong Kong, Chinese history, Identity

### **Introduction**

The government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region [HKSAR] announced on 8 September 2012 that Moral and National Education [MNE] would no longer be a mandatory subject in primary and secondary schools. Soon after Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, the Hong Kong government began to introduce elements of national education into the school curriculum. However, it was only 15 years after the Handover that the government attempted to make national education an independent and compulsory subject. The government's attempt induced about 100,000 people to demonstrate against the MNE curriculum in early September 2012. This demonstration, widely known in Hong Kong as the 'September protests', gathered teachers, parents, students, and concerned members of the public outside the Hong Kong government headquarters for eight days. This article does not focus on the events surrounding the September protests. Rather, it presents the historical development of national education in Hong Kong, the various challenges the MNE curriculum faced, and the conflicts and negotiations between the government and the public. It first explores the background of national education reform in Hong Kong since 2000. It then examines how the government instructed local schools to teach national identity in the subjects of Chinese History and the newly proposed MNE. The next section discusses the declining importance of Chinese History education since 2000. The article concludes by reviewing the voices supporting and opposing MNE, the most recent development in Hong Kong's education today.

### **Background of national education reform**

The National Education reform began in 2000 when the Hong Kong government reformed the secondary school curriculum by placing the subject of Chinese History under Person, Social and Humanities Education [PSHE], one of the eight Key Learning Areas [KLAs] in the new syllabus (The Curriculum Development Council [CDC], 2001, p.1-2). A number of larger reforms followed. In 2001, the Education and Manpower Bureau [EMB] identified Moral and Civic Education [MCE] as one of the four key tasks in Hong Kong's curriculum reform. MCE aimed to promote 'positive values and attitudes' towards China among primary and secondary school students (Primary 1 to Secondary 6) (CDC, 2011, p.ix). In 2008, the Education Bureau [EDB] expanded the content of national education and issued the *Revised Moral and*

*Civic Education Curriculum Framework*. Under the direction of Donald Tsang, then Chief Executive of the HKSAR, the government proposed to introduce MNE as a formal subject in the primary curriculum in 2012/13 and in the secondary curriculum in 2013/14. The government defined MNE as a practical means to develop students' 'moral and national qualities' under the 'rapid development' in Hong Kong and China (CDC, 2012, pp.2-3).

However, the government was unaware that many schools were not ready to teach national education as a formal subject. According to the MNE curriculum consultation draft issued in May 2011 by the Curriculum Development Council [CDC], an advisory body on the development of the local school curriculum as well as the primary developer of national education,<sup>1</sup> both primary and secondary schools were 'very 'supportive' of MNE (CDC, 2003). The CDC (2011, p.ix) stated that local schools were well-prepared to teach MNE as an individual subject, because elements of the subject were already being taught, and schools had been organizing field trips to China for over a decade. In terms of public opinion, the consultation draft did not elaborate on possible reactions from the public, but instead merely highlighted that the society 'generally agreed' on governmental initiative to implement national education. The reality was not as rosy, and the public was not as supportive of MNE as the government had assumed. Among the 516 primary schools in Hong Kong, only 55 (10.7 percent) of them made national education its major focus for curriculum development (*Apple Daily*, 2012a). These low numbers reflected that the CDC was unclear about the extent to which schools were prepared for the national education reform. The anti-national education protests in July and September showed that the government had failed to grasp the opinion of the general public.

The national education elements that were gradually included in the school curriculum between 1997 and 2001 did not trigger any substantial discontent in society. The 2012 MNE curriculum, however, differed greatly from teaching materials that had been issued previously. According to the MNE consultation draft, MNE aimed to 'raise students' recognition and sense of belonging towards their... nation', and to 'develop an affection for the country' (CDC, 2011, pp.3-4). MNE was divided into four domains. One of them, which received the most public attention, was the national domain. This domain was further divided into four dimensions, including 'natural resources, contemporary development, humanities and history'. In four key stages, namely primary 1 to 3, primary 4 to 6, secondary 1 to 3, and secondary 4 to 6, students were expected to understand 'the national situation and explore the opportunities and challenges of the country's development, such as achievements, difficulties, constraints and directions for improvement' (CDC, 2012, pp.18, 21). The CDC (2011, p.ix) stated that MNE would infuse students with positive attitudes about China and foster their national identity by taking examples from 'current issues and life events'. Teachers and students, however, did not accept teaching and learning about only the positive side of China. Gordon Mathews', Eric Ma's and Lui Tai-lok's (2007, p.93) study shows that students were aware of China's problems, and teachers believed that students should be taught to 'think critically about their country'. The MNE teaching materials focused on China's successes and avoided its problems. These weaknesses became the major concerns of teachers, parents, and students about the curriculum, and sparked a string of criticisms against MNE.

### **Teaching national identity**

In virtually every country in the world, the government uses history as a means to foster national identity. Back in Hong Kong in the 1950s, the colonial government feared that Chinese History would aid the spread of communism in Hong Kong. It thus divided the history subject into History and Chinese History, hoping to marginalize the latter. History that was taught in English entailed primarily European history and aimed to cultivate students' critical thinking. On the contrary, Chinese History that was taught in Chinese emphasized the memorization of dates and events with minimal analysis. Under the government's instruction, teachers were encouraged to take up a didactic and depoliticized perspective to teach the subject (Vickers, 2003, pp.52-53). Meanwhile, Hong Kong History, which was an anomaly in both the History and Chinese History curricula, was not taught in the colonial period (Mathews, Ma, & Lui, p.85).

The lack of a strong foundation in Chinese History and Hong Kong History posed a big challenge to the HKSAR government in implementing both subjects after the Handover. In 1997, the CDC (1997, pp.4-5)

issued the new curriculum for Chinese History at junior secondary levels 1 to 3, introducing Hong Kong History for the first time as an aid to learning Chinese History. The CDC noted that understanding Hong Kong History not only enhances Hong Kong students' interest in Chinese History, but it also cultivates positive feelings for one's country and national identity. The CDC provided teachers with a Hong Kong historical timeline and a list of Hong Kong historical events that resonated with Chinese History. It instructed teachers to elaborate on Chinese historical events related to Hong Kong, and encouraged them to organize Hong Kong historical tours for students. The CDC specified that students' understanding of local historical events would definitely aid the study of Chinese History. This new Chinese History curriculum is still in use today in local secondary schools.

As in Hong Kong History, the government also instructed secondary school teachers to teach national identity in Chinese History. For example, the EMB provided a list of items to be taught about national identity, such as communism. However, teachers in general did not reach a consensus on how to interpret these materials. While some wished the topic of national identity would appear in examinations, some sought to teach the topic by including the discussion of tragic events in contemporary Chinese History, such as the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square Massacre, in class. Many strove to avoid controversy and only touched upon the cultural characteristics of China. China's recent development and political issues, as a result, were not mentioned (Mathews, Ma & Lui, 2007, p.88). Such disagreement among teachers can be traced back to the peculiarity of Hong Kong people's sense of national identity. Debates among anthropologists, sociologists and historians about the nature of Hong Kong identity have persisted for around three decades, long before the government revised the Chinese History curriculum and attempted to introduce MNE as an independent subject. Gordon Mathews, Eric Ma and Lui Tai-lok (2007, p.xiii) have argued that Hong Kong people underwent 'conscious struggles over belonging to a nation' and they found it difficult to fully embrace their relationship with China. While most see China as their 'cultural home' and have difficulty identifying with Great Britain, they fear and resent China's political dictatorship. The Handover in 1997 provided an opportunity for Hong Kong people to reassess their national identity. However, the majority remained detached from the Chinese state, even if they accept that they 'emotionally belong to the Chinese nation'.

Public opinion surveys conducted between 1985 and 2005 reaffirmed this ambivalent sense of national identity, even though the surveys reflected their growing sense of Chinese identity over time (Mathews, Ma & Lui, 2007, p.11). A 1985 survey showed that nearly 60 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hongkongese, with only 36 percent as Chinese (Lau & Kuan, 1988, p.178). Ten years later, another survey showed that over 50 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hongkongese, over 30 percent as Chinese, and over 15 percent as both (Lau, 2000, p.259). According to the two more recent surveys conducted after the Handover, in 2001, 45 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Hongkongese, 26 percent as Hong Kong Chinese and 22 percent as Chinese (Hong Kong Transition Project, 2002, p.18). The one conducted in 2005 indicates that 39 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hongkongese, 29 percent as Chinese and 27 as Hong Kong Chinese (Hong Kong Transition Project, 2005, p.17). Despite Hong Kong people's increasing acceptance of their Chinese identity, the government did not utilize this opportunity to cultivate Hong Kong people's understanding of Chinese History through the existing curriculum.

### **Chinese history education in Hong Kong**

The extensive education reforms in 2000 weakened the independent status of Chinese History, which has been established since the 1960s. For junior secondary levels, Chinese History had become an independent subject since the 1960s. It soon became an independent subject in the public examinations in 1967. In the 1970s, Chinese History was already developed as a common core subject for junior secondary school students (Kan, 2007, pp.53, 139, 140). The reforms required every subject to be re-grouped into eight KLAs. The KLAs included Chinese Language Education, English Language Education, Mathematic Education, Science Education, Technology Education, PSHE, Arts Education, and Physical Education (Education Commission, 2000, p.15). Chinese History was placed under the KLA of PSHE, along with Civic Education, Economic & Public Affairs, Geography, History, Ethical/Religious Education/Buddhist Studies, and Social Studies (CDC, 2001, p.1-2).

On the surface, Chinese History would remain as an independent and important subject in schools. The CDC's (2001, p.23) report, *Learning to Learn: The Way Forward in Curriculum Development* (June 2001), stressed that the status of Chinese History as an independent subject would remain unchanged at junior and senior secondary levels. Chinese History would become the primary focus of study even if it was combined with World History to form a single subject. In 2007, a scholar of history education (Kan, 2007, p.135) in Hong Kong commented that the introduction of KLA PSHE 'can in no way threaten the independent status of Chinese History in school curriculum'. All these seemed to suggest that Chinese History would enhance its independent and important status in school curricula.

However, the modes of teaching PSHE proposed by the CDC resulted in the decline of Chinese History's independent status at junior secondary levels. According to the consultation document *Learning to Learn, Key Learning Area: Personal, Social & Humanities Education* (November 2000), the CDC proposed three modes of planning KLA PSHE at junior secondary levels. The first was to keep the existing individual subjects but, at the same time, develop means to encourage inter-subject coordination. The CDC gave examples of the ways in which teachers of Chinese History, Economic & Public Affairs, History and Geography coordinated with each other and develop the project of 'Changes in the Rural Community of Hong Kong' for Secondary 1 students. The second mode was to introduce 'integrated modes of different nature'. For instance, schools could offer the subject of Integrated Humanities that contained a 'China studies module', or they could offer a new History curriculum that emphasized the study of Chinese history and included 'elements' of world history. The third mode was to combine 'different modes in the same year or in alternate years'. For example, schools could provide an independent subject of Chinese History and Integrated Humanities in the same year. Alternatively, schools could offer independent KLA PSHE subjects from secondary 1 to 2, and then Integrated Humanities in Secondary 3. The CDC encouraged schools to develop their own modes to meet their needs (CDC, 2000, pp.21-23). Along with the proposal of various modes of planning KLA PSHE, in *Learning for Life, Learning Through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* (September 2000), the CDC advised eliminating 'repetitive and unnecessary elements in the curriculum' at primary school levels and junior secondary levels (Education Commission, 2000, p.15). Faced with these modes of planning PSHE subjects, as well as having to eradicate so-called redundant elements in the curriculum, would schools be able to retain the independent subjects while developing new subjects with elements of the former? Would schools still offer the independent subject of Chinese History while developing new subjects like History and Culture, and Integrated Humanities that contain Chinese History 'elements'?

By the 2010s, a number of schools gave up offering Chinese History as an independent subject. According to the Chief Curriculum Development Officer of PSHE in the EDB (Lee, 2008), in January 2008, 85 percent of the schools offered an independent subject of Chinese History at the junior secondary levels. Yet, only 70 percent of the schools provided Chinese History education as independent subjects from secondary 1 to 3. 6 percent of the schools offered the subject of History and Culture that contained Chinese History 'elements'. About 7 percent of the schools integrated Chinese History 'elements' in the subject of Integrated Humanities.

In May 2008, Education Convergence (2008, p.1), a group that monitors education policy in Hong Kong, delivered an investigative report on Chinese history education at junior secondary levels. Based on the *Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System 2007/2009– Handbook for Unrestricted School Choices* published by the EDB, Education Convergence concluded that only 74 percent of the schools would offer Chinese History as an independent subject in secondary 1 in the academic year of 2009/2010.

The dramatic fall in enrolment numbers for Chinese History in public examinations also showed that the status of Chinese History has declined in schools since the education reforms. Convener of Joint Action Concern Group for the Popularization of National History Education [Author's translation], Wong Ka-leung, argued that due to the lack of Chinese history education at junior levels, the students would not choose Chinese History as their electives for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary School Education [HKDSE] (Wong, 2010). Indeed, only 8596 students took Chinese History in the first HKDSE examination in 2012 (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority [HKEAA], 2012, p.33). This number made a stark

contrast with the number of candidates in HKCEE Chinese History from 2000 to 2010. In 2000 when the education reforms were initiated, more than 37,000 students attended the Chinese History examination. The number has declined every year since then. In 2008, less than 27,000 took the Chinese History examination. In 2009 and 2010, there were slightly more than 28,000 students who took the examination (HKEAA, 2011, p.59).

### **Voices supporting and opposing the MNE curriculum**

There had been little opposition from Hong Kong society since the HKSAR government introduced elements of national education into the school curriculum in 1997. When the government decided to turn national education into an independent and mandatory subject, the general public departed from its previous ambivalent attitude. A survey found that over 74 percent of students and over 77 percent of parents thought the government should withdraw the MNE curriculum (Lo, 2012, p.CITY3).<sup>2</sup> Opponents of MNE protested against the curriculum. On 29 May 2011, one month after the MNE Curriculum consultation draft was issued, a group of secondary school students established Scholarism, an activist group that was originally named the Alliance Against Moral and National Education, to demand that the government withdraw the proposal. On 29 July, over 90,000 Hong Kong people participated in a protest organized by Scholarism against MNE. From 1 September to 8 September, about 100,000 anti-MNE protesters answered to The Civil Alliance Against National Education, and gathered outside the Hong Kong government headquarters. Participants, consisting mostly of teachers, parents, and students, shouted and held up slogans such as 'Withdraw', 'Freedom of Thought', and 'No Brainwashing' (Apple Daily, 2012b).

The public was split on the issue of MNE. Supporters of MNE wrote to newspapers arguing that the curriculum should be implemented. One supporter (Wei, 2012, p.EDT12) thought Hong Kong youngsters would not be 'easily influenced' or brainwashed by MNE because they were 'capable of thinking for themselves about politics, economics, culture, education and social behaviour'. In support of MNE, another respondent (Tung, 2012, p.EDT16) asserted that 'Hong Kong people have been subjected to brainwashing by the West about its political system, values and Christianity for the past 100 years'. In contrast, opponents of MNE argued that the curriculum hampered students' critical thinking, and imposed a one-sided view of contemporary Chinese history on them.

Based on the MNE curriculum guide prepared by the CDC (2012, pp.21, 83, 88) in April 2012, students are expected to develop independent thinking and 'the ability to distinguish right from wrong' by studying the subject. From the first to second stages, MNE aims at cultivating students' positive values, for example, benevolence and respect, so that students would be able to build up the confidence needed to overcome challenges. In stages three and four, the students are expected to develop 'analytical thinking'. They are supposed to learn how 'to analyze issues and make decisions with a rational and responsible attitude'. The role of teachers was also to 'encourage students to perform objective analysis and make rational judgements'. While these values appeared neutral and acceptable to the general public, the MNE curriculum also aimed to reinforce Hong Kong people's identification with China (CDC, 2011, p.36). Opponents of the curriculum described such an initiative as a deterrent against developing students' ability to think analytically and independently. Wong Kwok-kong, the Evangelical Lutheran Church's head of education, criticized the MNE as 'instilling of values in an irrational manner', and added that his church 'need[ed] to look at issues from universally accepted perspectives, such as human rights, freedom and equality' (Chong, 2012, p.EDT1). Likewise, parents disagreed with the way MNE assessed students' feelings towards China, such as evaluating students' reaction in a national flag-raising ceremony (Chan & Cheng, 2012, p.CITY2). Scholarism (2011) criticized MNE for 'brainwashing' students and said the curriculum should be withdrawn, because it forbade students from expressing opinions other than those in textbooks. The public also worried that students would be graded based on their attitudes towards China. Chik Bun-Sing (2012, p.108), an educator, asserted that students would likely lie in class under such assessment method and this would result in subverting the very purpose of education.

Opponents of MNE were dissatisfied with the way MNE portrayed Chinese history. The curriculum guidelines instructed teachers to select historic events and 'outstanding' historic figures (the phrase 'outstanding' appeared in the Chinese version of the curriculum guide, but not the English one) that fit

within the four frameworks of 'continuation and inheritance', 'exploration and advancement', 'diversity and integration', and 'ideas and implementation'. For example, the CDC stated that students could study how people in different dynasties pioneered and explored the Silk Road in order to understand 'continuation and inheritance'; understanding Zheng He's exploration in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and his contributions to foreign relations and trade could illustrate the idea of 'exploration and advancement'.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, students were expected to learn the spirit of 'seeking common ground while allowing differences' through studying historic events such as 'the coexistence of various schools and theories during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period'(770 BCE - 221 BCE). Lastly, students were supposed to 'understand how history has developed from idea to implementation' and to achieve the 'unification of one's knowledge and behaviour'. Gradually, the students would learn to collect information to 'identify historic events' and 'understand the reasons why historic figures are respected' (CDC, 2012, pp.26-62).

One problem was the examples which were provided to give concrete illustration of the way in which the abstract frameworks would be implemented. Much emphasis was placed on China's achievements, and the examples were completely silent on events that potentially shed negative light on the country. For example, the Great Famine of 1958-1962 and the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989 left significant traces on the country's modern history, but they were national tragedies and were difficult to fit with the examples in these four frameworks. With only a selection of events that match the aims of the four frameworks, students may only gain a partial understanding of the country's past. MNE's focus on presenting China in a positive light therefore worried parents and students. Some were concerned that the curriculum would jeopardize freedom of speech ((Ngai, Leong, and Wong, 2012 [*Apple Daily*, 2 July]). One parent said that MNE could not properly represent national history, because it avoided the June 4th Massacre (Social Record Organization, 2012). Students were also discontented with having to sing communist 'red songs' if the MNE curriculum was implemented (Ngai, Leong, and Wong, 2012 [*Apple Daily*, 2 July]). Instead of exploring China through MNE, teachers, parents and students preferred to learn about the country through the subject of Chinese History.

To those opposing MNE, the content of Chinese History should include the positive and negative aspects of China. Importantly, they want to revive Chinese History as an independent subject (or even an compulsory subject) at junior secondary levels. An independent Chinese History subject guarantees enough teaching and learning hours for students. It also teaches students both the positive and negative aspects of China. People opposing MNE think that history and national education are different in terms of learning objectives and approaches. The former requires critical thinking and objectivity (at secondary levels) that national education largely ignores.

The replacement of Chinese History as an independent subject with MNE was a major concern of the anti-national education protesters. Chinese History was no longer a mandatory subject in junior secondary levels. Moreover, from 2000 to 2012, the number of students taking Chinese History examination dropped significantly (HKEAA, 2011, p.47; HKEAA, 2012, p.61). Without Chinese History as a compulsory subject, MNE would become the official source of understanding contemporary China. Teachers and parents thought that MNE was not capable of replacing Chinese History as an independent subject, because it could not provide students with the basics of Chinese History. Wong Ka-leung (2012, p.A14), convener of Joint Action Concern Group for the Popularization of National History Education, pointed out that without mandatory Chinese History classes, the MNE curriculum was defective because it placed too much emphasis on nationalistic education, and could not provide students with basic historical knowledge. Lee Wai-kai, a Chinese History teacher, wanted the restoration of Chinese History as a compulsory subject because the curriculum's coverage allowed students to explore China's cultural heritage in the past 3000 years (Yeung, 2012, p.EDT4). On 8 September 2012, the Hong Kong government announced that MNE would no longer be mandatory (Chong, Tam, Lo & Franchineau, 2012, p.CITY1). Joshua Wong from Scholarism, one of the protest organizers, announced at night that protests at government headquarters would come to an end, but the struggle for an indefinite withdrawal of the policy would continue (*Now TV News*, 2012). In October 2012, there were more protests about national education, but they were on a smaller scale, and debates surrounding MNE gradually declined (Chow, 2012 [*Sing Pao*, 18 October, p.A06]).

### Conclusion

The end of the September protests seemingly drew debates over national education in Hong Kong to a close. However, the contestations over teaching the topic of national identity have existed in society since the colonial era. Although teaching national identity was sometimes debated even during the colonial era, after Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty, teaching the topic of national identity has become an increasingly important issue that defines Hong Kong's relations with China as well as Hong Kong's future. This thus made it extremely difficult for the government to devise a new national education curriculum that would gain the favour of both the Chinese government and the Hong Kong people. As long as some Hong Kong educators and parents perceived the introduction of MNE as a government conspiracy, it is uncertain how the public would react if MNE were put into full practice. Situated on the edge of China, be it geographically, politically or ideologically, it is likely that Hong Kong's future policies towards national education would be determined by the various challenges facing China today: changing political leadership, economic stagnation, diplomatic instability, and the rapid growth of social media. However, Hong Kong people's response and participation, as reflected in the September protests, will surely be another critical determinant.

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### Notes

1. Members of the CDC include school heads, teachers, parents, employers, academics, professionals from different sectors, representatives from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and Vocational Training Council of Hong Kong, and representatives from the Education Bureau).
2. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association conducted this survey. It interviewed almost 2000 secondary school students and over 1400 primary school students' parents.
3. From 1405 to 1431, Zheng He, a court eunuch, was assigned by the emperors to lead seven voyages. The missions aimed to display the prowess of the Ming Dynasty to the states of South and Southeast Asia. More than 60 ships and 27,000 men were under the command of Zheng He. The fleets visited a number of places, for example, Champa, Siam, Malacca, Java, Calicut, and Ceylon. During the fourth and fifth voyages, Zheng's fleets even reached the east coast of Africa.

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## **The Challenges of History Education in Iceland**

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### **Abstract:**

*In this article the author discusses the teaching of history in Iceland, first and foremost in relation to the environment in which the subject finds itself, the legislation relating to it and the curriculum. Curriculum development over the past decades is examined, in addition to changes in teaching material and the general attitudes that have influenced both of these from the time of the struggle for national independence in the former half of the twentieth century. There is a discussion of the disputes that have arisen as a result of tampering with the curriculum and teaching material in history in recent years, both when new emphases were introduced in the eighties and when history teaching in upper secondary schools was substantially reduced with the new curriculum in 1999. Considerable attention is given to history teaching in upper secondary schools, despite there being a dearth of research at this level. There is quite a degree of evidence that history is popular amongst Icelandic students and the public at large. In this article, an attempt is made to analyse the state of history as a school subject in Iceland, not least in the light of the extensive freedom enjoyed by teachers in their jobs, bearing in mind that there are no standardized exams in the subject and no supervision of teaching methods. At present there is a review of the curricula at all school levels in Iceland and the future of history as a subject is therefore rather uncertain.*

### **Keywords**

History teaching, History curriculum, National history, Public debate on history teaching, Educational authorities, Teachers' autonomy, Upper secondary schools, Text books.

### **Introduction**

One of the things that makes history such a magical discipline is how tangible it is and how it manages to incorporate every human activity in some way or other. So it should come as no great surprise that no less a person than Charles Dickens would be the source of inspiration for the titles of the sections in this article dealing with the teaching of history in Iceland.

History teaching can be approached from at least two perspectives, the environment in which it finds itself and what in actual fact goes on within the history class. The author of this article has an interest in both, though particularly so in the latter. This interest stems from the fact that I have taught history at upper secondary school level for almost two decades; as well as working with student teachers at the University of Iceland for a number of years. As a supervisor I have monitored hundreds of lessons, mostly history classes, and in addition evaluated thousands of lesson plans compiled by those doing their practical teacher training. All of this experience has raised a host of questions that I long to have answers to. However the answers must be more than the informal, subjective opinions so far expressed in the debate on history teaching in Iceland.

No research is available concerning the teaching of history at upper secondary school level and much of what is known about history teaching at elementary school level comes from the Youth and History survey on historical consciousness among teenagers in the period 1994-1996.<sup>1</sup>

This is the reason why in this article I will mainly focus on curriculum development over the past decades and the general attitudes that have shaped this, or at least to the degree that it is possible to do such. These general attitudes are really only discernible when the teaching of history in schools becomes a topic for discussion outside the confines of the academic world and several examples will be referred to in this context. An analysis of the findings of the Youth and History survey will be provided and questions raised as to whether there has been development or stagnation in the teaching of history in the decades that have followed. Finally, there will be a discussion on the state of the subject in Iceland, since the discipline is very much at a crossroads at this point in time.

### **Bleak House: The Icelandic Social Science Curriculum Project**

Before proceeding any further it is necessary to put the teaching of history in Iceland into its historical context by mentioning a few facts on Iceland and the nation. To begin with the Arctic fox was the only mammal to be found here before man's arrival. This would change in the ninth century when a number of additional mammals were introduced by the first settlers coming from Scandinavia and the British Isles. These pioneers established their own system of government, but by the thirteenth century this would all change and Iceland came under the Norwegian crown. In time colonial control would pass to Denmark and it was not until 1944 that Iceland finally became an independent republic. During the struggle for independence the leaders of the nationalist movement tried to cast off the feeling of inferiority of a small colonized nation by harking back to a time in Icelandic history when the nation was free of foreign influence. The Medieval Age would be considered a golden age where the operative word was freedom. Central to the nation's achievements during this golden age was the writing of the Icelandic sagas. Today this literature is considered Iceland's greatest contribution to world culture. The fundamental national myth was that Icelanders are the descendants of ancient 'heroes', but over the centuries Iceland has had to endure much at the hands of foreigners.

Whatever the opinion one might have on this historical interpretation, it is easy to understand how it influenced the first history text books that were compiled for Icelandic school children at the beginning of the twentieth century. Little by little there was to be a silent agreement on what historical events were deemed important to Icelanders and even though strident nationalism was on the wane there was a general consensus that the function of history was to help mould good Icelanders who were proud of their country, nation and language. Iceland was no exception in adopting such an attitude, a similar mentality was to be found in other countries during the period of National Romanticism in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and indeed such an attitude still prevails in some countries today. It is also a known fact that many have the inclination to approach the discipline of history in an emotional fashion, and then there is the fact that history is not just the concern of experts, everybody appears keen to offer an opinion on the subject. It seems only natural therefore that when you start to tamper with history teaching you also start to meddle with people's feelings.

A point in case is what happened in Iceland in the winter of 1984-1985; the ensuing debate in the media and in parliament has been described as 'one of the most heated on the topic of public education in the twentieth century' (Jóhannesson, 2008, p.140, and Gunnarsson, 1990). Essentially what sparked this debate was that in the national curriculum for elementary schools in 1977, history, geography, sociology and regional studies were all combined into one general subject, i.e. social studies. Responsible for this decision was a committee appointed by the Ministry of Education's Schools Research Dept. The chairperson of this committee was Wolfgang Edelstein, later director of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Educational Research in Berlin (Edelstein grew up in Iceland). Social studies now radically moved away from the main knowledge goals set out in the various component subjects. There was a shift from attaining a general overview of history to training students to draw conclusions from the study of various historical topics and applying them to others. Classroom material was prepared for the first four years at elementary school level and a draft proposal drawn up for what would follow.

Six years later a journalist wrote an article entitled 'Rewriting Icelandic History' where he questioned whether these changes would serve to increase students' understanding, as was the intention, or whether they would result in them being 'frightfully ignorant' (Magnússon, 1983, p.54). The response was to be a series of articles and discussions conducted at a very emotional level and completely devoid of any attempt to set out in a sensible manner what and how people wanted Icelandic children to study history. Discussion raged about the reduction in the teaching of Icelandic history and the lack of a general overall view of history, as well as what many saw as strange or unusual teaching methods (cf. the statement 'for example that rote learning had various advantages and there was nothing to show that it had had a detrimental influence on young people up until now' (Magnússon, 1993, p.55)).

In the discussion four types of viewpoints could be detected; now, almost thirty years later, one can safely say that those same characteristics are to be found when every so often education in Iceland is the source

of intense public debate. The four perspectives include unsubstantiated opinions, attempts to substantiate opinions, concerted indoctrination and the viewpoint of social studies (Karlsson, 1992). The first of these four was what characterised the extensive debate in parliament, much of which was based on a misunderstanding of the topic under discussion. However the final outcome of all this drawn-out discussion was far from positive, it concluded with the group having responsibility for the changes in social studies resigning and a parliamentary committee proposal that Icelandic history teaching be increased came to nothing.

A similar situation would be repeated with the discussion of the new curriculum in 1999, as will be discussed later. But before that point was reached Iceland was so fortunate to be a participant in a large international research project which in reality showed the historical awareness and attitudes of the 'victims of social studies'.

### **Young Oliver, Dorrit and David: Youth and History**

In 1995 a survey was carried out in about 30 European countries as to the historical consciousness among teenagers and the findings were published two years later (*Youth and History. A Comparative European Survey on Historical Consciousness and Political Attitudes among Adolescents*). A short time afterwards the survey was published with findings for the Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland (*Ungdom og historie i Norden* [Norwegian]); in the same year a special book was published by the Icelandic experts responsible for carrying out the survey in Iceland (*Æska og Saga. Söguvitund Íslenskra Unglinga í Evrópskum Samanburði* [*Youth and History, The Historical Consciousness of Icelandic Youth in a European context*]). This is an effective presentation of the facts and information gleaned from 14-15 year-old Icelanders and their teachers. In this article we will be especially focusing on this book. The concept 'historical consciousness' is not an easy one to define and not everyone would agree on the same definition.

Angvik (1997, p.36) describes how the writing of some German authors about historical consciousness (for example Jörn Rüsen and Bodo von Borries) was met with interest and general agreement, especially in Scandinavia. History was described as a complex network of (a) interpretations of the past, (b) perceptions of the present and (c) expectations of the future. History was thus seen as a mental construct which made sense of the past in a narrative structure while at the same time providing orientation for the lives of those passing from the past to the future.

The chapter on Iceland in *Youth and History* is entitled 'Icelandic Youth: Optimistic, Democratic and Patriotic', a title that seems to quite accurately reflect the findings in Iceland. Icelandic teenagers were generally very positive towards history and they totally rejected the notion that history was something that had long ceased to have a relevance for them. They were far more positive in attitude than their counterparts in the other Nordic countries, even though teaching in those countries was more diverse than in Iceland (Guðmundsson & Karlsson, 1999, p.90). The survey revealed that history teaching at elementary school level was very uniform and mainly consisted of the teacher instructing and then supporting this with explanations from the text book (Guðmundsson & Karlsson, 1999, p.69).

One of the most interesting features emerging from the survey is the fact that students and teachers experienced the goals of the lesson in markedly different ways. When the participants were asked for their response regarding eight stated goals, the following three topped the list among teachers:

- i. That history should be fascinating and fun;
- ii. That students learn the basic values of democracy and understand the present; and
- iii. That students understand where development is heading.

Students on the other hand interpreted the lesson's central goal to be that they knew facts, knew of traditions and the role of the nation and society, and knew about the preservation of historical relics and old buildings. The teachers' top-rated goal of making students aware that history is fascinating and fun was actually put in fifth place out of eight by students (Guðmundsson & Karlsson, 1999, p.66). Judging from

these findings, the planned improvements in teaching envisaged in the seventies did not result in the changes that people either hoped for or feared. The survey's findings are important for teachers everywhere since the same discrepancies revealed themselves everywhere in Europe (in the book *The State of History Education in Europe*, published by the Körber Foundation in the wake of the survey, the question was asked 'Do teachers and students attend the same lessons?', p.103). Is it that teachers are not in the habit of discussing a lesson's goal with their students, or in Iceland's case is it perhaps the natural consequence of the stymied teaching methods common at elementary school level?

But one should bear in mind that even though 70% of Icelandic history teachers had a university education at the time of the survey, only a quarter of them had specialized in history, which is far less than in other European countries (Guðmundsson & Karlsson, 1999, p.49) and still less than in upper secondary schools in Iceland, where almost all history teachers have completed a BA degree in the subject before embarking on the programme of studies for the teaching diploma. Those of us involved in the education of teachers would be of the belief that it has a vital impact on how effective teachers will be. We also need to determine the source of the positive attitude of students towards history and whether in some way it stems from the fact that in general a rather strong interest in history prevails among Icelanders, an idea that will be touched on later.

But enough said regarding the findings of the *Youth and History* survey. We should not forget that much has changed in Icelandic society since 1995 which no doubt would influence the response given by teenagers if the survey were repeated today. We can for example mention the large increase in the number of immigrants and their offspring now attending elementary school, the increasing debate concerning Iceland's possible membership of the European Union, and the financial collapse of the economy in the autumn of 2008. Personally, I am only aware of one study on the historical consciousness of Icelandic students in recent times and it had a much smaller cohort than the survey of 1997. The research was actually a master's thesis submitted to Minho University in Portugal examining the ability of Icelandic, Portuguese and Italian students in the final year of elementary school to interpret historical sources (Carvalho, 2010). A knowledge of history was not meant to be of any importance in the study. However the topics presented included reference to the Romans, which clearly would be a far more familiar one to students from southern European countries than to the participating students from the Icelandic town of Kópavogur. Nevertheless, it emerged that the Icelandic students were equally as good when it came to critically analysing sources and drawing conclusions from them. They had various history abilities to hand, could apply these to new and unknown topics and so use them to gather new information. So here were skills that would have surprised many in the great 'winter of discontent' debate of 1984-85.

### **Great Expectations: new syllabus 1999**

The event that has had the greatest impact on history teaching at upper secondary school level in Iceland in the past decades is the new curriculum for elementary and upper secondary schools which took effect in 1999. Concerning upper secondary schools, there had been little development since 1986 and so teachers had high hopes for positive changes with the introduction of the new curriculum. History teachers were among those having great expectations for their subject. Instead however they were to be greatly disappointed.

History as a compulsory subject was considerably reduced and history teachers were told that they should now join in the scramble for students by offering interesting electives in their discipline. One positive outcome of the new curriculum was that it sparked a lively debate on the teaching of history and its relevance, both within and outside the academic world. But at least to begin with it all got off to a good start.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of 1997 the Ministry of Education set up preparatory committees for the nine fields of study<sup>3</sup> and the Association of History Teachers in Iceland was asked to nominate a representative for the committee responsible for social studies. At that time the association had been dormant for some period. However with the ministry's request its members would answer the call to arms. The author of this article became the association's new president and held the position for several years. Members of the

committee included representatives of the various social studies subjects and the committee's chairperson was a senior lecturer in history at the National University of Iceland. She was proposed by the minister, a person well-known for his keen interest in history. History teachers felt their interests were well represented when work on the new curriculum began and took an active part in the process. In March the Ministry of Education held a seminar on the state of social studies subjects and those wishing to make a contribution to the shaping of the new curriculum were encouraged to attend. History teachers were among the speakers at the forum and there was a lively exchange of ideas. Several informal meetings then followed between grassroots history teachers and the representative on the committee so that he could inform them as to the ministry's intentions for the new curriculum. The first item of thirteen read as follows<sup>4</sup>:

**Emphasis on Icelandic history and national culture**

Matters of national education such as the language, national culture and the history of the land and nation should be given special status in the curriculum. The prerequisite for a flourishing national culture in the face of ever-increasing foreign influence is a vibrant connection between the nation and its language, culture and history. The Ministry of Education proposes the creation of a clearly-defined policy in this area and that these matters be given a broader scope in the curricula, both at elementary and upper secondary school levels. (Stefnumótun [Policies], 1999)

Even though the preparatory committee had no say in the matter of certain subjects in the curriculum, history teachers interpreted the minister's statement to mean there would be more teaching in their subject and so little by little proposals were made as to how that should be.

There has been a tradition in Iceland that in the upper secondary school system concluding with matriculation, there should be limited specialization; rather it should be a broad-based, general education offering students access to almost any type of study at third level. From a history teacher's point of view, history had a secure place in such an educational system. The reasoning behind this was that history was a 'general subject' that one associated with a broad-based education, consequently it should have an important place in elementary school education and be included in all branches at upper secondary school level. It was now proposed that 10 to 12 of the 140 course units needed to successfully complete senior secondary school should come from compulsory courses in history. Depending on the school and the branch of study, this varyingly resulted in an increase or decrease in history teaching.<sup>5</sup> There were no recommendations as to how these course units should be distributed between modules that were general in content and those that were specialized. However it was proposed that Icelandic history and world history should be interwoven rather than being separate as had been the practice. While there was not total agreement, most were of the opinion that it was natural and in the best interests of Icelandic history that it be taught in the context of world history, or at least European history, which in reality is the case when teaching world history in Iceland and indeed in neighbouring countries.

It soon became apparent that the new curriculum meant increased specialization at upper secondary school level (16-20 years old). There would be a reduction in the core subjects shared and instead there would be more specialization within the various branches. Such changes would be detrimental to the teaching of history. Now, students specializing in modern languages and the natural sciences would take only six course units in history, i.e. two general modules in Icelandic history and world history (the first one dedicated to the period before 1789 and the second one to the period since 1789 to the present). Students specializing in social sciences were however to take a module in cultural history and so have an additional three course units. On the other hand, sociology and other social studies subjects were placed within the core of all branches and a new subject had been added, Life Skills, which emphasized such themes as the rights and obligations of a student, family etc. Many history teachers felt that specialization had been taken too far and a public debate on the matter ensued. In a newspaper interview the Minister of Education was asked for his response to the criticism that some students could now matriculate after four years of schooling with only six course units in history.

The minister's reply was that it was not the time spent that was important rather how it was used. He drew

attention to the change of emphasis in history teaching, away from the theme of the struggle for independence and a Marxist interpretation (the minister had long been concerned as to the presence of the latter in the teaching material for children and teenagers). He maintained that students at elementary level received a good overall view of Icelandic history from the settlement to the present and that history should 'not be a hindrance for those wishing to concentrate on something else' (*Viðamikil og nákvæm námskrá* [An extensive and accurate curriculum guide], 1999, p.35). While the minister did make some relevant points, his response upset many because here was a complete rejection of the traditionally-held opinion that the teaching of history had a necessary place within general education; instead it was now viewed as a specialized subject for those intending on further study. There was a strong response including a newspaper article written by me which reiterated the old familiar arguments of history's value as a general source of reference, its importance and how students' interest increased with age (Gestsdóttir, 1999). One should however keep in mind that history was an individual subject in the fifth to ninth grades at elementary school level, through it was not compulsory in tenth grade. Nevertheless, in the tenth grade 15 year-old students could choose history in most elementary schools and a new subject had been added within the field of social studies, i.e. sociology.

The Association of History Teachers issued two statements objecting to the cutback in history teaching, emphasizing that the radical new changes at upper secondary school level would require new teaching material that would have to be financed by the ministry and stressing that the schools themselves should decide what modules should be taught in the various branches after the compulsory modules had been completed (*Ályktun fundar Félags sögukennara*, 23 Jan., 1999; *Ályktun fundar Félags sögukennara*, 11 June, 1999). The latter will be discussed in the final section of this article. The text books for the two compulsory modules were published a year later and were the source of considerable debate, not least concerning the difficult task their authors had been set, i.e. to write an overview of Icelandic and world history, on the one hand from the 'beginning' to the eighteenth century and on the other hand from the eighteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century.

It was hardly to be expected that these books would meet with universal approval, considering that their content was old-fashioned and little use was made of new perspectives and research in history. The authors had been given very little time to complete their work and there was no possibility to pre-test and so come with suggestions before going to print. In addition, there was no teacher handbook and certain other features caused dissatisfaction among those who felt the Ministry of Education ought to have done better, especially when one bears in mind that text books in a small society with its own language tend to be in circulation for a considerable time. Many had doubts that the description for social studies modules in the national curriculum guide justified the writing of a combined general history, at least if one considers the following:

In the module history is traced chronologically from ancient times up to c. 1800. The intention is not for an exact chronological order, rather important themes are selected. *It is required to select a goal from at least three material categories with particular attention being given to range and diversity* (*Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla* [The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools, Social Studies Subjects], 1999, p.84).

There was satisfaction with the fact that to accompany the book there was a website having maps and pictures. Four years later a book on cultural history was published, which is the third module students majoring in social studies need to take. It covers a number of the twelve material topics that the curriculum suggests should be selected. And so concluded the state's initiative regarding the publication of books. In 2003 and 2006 other text books intended for the two general modules saw the light of day and so for the first time teachers had a choice of material. In addition, a detailed text book on the history of the twentieth century, a period widely taught as an elective subject, was published.

The debate in the media continued to the year 2000. Some felt it was an incident likely to win sympathy for the teaching of history when Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson in his New Year address made reference to the fact that young people visiting the cabinet office could not identify the political leaders from former

times. 'It is my belief that the younger generation's knowledge of previous ages in the nation's history is lacking and the teaching of such is in disarray', remarked the prime minister (Oddsson, 1999, p.47). When history teachers were asked for their response to this some replied that if the young people's ignorance was deemed a problem then it made no sense to reduce the number of hours devoted to history teaching (*Söguvitund ungmenna ábótavant?* [Lack of historical consciousness among young people?], p.36-37).

Verbal spats such as this are commonplace elsewhere, e.g. the ongoing debate in the UK after the present Minister of Education (Michael Gove) took up his post. However the Icelandic minister, Björn Bjarnason, totally refuted the claim that history teaching had been reduced, as could be seen if one compared how things had been under the previous curriculum. But the curriculum only tells half the story, the question is how are its guidelines implemented? In actual fact in most upper secondary schools students had been obliged to study more history than was stipulated in the curriculum. According to the figures, history had been reduced by anywhere between 25% to 50% under the new curriculum. How this reduction would actually be implemented remained to be seen (Porkelsson, 2000, p.49).

Icelandic history teachers felt they had been hard done by when the new curriculum took effect in 1999. They felt their arguments had not been given proper consideration despite all the consultations, and they strongly criticised the process for the compilation of teaching material at upper secondary school level, which had not in any way been as radical and forward-looking as had been hoped for. The fact of the matter was that nobody really knew for sure what influence the changes would have on young Icelanders in time to come.

### **Hard Times? The current situation**

As has been mentioned in the beginning, there is only one way to discuss the current situation in the teaching of history in Icelandic schools and that is to describe how one senses it is and to make guesses when it comes to related matters. The problem is that there is a severe lack of research. One can of course see how much history is taught at upper secondary school level, what teaching material is available to teachers and possibly what is the attitude of the public to the subject. In addition, one can surmise as to trends and developments.

As history teachers pointed out when the new curriculum took effect in 1999, it is easy to simply advocate that there be a sufficient offering of electives in history to compensate for the loss of compulsory hours in the subject. The question is whether certain schools have the means to be able to comply with such a recommendation. This has indeed been the case. In the difficult financial environment that Icelandic senior secondary schools find themselves at the present time, it is hardly viable to offer an academic subject module unless at least 25 students choose it. In smaller schools, the type most often found in the countryside, this is almost impossible. The largest upper secondary schools are in the Greater Reykjavik Area. And while the number of compulsory modules in history is only two, or three in the case of those specializing in social studies, in one of the largest schools, one can actually find eight history modules on the school's curriculum each year. In addition to the compulsory modules there are modules on the history of the twentieth century, film, religion, art and one even aimed at students with limited academic interest. These modules have proved to be popular among students.

A similar situation is to be found in most other large schools. When the situation in smaller schools out in the country was looked at, it was found that in some places only the compulsory subjects were taught, in other institutions one or two extra modules were on offer. So, in effect, one can state that where you have a large body of students and well educated history teachers, there is no problem to offer extensive history teaching and a lot of students finish their upper secondary schooling with more classes in history than is stipulated in the curriculum. But in schools where the low number of students restricts that possibility, students study much less history than was previously the case.

When it comes to teaching material for the two compulsory modules, one covering the period before 1800, the other the period after, essentially nothing has been added to the two publications already mentioned, i.e. from 2000/2001 and 2003/2006. Nevertheless more authors have displayed an interest in becoming

involved and in offering alternative viewpoints on the most common themes dealt with in history text books in Iceland. But as yet there have been no developments on this front. Publishers of school text books in Iceland maintain they are in a difficult situation businesswise at the present time and a statement on their behalf on the front page of Iceland's largest daily newspaper in 2011 claimed that the school text book market had collapsed. They first and foremost lay the blame for this on the exchange book market, a market that allows students to sell their old books and purchase used ones at a much lower price than these text books cost new. A spokesperson for the publishers said that it was impossible for them to consider publishing new books; the only solution was to wait until electronic publication became widespread, something that is still some years away (*Grundvöllur útgáfu hrinninn* [The basis of publication has collapsed], *Fréttablaðið*, 12 February, 2011, p.1).

Of course it is commercially challenging to be a publisher in a country having a language spoken by just over 300,000 people. However some would argue that publishers should be well satisfied with a situation guaranteeing the sale of several thousand copies of a text book before the exchange book market would begin to diminish sales. Perhaps there is a lack of ambition and a will to think outside the box. Electronic publication is certainly a very good option and particularly when it comes to history, since every day new material becomes available, both relating to contemporary events and the publishing of new research findings and information. Authors and publishers should embrace the Internet in a more structured way than is now the case and so kill two birds with one stone, i.e. keep publishing costs to a minimum and at the same time offer up-to-date material that can be easily changed and added to. Text books in history have been criticized for being out-dated, not least when it comes to gender issues. While the subject of gender has very much been to the fore in society, it has not been included in history text books. In addition, the multi-cultural aspect of modern Icelandic society is also absent from text books. They are still written as though all Icelanders are the descendants of Norwegian Vikings and Celtic slaves, even though 7% of the nation fall outside this categorization.

When the publication of teaching material is not in a good state it makes more demands on teachers in their job to both gather and prepare material. This is when a teacher's education comes into play. As has been mentioned earlier, history teachers at senior secondary school level finish their BA degree before undertaking study for their teaching diploma. They are historians and should therefore have the skills to find proper material and use it. It is a different case when it comes to those teaching history at elementary school level, as was revealed in the Youth and History survey. At the time of the survey only a quarter of those teaching the subject had specialized in it. One can assume however that in the intervening period this has changed for the better, at the same time that the education of those teaching in elementary schools has improved. In the past it was not uncommon to teach various subjects at the upper levels of elementary school or upper secondary school. This called for professional support in certain subjects, including history; in addition it fits well with the discussion these past years as to having the division between the two school levels less marked. Some of the educational thinking includes suggestions for transferring some of the core modules at upper secondary school level down to the upper grades in elementary school, for instance in foreign languages.

In those schools where history as a subject is in a healthy state and well represented among the subjects on offer, it appears that students are very positive towards the subject and the importance of a knowledge of history in everyday life. They do not regard the history modules as being first and foremost a preparation for studying history at university, rather they appreciate the subject's inherent general value ('so that we have something to talk about in the future', as one sixteen-year-old with little academic intentions put it). The number of students taking history at university over the past decade has increased; in fact the increase is more than the increase in students at third level over the same period.<sup>6</sup> Such a trend is in accordance with the public's attitude to history in Iceland. History is extremely popular, which is reflected in the strong interest in books of a historical nature and the many active historical societies. Every week one can choose from various meetings and forums on historical topics and interest in these extends well beyond the academic community. In this context one can for example mention the Icelandic Society of Historians which has held a series of public lectures over the winter months for years. In recent years these have taken place at lunchtime every other Tuesday in the lecture hall of the National Museum. More

often than not the auditorium is packed. The lectures have also caught the attention of the media with the result that there is often a follow-up public debate on issues. It was at one of the society's meetings in 2006 that Iceland's President, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, a former professor of political science, gave his famous lecture on the unique national characteristics that explained why Icelanders were so successful in the world of international commerce. The response to his lecture was mixed (Gestsdóttir, 2011, pp. 141-143) and indeed the speech has since become symbolic for the type of rhetoric characteristic of the boom period just prior to the economic crash of 2008 when the nation had lost touch with reality. The teaching of history has also been a matter of discussion within the Icelandic Society of Historians. During the season of 2006-2007, the winter series of lectures was dedicated to research in history, while the spring series focused on how history mediates. In conjunction with the latter a book was published (Benediktsson & Jóhannesson, 2008).

From what has been discussed it can be seen that even though Icelandic teachers, history teachers included, have reservations about the curriculum and are not at all happy with how their subjects have been affected, they still enjoy considerable freedom when it comes to what they do in the classroom. The curriculum lays down what should be done in the core modules, but both modules in history are so wide-ranging that it is impossible to cover all the material recommended. How teachers solve that problem is entirely up to themselves. Whether more than the core modules are offered is a matter for the individual schools. In Iceland there is no monitoring of teaching, only of a school's financial matters. The Ministry of Education sometimes checks to see if the number of students registered as having concluded a module is more than those actually active in it; this is done to prevent schools from receiving payment for students they did not provide a service to (irrespective of just how much service the school actually provided before the student dropped out). There are no standardized exams at upper secondary school level, rather schools are trusted to do the job that is expected of them. The system appears to work, at least a wide-ranging research study published in the spring of 2012 showed that there was no discernible difference between students from varying schools when it came to how they fared academically at university (Magnúsdóttir, 2012).

It should not surprise readers that there is absolutely no supervision of teaching. In many schools there is however regular evaluation of teaching by students and in some instances the school principal will discuss the outcome of these with teachers. But there is no established rule as to the use of these surveys, and the results have a rather limited value. Whether teachers choose to professionally cooperate among themselves, e.g. visiting each other's classes, is entirely up to themselves. There is no external monitoring. One might say that this reflects the high degree of trust extended to teachers and their professionalism, which is all well and good. It also means however that teachers receive no support and encouragement, either relating to what they are doing well or what they might need assistance with in order to do better. Last but not least, lack of supervision is the reason why so little is known about teaching methods in Icelandic classrooms.

Recent research, which was limited to students in the first semester at upper secondary school, indicated that cooperative teaching methods are considerably less used than at elementary school level. According to the findings of this research, students listened to lectures, watched movies, or did a series of questions and answers during 56% of class time. Students worked together for 10% of class time, the rest was spent working alone. The conclusion drawn by the researcher was that student initiative diminishes once you enter upper secondary school. The interesting fact is that this is not the impression teachers had regarding their own classes (*Dregur úr frumkvæði* [Students not as pro-active as before], 2011). In my opinion this clearly underscores the need for some form of support for teachers; and after all schools should not be some type of sheltered workplace. There is no data available as to history teaching specifically, so one does not know what has resulted from the meshing of Icelandic and world history, as stipulated in the 1999 curriculum. However a recent interview survey would seem to indicate that the traditional emphasis on the struggle for independence is on the decline or has almost disappeared, but what paradigm should replace it is as yet undefined (Magnússon, 2012).

Now there is a revision of the curricula for pre-school, elementary and senior secondary school levels. The

general introductory section is now completed and work is underway on the subjects section. The dominant policy seems to be to give preference to students meeting a certain competence standard via selected content. Concrete tasks are not specified. History will not be an individual subject at elementary school, rather it will be part of social studies and each school can itself decide what subject specialization within social studies they want to emphasize. All school activity should be based on six key elements, i.e. literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality, health and welfare and creativity. These key elements should be reflected in all subjects, whether it be the tasks undertaken or the teaching methods. In that part of the curriculum which is common to all levels, there is a chapter on the professionalism of teachers and a reference both to the trust extended to them and the responsibility they must shoulder. The chapter concludes as follows:

Teachers work in cooperation with school principals towards the development of a school curriculum that takes into consideration the circumstances and the special emphases at each school level. It is the teacher's responsibility to implement in a professional way, both in the classroom and in other school activities, the guidelines and policy set out in the national curriculum (*Aðalnámskrá leikskóla* [The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools], 2011, p. 12, *Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla* [The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools], 2011, p. 12, *Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla* [The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools], 2011, p. 12.)

### **Finally**

History has always been very much in the public domain in Iceland. The positive side to this is that people in general are interested in history, they buy books on historical themes and are curious about archaeological reports and other historically-related matters. The down side however is that when we turn to history as a school subject most people wish to have it 'the way it has always been', that teaching should revolve around 'the text book' and that the topics should be 'the same as always'. In Iceland there is no formal canon laying down what those topics should be, as is the case in some neighbouring countries, e.g. Denmark and the Netherlands, but there most definitely exists an informal canon created over the years and that includes such topics as the settlement (end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century), the age of the Sturlungs (13<sup>th</sup> century), the Reformation (1550), the struggle for independence (until 1944), etc. A conservative attitude clearly revealed itself in the 'winter of discontent' of 1984-1985, and conservative teaching methods are discernible from the 1995 *Youth and History* survey. As already mentioned, the survey showed that how teachers imagined their teaching to be was in fact quite different to the reality, which perhaps indicates a desire on their part to do better or differently – an ambition that needs to be supported. In the new national curriculum for upper secondary schools there is only a brief reference to study and teaching methods which includes the following:

Diversity in working habits and teaching methods is one of the requirements for students attaining a range of competences. It is important to bear in mind that different standards of competence can be achieved in a variety of ways and that not all students respond in a similar fashion to the methods used. Teaching practices should not discriminate between students on the basis of gender, residence, background, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation or social status (*Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla* [The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools], 2011, p.39).

It is less complicated to discuss official changes, such as legal amendments and curricula, than it is to discuss the changes that have actually occurred within the classroom. Research has shown that the teacher matters far more than the previously-mentioned factors (cf. e.g. Hattie 2003). Teachers of history in Iceland enjoy a considerable degree of freedom in their profession. There is a pressing need for a study of teaching methods in Icelandic senior secondary schools to determine whether they reflect the diversity of the modern age, meet the demands of students and stimulate the strengths of each student. My heart-felt wish is to be able to write another article on that precise topic at a later point in time.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the Icelandic school system "grunnskóli" or elementary is used for compulsory schooling for those aged 6-16; while the term "framhaldsskóli" or upper secondary refers to the following four years which most often concludes with matriculation.

<sup>2</sup> An article documenting this process was published already in 2001 (Gestsdóttir, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Icelandic, Life Skills, Information and Technology, Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Foreign Languages.

<sup>4</sup> The others are: Emphasis on scientific literacy, emphasis on technological education, international demands, general lifeskills, life-long education, evaluation and inspection, revision of teaching methods, enhancing long-distance learning, reduction of the number of drop-outs in upper secondary schools, studies that meet individual needs, equality, coherent studies.

<sup>5</sup> According to a Ministry of Education directive, there are approximately 35 student hours to every course unit (this system is currently under revision).

<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of 2003 the number of students registered at the University of Iceland was 8,225, of which 257 were studying history. At the beginning of 2012 the number of students registered at the University of Iceland was 14,422, of which 742 were studying history (Heildarskráning nemenda í Háskóla Íslands frá upphafi, 2012).

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### **Israeli history curriculum and the conservative - liberal pendulum**

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#### **Abstract:**

*At sixty-four Israel is still a comparatively young nation state, just passing from the 'developing' to the 'developed' phase. It has had five different history curricula for the Jewish 'Mamlakhti' (public non-religious) and the Arab sectors, which account for the majority of the students. For the first five decades the history curriculum did not ignite much controversy. The first curriculum was a rallying curriculum centered on the Jewish national movement and the establishment of Israel. In 1975 an 'academized' curriculum incorporated historical thinking goals – a move away from just an identification stance and towards an analytic stance. The mandatory baccalaureate examination, however, pushed for memorization and coverage. The fourth curriculum in 1993 integrated Jewish and world history with a slightly greater emphasis on world history, covered Israel's first three wars, and historical Jewish Diasporas and ethnicities. One textbook in the late nineties included cases of the deportation of Palestinian civilians during Israel's independence war. The decade since the turn of the millennia has been turbulent and inconsistent. New 'heritage' projects sponsored by right-wing Ministers of Education have alternated with curriculum emphasizing critical thinking, interpretation and multiple sources. The pendulum swung from expressive populist ethnocentricity to critical inquiry and diversity and back. New policies are haphazardly and partially enforced until a rival coalition reaches power and 'debates' curricula by publicizing the attempts to undo or alter them. Little attention was given to the ways teachers or students actually enacted and perceived the curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Israel, Curriculum, Strong state, Weak state, Baccalaureate, Matriculation exam, History education, History-teaching and learning, Jewish, Palestinian, Arab, Critical thinking, Middle East, Holocaust, Independence, Zionism, *Naqba*, narrative, Immigration absorption

#### **Introduction**

At sixty-four Israel is still a comparatively young nation state, just passing from the 'developing' to the 'developed' phase. The state was conceived and built by the Jewish national movement inspired by the Zionist ideology. Its establishment and most of the subsequent decades were accompanied by threats and wars with neighbouring Arab states. As these abated by the late 1970s, the security scene became dominated by a seemingly intractable conflict with the Palestinians. Complicating the picture is the fact that a fifth of the Israeli population consists of Arab citizens affiliated with the Palestinian people. Adding to this diversity is the fact that from the outset Israel was officially committed to 'the ingathering of the Jewish exiles' or diasporas. Consequently it has absorbed the highest proportion of immigrants in the world in the twentieth century. During Israel's first fifteen years its population tripled by the influx of Jewish immigrants from over 20 countries, from European (Ashkenazi Jewish) Holocaust survivors to members of Middle-Eastern (predominantly Sephardic Jewish) communities that had existed for significant parts of two millennia. This demographic upheaval was followed in the 1990's by an influx of over a million immigrants from the former USSR. The Israeli Educational system absorbed all immigrant children and was considered a main instrument of acculturation (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004; Zameret, 2002)

Israel's educational system reflects the *étatiste* nation-building ideology in that it is highly centralized. However, it also preserves a pre-state legacy of independent partisan factions in its highly fragmented structure. It is centralized as all curricula are supposedly issued by or certified by the state. Curriculum implementation is also centrally enforced by the use of high-stakes matriculation exams (Zohar, 2009). In order to earn a baccalaureate, necessary for higher education and significant private-sector employment, students must pass state-designed, standardized tests in the different subject areas. Finally, the state sector is comparatively economically desegregated with only a small percentage of private schools that mostly also comply with state curricula (Resh&Kfir, 2004). This means curriculum reaches students of all

economic backgrounds and achievement levels.

On the other hand, the system is institutionally fragmented and segregated into four sectors. In the humanities and social sciences, each sector has a different curriculum. Two of the sectors are comparatively independent; the Jewish religious public sector and the Ultra-orthodox Jewish 'independent' sector are state-funded but not state controlled. Two sectors are under direct and sometimes coercive control by the ministry of education; the *Mamlakhti* (Hebrew for 'governmental' or 'state' but essentially indicating Jewish non-religious) sector and the Arab sector (Harrison, 1994). We shall turn most of our attention to these latter sectors since they constitute the majority of the student population and serve as the main foci of debate and policy making in battles over history education.

In the Jewish *Mamlakhti* (public non-religious) and the Arab sectors curriculum planning is quite institutionalized, ensuring a degree of alignment between planning and implementation. Each school subject has a subject committee, dominated by the superintendent and representatives of the teaching 'field'. Subject committees decide at times to initiate new curriculum, and appoint a curriculum committee dominated by academics and headed by a prominent researcher. The curriculum committee convenes, sometimes for years, producing a proposal, which when approved by the superintendent is published by the independent Wing for Curriculum. The published curriculum serves as a guideline for textbook authors, and furnishes the basis for decisions by the Wing for Textbook Certification and the basis for examinations produced by the Matriculation Exams Wing. While this structure is quite centralized, since the 1970s it has not been under the direct, formal control of politicians. Experts and officials are in charge of curriculum design, and the lengthy deliberations of experts have at times outlasted the terms of three or more governments (Sabar & Mathias, 2003).

### **The first forty years of Israeli history curricula**

History is considered an identity-forming school subject. It is almost taken for granted that what the history students are taught will shape their identity, values and attitudes (Hofman, 2007). It is small wonder therefore that it attracts public interest and in some cases debate. However, for the first five decades of the Israeli educational system's existence the history curriculum did not ignite much controversy. In that period the Israeli Ministry of Education produced four curricula. The highly centralized system accepted and implemented them with varying degrees of success (Naveh & Yogev, 2002). A comparatively steady and noticeable pattern of development could be discerned in the transition from one curriculum to another and has been commented on by various authors (Hofman, 2007; Kiezel, 2008; Naveh & Yogev, 2002; Podeh, 2002). By contrast, the decade around the turn of the millennia seemed to have been especially turbulent and inconsistent.

The first four history curricula were published at intervals of about twenty years, roughly corresponding to the main three phases in Israeli history and politics. Changes in features of highly ideologized nation-building, coping with constant conflict, and absorbing diverse immigrants have marked both the history of the state, the educational system, and its curriculum. In its first two decades (1948-1967) Israel harboured an *étatiste* national ideology negating the value of diaspora Judaism. In these decades Israel won three wars against its Arab neighbours, maintained its Arab population under coercive military rule and fostered a militaristic culture. This was also the era of the 'Melting Pot' policy of cultural uniformity in immigration absorption. These characteristics can be seen as reflected in the history curriculum described below.

This first phase of Israeli history curriculum planning could be termed the 'rallying curriculum'. During the first two decades of the state, to the end of the 1960's, curriculum planning sought to create a unified curriculum for all schools (an endeavour which failed due to rejection by the Jewish orthodox sectors). Its explicit goal, heartily embraced by most textbook authors, was to 'rally the youths of Israel to the national cause' and 'sow admiration in their hearts' (Porat, 2001). It was planned with intense intervention of the Education minister, Ben-Zion Dinur (Dinburg), a prominent Jewish historian and Labor party leader. Curriculum featured an overwhelming preponderance of Jewish history topics (70%) over world history topics with the two histories taught and tested separately (Mathias, 2003; Kiezel, 2008). Ethnic minorities, such as Sephardic Jewish and Israeli Arabs were hardly represented, and when they were, it

was in patronizing or derogative stereotypes respectively (Bar-Tal, 1998; Ben-Amos, 1994; Podeh, 2002). These tendencies were more or less replicated in textbooks and in actual teaching. Little historical research or disciplinary practice was applied in class. This was partly due to the rallying stance, and partly to the lack of proper research on major aspects of modern Jewish history (Sabar & Mathias, 2003).

The next two decades, from the end of 1960s to the end of 1980s, were characterized by the declining fervour of Zionist ideology, with elites slowly turning to pragmatic, technocratic and academic notions of state management. Midway into this period (1977) the thirty year hegemony of the Zionist Labor movement was terminated by the rise of right wing coalitions. The period was also accompanied by a series of wars considered by the public to be unsuccessful and by an epochal peace treaty with Egypt. The end of military rule over Arab citizens of Israel in 1966 was shortly followed by the military rule over Palestinians in the occupied territories. The Melting Pot policy was officially (though not practically) rejected for a policy acknowledging the diversity of Jewish cultures and including non-Ashkenazic Jewish history.

The concurrent curriculum which may be termed the 'academized' curriculum was published in 1975. Its goals were to some degree similar to the prior 'rallying' curriculum and it still centered on the Jewish national movement and the establishment of Israel. However, it also reflected new trends such as Bruner's (1960) influence in setting such disciplinary goals as 'developing historical thinking'. Curriculum refinement and textbook production were taken over by the newly independent centre for curriculum planning. Textbook language became academic and neutral, with no attempt to overtly rally students to a cause (Mathias, 2005)

The preferential treatment of Jewish history decreased. However, the baccalaureate still featured two separate exams, for Jewish and for General history. An ambitious compilation of diverse sources was prepared as the basis for studying the 'the Zionist Idea and Establishment of the State of Israel' (Sabar & Mathias, 2003). A full textbook was devoted to the Jewish-Arab conflict that included references to the evolution of the Palestinian national movement (not long after Prime Minister Me'ir, in a 1969 interview in the *Sunday Times* claimed there was no Palestinian nation). This innovation met with some vocal criticism from the right wing opposition but was consistently backed by the Education Minister, Aharon Yadlin of the Labor party, who insisted the curriculum stressed the righteousness of Israel (Mathias, 2003; Podeh, 2002). Cross party support was given, however, to the growing representation of diverse Jewish ethnicities, at least in the elementary curriculum.

Interestingly, the comparative neutralization of the national discourse and the identification stance was accompanied by a new focus for emotional identification. For the first time Holocaust curricula were put to popular use, and gradually incorporated into highschool history. The growing emphasis on the Holocaust in Israeli official and collective memory indicates according to some researchers a new Israeli awareness of the vulnerability of the Jewish state stemming from the shock of the 1973 Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) War.

Common to all the new curricula, whether on the Jewish-Arab Conflict, the Holocaust or Zionist history was a new stress on historical evidence. For the first time state published textbooks suggested the intensive use of sources for studying history and provided them with the explicit aim of having students analyze and deliberate. However, the conventional baccalaureate history examination was not changed, and the new textbooks were soon rejected by teachers as presenting too high a challenge to students and being impractical for exam preparation. Contrary to the call of curriculum reformers such as Miryam Ben-Peretz (1990) for teachers to free themselves from scripted curriculum and interpret open-ended curricula teachers preferred ridding themselves of the need to interpret and create using document collections. As disenchantment with the government textbooks grew, commercial publishers filled in the vacuum, enlisting both academics and teachers, producing mostly unauthorized exam preparation textbooks (Kiezel, 2008).

To use Barton & Levstik's (2004) terminology, we may see the Israeli state school history curriculum as undergoing a transition. This featured a moderation of the pronounced (national) identification stance and

an attempt at promoting an analytic stance. However, it seems both identification and analytic stances were to a large degree stifled through the institutional pressure for a brand of exhibition stance. More specifically, the kind related to memorization and success in centralized exams. Curricula featured the anonymous neutral discourse of authoritative factuality (Paxton, 1997). While a stress on instrumental learning for uniform evaluation may make history teaching less meaningful, it may also be assumed to make it less contested a field (Barton, 2009). Thus, it would have been reasonable to expect ideological fervour to abate and make place for pragmatic deliberations of coverage and success rates. Such concerns indeed prevailed, however, contrary to expectations; the curriculum became a debated and politicized arena.

### **Pluralism and pandemonium: Troubles at fifty and Israel's 'curriculum wars'**

The last 20 years can be characterized as a period of growing political strife and sectionalism. Ruling governments often didn't finish their terms as weak right and left wing coalitions exchanged their hold on power. The state controlled economy was exchanged for wholesale privatization and governmental downsizing in the name of globalization. The period has seen a series of breakthroughs in peace negotiations with neighbours, notably the Palestinians, followed by violent setbacks and fierce debate within Israeli Jewish society. Multiculturalism was officially espoused by political and educational elites and to a growing degree by significant segments of the population. Thus for example, the million immigrants who came from the former USSR during the 1990's actively pursued multiculturalism, retaining many of their own cultural traits evading total assimilation into Israeli culture. Some of these trends were also reflected in history curriculum.

*The fourth curriculum* was published in 1993. It featured for the first time an integration of Jewish and general history both in textbooks and in assessment. It was also the first curriculum which contained Jewish history topics in a lower proportion (43%) than general history. More attention was given to major trends in 20th century history such as decolonization, the cold war, or civil rights and protest movements. For the first time, textbooks covered Israel's first three wars. History curriculum still centered mainly on political history with low reference to cultural, everyday, or minority perspectives. Arabs were still underrepresented in the curriculum, but now they were described in neutral and sometimes empathetic terms. The new curriculum also contained chapters about most of the historical Jewish Diasporas and ethnicities. Private publishers produced most textbooks upon approval of the textbook certification department. Approval was based on independent anonymous reviews by academics and teachers.

The new textbooks issued under this curriculum were published in 1998-1999 around Israel's 50th anniversary and gave rise to some debate. One of them, produced by a private publisher, contained a revision of Israel's 'victory of the few against the many' independence war narrative, referred to Jewish atrocities and to cases of deportations of Palestinian civilians (Barnavi & Naveh, 1999). These findings were known in the academic circles for over a decade and had already spurred some controversy then. Still, their presentation in a textbook seemed to carry new implications and a heated, though short lived debate took place over the pages of Israeli newspapers (Podeh, 2002). The touchy topics were claimed to mar the moral image of the state in students' eyes, and damage their national identity. However, the presentation of such topics, when negotiations with the Palestinians had not been finalized, carried implications beyond students' identity. To some, these issues seemed to undermine Israel's legitimacy and to bear upon the actual political/territorial outcomes of the peace settlements. However, it was another textbook, published directly by the Ministry of Education that came under more severe and concerted assaults.

### **The conservative trend and the assault on curriculum**

The new millennium began with an unprecedented publicized attack by an NGO, on official history curriculum. In a planned and publicized campaign, Yoram Hazony, director of the right-wing think tank the Shalem Institute, issued a bilingual report titled *The Quiet Revolution in the Teaching of Zionist History: A Comparative Study of Education Ministry Textbooks on the 20th Century* (Hazony, Oren & Polisar, 2000). The report, first publicized not in Israel, but in the American magazine *The New Republic* focused its criticism on an authorized textbook, Dani Ya'akobi's *A World of Changes* (Ya'akobi, 1999). The book was

depicted as representing a general dangerous trend of pushing Zionism out of the Israeli history curriculum. In the ensuing debate the Knesset's Education Committee convened and demanded the reinspection of the book. Soon after, the newly nominated right-wing Education Minister, Limor Livnat, went on to appoint a committee which fully disqualified the book. Using the ad-hoc committee's report, she claimed it had strong 'post-zionist' overtones, fostered under her predecessor (Hoffman, 2007; Sabar & Mathias, 2003). Shortly thereafter Livnat decreed that 'Heritage' would be a mandatory middle school subject (*Ha'aretz*, 4 September 2003). Parallel to the Jewish history curriculum but not subject to a curriculum committee's deliberation; heritage studies were a perfect track for bypassing the academic and liberal notion of history.

Later in her term as Minister of Education, Livnat initiated the '100 concepts' project which mandated that all middle-schoolers should study and pass a test of a hundred items in Zionism, Jewish heritage, and democracy (Khromchenko, 2005 [*Ha'aretz*, 3 January]). For the Arab sector, Jewish heritage was replaced by a predominantly medieval Moslem history with no mention of Palestinian and hardly any Israeli Arab items. The '100 concepts' initiative spurred resistance from academics and educators in general for adopting a monolithic, static approach to history and fostering rote memorization. Resistance was even more vehement among the Israeli Arab sector. Arab intellectuals and NGOs formulated a set of competing items, mostly critical towards Israeli history and polity, which were immediately banned by the ministry (Peled, 2006). The Ministry's '100 concepts' project was later incorporated into the high stakes 'school achievement and climate' evaluation tests (Khromchenko, 2005 [*Ha'aretz*, 3 January]).

Taken together these instances marked a strong conservative move, away from the seemingly progressive long-term trend characterizing the first 40 years of Israeli history curriculum. The concerted campaign against an authorized textbook and its unprecedented banning seemed to signal a defensive aversion to general history, critical reflection or even simply more neutral disciplinary stances. The turn to teaching heritage and Zionism as a parallel alternative to the history curriculum echoed this cultural closure and indicates impatience with and distrust of the academic experts running curriculum committees. The fact that the memorization of concepts in Zionism (the Jewish national movement) was forced upon Arab students, while mention of their indigenous heritage was censured, indicates aversion to diversity and a coercive approach to minorities. However, it was not long before the situation was almost thoroughly reversed.

### **A new horizon and the fifth curriculum**

By the year 2006 Livnat was replaced in the seat of the Minister of Education by the liberal left wing (and former peace activist) Yael Tamir. Soon thereafter the '100 concepts' project was suspended for reconsideration and reformulation (Kashti, 2008 [*Ha'aretz*, 26 March]). Not long later, a new history curriculum was published which (after more than ten years of formulation and writing) coincided with Tamir's 'New Pedagogical Horizon' initiative for fostering higher order thinking (Ministry of Education, 2008a). The new history curriculum was in fact completed by 2003, under the right-wing former Minister Livnat (Ministry of Education, 2003), but it began to be implemented under a more favourable climate. It aspired to incorporate historical disciplinary practices such as working with multiple sources into secondary education history teaching. As a measure of the seriousness of the attempt it should be noted these practices were introduced even into the high stakes baccalaureate exams (Zohar, 2009). Guidelines to textbook authors stressed the need to support disciplinary thinking and demanded the presentation of historiographical controversies (Ministry of Education, 2008b).

What about accommodating diversity and minorities into the contents of history teaching? The curriculum committee received numerous demands for representation and inclusion during its long incubation process. These ranged from requests of immigrants from the small Caucasian republics of the former USSR to present their ancient heritage, to the demands from prominent rabbis to stress the inherently religious zeal of secular Zionism. The new curriculum expanded the scope given to 'oriental' (Middle Eastern) Jewish ethnicities both in modern and in medieval history. The curriculum also attempted to incorporate urban, cultural and everyday life studies into the wider political history framework (Y. Bartal, personal communication, March 20, 2010; Y. Mathias, personal communication, February 12, 2010).

The new curriculum also incorporated, for the first time, the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem into the mandatory exam items for the Jewish public (non-religious) high schools. This topic has high relevance for the Arab sector in Israel and carries strong implications for the image of Israel in the teaching of the Jewish-Arab conflict. Similarly the military rule over Israel's Arab citizens and its abolition were incorporated in the curriculum as well as the related notorious massacre of Israeli Arab civilians by Israeli soldiers in Kufr Kassem (in 1956). Israel's security policies were analyzed as well as the debate about the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Ministry of Education, 2010). The Minister later approved an elementary school social studies curriculum for the Arab sector, containing a Palestinian perspective on the outcomes of the Israeli war of independence as the *Naqba* – the breakdown (Stern et al., 2007 [*Ha'aretz*, 23 July]). This initiative commanded vocal criticism from right wing opposition leaders.

The new pendulum swing to the more 'open' pole was not totally coherent, though. Structured explicitly around the concept of 'nationalism', the curriculum contained a significantly higher proportion of Jewish history than General history. Though the development of the Jewish nation and national movement was clearly contextualized within the growth of European nationalism, the general context surprisingly shrank. Major world history themes such as the Great Depression of the early 1930s or the Cold War were mentioned only in passing. If at all presented, they serve mainly as background notes to their Jewish history consequences, the Nazi ascent and persecutions; and the UN decree of the partition of Palestine respectively (Ministry of Education, 2008a). This slightly ethnocentric turn surprised even the creators of the curriculum, who, according to their own report, aspired to move away from narrow Jewish political history (Y. Bartal, personal communication, March 20, 2010; Y. Mathias, personal communication, February 12, 2010). But this mild bias was soon overshadowed by a decisive pendulum swing to an ethnocentric pole taken by next Minister of Education, following a new right wing coalition's rise to power.

#### **A conservative swing back and the rise of expressive 'censorship'**

As soon as the new Education Minister, Sa'ar, took his office, he declared that 'heritage' studies will be reinforced in all Jewish schools. These were to later be enhanced with tours to Jewish memorial monuments, among them the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the occupied territories (Zelikovich, 2009 [*Yedi'oth Aharonot*, 26 August]; Valmer, 2011 [*Yedi'oth Aharonot*, 15 February]). Here, again we see a bypass of the formal history curriculum, centering clearly on (conservative) collective memory as an enhancement of, but also as a replacement of an independent history curriculum. Soon thereafter the minister ordered a revision of the elementary social studies curriculum for the Arab sector. The term *Naqba*, reflecting the Palestinian perspective on the establishment of Israel as a catastrophe was to be omitted from the curriculum on the claim that it fostered disloyalty to the state (Talmor & Yahav, 2009 [*Walla News*, 22 July]).

The ministry suspended funding for fostering higher order thinking and disciplinary practices and the attempt to reform exams stagnated in the preliminary stage it had reached. However, the Minister had no mandate to directly change the history curriculum, which did pose some concerns to the new decision makers. These arose a few months later, when a newspaper article highlighted a certified history textbook's presentation of the historiographical controversy about the causes of the Palestinian refugee problem. Officials were outraged to discover it contained not just official Israeli perspectives but also a Palestinian historian's interpretation of the events. The book was authored and certified according to the new history curriculum guidelines, which the Minister has no mandate to change. Therefore the Ministry of Education reached an unwritten agreement with the publisher to omit the Palestinian historian's excerpts from a new edition to be published. In compensation the Ministry bought the textbook's 'problematic' edition straight off the shelves and shredded it (Kashti, 2009 [*Ha'aretz*, 16 October]). The book was republished following revision according to the history superintendents' detailed instructions to 'present a clear cut narrative' from 'a Jewish-Zionist perspective' (Ministry of Education, 2009b; Peled-Elhanan, 2012).

A year after this incident, education officials reacted in a similar pattern to news about the Peace Research in the Middle East (PRIME) 'Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative' text book initiative. The textbook, containing both Israeli and Palestinian narratives about key points in the Jewish Arab conflict was

designed by a group of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian educators. Following a positive news report on the use of the dual-narrative textbook in a Jewish Israeli school, the school's principal was summoned the education ministry and admonished. Use of the textbook was publicly prohibited on account of its being 'unauthorized' (Kashti, 2010c [*Ha'aretz*, 27 September]). It is worth noting that unauthorized textbooks for preparation for the history baccalaureate examinations are used *en masse* in Israeli high schools arousing no governmental response.

Interestingly, even Holocaust studies, which enjoyed unanimous support in all sectors of society, and have lately become obligatory also for the Arab sector, have come under criticism. Arab intellectuals protested at the lack of reciprocity, as Arabs study the Holocaust while the study of their traumatic events is prohibited (Zemer-Bronfman 2011 [*Ma'ariv*, 26 April]). But criticism was raised also within the Jewish institutions. The chairman of the history subject committee claimed current Holocaust curriculum amounts to not much beyond a 'pornography of evil'. She was consequently soon replaced in office for speaking her mind (Kashti, 2010a [*Ha'aretz*, March 22]).

Taken together, the above instances seem to indicate a total reversal of the progression to a more diverse, open and discipline based history curriculum promoted by the former government. On the one hand, education officials use heritage trips and other means to place a strong emphasis on a conservative, collective memory approach to teaching about the past, by-passing the official history curriculum. This approach is authoritative, expressly ethnocentric and is accompanied by public measures stressing closure to the 'other's' perspective and to critical inquiry. On the other hand, it should be noted that most measures are short term and reactive in nature, reflecting sensitivity to details presented by media and to party constituency more than a planned design to change curriculum.

Both ministerial coercive intervention and the reactive sensitivity to media at the price of a focus on process were noted and criticized in a mini-conference held at Israel's Mandel institution for Educational Leadership. Academics, educators and publishers discussed the question: 'What not to teach? Presenting dark periods in history in high school curriculum'. They questioned the assumption that promoting critical thinking contradicted cultivating belonging. Similarly, they criticized "the pendulum that characterizes the Israeli government" shifting the emphasis from collective commitment to critical thinking with each term of office. The censoring approach was assessed as leading to little effect, especially as teachers and students are bound to make meanings of their own, based on diverse inputs (Mandel Leadership Institute, 2010).

Indeed, the new history curriculum with its treatment of controversial topics is still in effect and still incorporates its charged topics. By the summer of 2012 Israeli high schoolers will, for the second time now, encounter, for example, the debate on the causes of the Palestinian refugee problem as part of their baccalaureate. Just to make sure it will not spill over in the wrong direction, the history subject's superintendent has by now prepared a detailed guideline on the Ministry's website. Multiple sources (all supporting the official Israeli stand point) are supplied as resources for fostering student thinking (Ministry of Education, 2012). The reader may suppress a smile, but should also bear in mind that no other Middle Eastern state (and but a few of the western democracies) brings debate about its most sensitive historical episodes into mandatory exams. It is worth noting this curricular change occurred at a time when the historical topics carry explosive implications for international negotiations.

However, in an interview about the new curriculum a ministry official made the following interesting 'not for attribution' remark. The official noted that the currently independent wing for curriculum design will soon cease making curricula because of the problems it has caused the ministry, such as those described as stemming from the current history curriculum. In the future, the ministry's officials will take care to make the next curricula (Ministry of Education, personal communication, May 14, 2010). The comment apparently referred to the long time needed to produce a new history curriculum and the disorganization accompanying it. The official certainly didn't criticize the liberal characteristics of the curriculum nor can the official be taken to be affiliated with the ruling right wing coalition. However the comment denotes a trend which would seem to serve also the aspirations of more conservative decision-makers. Such a trend

means taking curriculum design out of the hands of independent expert committees, and into the hands of state officials.

### **The tempestuous decade**

What can we make of this tumultuous decade in Israeli history teaching? Some observations and general outlines could be discerned through the (un)settling dust. First, we can notice the overt politicization and polarization of the debate on history curriculum and teaching. This politicization escalates as actual curriculum designers strive to make curriculum less politicized and more disciplinary. It seems that even the de-politicization and academization of such an identity-formative school subject is taken by some stakeholders as a political act and a national threat. It should be noted that some of the academics involved in designing the new curriculum were in fact aware of the potential reactions and tried to mitigate them (Y. Bartal, personal communication, March 20, 2010; Y. Mathias, personal communication, February 12, 2010).

It is interesting to note the Israeli history curriculum conflict was for most of the time not structured as a debate between competing identification stances, (as it has been to some degree in the United States) but as a contrast of the identification stance with the analytic stance. It was not so much a debate on the degree of the representation of one community over another, of women, Middle-Easterners or dissenters over European Zionist men. A lot of the debate centred more on whether school history curriculum (and more specifically students) could and should contain the multiplicity of knowledge and perspectives assumed to be characteristic of academe. Both incorporation of current historical research findings and acknowledgment of others' perspectives, were moulded as anti-national or left-wing. This framing limited the chance for real debate or for a pedagogical deliberation of the possible complementarity of identifying and analyzing.

Second, along with the politicization of the debate came public relations and media involvement in it. History curriculum, or even specific textbooks, suddenly merited a negative trans-Atlantic public relations campaign. Politicians respond to news reports about history curriculum or utilize them to publicize measures taken. And again the sound-bite pace of media and of professional politicians' response to it stands in stark contrast to the lugubrious efforts of designing and implementing curriculum.

Third, we should note the strong short term oscillations in ambience and to some degree in policy as to the history curriculum. The pendulum hovered from expressive populist ethnocentricity to critical inquiry and diversity and back. In a more general reflection, if history can be termed as one of the ways a society forges its identity, then the 'pendulum effect' may attest to a society highly divided and undecided as to its identity. It should also be noted that most of the deliberations or 'debate' about history curriculum is not really an ongoing public debate within a shared arena. Stakeholders, policy makers and experts do not convene to criticize, argue and convince. Rather, new policies are haphazardly and partially enforced until a rival coalition reaches power and 'debates' curricula by publicizing the attempts to undo or alter them. Little attention was given to the ways teachers or students actually enacted and perceived the curriculum.

A fourth complementary, though seemingly contradictory, observation is that, perhaps because the short term nature of decision makers' approach, they have little effect on curriculum. Below those ripples long term trends proceed, and the new history curriculum, with its mixture of openness and ethnocentricity will continue to be in effect for the next few years. Politicians will campaign against an occasional author or intimidate some educators, but most teachers are left to interpret the curriculum to their best understanding.

There is some reason to believe most of the debate passed above the heads of both teachers and students. While no systematic research was made into methods of teaching ongoing reports and complaints stress that frontal lecture and note-taking remain the most common methods of teaching (Ministry of Education, 2007; Naveh & Vered, 2012). Somewhat similarly to their reaction to the attempt some 30 years earlier, teachers seem to implement discipline-oriented reforms hesitantly even when they declare interest in change (Ministry of Education, 2009a). To some degree this hesitation is even more

justified than in the 70s, as since then high schools were desegregated and now cater to far more diverse achievement levels. Teachers express concern that endeavouring to march these cohorts into the minefield of historical argumentation may lead to grade casualties intolerable to parents and politicians (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Some empirical research was done on the impact of an encounter with alternative perspectives on Jewish students' national identification. Findings hint that Jewish students' national identification is hardly shaken by an encounter with harsh Palestinian accounts, even when they understand and acknowledge them. While students maintained faith in their side's legitimacy, encounters with such evidence seemed to foster dialogue and negotiation (Goldberg, 2012; Eini-AlHadaf, 2011). This replicates to some degree Barton and McCully's (2010) findings that whereas Irish Catholic and Protestant students support learning a dual perspective curriculum they nevertheless use it to enhance their existing identities.

On the other hand it appears that during the last decade Jewish Israeli youths are harbouring xenophobic stances to an increasing degree (Kashti, 2010b [*Ha'aretz*, 31 March]; Kashti, 2010d [*Ha'aretz*, 3 November]). If that is the case, a growing rift may develop between students' mentalities and the historical consciousness the contested curriculum aspired to promote. This may put populist policy makers and students in a threatening coalition against teachers and the new curriculum, adding to teachers' reluctance to implement it. If so, the ongoing curriculum bashing may cause permanent damage. Still, whatever progression as may be perceived does not go about unchallenged. The last decade's debates and oscillations of Israeli history curriculum attest to its contested status within a fragmented and confrontational public sphere. It is unclear what effects will it have in a climate of growing anxiety, xenophobia and populism. However, as these public trends may be seen as reaction to actual changes and progress, it may well be that as the dust settles, the Israeli history curriculum will be found to comply with the needs of the coming generation.

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**Explanatory note:** A shofar is a hollowed goat/sheep horn blown to make a loud noise – not unlike a fog-horn on religious holidays, such as the New Year and the Day of Atonement. It is a reminder of Isaac's being saved from sacrifice by his father, and is supposed to awaken the lenient to repentance. It is an example of the minutes (detail) that the 100 concepts in heritage, democracy and Zionism included.

## **History in Malta's New National Curriculum Framework**

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### **Abstract:**

*In February 2013 Malta's new national Curriculum, entitled 'A New National Framework for All' was launched. It was the end result of almost three years of meetings, debates, discussions, consultations and draft documents.*

*This paper first gives a brief description of the historical background of Curricula in Malta, all of which eventually lead up to the present one, and then goes on to discuss specifically history in Maltese Curricula. Today it is no exaggeration to say that, of all school subjects history is the one which has undergone the most radical transformation as far as its pedagogy is concerned. History teaching in Malta now focuses on the learning of specific history skills and concepts, and analyses and interpretation of primary and secondary sources. However, history does not have a high status in the Maltese educational system and there were clear intentions in the initial stages of the creation of the new curriculum to eliminate the subject. This paper describes the advances in history pedagogy experienced in Malta in the past 20 years and the endeavours of the writer to retain history as a separate academic subject in the new curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Malta, Islands, Maltese, History, Curricula, Development, Teaching, Learning, New Curriculum, Pedagogy, Schools, Education, History Teachers' Association, Education Department, Faculty of Education.

### **The Maltese Islands**

The Maltese islands are located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea some 96 km south of Sicily. The archipelago consists of Malta, Gozo, Comino and Filfla, and occupies an area of around 316 square kilometres. There are no forests, rivers or mountains and there are few natural resources with a dense population in excess of 450,000. At different historical periods the island belonged to various colonisers including, to mention a few, the Romans, the Arabs, the Normans, the Knights of St. John, the French and more recently the British from whom the Maltese got independence in 1964. Perhaps the best living evidence of Malta's chequered history is the Maltese language, which is Semitic but with a strong Romance and Anglo Saxon influence. Today Malta is a nation possessing a European identity with a distinct culture. The religion is predominantly the Roman Catholic faith and this is clearly stipulated in Malta's constitution<sup>1</sup>, that notwithstanding, Malta is a European Union member and functions as a democracy which grants freedom of conscience to individuals.

### **National Curricula before 2013 in Malta**

The Order of the Knights of St. John arrived in Malta in 1530 after negotiating with Emperor Charles the V for a new home following their expulsion from Rhodes by the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, seven years previously. The University of Malta traces its origins to the time of the Knights having been first set up as a college by Jesuits in 1592. When the British came to Malta in 1800, they took over the administration of the islands and the University, which had enjoyed a large degree of freedom under the Knights of St. John, came under the direct control of the government. Since then Malta has had a very centralised educational system with strong government control. It was in the nineteenth century that the first slow attempts at primary education and much later secondary compulsory schooling were made. Recommendations were put forward in the reports of Royal Commissioners who sporadically visited the islands, namely Austin and Lewis in 1838, and Keenan 1878. The structures of the curriculum were laid down in the middle of the nineteenth century when according to Fenech:

It was under Canon Pullicino's directorship, which spanned over three decades, that the classroom system was introduced, textbooks began to be ordered or compiled, time-tables set,

syllabuses prescribed, the streaming system established and examinations used as evaluation mechanisms of teaching in the schools. (Fenech, 1989, p.36)

During the last sixty years Malta's education system has expanded rapidly particularly after Independence when the needs of the country were transformed. The trend of building new schools started in the sixties but as far as curriculum development was concerned little was done and what Fenech calls the 'Canon Pullicino legacy'<sup>2</sup> persisted for a very long time. One driving force was that of utilitarianism, and governments sought to gear Malta's educational system towards the economic needs of the island (Curmi, 1991).

Education in Malta has often been a highly politicized issue, particularly the 'Language Question'<sup>3</sup> and the introduction of Secondary education. One radical experiment was undertaken in the 1970s of the twentieth century when A.Raimondo, the then director of education announced the introduction of comprehensive schooling in Malta. This meant that from 1972 all forms of entry tests and examinations to secondary school were abolished (previously Malta had had the British system of the 11+ examination at the end of primary school which then streamed pupils into grammar schools, area secondary schools and trade schools). This experiment in Maltese education lasted ten years and it was all revoked in 1982 when a tripartite system of Junior Lyceums (grammar schools), area secondary schools and trade schools was once again firmly re-established. Today this system no longer exists and we now have Colleges of schools which incorporate all abilities together in a very similar way to the British Comprehensive system of schooling.

A National Curriculum known as the Minimum National Curriculum came into existence for the first time after the 1988 Education Act. Prior to this curriculum, there had been no official policy statement on a National Curriculum in Malta, instead there only existed detailed rigid syllabi of school subjects, periodically published by the Education Department. This produced some confusion as far as teaching methods are concerned, as well as creating a situation where examinations become all important. A situation described by Charles Farrugia in this way:

...in the absence of a national curriculum, the majority of teachers take the lead from, and base their teaching on the structure and the questions contained in the national examinations. (Farrugia, 1989, p.21)

The Education Act of 1988 which brought about Malta's Minimum National Curriculum was called 'a highly innovative and reformative Act' (Zammit Mangion, 1989, p.27) and in the words of the Minister of Education it was necessary because 'there existed a need of providing for a common core – a homogeneous trunk' (Zammit Mangion, 1989, p.5).

These statements are somewhat misleading in the sense that one might get the impression that prior to the National Curriculum of 1988, schools and teachers were free to construct their own curricula. This was far from being the case for although an official National Curriculum was not formally written, all state schools both Primary and Secondary, followed the same syllabi prescribed from the Education Department.

At the end of the scholastic year all state school students sat for the same examination papers which were set up and issued by the Education Department<sup>4</sup>. Most of what the National Minimum Curriculum had to offer had already been happening in Maltese schools for many years, the new legislation merely provided an official document of what had been going on. The big change was in the role of the Minister of Education, whereas previously it was the sole duty of the Minister to decide educational issues: it was now the State's. Another important innovation was the fact that for the first time private schools had to follow the National Curriculum.

A review of the 1988 Curriculum was requested in 1996 by the then Minister of Education Louis Galea with the intended plan of implementing a new National Minimum Curriculum by 1998. The final version was in

fact presented to Cabinet in 1999 and was in operation in schools by the new millennium. The new document was based on 15 principles which included 'quality education for all', 'respect for diversity', and 'holistic educational'; all focused towards achieving more social justice, although once again in reality syllabi of school subjects changed very little if at all. There were some attempts at moving towards more formative means of assessment and an attempt at giving schools more identity through a decentralisation process.

After the 1988 and the 1999 Curricula, the next and latest Curriculum was launched in February 2013. This time the term 'Minimum National Curriculum' was abandoned in favour of the term 'National Curriculum Framework'.

### **History in the National Curriculum**

It is difficult to trace the actual development of history as part of the Maltese curriculum, for as explained above, there was no official curriculum as such, prior to 1988 and even here only a few sentences were ever allotted to history. One way to understand what was going on in schools is to examine history textbooks<sup>5</sup> and Maltese history textbooks first make an appearance in primary and secondary schools in the early twentieth century. History as with all other subjects at first 'reflected much of the atmosphere of the 1800s where the political and social forces had been in a continuous tug of war to achieve a sense of proportion between the pro-Italianate and Anglophile factions of Maltese society' (Cassar & Vella, p.86). However, by the turn of the century English slowly took over and history textbooks increasingly switched to the use of English, and later on the native language Maltese became the main language of use. For a long time irrespective of the language being used in history textbooks the general idea behind the teaching of history was that of passing across accepted knowledge together with a strong dose of moralistic teaching (Cassar & Vella, 2011).

The pedagogy of history teaching at first progressed at a fairly slow pace. In many ways the teaching of history reflected the Maltese educational culture, with its characteristic features of pupil selection, considerable teacher direction, pupil passivity, transmission pedagogy and emphasis on outcomes measured by final tests and examinations, in other words 'the traditional' teacher-centred approach. Most history lessons were of the 'lecture-type' with heavy emphasis on the use of the textbook, note-taking, frequent testing and stress on the summative examination at the end of the year.

There were isolated attempts at making history more interesting. For example, the report of the Commissioner appointed by the Minister of Education in 1955, recommended for history teaching a 'story approach' and suggested starting with myths, legends and adventures for both primary and secondary classes. (Education Department Report, 1955) Throughout the sixties, handbooks for history teachers published by the Department of Education all encourage visits to sites and historical places, as well as use of pictures, time-lines, outline maps and historical novels.

This remained more or less the policy for history teaching in Malta for the coming years. It was accompanied by a genuine effort to motivate pupils by trying to suggest ways in which history could be made more interesting. One can detect the influence of people like R.J.Unstead, the British historian and author of history books for children who was very popular in the 1960s and 70s.

Similarly to what was taking place in Britain, in the 1970s after the Plowden Report, there was an attempt at subject integration, especially in primary schools. Primary school syllabi became more topic based with history being incorporated with geography, nature study and civics. In secondary schools history remained a separate subject but with social studies gaining more importance.

The key note speaker at a conference in Malta entitled 'Maltese History: What future?' held at the University of Malta proclaimed in 1971 that:

History as a vital educational experience is in danger today. The sciences of sociology and politics tend to take its place in the preferences of the young generation ... the winds of change

might blow away this heritage before it reaches the next generation. (Reeves, 1974 p.13)

These words echo the general feeling that also existed abroad at the time, in particular in the United Kingdom, where there was a fear that history was going to disappear from the timetable. In the case of Malta the danger proved to be very real. In a survey, on 'O' Level<sup>6</sup> history in Malta, carried out by the author in 1989 in all secondary schools, 26% of the schools responded that history was only provided up to Form 2 or Year 8 (12 year- olds) and was no longer offered as an option. This meant that in 1989 one fifth of Maltese state schools did not prepare for history 'O' level. The fact that history was losing its importance as a school subject was also reflected in the small number of candidates sitting for the 'O' Level paper. The situation is still the same today, for in the past ten years the yearly percentage of history candidates who register for the history SEC examination normally average only about 4% of the whole cohort (MATSEC, 2012).

One frustrated history teacher remarked in 2011 that 'a good number of Maltese secondary schools end up without any history option lessons in their school timetable in the later secondary school years (form three to form five/ages fourteen to sixteen)' (Briffa, 2011 p.1-2). In fact during scholastic year 2009 – 2010, out of 25 secondary state schools there was no history as an option subject at form three (year 10/14 year olds) at sixteen secondary state schools ( Briffa, 2011) . Despite these statistics there are a number of individual Maltese schools particularly Church and Private schools who for the past five years have been preparing a sizeable number of students (on average about 35% of their form 5 student population) for history O Level (Briffa, 2011 p.2).

### **Pedagogy of history in Malta**

Back in the 1990s, while comparing English teachers teaching in England and Maltese Secondary history teachers in Malta it was clear that 'if one were to imagine a spectrum which represents the evolution of history teaching, English and Maltese teachers would be found in different places' (Vella, 1996, p. 178). English teachers in the early 1990s had had time to absorb the ideas of 'New History'<sup>7</sup>, with almost two decades of actual experience in using this approach in history classrooms. It was not the case for their Maltese counterparts; Maltese teachers showed a clear bias against the methods associated with 'New History' in particular the source method (Vella, 1996). However, sources did suddenly appear in the Maltese history O Level paper. This was an attempt by a university history teaching lecturer Michael Sant<sup>8</sup> to impose the 'Source Method' on a reluctant teaching staff. He was the Chairperson of the O Level history examination paper for many years and he introduced in 1986 a section devoted solely to questions based on historical sources. His approach seemed to have had the desired effect in Maltese secondary schools, with the President of the Malta's *History Teachers' Association* reporting in 1998 that: 'Today, it is not a rare occasion for our students to handle photocopies of official documents, letters, diaries or caricatures particularly those dealing with the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century' (Grech, 1998, p.23).

The move towards 'New History' teaching methods continued in Malta and in a recent research study on history teaching in secondary schools, it was observed that 'teachers who graduated prior to 1980 rarely, if ever, use 'New History' methods, whereas almost all of those who graduated after 2000 often or always use 'New History' methods in their classroom'. (DeGiorgio, 2008) Twelve years before another study had showed, that a large number of Maltese teachers were not in agreement with giving prominence to historical thinking (Vella, 1996). However James De Giorgio's study showed that 78% of history teachers were now strongly in favour of teaching history skills and, in particular, to giving students an opportunity to practice skills of analysing historical primary sources. This is probably due to a number of factors coming together and working in the same direction. Michael Sant's ideas on 'New History' continued in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, and today:

Student teachers are trained in how they can teach history as a form of inquiry with a focus on history thinking skills, which school children can use to analyse and interpret historical material by themselves. The ability to demonstrate conventionally accepted historical knowledge is not the priority within the framework of this teaching paradigm.(Cassar & Vella, 2011 p.97)

This philosophy on history teaching is strongly supported by the history division of the Curriculum centre at the Education Department. The Maltese History Teachers' Association, since its beginning in 1996, has also advocated 'New History' and the Association is quite a strong lobby on the island. It has continually produced publications and other support material for history teachers who wish to use sources in their teaching, as well as organising conferences and seminars to promote this method<sup>9</sup>.

Today it is no exaggeration to say that, of all the subjects in the curriculum, history teaching is the one which has undergone the most radical transformation. Effective history teaching now focuses on the learning of specific history skills and concepts, and analyses and interpretation of primary and secondary sources.

Maltese history teaching has made huge strides by moving away from note-taking and listening to 'lectures' given by the teacher towards creating a learning environment where the unique thinking skills found in history may be practised by the students. Students in Maltese secondary and primary schools today do evidential work based on primary history sources on a regular basis.

### **History in the New National Curriculum Framework of 2013**

So as far as history teaching is concerned, in the late noughties there existed in Malta an interesting situation. On the one hand, history as a school subject does not have a high status; it is not given much importance by either schools or the education department, although it was quite favoured in particular individual schools, it does not enjoy general popularity. On the other hand as far as the actual pedagogy of the subject is concerned quite significant advances have been made, with Malta figuring quite high on the scale in international surveys when comparing 'source method use' in different European countries<sup>10</sup>. This state of affairs was the setting in Malta as far as history teaching is concerned, when plans in 2009 for a New National Curriculum started to be initiated.

I am a history teacher trainer and I prepare B.Ed and PGCE history student teachers and as the co-ordinator of history at the Faculty of Education and the only full time professor in history pedagogy at the University of Malta, I could not avoid being involved formally and informally in the creation of this New Curriculum, particularly where history was involved. Initially I was not invited to form part of the inner core discussion group regarding any aspect of the [National] Curriculum but in the end I still ended up playing various roles in the creation of this Curriculum, sometimes peripheral ones at other times perhaps more central roles.

Officially the first draft for consultation was launched in May 2011. However, rumours of some very real changes this time in the actual structure and content of school subjects had been circulating since late 2008. There were rumours that there were plans underway to free up the school timetable by integrating various subjects together and history was one of the targets of this change. These rumours were further ignited when one eminent history Professor, Henry Frenco, wrote about them in one of the local papers *The Times of Malta* (Frenco, 2009). Henry Frenco, a historian and academic was not involved in the creation of the new National Curriculum but was just expressing his concerns over the hearsay that there were plans to remove history from schools. The same paper had also published several articles announcing that the Education Department was about to start working on a New National Framework and in one of these articles one journalist mentioned how the current restructuring was to make 'history and other core subjects more relevant to the students' needs' (Schivone, 2009).

The History Teachers' Association called an urgent meeting to discuss the matter and as its Vice-President and a Committee member I was present at this meeting. Feelings and tempers were running quite high for in the draft interim report history appeared only as a component of Citizenship.

History teachers present at the meeting interpreted this to mean that Citizenship would be the general framework and Geography, Social Studies and History lessons would stop being separate subjects in secondary school timetables. There would now only be time for one lesson of Citizenship per week

instead. Since these three subjects in many State schools were normally allotted two lessons per week this would considerably free up the timetable. This would help the curriculum-makers find slots on the timetable for new subjects and activities they wished to put in. I remember one history teacher remarking during a History Teachers' Association meeting that instead of two lessons of 40 minutes each we will now end up sharing one lesson with three other subjects and which he sardonically calculated to be 8 minutes of history per week!

There have been times in my academic career where I personally had been supportive of the idea of integrating history within an interdisciplinary integrated approach (Vella, 2000) but the gap between the rhetoric and the practice had long since made me rethink the validity of this method and I advised great caution before this situation. It was decided that the History Teachers' Association would contact the teacher associations of the other two subjects and ask for a meeting with the then Minister of Education, Dolores Christina and the Director General, Grace Grima. Meanwhile I wrote an article in *The Times of Malta* where I identified my position to be completely against such a move. Borrowing and adjusting a little Mary Price's title of her famous 1969 article on history teaching I wrote an article entitled *History in Peril* where I wrote that rather than the much hoped for innovative change planned, this was going to be the death-knell of the three subjects (Vella, 2009).

The meeting with the Minister did take place some months later and while being very cordial there were moments of quite heated debate. The official ministerial stance adopted was that the criticism of the changes was 'misplaced' and 'premature', history teachers were jumping the gun and consultation meetings on draft proposals were still going on.

Such consultancy meetings had been organised with various parties regarding general ideas and issues in the New National Curriculum proposals. I personally had previously attended two such meetings as an academic member of staff once at a general meeting with the Director General and the whole Faculty of Education in November 2008 and another in January 2009 as an academic member of the Arts and Languages Department of the University. On both occasions when I tried to ask about the history situation in the New National Curriculum I was told that the meetings were about holistic philosophical principles of a curriculum and not an occasion to discuss petty specifics of school time tables.

Ironically in October 2009, in spite of or perhaps because of, my declared opposition to the History Curriculum proposals I was invited to form part of the Review Committee of the New National Curriculum. The Curriculum Review Committee's job was to review, revise and upgrade the 2000 National Minimum Curriculum and to give a final draft of the new National Curriculum Framework to be presented for public consultation in 2010.

As part of this review, various learning areas had been identified and these learning areas were eventually to support the broad curriculum framework. For each learning area, learning outcomes had to be identified and I was nominated to be a member of a small group of people, which included representatives from the Education Directorate and schools, to develop the learning outcomes for Citizenship education at the eight levels (from Kindergarten to end of secondary school) in compulsory education.

This sub-committee was chaired by Horace Caruana a College Principal<sup>11</sup> and hand-picked by Grace Grima, the Director General of Education, who was herself the Chair of the Curriculum Review Committee.

I had very mixed feelings about whether or not to accept the nomination to join this sub-committee not least because of my concern regarding the decrease in the time allotted to proper history teaching and because of my fears that under these proposals history would stop being a separate subject on the school timetable, such fears which I had publicly declared in the media. However, I also had a far more serious worry that by far transcended both these two concerns. In my opinion I strongly feel that in the case of history there is the added problem that history and citizenship do not always sit comfortably together; indeed, in some instances they are incompatible. Whereas, citizenship is concerned with developing

certain attitudes and values which currently prevail in a society, history is about questioning evidence. Citizenship is essentially an initiation process while history is not designed for this<sup>12</sup>.

However, in the end I decided it was wiser to be part of this national process than to be outside it and accepted to join. There were regular intensive meetings for about 3 months with all the other members representing all the other subjects which were to fall under Citizenship Education. These now included besides History, Geography and Social Studies, Home Economics and PSD (Personal and Social Development) bringing it to a total of 5 subjects. Horace continually emphasised the fact that the subjects would continue to exist and that Citizenship Education was to be just the general theme embracing the five subjects. I was relieved to see that the one lesson Citizenship idea had apparently been shelved. We worked together to produce quite a lot of documentation which totalled 4 outcomes for each of the 6 Levels of classes.

By Christmas 2009 the work was presented to the Curriculum Review Committee which sent back very positive feedback while suggesting a number of modifications, for example, to include more topics on National and European identity. However, the Committee did not meet again before April 2010 when in our last meeting we were informed that the final report had been presented to Grace Grima, the Director General and the Chair had produced from our work an introduction on Citizenship Education and our work had been fitted in the general curriculum.

The official consultation document on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) came out in October 2011. It was made up of a pack which presented a set of four consultation documents. The first document was an Executive Summary, the second a Rationale, the third the Three Cycles showing how programmes of study would be developed and the fourth document was entitled 'The Way Forward'.

I was taken aback to see clearly in black and white in document three under the heading Citizenship Education that:

The NCF is proposing a core learning area that provides for a broadly integrated approach to Citizenship Education, bringing together the subject areas of Social Studies, History, Geography, Environmental Studies and aspects from Personal, Social and Health Education and Home Economics. (The National Curriculum Framework Consultation Document 2011 no.3, p.53)

So Citizenship Education had replaced all the other subjects including history although the National Curriculum Framework consultation document continued to say that 'in the later years, students are also given the opportunity to take History, Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies and European Studies as optional subjects' (The National Curriculum Framework CF Consultation Document 2011 no 3, p.53). So in theory, one could still choose it as an O Level Sec option in Form III/Year 9 (13 year olds) but obviously in practice this would become increasingly unlikely since students would not have been having any history lessons in the previous years. This development was very upsetting for everyone involved in history education but yet again we were informed that this is just the draft consultation document and people had up to June 2012 to give any feedback.

I wrote several feedbacks repeating in each one my previous litany of concerns. As the History co-ordinator in the Department of Arts and Languages in the Faculty of Education I wrote amongst other points that:

History in the draft document falls under the heading of *Citizenship Education* (p.44), together with Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, PSD and Home Economics. All these subjects do indeed possess concepts and notions in common and in particular situations it might make sense to allot them a common branch title. *Humanities* instead of *Citizenship Education* would be preferable as main generic term. It is important to point out that while Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, PSD and Home Economics can be used to help develop

children's sense of democracy and citizenship, it is however by far not their sole function. One hopes that the Consultation Document is not implying that these subjects will cease to exist as separate academic subjects in their own right and used only by means of an integrated approach to teach Citizenship Education .... (Vella, 2012a)

I also made reference to other countries for example the case of Britain where I said:

... back in the 1980s in Britain, where this approach had been very popular in some schools for some time, history inspectors were alarmed at how standards in the subject in these schools had fallen and how history teaching had become just an outline of facts and information. There was a loss of rigour and the distinctive nature and methods of history were compromised. Furthermore, integrated approaches in general were criticised for creating undemanding tasks and watered-down versions of the subjects. Students were often bored and found thematic approaches tedious. More recently Annual Reports of HM Senior Chief Inspectors of Schools reported even more alarming results of 'hybrid' integrated courses. In seven of the 10 schools visited between 2008 and 2010 in which curriculum changes had been made towards integrated approaches, history, with other foundation subjects, had greatly suffered. For example: 'a series of themes was created and history teachers were required to make artificial links to them...so the history curriculum lacked coherence and undermined progression' ... 'schemes of work and lessons were created in which subject specialists had limited or even no input; the result was superficial and simplistic teaching and learning; feedback to students was of limited value because it lacked subject-specific comments about how they might improve' ... 'the work set was not as challenging as when students were specifically taught history in discrete lessons...with students saying the work was too easy'(Source: *History for All: History in English Schools 2007/10*, Ofsted, March 2011). (Vella, 2012a)

As the co-ordinator of Primary Social Studies in the Primary Department of the Faculty of Education I said that, 'Even at Primary level the distinct elements of Social Studies should remain separate. It is the only way the integrity of the areas can be respected and the specific learning skills and concepts of these individual subjects retained' (Vella, 2012b). I also wrote the History Teachers Association's National Curriculum Framework feedback where for good measure I repeated the above points once again.

There were moments when things with regard to history in this New Curriculum became very unclear and confusing. At this point it was quite perplexing for me to learn that, oblivious to what was being said in the draft consultation document, actual detailed syllabi of all the subjects were being presented as separate documents entitled 'Handbooks' by the Educational Directorate itself. This was happening precisely while the consultation period on the National Curriculum Framework was being conducted, that is, the period between October 2011 and May 2012. This History Handbook was looking at history as a completely separate academic subject in schools and was being planned on the old model of two history lessons per week. This work was being conducted by a team of history subject co-ordinators led by George Calleja, the History Education Officer at the Directorate. When I learnt of its existence I offered my services and they were accepted. A lot of work had already been done when I joined and while on the whole I liked the general approach I was critical of certain aspects in particular on progression in history, which were and are unfortunately still very unclear in the History Handbook. But otherwise I worked well with George Calleja and I was responsible for the topic 'Life in Late Medieval Malta'<sup>13</sup>.

Then suddenly in February 2013 the New National Framework was out with a backdated date of publication of December 2012 possibly to precede any possible developments which might result from the General Election which was announced in Malta for March 9th 2013 and which in fact did bring about a change of government. All the lobbying in favour of retaining history as a separate subject seems to have worked. In this final document there is no mention of Citizenship in any of the Learning Areas for the Junior and Secondary School Cycles, instead the New Curriculum states that:

The Working Group establishes the Learning Areas for the Junior and Secondary Cycles of

education to be Languages; Mathematics; Science and Technology; Health and Physical Education; Religion and Ethics Education; Humanities, Education for Democracy; and Visual and Performing Arts. (A National Curriculum Framework for All, 2012 p. xiv)

It was very satisfying to read in chapter 1 that there “was a high level of convergence of views expressed” in the consultation process and amongst the points identified in the Report there was that:

The Learning Area on Citizen Education is, in the main, criticized as it is feared that it will result in the marginalization of Geography, History and Social Studies as separate disciplines. (National Curriculum Framework 2012, p. 3)

The New Curriculum Framework places the study of History together with Geography in a specifically focused Learning Area called Humanities. However, perhaps it is too early for history educators to celebrate because one has to see what percentage of time will be given to the Humanities in this new Curriculum. There are clear minimum entitlements for each of the eight Learning Areas in the Junior, Lower Secondary and Senior Secondary Years but the percentage distribution graphs for Humanities do not present Humanities alone but share the 10% entitlement of Humanities with Education for Democracy in the Junior and Lower Secondary Cycles while in the Upper Secondary School, Humanities share their 10 % with Religious & Ethics Education, Education for Democracy and with the Visual and Performing Arts. Presently it is difficult to predict at this stage how all this will translate into actual school lessons and the real situation that history will find itself in, will only really surface once the implementation stage of the Curriculum begins. Unfortunately, there is a very real possibility that the two history lessons per week may yet disappear to be replaced by one or even fewer lessons of history per week.

The launch of the new National Curriculum coincided with a significant political change on the island. In Malta today, that is, April 2013 a new administration is in government, after almost 25 years of a Conservative administration, Malta now has a Labour government, with a new Minister for Education. One has yet to see what effect this is going to have on the new Curriculum. It is not yet clear whether it will be retained in its entirety, whether parts of it might be transformed and most importantly how will it all be implemented in the schools. Personally, the journey involved in the creation of this new National Curriculum has been a most interesting learning experience, with various twists and turns – a journey which at this stage is far from complete.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Malta’s constitution clearly says that:

(1) The religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion.

(2) The authorities of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong.

(3) Religious teaching of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all State schools as part of compulsory education. (Constitution of Malta Act, 1964 line 2)

<sup>2</sup> Canon Paolo Pullicino (1815-1890) was a priest who was put head of a Committee on Education by the British Governor in 1847. He founded the Education Department which to this day runs all public state schools in Malta.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Language Question’ is a term in Maltese history which denotes a historic period starting in the late 19th century up to the 1930s. This was a time when a harsh political struggle started between sections of the population in favour of the use of English, against those in favour of the use of Italian. Maltese and English eventually became the two official languages in Malta in 1964 and today Malta’s national language is Maltese.

<sup>4</sup> Malta has one department which runs all state schools and is run by the national government under the Minister of Education. For many years it was known simply as the Education Department and later on as

the Education Division. Today it is frequently referred to as the Directorate.

<sup>5.</sup> A thorough study on Maltese history textbook was conducted by George Cassar and can be found in a joint paper by G. Cassar and Y. Vella (2011) entitled 'A hundred years of history teaching and learning in Malta' found in G.Cassar and Y.Vella (eds.) *History teaching and Research: bridging the theory/practice divide* Vol 2

<sup>6.</sup> Malta followed the same system as in Britain with regard O Levels, with the change to GCSEs Malta starting calling her O Levels, 'Sec O Levels' that is Secondary Education Certificate Ordinary Levels.

<sup>7.</sup> In Malta the term 'New History' is still frequently used to refer to history teaching which places more emphasis on the use of sources and history thinking skills and concepts. A term first used in Britain in the 1970s but lately not so frequently used outside Malta, where it is now more popularly known as the 'Source Method' or 'Investigative History Teaching'.

<sup>8.</sup> Michael Sant was a pioneer in the teaching of History in the 1980s and early 1990s. In his capacity as Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, he was a complete convert to the 'New History' methods of teaching and popularised the idea of using sources in history teaching in Maltese schools.

<sup>9.</sup> The Maltese History Teachers Association organised the 2006 Euroclio General Conference entitled 'Teaching History Thinking Skills and Concepts' while they also organise an annual seminar on history teaching entitled the Michael Sant Memorial Lecture, where experts from abroad have regularly from 2000 been invited to give papers on history teaching.

<sup>10.</sup> With regards the use of sources as part of history teaching Malta came out quite high when compared to other European countries in an EU project entitled 'Assessment, tutorial structures & initial teacher education of trainee students in the subjects Political/ Civic Education, Social/Cultural Studies & History in Europe—a comparative study—ITTP', co-ordinated by Prof. Alois Ecker, University of Vienna Summary of study may be viewed at <http://che.itt-history.eu/>

<sup>11.</sup> Today Primary and Secondary schools in Malta are clustered and grouped according to different areas and regions which form a College and these are headed by a Principal in charge of all the schools in that group.

<sup>12.</sup> I further developed and articulated my concerns about interdisciplinary teaching in a paper I presented at an IRASHE (International Research Association for History and Social Sciences Education) conference in Rome in September 2012 entitled *The problem with teaching history as part of an integrated or interdisciplinary cross-curricular pedagogical approach*.

<sup>13.</sup> The new History Curriculum Handbook may be viewed at:

[http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric\\_f1/curric\\_f1\\_history\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric_f1/curric_f1_history_handbook.pdf)

There are only two specific detailed syllabi ready at present and these may be viewed as follows:

Links for curriculum units:

Form 1 (11 year-olds): [http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric\\_f1/curric\\_f1\\_history\\_units\\_e.pdf](http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric_f1/curric_f1_history_units_e.pdf)

Form 2 (12 year-olds): [http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric\\_f2/curric\\_f2\\_history\\_units\\_e.pdf](http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric_f2/curric_f2_history_units_e.pdf)

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## **Learning to think historically through course work: A New Zealand case study**

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### **Abstract:**

*In New Zealand senior secondary school students are not required to follow a history prescription and up to a half of their courses for national qualifications are based on internally assessed course work where they enjoy a high degree of autonomy over what they choose to study. This paper draws on recent research in five New Zealand schools that examines the extent to which students learn how to think historically when they engage in this type of learning. History is typically only offered as a senior option subject in New Zealand schools and while young people are unlikely to engage with historical thinking prior to this, students who are successful in conducting internally assessed research projects are developing advanced understandings of how the discipline of history operates. It is argued that in this context these students (as novices) are largely developing disciplinary competence and expertise in history by conducting research projects because this process is central to how historians (as experts in the field) critique, interrogate and produce knowledge. While analysis is at an early stage, findings indicate that these students have developed advanced understandings of the interpretive nature of historical thinking, although the question of significance (that in the curriculum is explicitly linked with New Zealand) is proving to be a more difficult concept for students to master.*

### **Key Words**

Historical thinking, Significance, Teaching and learning, New Zealand, Assessment

### **Introduction**

In New Zealand senior secondary school students are not required to follow a national prescription in history and up to a half of their courses for national qualifications are based on internally assessed course work where they conduct individual research projects and enjoy a high degree of autonomy over what they choose to study. This paper reports on a 2011/2012 study of 91 students in five New Zealand schools that examined the extent to which young people learn how to think historically when they engaged in this type of learning. The students in this project demonstrated high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in these assessments and many had sophisticated understandings of how the discipline of history operates. They were not only extrinsically motivated to achieve high grades for national qualifications (and making tactical decisions in this regard) but they also demonstrated high levels of intrinsic motivation in these assessments that was well beyond what was required of them to achieve academic success.

The question of motivation has implications in a New Zealand setting as although history is only offered as a senior option subject (and young people are unlikely to engage with historical thinking in their junior schooling) participants in this study typically demonstrated advanced understandings of how the discipline of history operates. It is argued that in large part this is a consequence of students conducting internally assessed research projects because the research process is central to how historians (as experts in the field) critique, interrogate and produce knowledge. While analysis is at an early stage, findings indicate that these students have developed advanced understandings of the interpretive nature of historical thinking, although the question of significance (that in the curriculum is explicitly linked with New Zealand) is proving to be a more difficult concept for students to master.

### **Rationale**

History is not a prominent part of the New Zealand curriculum (Sheehan, 2011) but those students who elect to study the subject in the senior school generally develop advanced understandings of how the discipline operates. History is only offered as an elective in the final 3 years of secondary schooling. In the junior school history is subsumed within the integrated subject of social studies where students seldom develop a detailed understanding of the past or engage with the key features of historical thinking (Aitken, 2005; Archer & Openshaw, 1992; Cubitt, 2005; Harrison, 1998; Low-Beer, 1986; Partington 1998). This article reports on how young people develop disciplinary expertise in history by conducting internally

assessed research projects. It is through disciplinary thinking that students (as novices) shift from focusing on the superficial features of knowledge to develop the characteristics of experts who tend to 'think in terms of deep structures or the underlying principles of knowledge' (Bolstead & Gilbert, 2012, p.15). McPeck (1990) argues that learning to think critically is more effectively developed within the frameworks of traditional academic disciplines. It is primarily through this approach that students 'learn to do things with knowledge, to use knowledge in inventive ways, in new contexts and combinations ... [and] to enter and navigate the constantly shifting networks and flows of knowledge that are a feature of 21<sup>st</sup> century life' (Bolstead & Gilbert, 2012, p.32).

The internally assessed research component of New Zealand senior secondary history courses was introduced in the 1980s. It was influenced by the School Council History Project in the United Kingdom and aimed to introduce young people to historical skills such as source analysis (Department of Education 1987; 1988; 1989). Initially the internal assessment component of national qualifications was aligned to students results in norm-referenced external examinations but in 2004a standards/criterion based assessment system (National Certificate of Educational Achievement: NCEA) was introduced. The internally assessed component of this qualification is now autonomous and up to 50% of history courses are based on student's conducting their own research. NCEA is closely aligned with the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC 2007) that, in the case of history, reflects a disciplinary approach to history especially in regards to the interpretive and contested features of the subject.

Internal assessment has proved controversial. It continues to generate criticism that it is demotivating and lacks academic credibility. A number of high-profile schools claim external examinations are a more valid measure of students' intellectual development and recently one of New Zealand's most prestigious secondary boys' schools largely eliminated the internal assessment component of NCEA at Year 11. The principal claimed that this was because the 'learning style and nature of most boys suited external exams', there had been a 'decline in motivation and the work ethic of students', and internal assessment undermined 'the coherence of individual subjects' (Morris, 2010). The media are also typically critical of internal assessment. For example, a 2011 article in a major national monthly magazine (*North and South*) attacked the integrity of internal assessment by alleging that the government body responsible for examinations (New Zealand Qualifications Authority: NZQA) 'fudged the figures' to make it appear that moderators and teachers agreed on the internal assessment mark for students' work (Coddington, 2011). The article was deemed 'unfair and unbalanced' by the authority that monitors journalistic standards (New Zealand Press Council, 2012), yet it was stoutly defended in subsequent editions by the editor and commentators.

Given both the controversial nature of internal assessment at this level and the contribution history makes to young people's intellectual and social development, establishing the extent to which students learn how to think critically about the past when they conduct internally assessed research studies is a priority. The aim of teaching young people to think historically is for them to master the disciplinary tools that historians use when they produce and critique knowledge including engaging with substantive content (the substance of history) and second-order concepts that are central to the framework of the discipline (such as change, continuity and significance) (Lee 2004). Developing a disciplined, structured way of thinking in academic subjects such as history is a key factor in achieving academic success in the 'knowledge age' where students are required to become familiar with the concepts and principles of the domain of an academic discipline as negotiated by experts in the field. To do this successfully in an academic subject such as history students need to be able to read and understand large amounts of text, and to develop a grasp of specialized vocabulary and particular discipline-based methodologies (Sturtevant & Linek, 2004). This way of thinking cannot be acquired purely from everyday experiences but rather requires systematic instruction (Alexander, 1997). Teaching young people to develop a historical perspective also allows young people to place events, ideas and personalities into a wider context as well as foster a degree of empathy for others (Davison, 2012). Learning how to think critically about the past however is counter-intuitive and it has been described as 'an unnatural act' (Wineburg, 2001). Students' beliefs about the past are inherently shaped by the present and new information is filtered through these (often firmly held) views (Gardner, 1985) and typically young people make sense of the world through popular memory and the continuous construction of narrative. In this context engaging with historical thinking contributes to

young people being able to make informed and intelligent judgments about both the past and the present that are central to developing the qualities of critical citizenship (Johnson & Morris, 2010) especially in regards to being able to adjudicate competing claims to historical authenticity and 'truth'.

### **Methodology**

The researchers adopted a mixed method qualitative approach to gathering the data (Levstik & Barton, 2008) including interviewing, focus groups and documentary analysis. Ninety one students in five New Zealand schools participated (two in the South Island and three in the North Island) and data was collected during 2011/2012. As this is a 'point-in-time' study it did not track progression nor did researchers attempt to measure relative attainment between schools. Ethnicity data was collected but is statistically irrelevant given the sample size. As well as interviews (conducted in focus groups) documentary evidence was collected including how students personally evaluated the research process. Teachers were interviewed with a particular focus on how they assessed their students' work and the nature of feedback provided during the research process. The interviewers paid particular attention as to how students established significance in history and how they understood ideas about interpretation and bias through variations on the following questions:

- Why are there different versions and interpretations of the past?
- Are there better ways of thinking about or approaching the past than others?
- How do we establish what is important to know about in the past?

Qualitative data was imported into NVivo 8 and the focus of the analysis thus far has been on how students (as novices) engage with the particular methodologies, vocabulary and concepts of history, including the contested and interpretive nature of how knowledge is produced in the discipline (Sheehan and Howson, 2012).

The analysis process has been informed by a grounded theory perspective that allowed for the complexity of the data that was gathered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) yet was bounded and structured by a specific research question: *How do inquiry-based history research projects contribute to students' developing disciplinary competence and expertise in history?* Analysis is still in its early stages and is not a straight forward matter because the range of ideas about particular themes and questions is not linear or uniform. Approximately 4-6 students were interviewed in focus groups at any one time and to ascertain if their understanding of historical thinking was typical of their cohort, students in the home classes of those interviewed during 2012 were asked to complete a historical thinking matrix to triangulate our data (n= 152). These students were asked to agree/disagree with statements such as 'all historical accounts are biased', 'primary sources are more accurate than secondary' and 'some accounts of the past are more valid than others' as well as to consider the question of historical significance. This data is being analysed using SPSS software. Researchers are also currently drawing up a 3-level novice-expert, epistemology/knowledge matrix that is informed by international studies (Vansledright, 2011; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Shemilt, 1987) and shaping the categories around those used in the Historical Thinking Project (Peck & Seixas, 2008).

### **Discussion/Findings**

#### **Interpretation**

Students in this study generally demonstrated sophisticated understandings of bias and of the interpretive nature of the discipline. They were operating well beyond novice thinking in this regard, had a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of sources and were thinking critically about historical arguments. For example one student saw all sources as biased: '... because that's just how it is and I don't believe you can be completely impartial about something, because you just can't'. He reasoned that this is because we have different interpretations of the past:

... Because it is really human nature, it's a part of everyone's personality and everyone has their own different set of values and morals. I may value different things to what people sitting in this room value, and so events that happen may have bigger impacts on me as opposed to everyone

else, where events that happened to them may have a bigger impact on them depending on what they value.

Many of the participants had similar views to that expressed above that demonstrated an understanding that objectivity is not a realistic option for historians. For example, one student initially argued that truth is attainable when accounting for the past where there is historical evidence to support a particular claim but when asked to what extent it was possible for historians to fully account for the actions of individuals in the past, he conceded that this would not be possible:

It's something you will never truly know. You can guess at it, but you can never be completely certain. The person might lie or have changed their mind over time so you can never actually know what the person is thinking. For example, I might have eaten cake and thought it was average, and then a week later I thought the cake was much tastier than I did before. And now in my opinion if you asked me what I thought the cake tasted like I would say it tasted really, really good even though I didn't before, but now I decided it did.

Despite the eccentric nature of his example, this participant demonstrates some grasp of the role memory plays in shaping our view of past events and that our experiences over time can change how we remember the past.

Not all students had a sophisticated grasp of the second order concepts of the discipline (and did not achieve well in the internal assessment tasks). There were some who were working with weaker notions of the past in disciplinary thinking terms as the example below indicates:

In a way, back a long time ago, then it was the leader who wrote the history or told people to write the history for them, but now it's like diverse. People write books and they're more free.

However these students were not typical of those who participated in the study. The majority demonstrated advanced historical understandings such as the nature of historical accounts depends on the types of questions asked and different accounts of past events can both be valid as long as they are based on the protocols of disciplinary thinking.

### **Historical thinking and significance**

The question of historical significance is a high priority in the New Zealand history teaching community (Harcourt, Fountain and Sheehan 2011). Although teachers in New Zealand have considerable autonomy in how they shape their programmes (and in regard to internal assessment students typically choose their own topics) courses of study are required to be '*of significance to New Zealanders*' and participants in this study did not generally have a firm grasp of how this concept operates in the discipline. Significance is seen as a key concept among proponents of the 'disciplinary approach' to history thinking who do not see school history as primarily about developing particular values such as the 'common good' (Barton & Levstik, 2004) but rather as introducing young people to the critical, disciplinary tools that historians use when they construct, interpret and adjudicate different interpretations of the past (Wineburg, 2000; Lee, 2004; Shemilt, 1983; Lee & Ashby, 2001; Seixas, 1997; Levesque, 2008).

The ability of students (as novices being inducted into the discipline) to appreciate the second order concept of *significance* is an important step in their understanding of how the discipline of history operates. Historians cannot study everything that happened in the past so they select particular 'historical events, personages, dates or phenomena that are more important to their studies than others' (Levesque, 2008, p. 41). What is seen as significant in the past is likely to change over time and establishing a consensus over what is significant is unlikely as students, teachers and historians typically view the past through their own cultural, ethnic and social frameworks (Seixas, 1997; Hunt, 2000). In light of this researchers have focused on establishing an effective disciplinary framework for teachers to draw on in the classroom when they ask students to engage with this concept (Counsell, 2004; Hunt, 2000; Levesque, 2008; Seixas, 1997,

Partington 1980, Cerdillo, 2001).

The question of significance was proving problematic for many participants who (despite being very aware of the contested interpretative nature of the subject) were especially troubled by the phrase 'significance to New Zealanders'. By grafting the phrase 'to New Zealanders' onto significance there is additional dimension that demands teachers and students interrogate the idea of what history is for and what knowledge counts in this time and in this place. In part it acts as a counter to the reluctance of many history teachers to incorporate a New Zealand dimension into history courses that until recently were dominated by a narrow, Eurocentric range of topics such as 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England (Sheehan, 2010). Developing an authentic understanding of how the phrase 'of significance to New Zealanders' shapes historical thinking however, requires young people to engage with New Zealand's historical experience as part of a wider human story. Rather than seeing New Zealand's history as that of a small, remote island nation that was settled by Europeans over the last 200 years and 800 years earlier by Polynesians, the cultural, religious, legal, intellectual and social frameworks that shape New Zealand in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have direct roots in Polynesia and Europe that go back several millennia (Andrews, 2009).

What was apparent is that many young people (and teachers) were adopting a literal, novice response to ascribing significance to the events that they had chosen for their internal assessment. Most typically looked at specific New Zealand events and personalities and in this they reinforced earlier studies by the author that reported on the narrow range of areas historians, teachers and students in New Zealand saw as significant (Sheehan, 2011b). However those students who chose to focus on international events generally made an explicit link with a New Zealander who had been involved in some way. For example the Cambodian genocide was claimed to be significant by a number of students because a New Zealander was tragically captured, tortured and killed there:

For the standard we had to relate it back to New Zealand and Cambodia actually had a New Zealander die at the hands of the regime so that made it easier.

I just pointed out that a New Zealander died during it and that New Zealand had signed the treaty against genocide for the United Nations so we probably should have done something but did nothing.

The death of a New Zealander (Kerry Hamill) who was inadvertently caught up in this catastrophe was certainly tragic yet the Cambodian genocide is one of the most profound events of the last 40 years and its historical significance to New Zealanders is that it has something profound to say to us about the human experience. Similarly in the case of a study of the genocide in Rwanda a number of students made the connection with the New Zealand UN representative (Colin Keating) who saw the situation as one of genocide at an early stage and attempted to pressure the UN take some action.

Many students saw 'significance to New Zealanders' as an inconvenient 'add-on'. For example in one internally assessed study (that the whole class had completed) students had been asked them to compare the battle of the Little Big Horn in Dakota in 1876 with the defeat of the British at in a particular battle in New Zealand in 30 years earlier. The comparison felt awkward and participants typically felt the NZ experience wasn't very important.

The significance to New Zealand part I thought was at times very frustrating ... they want more to discuss the direct parallels with New Zealand which I think is, apart from being frustrating and sometimes difficult to do. I don't like how it focuses everything onto New Zealand ... especially seeing as New Zealand is a very small place on the global scale and that drawing parallels to New Zealand is always generally a bit stretched because of the fact that there is not a whole lot of things that you can really say because New Zealand is a small place and it hasn't been colonised for that long so.

I think that it's hard to make these comparisons with the Battle of Little Bighorn and New Zealand because sometimes I don't really think that it was actually significant to New Zealand and the only way you could write about significance was just saying that they were similar in this way.

Students in this example were not engaging with significance in a way that reflected an understanding of how the second order concept operates. For example they had not been encouraged to consider why Americans see the battle of the Little Big Horn as significant yet New Zealanders do not see a similar event in the same light. In reality the actual events are not so very different. They were both relatively minor 19<sup>th</sup> century, frontier conflicts in which indigenous people were able to defeat a colonizing military force. Neither battle involved many people nor had a major impact in shaping the overall colonization and settlement of these frontier societies. However what students were not able to do is critically reflect on why in America the 'battle of the Little Big Horn' is seen to be of significance while in New Zealand a similar event is not.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of our study is in its early stages but those students who are successfully engaging with internally assessed projects have typically sophisticated understandings of the interpretive nature of the discipline. They are operating well beyond novice thinking in this regard and had a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of sources and the need to be cautious of accepting historical arguments at face value. Engaging with internally assessed research projects is also offering them a chance to develop critical thinking skills and address complex conceptual matters directly associated within the discipline of history. Furthermore while these students are extrinsically motivated to achieve high grades in their internally assessed projects, they are also intrinsically motivated to go well beyond what is required of them to achieve academic success and by doing so are developing powerful understandings of the disciplinary framework of history. Although the question of significance (especially with the grafting of significance to New Zealanders onto this concept) is proving to be difficult to master this may be a consequence of how recently (last 2-3 years) notions of historical thinking have been embedded into the NZC and the NCEA assessment requirements.

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***A Question of Identity? Purpose, Policy and Practice in the Teaching of History in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland***

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**Abstract:**

*This article traces the evolution of history education, north and south of the Irish border since partition of the island in 1921. It begins with an historical overview of the situation common across Ireland prior to partition. Subsequent developments in history provision in elementary, primary and early secondary education are traced in each of the two jurisdictions that emerged after partition, the Irish Free State, which became the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland. In each case, the educational and political imperatives of each, which shaped these changes, and resulted in divergence, are identified, analysed and compared. Evidence is drawn from the dominant literature in each jurisdiction and on relevant curriculum documents. The paper concludes by demonstrating that in a post-modern, increasingly globalised world, shared educational ideas and political aspirations emerging from the Irish peace process are acting to bring the respective history curricula back into symmetry and, thereby, providing opportunities for increased co-operation.*

**Key Words:** Ireland, History Education, National Identity, Education and Conflict

**Introduction**

This article examines the teaching of history in Ireland and looks at its historical and ideological development over time, from the establishment of the national school system in the 1830s to current debates relating to how history should be taught during the 'decade of commemorations' (2012-2022), a period which includes the centenaries of key events and movements in the histories of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Focusing on the teaching of history during the period of compulsory education with emphasis on elementary / primary education (5/6 years to 14 years), the article begins with a shared narrative from the setting up of the national school system in 1831 to partition in 1921/22.<sup>2</sup> It then outlines developments in both jurisdictions, highlighting points of divergence and agreement between history curricula and between their underpinning ideologies and practices. The article concludes by discussing some critical issues that emerge in relation to the teaching of history in Ireland in the twenty-first century.

The methodology used was a simple one: drawing on the dominant literature in each jurisdiction and on relevant curriculum documents, the authors separately constructed critical narratives which served to identify emerging points of convergence and divergence between the two systems. These partial critiques were then subjected to an iterative process of dialogue and redrafting until the final article emerged. This approach is evident in the article, where the voice of each section is, to some extent, determined by the nature of the available sources while the overarching framework and the concluding arguments are shared constructions.

**A national system for all**

The national system of education set up in Ireland in 1831 was one of the first of its kind in Europe. Established 41 years in advance of the English system, it was multi-denominational and aimed *inter alia* to promote identification with the British Empire, increase governability and reduce poverty, and to extend state control of the education sector hitherto characterised by private denominational institutions and societies, and by a network of informal, localised and potentially subversive 'hedge schools' (Walsh, 2012, pp. 18, 19; Coolahan, 1981; Akenson, 1975).<sup>3</sup> The multi-denominational character of this social experiment quickly fell foul of inter-religious rivalry and by 1870 the trend towards denominationalism was largely

accepted (Coolahan, 1981, p.26). Overseen by a National Board, whose composition reflected key religious and economic interest groups of the period, the system changed little in the decades leading up to 1920, when efforts by the government to introduce local control through the establishment of County Education Committees were defeated, largely by the resistance of the Catholic Church (Walshe, 2012, p. 21; Akenson, 1975, p. 20). The system inherited by the Irish Free State, therefore, was both centralised and denominational. In contrast, in the new entity of Northern Ireland central authority had to be re-established by the fledgling Ministry of Education and, unlike its counterpart in the south, it met resistance from the Catholic hierarchy.

The narrow and literary programme implemented in national schools in Ireland between 1831 and 1900 was mediated through state-sponsored textbooks which prioritised education as a moral and socialising project (Coolahan, 1981, p. 20). Convinced that history textbooks would be inevitably partisan, the Board excluded from the curriculum 'all systematic teaching of history' (Fitzpatrick, 1991, p. 171). The *Revised Programme of Instruction*, however, which was introduced in 1900, sought to integrate history into the programme through sanctioned texts (Walshe, 2012, p. 53). By 1908, persuaded by the idea that history could be taught in an unbiased way, a primary history curriculum had been developed, along with a range of approved textbooks focusing on both Irish and British history (Fitzpatrick, pp. 173, 174). With significantly more Irish history content than its counterpart in lower second-level education, and reflecting the progressive character of the *Revised Programme*, the 1908 primary provision included an emphasis on local history and the use of historical poems and ballads. The debate in relation to bias and subversion resurfaced in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rebellion but the 1908 programme remained in place until partition led to the formation of two separate educational systems with divergent views on teaching history and its relationship to wider issues of identity and citizenship.

#### **History teaching in Northern Ireland, 5-14**

From the outset the unionist northern government was acutely aware of nationalist hostility from within and without as a threat to Northern Ireland's existence. It moved early to re-impose central authority in education, this time from Belfast. In opposition, a third of Catholic elementary schools continued to show allegiance to Dublin until autumn, 1922 when the government there terminated the payment to teachers, thus forcing the schools into the northern system (Akenson, 1973, pp. 44-45). Once initial attempts to re-assert non-denominational education had failed, largely due to mutual suspicion and the self-interest of the churches, the government was prepared to use the power that it had over finance, school structures and curriculum to promote positive attitudes towards the United Kingdom and to guard against potential nationalist agitation in schools under the influence of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the fulcrum of political influence had moved eastwards. Akenson (1970, p.50) asserts that 'parity with England came to dominate the social policy of the Ulster government'. Thus, after 1921, their actions 'in most matters, and especially in education, diverge sharply from their southern counterparts'.

The Lynn Committee was set up to establish the structures of the new education system. Reporting in 1922 its recommendations clearly pointed to the role history education might play in orientating the new state politically when it declared that children 'should acquire an elementary knowledge of the history of Great Britain, and of Ireland, especially Ulster as part of the United Kingdom' (Cited in Smith, 2005, p.112). History education was to be an option only in the final three years of elementary education, but a compulsory component of secondary provision. Smith (2005) has briefly surveyed the Stormont decades, drawing on small scale research reports, official documents, inspection reports and anecdotal evidence. The picture that emerges of the elementary and early secondary years is one characterised by a tension in official attitudes. There was a desire to expose children to an 'Ulster as British' narrative but also unease that emphasis on a local dimension might legitimise the claim from Catholic schools to teach about Ireland's past. Consequently, a watching eye was kept on the endorsement of suitable textbooks and, in the primary school, a lack of attention to history was more desirable than encouraging teaching which might be subverted by a nationalist agenda. In any case, this vigilance was probably wasted as Murray's study of two primary schools in the mid 1970s demonstrates the power of schools from both communities, regardless of official policy, to transmit contrasting messages of identity through the 'hidden curriculum' (Murray, 1985). Hansard minutes of proceedings in Stormont in the 1950s and 1960s do show that,

periodically, as confidence in the Catholic community was growing, and revisionism at academic level was gaining momentum, voices did speak out for a more inclusive approach to teaching Irish history (Smith, 2005, pp. 118-119). However, before any significant change took place greater forces took charge and in the late 1960s Northern Ireland began its descent into communal violence.

Bar external senior school examination syllabi and anecdotal accounts there is a dearth of evidence to illuminate students' experience of the history curriculum in the two decades prior to the Troubles. However, Magee (1970), in an influential paper drawing largely on policy documents and his own extensive educational experience, presents a snapshot of history teaching north of the border just as violence was gaining momentum. He describes an official position which is suspicious of anything Irish and where 'Irish history was taught only where it impinged in a significant way on the history of Great Britain'. In primary schools, history was treated as optional, Irish history was largely ignored and subject provision was 'spasmodic, unco-ordinated and largely academic' (Magee, 1970, p.5). Surviving resources indicate that the best work frequently involved children engaging in local studies, prompted by the enthusiasm of individual teachers. As for secondary level, history was taught extensively but, Magee (1970, p.7) concludes, it was 'too verbal, too intellectualised' and inaccessible and irrelevant to the majority of young people. When the Stormont parliament fell in 1972 direct rule from London prevailed and, over time, this opened up the possibility for a more constructive role for history teaching in fostering better community understanding.

Thus, in the past three decades NI has presented a case-study on how history education might respond to conflict, first during violence and then in a society seeking transformation. Northern Ireland's divisions are closely associated with contested national identities where historical collective memory runs deep. Contemporary political actions frequently seek justification in real or perceived grievances in the past. Initially, critical educators sought to break the destructive connection between selective historical memory, community affiliation and antipathy to the 'other' (Magee, 1970). Ways were sought that would encourage young people to better understand the root causes of division and thereby challenge the history they encountered at home and in the streets. Decisions still had to be made as to what was the most appropriate curriculum framework to achieve this while still developing children's all round historical understanding; and at what age pupils should be introduced to potentially controversial material.

The decision to introduce a Northern Ireland Curriculum in the early 1990s was largely a consequence of direct rule. The Conservative led British Government's decision to develop a National Curriculum for England was soon followed by a similar proposal for NI. What emerged mirrored closely developments in England but also allowed recent local history initiatives to be officially endorsed (Phillips et al., 1999). The history curriculum followed a similar structure to the constructivist English model. It, too, was underpinned by the idea that a curriculum founded on sound principles of historical investigation – the formulation of interpretations only when consistent with evidence, the sound grasp of the historical concepts of chronology, a sense of time and causation and the recognition that those who acted in the past did so from different perspectives – could then equip young people to engage with more complex historical questions as they progressed through school.

In NI the preparation of the excellent *History Guidelines for Primary Schools* (NICED, 1984) had already set a precedent for an evidence based approach to teaching history in primary classrooms. However, establishing sound enquiry principles now took on extra significance. The rationale contained intrinsic aims related to the fostering of historical thinking but also made explicit reference to the extrinsic aim of contributing to a more peaceful society (for extrinsic aims, see Slater 1995, pp.125-6). The History Working Party entrusted to draw up the new curriculum was directed to ensure that what emerged contributed to the cross-curricular theme of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) (NICC, 1989; 1990, p. 89). In a society in conflict it was deemed particularly pertinent to develop critical thinking as a pre-requisite for teaching potentially emotive and divisive historical events in a measured and open way. This premise was an important influence in the way the original history curriculum was structured across the compulsory stages of primary and secondary education. It resulted in complementary but distinctive functions for the primary (key stages 1 and 2) and secondary (key stage 3) strands of the curriculum. The

role for the primary school was envisaged as one that built a foundation of historical thinking, thus equipping older students at key stage 3, and beyond, to critically examine the more contentious past. The History Working Party proposals advocated that teachers 'should not hold back' from controversy but at the same time cautioned that sensitive materials 'should be introduced at a time when pupils have sufficient maturity to possess the critical faculties to handle it appropriately' (NICC, 1990, p.6). Ideally, in the Working Party's view, this was aged 14 and over.

In turn, the cognitive model of progression adopted, together with commitment to EMU, influenced the working party's selection of content. Most obviously, the core units of study selected were to be examined in their Irish, as well as their British and European contexts, thus ensuring for the first time that all children and young people would study aspects of Irish history. However, at primary level this would largely be confined to social dimensions with political history reserved for key stage three and beyond.

At key stage one, as in England, the emphasis on introducing children to the concept of evidence and to developing their sense of time and period was to be developed by studying people and events close to the children's own experiences, related to the history of their own families, communities and familiar celebrations; and then more formally on a study of the recent past. Attention was on skills and concepts rather than pupils encountering anything that might be deemed culturally and politically sensitive. At key stage two (aged 9-11) compulsory units of study on the themes of Early Times, the Vikings and the Victorians were prescribed but, again, the emphasis was on social history and the lives of ordinary people. Even when tackling the Victorians in the final year of primary school political events were largely omitted from the official guidance materials. For example, when teaching the Irish Famine teachers would cover the traumatic experiences of those who suffered through starvation, eviction and emigration but be less likely to investigate the responsibility of Government for people's suffering. Thus, a legitimate argument was advanced that concentration on the familiar and the social, allied to embedding critical skills, was in line with children's cognitive maturity and would better prepare students to engage with Ireland's contentious past at a later age. Yet, near contemporaneous research was indicating that even by the age of three many children in Northern Ireland have already acquired an embryonic framework of sectarian identification (Connolly, 1998). It might be argued that the history curriculum as designed allowed primary teachers to side-step responsibility to challenge the myths and partial understanding younger children may have acquired in their families and communities.

How far did the first NI History Curriculum achieve its aims? No official single subject evaluation was commissioned during the period of its implementation. An NFER Cohort study tracked 3000 students across five years of schooling between 1996 and 2003. It makes few direct references to history in the primary school but in recording views at the end of key stage two it found that pupils did not perceive socially orientated subjects like history to be given great importance; nor did they think that the curriculum, generally, was very relevant to their everyday lives (Harland et al., 1999).

Barton (2001a, 2001b) provides the main insights into the impact of primary history under the first NI Curriculum. His comparative study of NI and US primary students' understanding of history highlights significant differences between the two, some of which he attributes to the nature of the respective primary history curricula. Whereas, the strong narrative approach of American school history influenced US children into seeing history's purpose as providing a sense of national identity, pupils in NI thought history should help them learn about people different to themselves. Possibly, this reflects the emphasis at key stage two on investigating the everyday social lives of people from the more distant past. Further, NI children were more aware of the place of evidence in historical thinking, had a more complex grasp of chronology and sense of period and were better able to see forces for change beyond the level of human agency. Thus, Barton argued that the primary history curriculum was achieving two of its core objectives by building a foundation for the critical evaluation of evidence and by encouraging children to acknowledge and value difference. Yet he also observed that, even in the primary classroom, children showed interest in issues of identity and 'by keeping controversy at arm's length, teachers may be inadvertently surrendering to influences outside the school – influences that they might be uniquely qualified to challenge, and which pupils expect them to confront' (Barton, 2007b, p. 42). He encouraged educators to facilitate the study of

events from the past which develop a shared sense of identity, 'one that transcends the community divide' (Barton 2007a, p.13), as well as events illustrating difference.

Key stage three is not the major focus of this paper but it is relevant to track the transitional impact of the original curriculum from primary to secondary education. Studies (Barton & McCully, 2005; 2010; Bell, Hansson & McCafferty, 2010) indicate that students' understanding of enquiry did transfer and that students did value the role school history plays in helping them make sense of history they encounter in classrooms and elsewhere. Yet, the capacity to move beyond their own cultural allegiances to understand the past from other perspectives proved difficult, as did establishing connections between historical events and the contested present. Young men, particularly, as they grew older were more likely to draw selectively on their historical knowledge to support community orientated positions, perhaps, reflecting increasing politicisation with age. Several small scale studies also suggest that teachers while professing commitment to the rhetoric of an enquiry based, multi-perspective curriculum may be less proficient at carrying it through in practice (Conway, 2004; Kitson, 2007). A revised curriculum introduced in 2007 has both created greater flexibility to meet student needs and further strengthened the extrinsic aims of the key stage three history programme. Rather than eschewing the identity issue as was the case previously teachers are required to provide students with opportunities to 'explore how history has affected their personal identity, culture and lifestyle' (CCEA, 2007). Time will tell as to how far the changes will enhance history teaching's contribution to societal transformation.

As regards the impact of revision on primary history at key stages one and two there are questions as to how far the move away from subject specific provision to an integrated *World Around Us* approach (embracing geography, history and science and technology) has sustained the foundation for enquiry, considered important for the more challenging work in the secondary school. Great emphasis is placed on developing generic "thinking skills" but there is a danger that this will be at the expense of understanding which is specifically historical. Certainly, the time spent on preparing teachers for history in initial teacher education has already been substantially reduced in response to curriculum change. Prescriptive content has been removed from statutory provision but accompanying guidance indicates that the expectation is that the emphasis will continue to be placed on social history. However, it should be noted that a strong citizenship dimension has been embedded into the *Personal Development and Mutual Understanding* strand of the curriculum which more directly addresses issues of community division than before.

### **History teaching in the Republic of Ireland, 5-14**

The intention behind the educational policy of the newly independent Irish state from the 1920s to the 1960s was primarily one of Gaelicisation, the construction of a distinctive and singular national identity and the development of the Irish Ireland envisioned by its founders. The Irish education system in general during this period was characterised by administrative conservatism (Akenson, 1975) and by cultural nationalism in terms of its curriculum (Coolahan, 1981). The curriculum agreed by the First National Programme Conference in 1921-22 and by the Second National Programme Conference of 1926 prioritised the revival of the Irish language above all else, a policy which included the teaching of history (and other subjects) through the medium of Irish, even in areas where Irish was not children's first language. The Irish language was seen as synonymous with Irish identity and the education system was identified as the main vehicle for its revival as the majority language. Available statistics suggest that by the 1940s history was taught through Irish in a majority of primary schools (Doherty, 1996 p. 339, fn 2).

The teaching of history was, in essence, a state-building project, particularly in the context of primary education. Prior to the introduction of free second level education in the 1960s, the majority of children completed their compulsory schooling in national primary schools. The second-level system was largely private and denominational and less subject to state control through inspection or through prescribed curricula. The primary sector, therefore, offered the most fertile ground for the reconstruction of Ireland's 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991; O'Callaghan, 2009, p. 19). The ideological thrust of the history programme is perhaps best articulated by this quote from the *Notes for Teachers*, issued in the early 1930s and which remained in use, with some modification, until 1971.

In an Irish school in which History is properly taught, the pupils will learn that they are citizens of no mean country, that they belong to a race that has a noble tradition of heroism, and persistent loyalty to ideals. In such a school no formal exhortation should be necessary to bring home to every pupil the worth of good faith, courage and endurance and the strong grounds there are for the belief that a race that has survived a millennium of grievous struggle and persecution must possess qualities that are a guarantee of a great future.

The *Notes* go on to broaden the definition of patriot to include ‘the ordinary people of Ireland who do their daily work faithfully’ and warn against any ‘distortion of the facts of history’ or suppression of facts ‘derogatory to national pride’ (Department of Education, 1934).

The nationalist ideology at the heart of the history curriculum, which included the implicit conflation of Irish identity with Catholicism, did not go uncontested.<sup>4</sup> Protestant church leaders protested against the Catholic nationalist character of history textbooks and the enforcement of Irish language requirements, criticizing them as inherently sectarian (Jones, 1992; Doherty, 1996). Questions of ‘nationalistic bias’ surfaced from time to time in Dáil (parliamentary) debates and in public discourse, prompting one commentator to call for the setting up of a ‘small committee of experts’ with representation from the Department of Education, professional historians and teachers, ‘to examine how far this criticism is valid’ (Hibernia, 1962, p. 8).

As it happens, consonant with other impulses towards change, such a committee, comprising of historians and educationalists, was set up four years later by Fianna Fáil, the party then in government. It is worth noting that this occurred at a time when there was a renewed and intense focus on the Irish revolutionary period, and, in particular, the Easter Rebellion of 1916, the half-centenary of which fell in 1966. In subsequent decades, the celebratory nationalism deemed to be characteristic of the commemorations at this time became embedded in public discourse as one of the factors that contributed to the Troubles. The unreflective teaching of a narrow, nationalist school history programme was identified as another.<sup>5</sup>

However, more recent research into the history of 1966 has revealed a more complex and differentiated story, suggesting, among other things, state efforts to embed a modernising agenda into the commemorative events, rather than a backward-looking celebratory nationalism (Daly and O’Callaghan, 2007). Indeed, prompted by the growing belief of politicians that the economic future of the country was generatively tied to the quality of its education system and, in particular, to the issue of access, education itself was on the cusp of change and within five years had undergone something akin to a revolution.

Charged with considering how history should best be taught across the education system, the Study Group on the Teaching of History in Irish Schools established in 1966, signalled a move away from the narrow and inward-looking provision characteristic of the system since the foundation of the state. The Study Group was conservative and traditional in its conceptualisation of children’s capacities. Nonetheless, its recommendations for primary level, which included a focus on historical concepts and processes, on social, economic and local history and on the links between past and present, foreshadowed many of the changes brought forward by the 1971 Primary School Curriculum (Study Group on the Teaching of History, 1967; Department of Education, 1971a, 1971b). While the 1971 curriculum continued to draw on the rhetoric of ‘sublime patriotism’, it went beyond the recommendations of the Study Group, promoting engagement with historical sources, and with local, social and global history. Premised on a child-centred perspective, it supported active and experiential learning across the curriculum and espoused an integrated and constructivist approach to knowledge. History became part of a broader subject, Social and Environmental Studies, which included geography, civics and elementary science (Department of Education, 1971b, p. 87). While history could be introduced informally from first class (6/7 year olds) onwards, it began formally in third class with a focus on early and medieval history and on ancient civilisations. In senior primary, the focus shifted to significant periods in European history and to Irish political history, particularly the key epochs, events and individuals that punctuated the overarching narrative of independence. Patch studies of life in a Norman Castle, the Great Irish Famine or the 1798 Rebellion and line of development studies on themes such as energy and transport, introduced a new vocabulary into history teaching and novel ways of organising children’s learning experiences through field

trips and collaborative group work.

However, while 1971 marked a watershed in curriculum at policy level, it was less successful at the level of practice. Although there was some evidence of an increase in project-based work, the teaching of history continued to be dominated by the textbook, while there was little engagement with local history or with the local environment as a site for historical learning in the majority of classrooms (Department of Education, 1983; Motherway, 1986; 1988; Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 1996). This failure of implementation was a recurring problem within the system and evident at each stage of curriculum reform from 1900 onwards (Walsh, 2012). On the other hand, there is little dispute that from the perspective of children, the 1971 reforms in general supported a more holistic, open and 'child conscious' (Sugrue, 1990, p. 11) learning environment, which made a significant difference to children's experiences of school.

If the 1971 curriculum embodied education's response to the modernising agenda of the 1960s, the Primary History Curriculum 1999 (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 1999) captures the tendencies towards multiplicity, deconstruction, and critique characteristic of post-modernism and of globalisation. As an expression of the state agenda in history, it is one that no longer sees the need for school history to prioritise an agreed national story, or instill in children a privileged national identity.

Influenced by inquiry-oriented curriculum developments elsewhere, particularly in the UK, and premised on a view of historical knowledge as provisional and constructed, it promotes critical and reflective engagement with the evidence of past lives and communities and with the historical roots of present day attitudes, structures and contexts. Organised in four class bands (Infant Classes, First and Second Classes, Third and Fourth Classes and Fifth and Sixth Classes), the 1999 curriculum presents its content in strands and strand units, with an over-arching strand focusing on skills and concepts. There is gradual progression outwards from the child's direct experience to the wider world and, premised on a spiral rather than a chronological approach to history, children visit and re-visit time periods over the course of their primary schooling in increasingly complex ways. There is a strong focus on local and social history throughout the curriculum, with political history again introduced in the final two years (fifth and sixth classes), a characteristic feature of Irish primary history curricula since the foundation of the state. Similar to the 1971 curriculum, it is part of an integrated subject area, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education, which it shares with geography and science.

The contrast between the 1999 history curriculum and earlier curricula is striking in terms of the extent to which it embraces an open-ended, rather than a bounded conceptualisation of national identity which 'seeks to imagine 'us' without 'them' (Tormey, 2006, p. 322). Where identity is focused on, it is in the context of multiple and nested identities – personal, local, national, European and global – while its conception of Irish identity is a plural and inclusive one which seeks to build children's respect for, and openness to different communities and perspectives (Waldron, 2004). Characterised by Tormey (2006) as signifying a movement away from a 'post-colonial' to a 'globalised' curriculum (p. 312) and by Waldron (2004) as 'relentlessly post-nationalist' (p. 217), the 1999 history curriculum can also be seen as a response to the local historical context which saw the emergence of the Northern Ireland peace process after decades of conflict. Indeed, one could argue that while globalisation may have provided the ideological frame for the curriculum, the state's need to institutionalize its educational response to the peace process provided its moral and political purpose.

While its strengths are evident, the curriculum is not without its flaws. Although it endorses an investigative approach to history, it ignores to a large extent the role of historical questions in driving that investigation. This weakens its capacity to promote an inquiry-oriented approach to history and may, in practice, reduce the role of evidence to an *ex post facto* illustrative or motivational function, rather than seeing it as part of the process of constructing historical knowledge. While the embedding of a multi-perspectival approach across the curriculum means that the narratives of non-dominant groups can be made more visible, the curriculum fails to problematise the historical roots of structural inequalities of class, gender or ethnicity. Moreover, the low visibility of myths, stories and legends particular to Ireland may limit the future capacity of children to recognise and critique common cultural tropes and iconography and to reflect critically on

their use and misuse (Waldron, 2004, p. 219).

Furthermore, while the Irish primary history curriculum holds much that is to be welcomed in terms of its engagement with identity, pluralism and diversity, its failure to engage with a broader framework of citizenship education leaves issues of identity in an uncertain and uncritical space. Citizenship education within the curriculum is located within Social and Personal Health Education and, while it focuses in the main on promoting participative citizenship and the practice of democratic processes within the school community, it includes a focus on national symbols, heritage and culture with specific emphasis on emblems, flags and celebrations. Removing such aspects of citizenship from their historical context and eschewing a more critical and reflective approach in favour of a celebratory one is problematic at the best of times; in the context of the upcoming 'decade of commemorations', it is particularly so. It is likely that this reluctance to see history as a relevant or necessary part of citizenship education in the current curriculum derives, in part, from earlier debates relating to the role of school history in fuelling physical force nationalism and a consequent reluctance to address directly its role in the construction of what it means to be an Irish citizen. Constructed, as it was, during the period of negotiations that preceded the Good Friday Agreement, some measure of avoidance or nervousness may have been inevitable. Yet, while it eschews open engagement with citizenship, it is very explicitly engaged in a future-oriented process of identity construction, which seeks to imagine Irish identity as plural, cosmopolitan and respectful of difference.

While the history syllabus at lower second level has gone through a parallel process of change, its revisions do not have the same resonance in terms of identity construction. Indeed, they present as gradualist and disciplinary-focused when compared with the fundamental shifts at primary level. The introduction of the Junior Certificate syllabus in 1989 (Department of Education and Science, 1989) represented the first reform of note in a sector characterised as academic and exam-oriented. Premised on the idea of 'new history', it emphasized the development of historical concepts and skills, as well as the role of evidence and interpretation in the construction of historical knowledge (Crowley, 1990). However, there is little evidence in the text of the syllabus, or in the accompanying guidelines of any commitment to student-led enquiry or, indeed, to enquiry as a paradigmatic mode of engagement with history. While there was some revision of content in 1996, the syllabus has remained largely unchanged in terms of its areas of focus. More recently, efforts by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to 'rebalance' the history curriculum have been overtaken by significant reform of the Junior Cycle itself which will see a rebalanced syllabus implemented in 2017 (NCCA, 2008a). Among the more controversial aspects has been the decision to remove history as a core subject at Junior Cycle, a status it has held for most of the second level sector since the early 1920s.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of students' experiences, while the research base is slight, there are some evident themes that recur over time. Teaching in general at second level has been critiqued over many decades as exam-oriented, and textbook-led (Gleeson, 2012; Raftery et al., 2007), while recent research indicates the continuing influence of terminal examinations on history teachers' choices in terms of content and method (Raftery et al., 2007). In a study of history teachers' identities, O'Boyle (2004) suggests that the teaching of history is also characterised by an avoidance of controversial issues and a momentum towards ideological conformity and consensus (p. 425). While there is some suggestion that enquiry-oriented approaches to history are gaining ground at second-level (DES, 2006) transmission-based, textbook-led teaching still remains a key if declining issue across the curriculum at both primary and second level in the Republic of Ireland (NCCA 2008b, 2008c; Eivers, Sheil & Cheevers, 2006; Waldron et al, 2009).

### **Divergence and convergence: a North/South perspective**

Over the course of eight decades, curriculum policy in the Republic of Ireland in relation to history has evolved from one in which a nation-building agenda was articulated through the transmission of an agreed national story and the promotion of a privileged and exclusive national identity, to one which embraces both the constructed and provisional nature of historical knowledge and the idea of multiple perspectives. These changes have been prompted in part by the meta-discourses of modernisation, neo-liberalism and globalisation, and the resultant bonds forged between education and the economy, as well as by the

growing influence of constructivism and related theories in education. More local discourses were also influential: debates about historical revisionism arising from the historiographical revolution begun in the 1930s which gained momentum with the growing unrest in Northern Ireland (see Brady, 1994); voices which challenged the role of school history in providing a context in which extreme nationalism could continue to flourish and, more recently, discourses about diversity and multi-culturalism which shattered the illusion of homogeneity implicit in earlier curricula.

As for Northern Ireland, prior to the Troubles, the use of education for political purposes was less overt but no less pervasive. Yet, in trying to consolidate the state all that educational policy achieved was deeper segregation and resistance from the minority Catholic community. Association with the rest of the United Kingdom meant that the modernist and post-colonial forces for social change which prompted the educational reform movement in Britain from the 1960s did have an impact on Northern Irish education a decade later, for example by bringing history based on disciplinary approaches to educators' attention. Of course, by then the conflict was endemic and, to their credit, policy makers wrestled with how constructivist approaches to teaching and learning might be adapted to foster greater community understanding and trust. Expectations for education's role in peace-building have gained momentum with the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. The Revised Curriculum claims to be a response to 21<sup>st</sup> century change, both local and global. It places Local and global Citizenship at its core and history is asked to take on stronger social utilitarian aims. Indeed, the onset of the decade of commemorations has heightened the interest of civic society in teaching history to a point where some are concerned that its disciplinary rigour in schools may be threatened (McCully, 2012, p.154). However, from whatever direction educational policy comes, the structural segregation imposed on schooling at Northern Ireland's birth remains a constant, constraining influence.

Currently, one could argue that history curricula in the RoI and in NI now have more in common than not, particularly at primary level. Both present a shared view of history and of the role of enquiry in the construction of historical knowledge; both emphasise social and local history and prioritise making connections between children's environments and the historical past. Both recognise the interconnectedness of learning and support integration and interdisciplinary approaches to varying degrees. Neither puts forward a definitive or singular notion of identity but seeks to locate children within a range of communities, from local to global. If the northern curriculum has a more explicit articulation of the role of history in citizenship education, albeit that the boundary is becoming blurred, the silences within the southern curriculum in this regard are ones that are full of possibility and open to development. One significant difference between the two curricula, however, and one which has remained constant over time, is the exclusion of political history from the NI primary curriculum and its inclusion in the southern curriculum.

Tormey (2006) argues that the reflexive construction of identity embedded in the 'skills and methods' of the Primary History Curriculum of the Republic, together with the conceptualisation of identity evident in its aims, objectives and content, amount to identity construction as 'a self-conscious project' for children in primary school. Drawing on Giddens (1991), Tormey argues that this is 'not unproblematic' and suggests that both 'the unbounded sense of identity and the existence of such perspectival work for young children might be thought to increase anxiety and uncertainty at a time when one might be better served building a sense of trust and certainty (p. 321)'. Are Tormey's reservations, justified? Is the inclusion of political history which requires the problematising and deconstruction of received identities a step too far for primary school children?

From a southern perspective, it is probable that, notwithstanding the existence of dissenting voices, the consensualism inherent in the idea of a dominant national narrative meant that the political topics included in successive curricula at primary level were never conceptualised as controversial or problematic in the first place. While confining it to senior classes implies some recognition that political history is cognitively complex, up until the most recent curriculum that complexity did not extend to include issues of meaning, interpretation, perspective and identity. Even so, the southern curriculum in general endorses the Brunerian premise that complex ideas can be introduced to young children in age-appropriate ways. In

Northern Ireland Tormey's reservations have, to date, been shared by curriculum planners who have steered teaching away from political history at primary level. This has raised its own dilemma in that there is a danger that children develop an exclusive identification with the past unchallenged by schooling. Perhaps Barton's call for some emphasis on common aspects of the past has potential in helping children to see identities as multi-faceted and not necessarily conflicting.

There is a convincing argument also, that, whether we like it or not, children are already constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing their ideas of identity, including community and national identity, responding to influences, negotiating contradictions, buying into old stereotypes and creating new ones every day, in school and out. Furthermore, when given the opportunity, children will recognise and critique the inconsistencies, biases and tropes embodied in their ideas of national identity and the mechanisms that shaped them in ways that are open and reflective (Waldron and Pike, 2006). In this context, the idea of childhood as a place apart where identity remains unquestioned, implicit in Tormey's critique, may be a luxury neither jurisdiction can afford.

### **Conclusion**

From a common starting point the accounts above have illustrated that very different political and administrative regimes acted upon history teaching, north and south, in the decades which followed partition in 1921. Cultural and political forces in each jurisdiction quickly led to contrasting educational structures and this helped shape what history was taught and, to an extent, how it was taught. As demonstrated, history teaching was utilized, somewhat simplistically, both north and south, to consolidate attitudes to the respective states and to boost identity formation. The enduring contrast in approach has been the willingness in the south to promote teaching about overtly political events and personalities originally as a means of legitimizing the origins of the Irish state and, more recently, in pursuit of understanding and a more inclusive approach to national identity; and in the north the official shunning of such issues, initially to contain expressions of Irishness and, more latterly, to avoid the potential to contribute to division at a young age.

However, common threads can also be detected across the decades. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century proceeds a number of influences, emanating both from within and beyond, are restoring elements of symmetry to history provision on the island. Today, influenced by the Troubles and post-conflict transformation, and by cultural diversity brought about by immigration, the concept of identity has become more problematic in both states at a time when the political imperative has become one of reconciliation. Arguably, in response, history teaching has come to value complexity, diversity and inclusivity. This is reflected less in the content covered and more in curriculum structures and pedagogical approaches adopted, as illustrated in recent curricular revisions in both jurisdictions. Northern Ireland's administrative ties with the UK have probably meant that progressive educational ideas arrived sooner than in the Republic but it is significant of common influences that, at their own pace, both systems now advocate evidence-based, multi-perspective aims for historical learning set in a wider interdisciplinary framework. Further, history teaching north and south is more self-conscious than before of its potential to influence social attitudes although much has yet to be done to articulate the distinct but complementary relationship with citizenship education.

It would be naïve to underestimate the constraining impact that the pressures of accountability and instrumentalism, associated with two heavily examination orientated educational systems, have on creative approaches to teaching and learning. Yet, overall, history teaching in Ireland is in a reasonably optimistic place. There is an emerging consensus that the subject should be taught through the process of critical enquiry and that it must be made relevant to the needs of children's and young people's everyday lives. Having experienced nearly a century of divergence, approaches are now moving back into line. This is timely as the decade of commemorations rapidly advances. At a wider societal level the series of anniversaries present both the potential for triumphalism and deep partisanship and the opportunity to re-think the impact and significance of Ireland's last hundred years in a way which facilitates greater mutual understanding and interconnectedness. School history is in a good position to make a contribution to the latter, not least through establishing cross-border communities of practice amongst teachers and

students.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Decade of Commemorations refers to the decade 2012 to 2022 which includes the centenaries of a range of key historic events beginning with the centenary of the Ulster Covenant in 2012 and ending with the foundation of the Irish Free State in 2022. It includes events such as the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the 1916 Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme and spans the course of the First World War and the Irish Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland (NI) was established by the Government of Ireland Act in 1921 and the Irish Free State was established by the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1922.

<sup>3</sup> 'Hedge Schools' were unofficial schools which grew up in response to the Penal Laws, enacted in the late seventeenth century, which *inter alia*, included a prohibition on Catholic education.

<sup>4</sup> Demographically, on its foundation the southern state was overwhelmingly Catholic with a small (approx. 7%) Protestant minority. This minority decreased in size over the ensuing decades and by the 1990s represented approximately 3% of the population. More recent census document a growing diversity among the population.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Dáil Eireann Debate, Vol. 259 No. 2, p. 48. Downloadable at <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/1972/02/23/00048.asp>. Irish historiography of the period, from the 1930s onwards, was also characterised by intense debate relating to historical research, the writing of history and historical revisionism which grew in intensity from the 1970s onwards and included debate amongst historians around the teaching of history, as evidenced by Fitzpatrick, 1991 and Doherty, 1996. See Brady, 1994 for an account of revisionism during the period.

<sup>6</sup> See the website of the History Teachers Association of Ireland for an account of the debate regarding the 'threat to history' at <http://www.htai.ie/>.

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**'A Giant with Clay Feet': Québec Students and their Historical Consciousness of the Nation**

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**Abstract:**

*The aim of this paper is to explore French Canadian (Québec) students' historical consciousness of the nation through the lens of Social Identity Theory (SIT). Relying on a sample of 142 Québec's historical narratives written by Francophone Québécois students, the paper revisits findings from a previous study on the historical consciousness of young Québécois. Informed by SIT principles, our narrative analysis shows how most Franco-Québécois categorize the past in homogenous categories (e.g., the imperialist Anglophone; the surviving Francophone) and frame their stories into particular modes of present-day orientations. Implications of this study for history education are also discussed.*

**Keywords:** Historical Consciousness, Québec Students, Nationalism, Social Identity Theory, School History

**The context**

Educating the younger generations and instilling in them unifying historical representations of their country are taken very seriously by state authorities in Canada (Osborne, 2003). Yet national history and historical consciousness are hotly debated publicly. 'In Canada even history divides', once observed philosopher Charles Taylor (1993, p. 25). As might be expected, public memory often nurtures conflicting and potentially mutually exclusive stories of the nation. Interpretations of the past are not only contested but used publicly to justify partisan decisions about the future of the Canadian nation.

These conflicting narratives of nation have their origins in the bilingual nature of Canada and the coexistence of so-called 'nations within,' where nation means 'a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 11).<sup>1</sup> Whereas ethnic and previously marginalized groups have sought a more culturally inclusive narrative of the nation, national minorities pose a radically different kind of challenge to history. In the case of Québécois and aboriginal peoples, these groups were incorporated into the Canadian federation while maintaining their historical reference to a 'homeland'. Not only do they seek greater recognition of their contribution but also collective identity, rights, and self-government.<sup>2</sup>

One prevailing way of promoting nation-building is through shared stories (Miller, 1995). This is particularly true in the case of nations within since the legitimacy of their claims for collective identity and self-government lies in history. Narratives of the nation can be transmitted in various ways. Most often they are shared through what psychologist James Wertsch (2000) calls 'cultural tools', which include such societal things as official texts, oral stories, cinematographic representations, and of course, school programs and textbooks. Public memory supplies the societal milieu for the creation and legitimization of these nation-building stories.

The case of Québécois' historical consciousness is particularly interesting to study because of the circulation of those shared stories linked to the notion of nationalism. In reflecting on the uses and abuses of history, Margaret MacMillan (2010) concludes, history provides much of the fuel for nationalism. It creates the collective memories that help bring the nation into being. The shared celebration of the nation's great achievements – and the shared sorrow at its defeats – sustain and foster it (p. 81).

The events may be great national achievements but also great traumas as evidenced by reference to the Conquest of 1759 for French Québécois. So deeply entrenched into public memory is the defeat of the French army on the Plains of Abraham that a passionate societal debate fired up in 2009 when, for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle, Parks Canada planned a re-enactment ceremonial on the Plains. The

Québec nationalist outcries were such that the re-enactment was eventually cancelled to avoid conflict and violence.

Nationalism not always leads to self-determination but invariably relies on the notion of commonality, both in history and current life. This understanding of nationalism is precisely what Québec intellectual Fernand Dumont exposed a few years ago:

Today, Francophones may promote Quebec sovereignty in the name of greater government efficiency and claim to have exorcised the demons of their grandfathers' nationalism [but] they do not hide the fact that their wish for independence is also nourished by memories of past humiliations (as quoted in Meisel, Rocher & Arthur, 1999, p.1).

In sum, for Québécois, predominantly French-speaking Canadians (here after French Canadians) but not necessarily nationalist, history bears a special significance as a root for defining and distinguishing their collective identity from English-speaking Canadians (here after English Canadians).

A number of studies have documented the role and influence of cultural tools on Québécois' historical consciousness but one study bears particular significance. Over the last ten years, Létourneau has collected more than 4000 historical accounts from Québec francophone students (see Létourneau & Caritey, 2008). Volunteer participants from various urban and rural communities have been approached during their school year and asked to write a short story based on the following open-ended question: Please present or account for the history of Québec since the beginning, the way you see it, remember it, or understand it.

Preliminary results of the study have revealed a striking pattern: Québécois students of French Canadian background share a relatively singular and linear story of their nation (Létourneau, 2006).<sup>3</sup> This history of Québec is rippled with ideas of nostalgia and historical melancholy of an unhappy representation of Québec's national place in history (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004). The narrative template has variations but its basic plot remains relatively stable and contains the following four chapters:

1. An 'initial situation' in which European explorers discover North America and French Canadians subsequently settle and live a modest life in New France. The period is characterized by struggle over nature and contact with aboriginal peoples.
2. A 'time of crisis' with the Conquest of 1759, which marks the end of New France and the start of a long and painful period of English domination and French fight for cultural and linguistic survival (*la survivance*).
3. The 'Awakening' by the return of French power in Québec during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. After more than 200 years of collective survival, the time has come for political, economic, and cultural awakening for Québécois, who become 'masters in their own house' (*maîtres chez-nous*).
4. The 'uncertainty' of a fragmented and hesitant future. The momentum of the Quiet Revolution seems to have been lost with new constitutional changes and political defeats from the Referendums of 1980 and 1995. Vigilance about cultural and linguistic vitality is '*de rigueur*'.

In several ways, this narrative template has nothing original or particularly Québécois. One would think that other national groups have developed collective stories along the pattern of this historical narrative, most particularly national minorities in integrated multinational states (e.g. Northern Ireland). However, the value of this narrative resides in its recurrence among young Québécois of French Canadian background. Indeed, participants in the study are a very interesting case. They were born in the 1990s with no experience of the Quiet Revolution and limited memories of the Referendums on sovereignty. In many ways, their history of Québec has little to do with their own personal experience of Québec politics and emotional memories of 'past humiliations'. So why do these high school students develop and tell this particular story of Québec? What vision of Québec history do they use to think in these terms?

Answering why students cultivate a master-narrative of '*la survivance*' is most critical considering that both Québec historiography and provincial history education programs no longer promote that classic nationalist story expressed by earlier historians like abbé Lionel Groulx (1950).<sup>4</sup> Various curriculum experts and historians can attest to this professional change in history and education (Laville, 1996, 2010; Létourneau, 2006; 2006; Cardin, 2009). As Létourneau (2006) confesses, 'the [Quebec] ministry's program and textbooks can sustain many accounts of the historical experience of Québec. Their aims and content are largely reasonable and acceptable' (p. 77). Laville (2006) concurs, 'all current programs are structured around competencies to acquire and develop. These are no longer programs of factual knowledge' (p. 82). In the Québec curriculum, students are required to take social studies classes in elementary school (grades 1-6) followed by various courses in Canadian and world history and geography at the secondary level (grades 7-11). Following the Québec provincial task force on history education in 1996, all programs have been revised to put greater emphasis on historical thinking competencies, citizenship education, and cultural diversity (Cardin, 2009). In short, students in Québec are no longer expected to acquire a master-narrative of French Canada but to engage in a critical study of the collective past. But do they?

### **This study**

Works in social psychology, and from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) in particular, can be extremely pertinent to the analysis of historical consciousness. These works have highlighted the importance of understanding that past and current events 'do not merely unfold before our eyes, complete with their inherent meaning and implications' (Kunda, 1999, p. 4). Individuals play a crucial role in giving meaning to them. Such meaning-making is not given but influenced by societal beliefs, concepts, and theories as well as by personal goals and feelings. Applied to the field of history, social psychology provides a valuable analytical lens through which it becomes possible to understand how students of a given community use particular cultural tools to interpret past realities. Individual beliefs and personal differences do matter in thinking the nation but they only tell half the story. A basic assumption in social psychology is that individuals are 'social beings' who interact with one another to achieve some personal and collective goals and satisfy inner motivations (Kenrick et al., 1999, p. 434). Structured groups, like communities and nations, are made up of individuals who need to be interdependent. They work together to accomplish common objectives that could not be attained individually (e.g., create an independent country). Group structure favours cohesion and tends to create social norms and a common identity. It is through such group structure that public memory gets developed and reinforced by its members.

A classic theory in social psychology, Social Identity Theory (SIT) states that people are social beings who naturally develop a sense of group identity and, as a result of this collective belonging, identifies themselves in a comparative process between an 'us' versus 'them', otherwise called ingroup and outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The central hypothesis of SIT is that members of the ingroup are seen as sharing common attributes such as norms, values, language and history. SIT theorists argue that 'categorization forms the foundation of how we think about national groups' (Searle-White, 2001, p. 11). For social psychologists working in the SIT tradition, categorization is a 'mental shortcut' that individuals use to reduce seemingly complex societal attachments and interactions to more simple judgements (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 42). In other words, categorization helps processing information more efficiently by making people more comprehensible and predictable by assigning them to social categories (e.g., Westerns, Asians, Christians, Muslims, males, females, etc.).

Categorization is also extremely relevant to history since the past is virtually infinite. 'No historical account', as David Lowenthal (1985) acknowledges, 'can recover the totality of any past events' (p. 214). To be coherent and meaningful, stories synthesize past realities, and this requires people to make decision about what is significant and what is trivial to the storyline. One method of processing this vast historical information is through categorization. Categorizing historical events allows us to organize the messiness of the past into coherent groupings based on structured sets of cognitions (schemas). For example, we see the decades-long political and military tensions between the powers of the western world and the communist world as the 'Cold War' in reference to the restricted and indirect fights between the two blocs during the 1950s-1980s. Students, no less than adults, use categories to organize the past and construct their own accounts.

For SIT theorists, personal narratives of the nation are as much collective as they are individual. Over the course of their lives, people internalize various ideas from societal sources which they gradually transform into personal attributes and beliefs. In analyzing the relationship between the learner and the narratives, we find what Wertsch (2000) calls a 'dialogic' representation of the past because individuals always act in tandem with cultural tools at their disposal (p. 40). This dynamic process of appropriating national narratives is complex and never complete but helps explain how 'imagined communities' get established and transformed over time.

We argue that SIT is important to the study of historical consciousness because it provides a critical lens for looking into the categorization process of narrating the history of the nation. Since history is a vital part of one's own ingroup, the way one categorizes the past can tell us something about how he or she establishes a foundation for defining personal and collective identity. Within sight from SIT and empirical data from students, we examined how young Québécois categorize actors and events into dichotomous or harmonious groupings and, as a corollary, structure their narration of Québec's history. This categorizing pattern has not yet been looked at in previous studies.<sup>5</sup>

### **Methodology**

Following SIT theorists, we decided to focus our study on the stories of francophone Québécois students in their last year of high school (grade 11), using data originally collected by Létourneau. By doing so, we revisited the stories of students who (1) were in grade 11, (2) came from 11 schools located in various region of Québec, and (3) were French Canadian by origin. More specifically, results for this article are based on a stratified sample of 142 accounts from the corpus of data collected between the periods 2003-2004 and 2010-2011 with 990 grade 11 students from public and private schools in the province of Québec.<sup>6</sup> Essays were collected during class time for the sole purpose of the research without any impact on their school achievement. Students were given 45 minutes to complete the activity and did not have the opportunity to use personal notes, textbooks, or computers.

We believe that the use of storytelling to capture how students think the nation is a formidable instrument because narrative is an affordable tool used extensively by students to talk about the practical past (Barton, 1996; Egan 1989). Research even suggests that people have a mental 'story schema' that they use to make sense of their own lives and community (Carr, 1986; Levstik, 2008). Perhaps more importantly, inviting students to write a story requires them to select and connect antecedent and succeeding events in a more coherent and meaningful way than otherwise would be the case in a simple list of events.

### **Findings and discussion**

Much of current research in history didactics, including our own, is grounded in the belief that formal school history is supposed to replace intuitive ideas about the past, that people gradually acquire through life experiences, with more disciplinary evidence-based life experiences (Lee & Ashby, 2000; VanSledright, 2002; Seixas, 2004; Lévesque, 2008). This is clearly not the way young Francophone Québécois from this study envision their history. Results from our research suggest that young Québécois are not only 'students' but also and perhaps above all 'social beings'. Young Québécois do not bother making a sharp distinction between 'history' as a form of critical inquiry and 'historical memory,' the usable past shaped by emotional and contemporary social processes. We found an interesting selection process of events and periods by students when thinking about Québec history. Far from being insignificant, these categories do inform how students remember and interpret the past. Table 1 shows a representation of these categories based on the number of appearance in text (with a minimum of five occurrences).

**TABLE 1**  
**Categorization of Québec history**

Events/Periods	Occurrences in text
Age of Discovery/Explorers	132
Conquest of New France/Treaty of Paris (1763)	128
Colonization of New France	126
Québec referendums/Patriation of Constitution/ Provincial-Federal accords (Meech Lake, Charlottetown)	93
British North America/Québec Act (1774)/Constitutional Act (1791)	80
Rebellions of Patriots/Union Act (1840)	68
World War II	48
American Revolution/War of Independence	48
Confederation (1867)	42
Loyalists arrival to Canada	40
World War I	38
Quiet Revolution/October Crisis (1970)	35
Great Depression	34
Aboriginal peoples/Pre-contact with Europeans	32
Cold War/Duplessis era in Québec	32
Industrial Revolution	31
Women's rights	30
Westward expansion/Riel Métis Rebellion (1885)	17
Bill 101/Charter of French language	8
Deportation of Acadians (1755)	5

Among the most cited categories we find the European discovery of North America by Jacques Cartier (sometimes confused with Christopher Columbus), the British Conquest of 1759 and the ensuing Treaty of Paris (1763), and the colonization of New France. In fact, one interesting element from the table is that the top three categories all deal with the period corresponding to the first chapter of the narrative template outlined earlier. Students spent considerable time in their accounts presenting events and personages (Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain, Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, Jean Talon) related to the discovery of Canada as well as its slow but relentless colonization during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, the next most-cited category is about contemporary Québec history, the last chapter of the narrative template. Many references are made to the two referendums on Québec sovereignty (1980, 1995), the patriation of the constitution by the Canadian government (1982) without the consent of Québec, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the constitutional disputes over the place and recognition of Québec as a 'distinct society' within Canada. The high number of references to the contemporary period could be related to what students are most familiar with. Then comes a series of national and international events ranging from the Québec Act (1774), the Rebellion of French Canadian Patriots (1837-1838), World War II, the American Revolution, Confederation of Canada (1867), the Loyalists' arrival to Canada (following the U.S. Declaration of Independence) through to women's rights, aboriginal peoples, the Industrial revolution, the Quiet Revolution and the Charter of French Language (Bill 101).

A key finding from the analysis of events is that students do possess a sense of chronology as they connected meaningful events from the present and distant past into a story. Most accounts are more than discrete dates on a timeline. They do form 'a history' with a structured sequence and narrative orientation. This suggests that these senior level students have been able to make reference to a variety of ideas about the past, emanating from memories of earlier years of schooling and other societal influences, and organize them into a narrative. While stories varied in length and depth, two interrelated perspectives, like two sides of a same coin, seem to have been employed by students to categorize the past of Québec: Eurocentrism and ethnocentrism.

One striking feature of students' accounts is the overwhelming perspective of European colonialism, a

narrative trend that has also been observed in English Canada (Stanley, 2006). Overall, the great majority of participants (80%) begin their history of Québec with the 'discovery' of North America and references to Cartier and Columbus. Stories start with such statements as:

'Jacques Cartier arrives as conqueror and takes possession of the American land.' (CND4S19)

'In 1534 Cartier lands in New France.' (CND5S2)

'The history of Québec starts with the arrival of Jacques Cartier in 1534.' (DEC5S10).

The presence of aboriginal peoples is acknowledged by many students (60%), but their references typically happen during the colonization of New France by the habitants and most often from the positive perspective of European progress; progress in geographical discoveries, progress in commercial trade, and progress in morality and technology. Students talk about the 'acculturation of Indians' (CND5S10) and the fact that 'Those who inhabited the land since 7000 years did not know technology' (CND5S28). For them, America might have been inhabited well before the arrival of French explorers but this native presence does not appear meaningful to the overall vision of their accounts, as evidenced by this blunt statement from a student: 'At the beginning there was not much, only Indians who lived here' (PERS511).

The Eurocentric nature of students' stories is not exclusively in reference to aboriginal peoples. It is also in how they choose to address or not address the contribution and growth of the multiethnic population of Québec. Immigration is one such example. Throughout its history, Canada has been influenced significantly by repetitive waves of immigrants from Eastern and Western Europe, the U.S., Africa and Asia. Yet most accounts are relatively silent on these. The only two exceptions are the British loyalists who migrated en masse to Canada following the U.S. Declaration of independence and Irish Catholics who left Ireland during the great famine. As students put it:

'In 1783 the U.S.A. became independent. The loyalists arrived in Québec' (GRIV5S23), and  
'[The English] realized that Irish were immigrating to the francophone province [of Québec] and were taking our culture instead of theirs' (CND4S45).

The effect of this prevalence is that Québec history is very much a white European affair for students. Aboriginal peoples and non-white immigrants barely appear in the chronology and thus remain largely absent from the story they tell about Québec.

Eurocentrism in students' accounts only makes sense when analyzed in reference to its twinside, ethnocentrism. For SIT theorists, ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture and ingroup is the centre of reference for judging other cultures, practices, and outgroup (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 179). When applied to history, ethnocentrism becomes, for Jörn Rüsen (2002), almost an instinctive process inherent to identity-building. In our study, ethnocentrism reveals how the predispositions of Québec students to judge the past in terms of 'ingroup-outgroup' led them to select and interpret events in a naïve, culturally-biased way. Throughout the stories, one is struck by the chronic absence of non-French explorers and native leaders in the history of Québec (e.g., John Cabot, Donnacona) and the narrow, microscopic focus on French Canadian experiences. One recurring example illustrates this bias: the Conquest of 1759.

### **The main event: The Conquest of 1759**

The Conquest of New France is pivotal to French Canadian history (Quimper & Lacoursière, 2009; Buckner & Reid, 2012). In the fall of 1759, the British forces under the command of General James Wolfe defeated the French army of the Marquis de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham. This military defeat subsequently led to the fall of New France and the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763). As a result of this conquest, over sixty thousand French settlers suddenly became British subjects. Contemporary historians in Canada have placed the Conquest within the larger context of the so-called 'Seven Years War' (1756-63). The hostilities started in the Ohio valley in 1754 but Britain officially declared war in 1756 and aimed to destroy the French army and navy and ultimately eliminate France as a commercial rival. While France found itself committed to fighting primarily in Europe, Britain strategically used its powerful navy to attack and seize French colonies abroad. The Battle of the Plains of Abraham was one of the culminating British

military wins in America. School programs and textbooks make explicit reference to the Seven Years War and the war of the Conquest.

The Conquest is the single most cited event in students' narratives. No other historical event, including issues of contemporary politics, received as much attention in their stories. This finding tells us something about the saliency of war in Québec collective memory (as highlighted by Liu et al., 2005), but also of the place of the initial conflict between French and British in young Québécois' historical consciousness. Yet, how students situate this turning point in the larger geopolitical context of the time is intriguing. Most accounts do not present the Conquest in a 'big picture' historical perspective. In fact, for students the Battle of the Plains of Abraham is organized exclusively from their own ingroup point of view, as an invasion of 'our' land by 'them' (British/Americans). For students, the modest French colony controlled a gigantic commercial territory with a relatively small and unprotected population which made the envy of English merchants and settlers to the south. As one student writes,

'The continent was used only for fur trade and this is why the English took over Québec: A giant with clay feet. A territory too large for its population' (DRAC5S33).

Another student concurs,

'[The French] developed a colony very extended geographically and without infrastructure. The English, to the south, will invade New France to seize the territory, the fur trade and fishing waters' (CND5S19).

The reference to the British colonies to the south is also present in this other account, 'the war of the conquest is declared because the 13 colonies need territory to expand and want the land of New France. The 13 colonies win hands down and New France becomes the Province of Quebec' (CND5S31). These are rather simplistic and even inaccurate portrayals of the conflict between France and Britain in America. No reference is made to the main causes of the conflict between the two empires or even the preceding events that took place in the Ohio valley and Acadia. The focus of the story is exclusively on New France and the Battle that sealed the fate of the colony.

From a didactical point of view, students' simplified accounts are naïve considering the current Québec program of study and Canadian historiography, which both give fair place to situating events in the larger international context and to 'multiperspectivity'. From a social identity point of view, though, these stories serve an extremely useful purpose for students; they help position French Canadians (ingroup) in opposition to a dominant and imperialist outgroup, *les Anglais*. By doing so, students develop a predictable pattern of meaning-making which simplifies past realities into 'us versus them' and creates what social psychologists call an 'outgroup homogeneity effect'. Once we categorize people into groups we tend to see the other group not only as more different than ours but with common and stable traits and attitudes among all the members of the outgroup. In the case of these students, '*les Anglais*' become all alike, regardless of whether they are British or not, whether they were North Americans from the 13 colonies or British troops from Europe. No reference is made to individuals, leaders or ethnic groups within the outgroup. So why do students tell these simplified stories?

### **Defining ingroup and outgroup**

As the findings suggest, categorizing the collective past not only helps explain how students make decisions of causation and significance, it also forms the foundation on how people think about national groups. One straightforward way of defining who belongs to a nation is to think about nationality in terms of citizenship. This is the legal definition used by most nation-states today. Unfortunately, in multinational states like Canada, categorizing national membership is more complex because the limits of the nation do not necessarily coincide with those of the state. In the circumstances, how do young Québécois categorize themselves and others into national groups when looking at the collective past? To answer this question, we looked at their perceptions of the historical events listed in Table 1 and their attitudes towards the people identified in their stories. What emerges is an intricate division of events and people into 'us'

(ingroup) and 'them' (outgroup).

When comparing story events in references to group divisions and collaboration, we find a disproportionate ratio of 3 to 1 in favour of group conflicts. This indicates that students have deliberately selected events for their stories that more frequently highlight confrontations between groups, typically in terms of ingroup and outgroup. In fact, from 16<sup>th</sup> century explorers through to 21<sup>st</sup> century politics, the majority of events and personages cited in students' accounts deal with clashes between Europeans/Aboriginals, French/English, Québécois/Canadians, and Québec/Canada. Interestingly, students often used interchangeably expressions like 'us/French', 'us/Québécois', 'them/English', and 'them/Canadians' when talking about encounters between groups. In fact, for most students the term 'English' refers to the larger linguistic group populating Canada (and North America) not the ethnic background of Canadians of English descent. The following excerpts illustrate the interpretations of students and their separation of people into conflicting entities:

In 1608, Québec city was established. Initially cities were small camps for fur trade with Indians. But there were two empires wishing to control the land, the English and the French. Each made alliance with Indian tribes for commerce. They were constantly fighting.... (DRAC5S19)  
Years later, the French colony ended up in the hands of the English who tried to assimilate us, but they failed. (DRAC5S20)  
England colonized America in the south (US today). It is when the English came to New France that conflicts really started. (PER5S2).  
Around 1750 - Arrival of Loyalists. Confrontations between French and English.(CND5S10)

The tendency to conceive the past into ingroup and outgroup seems to influence how students make judgement about these particular groupings. To evaluate more precisely their categorizations, we looked at the extent to which these historical events presented favourably (strengthening) or unfavourably (weakening) the different groups in question. What we found is complementing the earlier findings on students' selection process. Twice as many events emphasize ingroup weakening compared to ingroup strengthening. Conversely, the number of events stressing outgroup strengthening is five times greater than the number of events for outgroup weakening. These findings suggest that the stories of students not only put great emphasis on group conflicts, but many students consider these confrontations (or their outcomes) to be largely negative for the ingroup and favourable to the outgroup. Consider the following comments:

The English will win. They will take all the territory and leave only a small piece of land to the French: the Province of Québec. (CND5S2)  
In 1837, we write the 92 resolutions. They will all be rejected (replaced by the 10 resolutions of Russell). Unhappy the [French] Patriots will lead an armed insurrection. This will be followed by the hanging of the Patriots. (DRAC5S22)  
The construction of the trans-Canadian railroad threatens [the province of] Manitoba. Louis Riel leads a rebellion. Québec is supporting him, but not Ontario. Louis Riel is executed. (CND5S23)

SIT theorists have suggested that categorization combined with homogenization leads to 'outgroup devaluation' (Wagner, Lampen & Syllwasschy, 1986). Once people position themselves into a collectivity, they tend to see their own group in positive terms and inevitably develop negative images about people in the other groups. Such a devaluation process helps reinforce collective belonging and develop feelings of collective worth and superiority. Every nationality, for instance, has stereotypical stories and jokes that denigrate the other. What is interesting about our findings is that Québec students have developed negative views about themselves – and the collective past – and attribute the causes of this to the outgroup. Their stories are submerged with cases of what might be called 'outgroup denunciation'. These include the Conquest of New France, the arrival of Loyalists, the hanging of Patriots following the Rebellion of 1837, the death of Métis leader Louis Riel,<sup>7</sup> the conscription crisis during both World Wars, the *Front de Libération du Québec* (FLQ) extremist movement and the ensuing War Measures Act (1970), and the unsuccessful referendums on sovereignty. In all these instances, and many others, students'

memories are about a dominated and reclusive people abused by others and fearful of its destiny. In fact, less than a third of students have expressed very positive views of their collectivity and highlighted instances of collaboration or ingroup success (e.g., economic growth, welfare state, women's rights, nationalization of hydro-power during the Quiet Revolution).

That being said, the stories of students overwhelmingly blame the past and attribute responsibility for the rather melancholic destiny of Québec to the 'English majority'. Indeed, in many instances where students talked negatively about the ingroup, they claimed that the outcomes of the situation generally favoured the outgroup. This is exactly how they represent the conquest of 1759 or the French Canadian Rebellion of 1837-1838. In either case, the result was seen as catastrophic for them and advantageous for the dominant group, as expressed by the following student:

The English and French had different ideas and did not get along well. The French wanted mostly to preserve the language and their importance, which was not obvious for the English population. In fact, most conflicts started from that. The French society was crushed by the English who took over their land. (PER5S2)

### **A vision of Québec history**

The largely negative interpretations of Québec's past and the blaming of the outgroup led us to ask the further question: what vision, if any, do these students have with regard to the history of Québec? People construct historical accounts to give a temporal orientation to their present life situation by means of recollection of past realities. For Rüsen (2005) historical narrative has the general function of serving to 'orient practical life in time by mobilizing the memory of temporal experience, by developing a concept of continuity and by stabilizing identity' (p. 12). Narrative, in this view, has a particular orientation bestowed by our own interpretation and identity. It mobilizes the experiences of past times in order for us to make sense of our own existence in contemporary life situations and to provide direction for future actions. A narrative bridges time differences between past, present, and expected future by 'a conception of a meaningful temporal whole' (p. 26).

Following this, we looked at the overall orientation of students' accounts to capture their vision and sense of Québec history in reference to themselves as historical agents. Throughout the research we asked ourselves the same question: how do these kids envision their personal and collective lives in reference to a usable past? By doing so, we wanted also to understand how their selection and interpretation of the collective past serve to establish their own identity and agency as Québécois. Table 2 highlights four different narrative orientations that were delineated from the stories: descriptive, adversity, just cause, and victimhood.

**TABLE 2**

Orientations of students' stories

<b>Orientations of story</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Descriptive story	60
Adversity story	48
Just cause story	21
Victimhood story	13

Overall, 60 students (42%) offered narrative accounts that do not provide clear evidence of a distinctive historical orientation. Events are either presented in a descriptive manner (as in a timeline) or connected together without personal statement on their significance for students in explaining the past to the present. In most instances (45 of the 60), the descriptive orientation of the accounts is the result of an incomplete story. As noted earlier, students were given only 45 minutes to complete the task and some spent considerable time presenting events and personages dealing primarily with the first chapter of the narrative template (Age of discovery/Colonization) without consideration for the subsequent chapters.

While we find some fragmentary elements of a vision of Québec history in these accounts, it is extremely difficult for us to judge their orientation for present-day meaning-making as no reference is made to contemporary history and identity. We acknowledge that these students have a sense of historical consciousness, being able to select and connect past events using a particular vision of temporal whole, yet we lack that explicit past-and-present orientation for their personal life as external researchers.

That being said, 82 students from our sample developed stories that do present a clear narrative orientation. The dominant vision expressed by students (48 stories) is that of 'adversity'. The concept of adversity is characteristic of French Canadian culture (but most likely found in other minority cultures as well). It refers to a permanent state of struggle to make the most out of the adverse life situations. Stories of adversity are not exclusively about a negative vision of the past, that is, stories of decline. Instead they bridge time differences with a conception of human experiences characterized by a condition of serious and continuous difficulties. Past challenges (e.g. struggle over inclement Nordic climate, fight for French cultural survival, resistance against Anglophone assimilation) are utilized to form a meaningful story of Québec experiences for 21<sup>st</sup> century identity orientation. Students who developed a story of adversity do not envision their lives or the history of the province in purely positive or negative terms. Their accounts are more tentative, populated with examples of situations where vigilance was vital to collective survival. Canadian historian Masson Wade (1968) refers to this 'French fact of America' as the 'ceaseless struggle of a minority group to maintain its cultural identity in the face of all manner of conscious and unconscious pressures to conform to the dominant civilization' (p. xiii). The particularly ambivalent references to military conflicts in the development of Canada are typical to many stories of adversity. The following excerpts provide examples of narratives oriented by the adversity template:

The English win the war [of the Conquest] but the French language remains despite the contempt of the British; the French people hold their ground and fight for their rights. (CND5S17)  
The Brits led an assault on French land. Then they tried to assimilate the French but they failed because we were too many and making too many French babies.... (ELE5S60)

When the war in Europe was won by the British, the territory of New France was ceded to England with the Treaty of Versailles [sic]... The mission of English was now to assimilate the French people. The first two governors, Murray and Carleton, were conciliatory with the French. They understood that they were too numerous to be assimilated. Later, in 1774, the Québec Act re-established the Seigneurial system and French civil laws. (PCAR5S18)

The Patriots [of 1837] attacked the English but they are beaten. French Canadians continued to make requests to protect their culture while the English attempted to assimilate them. (SOU5S3)

Stories of adversity are not exclusively in reference to past events, they also have a unique vision of contemporary history – what Liu et al.(1999) refer to as the phenomenon of 'ingroup ontogeny' (p. 1023). In line with the last chapter of the narrative template, these stories are about the uncertainty of a fragmented and disillusioned society in the face of an unclear future. Students with this narrative orientation are not exceedingly anxious or overtly enthusiastic about the faith of Québec. They are what some Canadian commentators have called 'pragmatic'. A number of them talk about the fact that the 'English domination' (a symbolic representation of the multiethnic and English-speaking majority population) is as present as ever but Québec now holds provincial powers to maintain its survival as a distinct French entity in Canada. Others, more cynical, are not convinced that Québec's own political leaders offer a better promise of national achievement or that Anglophones actually represent a real threat to contemporary Québec culture.

When the English landed, they tried to assimilate us, in vain. But they dominated us for a long time. Since then, we have our own government we can vote for, but this is not really famous either. (SMB5S7)

After [World War II] Québec was lagging behind Canada. It was still a province of 'working class.' Québécois started to take things in their own hands and, in 1980, had to vote on what they saw as the most important challenge: the separation [from Canada]. They repeated it in 1995 following the troubles with the constitution (patriation, Meech Lake Accord). (GRIV5S28)

Until 1982, Canada needed England to manage its constitution. Already political parties had opposite views. Some identifying with England and other with Canada. Francophones were among the most revolted and irritable. With time, French-Canadian nationalism becomes Québec nationalism. Should Québec become independent? Or not? Today this debate is still alive after over 100 years.... (CND5S40)

Québec holds in the 1970s a referendum on sovereignty and another one in 1995. Québec thinks it is special because it has a different language from the English and feels threatened by the 'bad' Anglophones who want to attack its way of life and force Québécois to drink tea. A normal Québécois believes that we need to get rid of the Anglophones, oh what a threat ! (CND5S14)

If the previous students are far from convinced that English Canadians or Americans represent a threat to Québec, a quarter of participants, however, have exposed more decisive narrative orientations. A total of 21 stories present a vision of what might be called the 'just cause'. We refer to the concept of 'just cause' as stories that highlight the long and progressive struggle of the Québec people to achieve its full collective recognition and national self-determination. Students who fit this orientation have a positive view of Québec nationalism and feel confident about its future. They believe that they are right in their collective quest and will ultimately triumph. Feeling right about a cause is an extremely powerful motivator to continue the struggle. From an identity point of view, supporting a just cause make individuals 'feel justified and worthwhile' because in modern world affairs nationalism can provide people with an opportunity to be right, moral, and just (Searle-White, 2001, p. 87). Indeed, in the face of persistent Anglo-domination and growing immigration pressure, Québec nationalists typically resort to the 'just cause' for justifying another referendum on sovereignty; a claim that is legitimately recognized by the United Nations. Consider the following statements from students:

Québec is now a province where the majority of people speak French (unfortunately not perfect) but with immigration the language is slowly dying. So we have to separate from Canada to keep our language and our European traditions. In 1980, a leader thinks right for the Francophone and holds a referendum to secede from English Canada, but people are afraid and vote NO. In 1995, a new attempt, No! (Yes 49.4 and No 50.6). In 2006 a new attempt... YES ☺ (60.1) and No (39.9). (CND5S6)

For a long time, Québec has tried to achieve its independence. The more we progress in history the more we are getting closer to sovereignty. (GRIV5S27)

If feeling right about a cause makes people envision the future in positive and certain terms, feeling of victimhood can be a powerful emotion to comprehend the present in reference to past actualities. Thirteen students have presented a vision of Québec history wrapped in historical tragedies and collective hardships. Their stories are filled with references to struggles that remind Québécois of their miserable condition as victims of past political decisions and military defeats. These include the Conquest of 1759, the influx of non-French immigrants, the failed Rebellion of Patriots and the domination of Anglo-American economy.

England wins the war... they tried to acculturate French Canadians but failed. They oppressed us politically and limited our rights to choose and manage our budget.... A few years later there was a rebellion that some called the rebellion of Patriots 1837-1838. The majority got executed at the end of the rebellion. This event discouraged the nationalist movement. (CND5S3)

In the history of Québec, there are many immigration waves: British and Scottish. They brought with them diseases and famine to the habitants of Lower Canada [Québec]. (CND5S14)

We were and are still under the influence of Americans, and gradually becoming passive wards of the government and victims of the media which alienate us with lies and messages of consumption. (PER5S5)

Such historical memories serve an important function for the orientation of these students. As Rüsen (2005) observes, history becomes 'the mirror of past actuality into which the present peers in order to learn

something about its future' (p. 24). Those who see past realities in terms of oppression and tragedy tend to develop a rather negative vision of both history and their own historical identity. Stories of victimhood repetitively stress the danger of assimilation and external threat for their cultural and linguistic identity.

Although I am proud to be Québécois of old stock, there is a limit to pride. This province was conquered and this leaves no room for pride. (CND5S20)

The history of Québec is a series of trickeries by the English. (CND5S34)

In brief, there is not much interesting that happened in Québec history, since the beginning the government is playing tricks on us. (DRAC5S40)

We, Québécois, would be so much better without the federalists, without the Americans of George Bush to the south, and without the Indians who take advantage of the system. WE WANT A FREE QUÉBEC. (ECEP5S4)

### Conclusion

Understanding how young Québécois make sense of their collective past takes us into the colliding spheres of school history and public memory. In reading and analyzing the stories of these senior students, we were not so much focused on their level of historical knowledge and mastery of bits and tokens taught in history classes as with their historical representations of the nation. Our contribution serves to explore how students' collective identity and sense of belonging seriously affect their categorization of historical references and how they interpret and learn national history. We found that a usable history, as the ones articulated by students in their stories, is much more than a matter of historical study in school setting. It is a prevailing cultural tool in students' life, a useful and necessary way of orientating their own actions through the experience of time.

Throughout their schooling, Québécois students are supposed to be taught a scholastic history which encourages them to explore different stories of Québec and Canada and develop disciplinary ways of thinking critically about the past. As such, we should not underestimate the power of school programs, examinations, and provincial authorities in providing students with scholastic ways of thinking about the past. One only has to consider the negative consequence of failing the Québec national history examination to be convinced. Yet, it is evident from our findings that many students are unmoved by the current didactical approaches to national history. What they see as historically significant and how they categorize events and people reveal an interesting pattern of meaning-making, attitudes and personal modes of orientation. The accounts that they provided us offer a drastically different story than the ones in the school programs (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2006).

'Historical consciousness', as Wineburg (2000) observes, 'does not emanate like neat concentric circles from the individual to the family to the nation and to the world. Lessons learned at home contravene those learned at school.... To make historical sense, we must navigate the shoals of the competing narratives that vie for our allegiance' (pp. 310-311).

Students' usable history is very much shaped by forces outside the realm of formal education. In the case of Québec, this practical past is in sync with their public culture; a culture where the '*survivance*' template is a commodity still being used by political leaders and popular figures (e.g., pop artists).<sup>8</sup> This is an important lesson for history educators, particularly in a minority context. The process of learning a usable past for practical life orientation involves a different sort of relationship between learners and cultural tools than does cognitive learning in history classes.<sup>9</sup> As our and other studies suggest, simply presenting students more historical evidence and conflicting stories seem to do little to change entrenched attitudes and personal modes of orientation (McCully and Reily, 2011).

Indeed, our results suggest that the group structure and collective identity of Francophone Québécois act as a 'social impact' on students' historical orientation. For psychologist Bibb Latané (1981), the relative influence of a group on individuals is dependent upon a number of factors, including the number of people, its strength, and its immediacy. Latané suggests that social impact can be compared to light on a surface: the total amount of light depends on the number of light bulbs, the power of the bulbs, and their distance

from the surface. In the case of Francophone Québécois, these people form a relatively strong and substantial population (about 7 millions) regrouped on a common territory (the province of Québec) with a more-or-less autonomous form of provincial government. This particular geopolitical context, unique in North America, creates some converging norms, expected behaviours, and shared ideas, notably about history.

The narrative structure of these Québécois students can thus be explained in reference to a common memory, which mobilizes past experiences (conflicts, humiliations, and traumas) engraved in the collective consciousness of French Canadians, used as a relevant orientation mode in reference to present-day situations. Students make use of this narrative template because it provides them with an affordable tool to comprehend past complexities in the course of time. This narrative serves also another practical function: it sets forth a temporal direction for situating oneself within the course of the nation and making the person part of a temporal venture larger than their his own personal life. Searle-White (2001) argues that 'identity is simultaneously individual and social, and our national identity is as much part of us as is our own individual history' (p. 4). Because of the nature of human identity, we are naturally inclined to feel threatened. Belonging to a national group allows us to extend our temporal life beyond birth and death into the memorable course of the nation. The problem is that national minorities constantly fear threats of annihilation – whether it is real or symbolic (Wohl et al., 2010). By means of reference to tragic past experiences, Francophone Québécois can give a meaning to their contemporary lives as Francophone on an Anglo-dominated continent and remind themselves that constant vigilance is vital to both collective and personal existence.

In the circumstances, how should we design more effective educational programs in history? What can be done in the context on minority education in which issues of collective identity and national survival often take precedence over scholastic thinking? To date, there has been only limited research in Canada and abroad on the role and impact of historical memory on young learners (see Charland, 2003; Lévesque, 2005; Létourneau & Caritey, 2008; Peck, 2010; Wohl et al., 2010). Identifying what changes need to made in Québec history teaching and learning is beyond the scope of this article. But presenting and analyzing the particular tools that students appropriate from their culture to make sense of the past highlight the areas where more research should be directed in the future.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Although accepted in the literature, the concept of 'multinational state' is still contested in legal documents and politics. Many multinational states continue, for various reasons, to refer to the traditional definition of the nation-state (that is, all citizens of a country) or blur the distinction between the two for political convenience. In Canada, for instance, the federal government has officially recognized in Parliament (2006) that 'the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada'. But all national references continue to imply Canada, not Québec, as in the 'national capital' (Ottawa), the Department of National Defence or the National Gallery of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, we refer to ethnic/cultural groups as communities whose origins in the host country lie in the act of self-immigration (either individually or as families). Ethnocultural groups typically seek political and cultural integration into the host society and some form of accommodation for their cultural differences (e.g., religious practices, dress codes, and holidays). National minorities, on the contrary, are communities that have been integrated (voluntarily or not) into a larger state as a result of colonization or territorial conquests. While these minorities may contain various ethnic/cultural groups, they do not see themselves as ethnics or immigrants because their collective existence often predates that of the country in which they find themselves. These so-called 'peoples' have historical practices and collective institutions providing a wide range of social services operating in their own language. National minorities seek various forms of self-governments rights, which Will Kymlicka (1998) defines as a 'package of beliefs and desires: the sense of being a nation, on its historical territory, that has exercised its self-determination by entering a

larger state...’ (p. 6). While ethnocultural groups must either integrate into the host societal culture or remain marginalized, national groups have characteristically resisted integration and have instead fought for collective recognition and self-government. This crucial distinction helps understand why Québécois, for instance, are entitled to collective rights (civil code, public education in French, control over immigration) that other groups of Canadians do not have.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of the study, we have defined young Québécois of French Canadian background as students whose first language is French, are registered in the French language school system, and identified Canada as their birth country and ‘Canadian/Québécois’ as their cultural heritage. By doing so, we were able to focus our analysis exclusively on accounts from students who do form the ideological ‘core’ of French Canada. We understand that this delineation is rather conceptual as other students outside this definition could be considered Québécois of French Canadian background. But doing so made it possible to identify and select participants who corresponded more closely to the earlier definition and findings of Létourneau (2006). We are now in the process of analysis data in a comparative perspective with participants who defined themselves differently in the study (e.g, English-speaking, born outside Canada) so as to discover whether the stories of the initial group actually differ from those of the others, and if so, on what grounds.

<sup>4</sup> The potential role and impact of school history on the development of Québec students’ stories has been discussed extensively in Létourneau and Moisan (2004).

<sup>5</sup> One study has demonstrated the usefulness of combining SIT premises with narrative analysis to scrutinize young Québécois’ historical consciousness, but without a main focus on categorization process. See E. Bougie *et al.*, ‘The cultural narratives of Francophone and Anglophone Quebecers: Using a historical perspective to explore the relationships among collective relative deprivation, in-group entitativity, and collective esteem,’ *British Journal of Social Psychology*. 50(4) (2011), pp.726-746.

<sup>6</sup> The total number of 990 students from grade 11 included all French Québec students regardless of their country of birth and cultural heritage. Of this total, 651 students are identified as Québécois of French Canadian background. Our random sample of 142 participants thus represents about 22 percent of all Québec students of French Canadian heritage who provided accounts supportive of the conclusions of Létourneau (2006). More specifically, the breakdown of participants by school is as follow: 24 for CND5S, 6 for DEC5S, 37 for DRAC5S, 9 for ECEP5S, 4 for ELE5S, 22 for GRIV5S, 4 for IES15S, 16 for PCAR5S, 9 for PER5S, 7 for SMB5S, and 4 for SOU5S. The different number of participants by school is in statistical proportion to the number of accounts collected by each given participating school in the project.

<sup>7</sup> In the Canadian context, the concept of Métis refers to people who trace their descents to mixed First Nations and European heritage. In constitutional law, Métis were not considered Aboriginal peoples and, hence, received no particular status as a group. However, the Supreme Court of Canada delivered a landmark decision in 2003, which recognized and affirmed the existence of Métis as a distinct Aboriginal people with existing rights protected by the Constitution Act of Canada.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance ‘Entretien avec Alain Dubuc, propos recueillis par Sabine Choquet’ (‘Conversation with Alain Dubuc – a collection by Sabine Choquet’), ‘Sortir de nos mythistoires’, *Cités*, 23(2005), pp.197-208.

<sup>9</sup> The notion of ‘usable past’ is drawn from the work of Rüsen (2005).

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## ***The Influence of the Disintegration of Yugoslavia on Slovene Curricula for History***

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### **Abstract:**

*In this paper the author tries to determine the influence of the disintegration of Yugoslavia of 1991 on the implementation of the subject of history in elementary and secondary schools in Slovenia. By analysing the curricula for elementary and secondary schools that were in force until 1990 and those that were issued immediately after Slovenia attained independence, the author has determined that significant changes occurred in these history curricula. Prior to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the curricula above all emphasised familiarisation with and understanding of the development of human society and the labour movement, as well as the history of the Yugoslav nations. They stressed the importance of the liberation struggle of the Yugoslav nations during World War II and the post-war socialist development of Yugoslavia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia the Slovene curricula for elementary school no longer included the history of Yugoslav nations, while the secondary school curricula preserved the history of other Yugoslav nations for a few more years. The novelty in all history curricula after 1991 was the fact that Slovene history was included in special units or separated from European or world history and in later years gained an even greater role and scope in the Slovene curricula. The subject of history in elementary and secondary schools in Slovenia belonged to those sociological subjects that had undergone greater changes in content precisely due to the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s.*

**Keywords:** Yugoslavia, Slovenia, history, curricula, elementary schools, secondary schools.

### **Introduction**

The Yugoslavia established after 1945 was at first called the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Following a conflict with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1948 it began to follow its own socialist path, with workers' self-management and a non-bloc policy, changing its name to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Socialist Republic of Slovenia was one of six republics, in addition to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The federal state was founded on the political equality of Yugoslav nations. There was only one party in the state: the Communist Party, which governed all the spheres of political and public life, including the education system.

Irrespective of opinion within the profession, education was always and universally subordinated to the ideology of the regime and the state. Since it served to consolidate the communist totalitarian government and to fulfil its ideological objectives, the party regime constantly kept careful watch over the developments in education. The main purpose of the entire education system was to support the regime in power, which weighed up each intervention and every change in terms of ideological goals and usefulness in consolidating its power. In order for education to become an obedient tool for bringing up youth according to the communist ideological principles, it had to be cleansed of everything that impeded or prevented its ideological purity. (*Slovene Education System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2007, p. 56; Okoliš, 2009, p. 108).

It was precisely among the sociological subjects, to which belonged the subject of history, that the influence of ideology, particularly of socialist ideas, the workers' movement and emphasis on the history, brotherhood and unity of all Yugoslav nations, was expressed the most.

A handbook for teachers from the 1980s states the following:

History teachers are responsible for the development of the ideals of the young generation and for directing it. /.../ Work carried out during a history lesson must also decisively contribute to the shaping and defining of the ideals of a young person. The elements of history lessons in elementary school, such as discovering the progressive when compared with the conservative,

the fight for freedom and independence, and nonalignment in comparison with the powers that wish to prevent it or slow it down /.../, becoming acquainted with and fully evaluating the National Liberation Struggle and its extraordinary importance for our subsequent social, political, cultural, economic and self-managing development, co-dependence and consequentiality of the economic, political and cultural factors, have a decisive effect on a young person and emphasise the special ideational value of history lessons /.../. (Weber, 1980, p. 5).

After 1980, following the death of President Josip Broz Tito, the state was governed by the so-called collective presidency; however, due to a socio-economic crisis and political unrest, the striving towards democratisation and the different interests of the Yugoslav nations, Yugoslavia disintegrated. Slovenia was also the first republic whose citizens decided at a plebiscite on 23rd December 1990 that Slovenia should become an autonomous and independent state. Six months later, on 25th June 1991, Slovenia declared its independence.

By attaining independence, the Republic of Slovenia faced problems in all areas, which it solved gradually and in a few years' time became strengthened both economically and politically and successfully integrated itself into the European area. Thus for the first time the Slovene education system began developing with full autonomy and independence from other systems (previously the Yugoslav education system). The school reform covered all stages of education from kindergartens to the university (Slovene Education System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, 2007, p. 61).

The reform of the contents of subjects first began in elementary schools and later in secondary schools as well. What had been changed above all were the curricula for sociological and linguistic subjects, which was followed by the issuing of new textbooks. The syllabi in elementary and secondary schools eliminated a few subjects which were characteristic of the Yugoslav education system, e.g. Serbo-Croatian, self-management with Marxist foundations, and defence and protection (Gabrič, 2006, p. 1311).

For this reason the article will compare the history curricula used in elementary and secondary schools in the 1980s and in the 1990s. It will determine the bigger changes in the history curricula after Slovenia's attainment of independence in 1991. It will also be of interest to see whether the history curricula that immediately followed 1991 already included the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Slovenia's attainment of independence.

### **History Curricula for Elementary Schools**

In elementary schools the Elementary School Act of 1980 determined the programme of the life and work of an elementary school. Elementary school was an eight-year one; the subject of history was present in the final three years. Hence the analysis included two history curricula. The first history curriculum was included in the publication entitled: *Programme of the Life and Work of Elementary School* (1984). The second history curriculum, which came out in independent Slovenia, was published as an independent publication entitled: *Knowledge Catalogue of History for Elementary Schools* (1992). In the remainder of the article the terms curriculum of 1984 and curriculum of 1992 will be used.

In the 1980s the subject of history was included in the socioeconomic educational field. In the history curriculum of 1984 as many as eight of the 10 educational objectives referred to the political and social order of Yugoslavia.

The following objectives can be pointed out, in which the pupils became acquainted with:

- the most important events, phenomena and terms from the history of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia and from that part of world history that conditions the understanding of local development;

- the most important events and the development of the National Liberation Struggle and the socialist building of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia and of the Slovene nation in particular;
- become educated in the spirit of national consciousness and the brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities for democratic relations in a self-managing socialist society and will strengthen their moral readiness to defend the achievements of the self-managing socialist society and their love for their homeland. (Programme of the Life and Work of Elementary School, 1984, p. 37).

Thus the objectives emphasised the history of Yugoslav nations, especially the contemporary history of Yugoslavia. When comparing these learning objectives with those in the curriculum of 1992 it can be seen that such objectives no longer existed. The curriculum following Slovenia's attainment of independence contained only four objectives, two of which were already related to Slovene history, namely the pupils became acquainted with the most important events from general and national history and became qualified to accept and evaluate cultural heritage on a general and national level (Knowledge Catalogue of History for Elementary Schools, 1992, p. 7). This means that the objectives placed Slovene history in the forefront.

In the curriculum of 1984 the contents were divided by grades and periods. Thus:

the 6th grade (for pupils aged 12–13) contained:

- an introduction to history,
- the age of the prehistoric community and feudalism;

the 7th grade (for pupils aged 13–14):

- capitalism and imperialism;

the 8th grade (for pupils aged 14–15);

- the so-called rise of socialist forces.

In the new curriculum of 1992 the learning content was not divided by periods but by civilisations, with European and Slovene history being separated.

The curriculum of 1984 contained certain content characteristics that were no longer present in the curriculum of 1992. The first characteristic in the curriculum of 1984 was that the content in the 7th and 8th grades related to the workers' movement, which was in accordance with the socio-political order of Yugoslavia. For example, the 7th grade contained the following contents:

- the beginnings and development of the workers' movement (the first industrial revolution, the status of the worker and farmer);
- the arrival of Marx and Engels, shaping the class consciousness and uniting the proletariat;
- the Paris Commune;
- the struggle for the social and political rights of the proletariat and the formation of labour parties), the Second International, Lenin.

Topics in the 8th grade (in 1984) were:

- the October Socialist Revolution and its global importance;
- revolutionary movements and the Third International.

Another characteristic (in 1984) was that in the 7th and 8th grades much of the content related to the history of the Yugoslav nations:

- Croatia under the local rulers;
- the Macedonian state;
- Mediaeval Serbia and Bosnia in the Middle Ages;
- the formation and development of towns in other Yugoslav regions;
- the economic and cultural role of Dubrovnik;
- the fight of the Serbian, Macedonian and Montenegrin people against the Turks – the beginnings of the formation of Serbian and Montenegrin statehood;
- national movements of Yugoslav nations in Austria in the pre-March period;
- the revolutionary year of 1848 in the case of the Croats and the Serbs of Vojvodina;
- the development of an autonomous Serbian and Montenegrin state, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Macedonia and the Balkan Wars;
- mutual alliances of Yugoslav nations prior to World War I.

The curriculum of 1992 only kept the topic of the Southern Slavs and the Turkish advance into Europe, which was entirely related to Southern Slavic history. Two topics concerning Slovene history continued to include other Yugoslav nations, namely the Croats and Serbs who lived in Austria or under Austria-Hungary, viz. in the following topics: Slovenes in the 1815–1848 period; Slovenes at the turn of the 20th century (Croats and the Serbs of Vojvodina 1815–1848, Croats and the Serbs of Vojvodina after the introduction of dualism; the Balkan League and Wars).

The contents (in 1992) remained the same or similarly divided only in the 6th grade. These contents were:

- getting to know history (introduction to history);
- the oldest civilisations;
- Ancient Greeks;
- the Roman world-state;
- Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

There were different types of content in the 7th grade (the curriculum of 1992), which were divided chronologically according to European history, i.e.:

- humanism and the Renaissance;
- discoveries of overseas countries;
- Reformation in Europe and Slovenia;
- Counter-Reformation;
- peasant revolts;
- economic development in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries;
- Absolutism in the 17th and 18th centuries;
- Europe and the world at the turn of the 19th century;
- the American liberation war;
- the French Revolution of 1789;
- the rise of Napoleon;
- the Illyrian provinces (Les Provinces Illyriennes 1809–13);
- the Congress of Vienna;
- the year 1848.

Several topics were divided separately for European and separately for Slovene history:

- Slovenes in the 18th century;
- Europe in the 1815–1848 period;
- Slovenes in the 1815–1848 period;
- Europe after 1848;
- Slovenes after 1848 in the Hapsburg Monarchy;
- Slovenes at the turn of the 20th century.

This means that after Slovenia attained independence the history of Slovenes gained a greater role in the curriculum. What should be especially pointed out in the curriculum of 1984 is the fact that in the 8th grade content focus or core related to the history of Yugoslavia from 1914 onwards. Thus during lessons on Yugoslavia between World War I and II the pupils learned the following contents:

- peace conference and the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes;
- the fight for the north and west borders;
- the national and social issue;
- revolutionary conditions and the establishment of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia;
- the 6th January Dictatorship and the aftermath in domestic and foreign policies;
- the global economic crisis and its aftermath in Yugoslavia;
- the appearance and rise of fascism and Nazism; the Comintern and the People's Front movement.

The most comprehensive theme was the fight of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia during World War II. The content with which pupils became acquainted in elementary school was:

- the attack of the fascist powers on Yugoslavia and the aftermath;
- the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the uprising of the Yugoslav nations;
- the most important military and political events of Yugoslav nations and nationalities prior to Italy's capitulation;
- the Republic of Užice;
- the first proletarian brigades, the occupier's attempt to destroy the liberated territory;
- 1st and 2nd AVNOJ session (AVNOJ: Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia);
- the battle for the wounded on the Neretva river and the breaking out across the Sutjeska river;
- the struggle for the liberation of Yugoslavia and the final operations;
- the importance of the fight of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities in the form of the National Liberation Struggle and the socialist revolution.

This topic included content that related to World War II in Slovenia:

- the Liberation Front of the Slovene nation and the role of the Communist Party of Slovenia;
- the beginning of the uprising of the Slovene nation and the first liberated territories;
- the spreading of the occupier's terror; development of the people's government in Slovenia;
- the Great Italian Offensive and the counter-revolution in Slovenia;
- the operation of the Liberation Army and the partisan detachments of Slovenia.

Great emphasis (in 1984) was also placed on the socio-political development of Yugoslavia after 1945, where pupils first became acquainted with the establishment of the revolutionary achievements in Yugoslavia and later with the development of the self-managing socialist social order in Yugoslavia.

Thus the content was as follows:

- elections to the constituent assembly and the proclamation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia;
- the constitution of 1946;
- restoration and building of the homeland, socialisation of natural resources and production; the five-year plan;
- the peace conference and border issues;
- relations between the East and West;
- the Information Bureau and the independent Yugoslav path towards socialism;
- Yugoslavia in the fight for peace and equal relations in the world;
- the role of Yugoslavia and Tito in the movement of the underdeveloped and the nonaligned; self-management and socialist democracy in Yugoslavia;
- the role of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in building a socialist self-managing society;
- the new constitution of 1974 and the amendment to it;
- Josip Broz Tito.

The 8th grade contained a special topic entitled 'Basics of the Social Self-Protection System', which included special content on national security, the safety of the citizens and the safety of a socialist self-managing society.

That the content regarding the development of Yugoslavia and its path towards socialism was very important in the curriculum (in 1984) is also demonstrated by the instructions, which demanded that the teachers emphasise:

- the importance of building socialism and a self-managing society in our country, its contribution to the development of the workers' and other progressive movements;
- the effort to consistently enforce the equality of all nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia and the legitimate demand for the equality of our national minorities in the neighbouring countries. (Programme of the Life and Work of Elementary School, 1984, pp. 47–48).

However the curriculum of 1992 topics in the 8th grade were divided according to World War I and II and into world/European, Yugoslav and Slovene history. These topics were:

- World War I;
- The World between Both Wars;
- Slovenes in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia;
- World War II; Slovenes during World War II;
- The World after World War II;
- Slovenia and Yugoslavia after World War II.

The topic 'The Kingdom of Yugoslavia' (in 1984) now became 'Slovenes in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia' (in 1992). The only topic in which Slovene and Yugoslav histories remained joined in the curriculum of 1992 was the topic Slovenia and Yugoslavia after World War II, which means that the content remained similar to that in the curriculum of 1984:

- restoration in Yugoslavia and Slovenia;
- settling the border issues;
- Yugoslavia between the East and West;
- the beginning of self-management;
- Yugoslavia after Tito.

What was new was a topic that included the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Slovenia's attainment of independence. The following content objectives were envisaged for the pupils, in which a pupil would:

- describe the crisis situation in the 1980s, the consequences of the rapid increase in inflation and indebtedness;
- become acquainted with conflicting views (i.e. multi-perspectivity) on the Yugoslav crisis and why it had not been solved peacefully;
- describe the political events in Slovenia at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the '90s, which denote the establishing of democratisation and national sovereignty of Slovenia;
- state and describe the facts that led to the referendum on Slovenia's independence and the declaration of independence;
- describe the reaction of the federal government and the Yugoslav National Army and evaluate the efforts for the attainment of independence. (Knowledge Catalogue of History for Elementary Schools, pp. 38–41).

It has been determined that prior to 1991 more objectives referred to the socio-political order and defence of the socialist Yugoslavia and less to all the periods in history. This priority was related to the dominant ideology of the Yugoslavian government. After the political shake-up leading to Slovenian independence in 1991 these priorities changed radically. After 1991 there was a substantially smaller number of general objectives and these concerned European/world history on the one hand and Slovene/national history on the other. Prior to 1991 the history of Slovenes was discussed together with the history of other Yugoslav nations; however, it was present in a much smaller extent than after 1991. After 1991 the history of Slovenes was included in separate topics. Therefore the main change was precisely the fact that with Slovenia's attainment of independence Slovene history gained a greater role in the curricula for elementary schools. The Ministry of Education and Sports began preparing organisational and greater substantive reforms for elementary school only after 1993, with one of these reforms being the preparation for introducing a nine-year school, instead of an eight-year one. This substantive reform of elementary school was given a legal basis in 1996 with the Elementary School Act. Thus greater didactic and methodical changes were included in the history curriculum for elementary schools only a few years after Slovenia had attained independence. The curriculum of 1992 already indicated that Slovene history must secure for itself a stronger place in the curriculum alongside European and world histories. The history of the so-called former Yugoslav nations was preserved only in the case of the common history, i.e. history of the 20th century (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). In other topics the history of the former Yugoslav nations was included as part of European history.

### **History Curricula for Secondary Schools**

At the end of the 1980s secondary school education in Slovenia consisted of three programmes: short-term secondary educational programmes (social sciences), secondary educational programmes (history) and advanced secondary educational programmes (history). (Syllabi of Reformed Secondary Educational Programmes, 1987, p. 6)

History in secondary educational programmes has been studied; for this purpose two history curricula were analysed that had been issued in two publications: *Educational Programme of Secondary Education. Sociolinguistic Activity* (1986) and *Common Programme Basis in Career-Oriented Education* (1979). Below, the terms curriculum of 1986 and curriculum of 1979 will be used. The curriculum for secondary vocational schools or the so-called short-term programmes was not included, since these programmes did not have history, but the subject of social sciences. (Syllabi of Reformed Secondary Educational Programmes, 1987)

These two curricula will be compared after 1991 with the subject of history in general secondary schools and secondary technical schools. The reason for this is that Slovenia once again introduced general secondary schools (in the 1980s general secondary schools were abolished in Yugoslavia because they

were too elitist and were said to not correspond with the socialist social order of Yugoslavia). After Slovenia attained independence the secondary school programmes were as follows: four-year general secondary school, two-year programme of secondary vocational schools (social sciences), three-year programmes of vocational schools and four-year programmes of different secondary technical schools (history). In the three-year programmes of secondary vocational schools the subject of history was included only in the 1991/92 school year; from 1992/93 onwards it was called Social Knowledge. Hence three curricula were included in the comparison. The first history curriculum was intended for the general secondary school programme and was issued in the publication: *Programme for General Secondary Schools* (1992). The other two curricula refer to secondary vocational and technical schools: *Two-Year and Three-Year Programmes of Vocational Schools* (1991) and *Four-Year Programmes of Different Secondary Technical Schools* (1991). Below, the terms curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992 and curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools of 1991 will be used.

### 1. History Curricula for General Secondary Schools

The curriculum of 1986 applied to the sociolinguistic course in career-oriented education, in which the subject of history was present for all four years. Of the 10 learning objectives, 7 objectives related to Yugoslav socialist patriotism.

The following objective can be pointed out, in which the students:

- become acquainted with the historical roots of Slovene national consciousness and the brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities and are educated to respect their freedom-loving traditions and cultural heritage, are educated in Yugoslav socialist patriotism, socialist humanism, reciprocity, solidarity and equal co-operation among nations;
- become acquainted with the revolutionary role of the working class and the leading power behind the Communist Party of Yugoslavia or the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, especially in the National Liberation Struggle and the socialist construction following the liberation. (Educational Programme of Secondary Education. Sociolinguistic Activity, 1986, pp. 3.11/1 and 3.11/2).

When reviewing the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992 it can be seen that it contained only four learning objectives. The objectives no longer concerned the history of the Yugoslav nations. Two objectives related to Slovene history, similarly as in the curriculum for elementary school. The students acquired fundamental knowledge of historical developments, processes and phenomena from world history and deepened their knowledge of national history, determined the causes for the rise of Slovene national consciousness and evaluated its significance for ethnic independence. Thus, although Slovenia itself was at the core of the curriculum, it has also been placed in a transnational contextual dimension. (Programme for General Secondary Schools, 1992, p. 126)

The learning content in the curriculum of 1986 will be presented separately for each year. In the first year the content was divided according to periods:

- introduction,
- prehistory,
- antiquity (ancient East, ancient Greece, Roman Empire) and
- the transition to the Middle Ages.

Only a few topics were connected with the history of the Yugoslav nations:

- our region in prehistory;
- contacts of the Greeks with our territory;
- the Romans in our region;

- the first Southern Slavic states.

These topics used the adjective 'our': our territory, our regions, which referred to all the nations of the state of Yugoslavia.

In the second year the topics were connected with socio-economic development:

- the age of developed feudalism;
- the crisis of the feudal social order;
- the technical and industrial revolution;
- the period of bourgeois revolutions.

Many topics discussed the history of the Yugoslav nations, in which the adjective 'our' referred to all the nations in Yugoslavia: e.g.

- the Southern Slavs between the German Empire, Venice, Hungary and Byzantium;
- the rise of Ottoman power and the consequences it held for our nations;
- the Reformation and its significance for our nations;
- forms of the resistance of our nations and nationalities against feudalism and foreign supremacy and the consequences of this;
- reformatory interventions in the feudal system in our lands;
- our nations in the time of Napoleon;
- the eastern issue and the beginning of the liberation of our nations from Turkish rule.

The third year contained content from the 19th century:

- the struggle for establishing liberal capitalism;
- imperialism;
- the deepening and concretisation of the Yugoslav idea prior to World War I;
- World War I;
- the October Revolution and the formation of Yugoslavia.

In addition there were more topics that included the history of the Yugoslav nations: e.g.

- the year 1848 with regard to the Yugoslav nations, the process of abolishing feudalism;
- the efforts of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities for equality and autonomy;
- the Congress of Berlin and the consequences for Yugoslav nations;
- the strengthened political pressure of the great powers in the Balkans;
- Yugoslav national programmes;
- the two Balkan Wars and the aftermath, Yugoslav nations in World War I, the formation of the Kingdom of SHS;
- the fight for the borders, peace treaties and the Versailles system.

In the fourth year content was divided into three parts:

- the world between both wars;
- World War II and
- the world after World War II.

Each part contained world/European history, with separate topics for the history of the Yugoslav nations, in which Slovene history was also included (e.g. Yugoslav nations between both wars; the liberation struggle of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia in World War II; the fight of the new Yugoslavia for an

independent path of development after World War II). However, the titles in this curriculum did not emphasise Slovene history, except in the case of two topics; namely the topic discussing the development of the liberation struggle in Slovenia and the topic that referred to the borders and the Slovenes in the neighbouring countries after World War II. As in the elementary school curriculum, the greatest emphasis was placed on World War II in Yugoslavia. The 1986 curriculum also included several topics from the period of Yugoslavia after 1945 and ended with the problems of Yugoslavia. The contents were:

- the fight of the new Yugoslavia for an independent path of development;
- the beginnings of self-management, constitutional development, the establishment of self-management and a direct democracy with the delegational (devolved) system;
- the social and cultural development of the new Yugoslavia;
- the political, economic and international problems of Yugoslavia and the process of solving them.

When comparing the learning content from the curriculum of 1986 with the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992, it can be seen that the topics were quite similar in all the years. It has also been determined that the majority of the contents referring to the history of the Yugoslav nations was preserved; similarly was the adjective 'our', e.g.:

- prehistoric sites on our soil;
- Roman culture on our soil;
- the Southern Slavs between Byzantium and the Franks;
- the first Southern Slavic states;
- the Southern Slavs under developed feudalism;
- the crisis of the Ottoman Empire and the eastern issue;
- the First and Second Serbian Uprising; the beginnings of the Montenegrin state;
- Slovenes, Croats and the Serbs of Vojvodina in the pre-March period (1815-1848);
- the dualistic reorganisation of the Hapsburg Monarchy and the position of our nations;
- Yugoslav nations during World War I.

In the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992 four topics for the 4th year were entirely dedicated to the Yugoslav nations, the first topic being Yugoslav Nations in the Age of Imperialism.

The contents were:

- national programmes and the aspirations to become united;
- differences in the economic and political development;
- the Congress of Berlin;
- the Balkan Wars and the aftermath.

The second topic was 'Our Nations between Both Wars', which contained the following contents:

- the formation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes;
- the fight for the borders;
- economic conditions;
- political order and the multiparty system;
- foreign policy;
- Yugoslav national minorities in the neighbouring countries.

The third topic was 'National Liberation Struggle of the Nations of Yugoslavia', which contained the following contents:

- attack on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia;
- the start and development of the liberation war;
- forms of collaboration and counter-revolution, the causes and consequences;
- Liberation Front and the development of Slovene statehood, the first and second AVNOJ session, final operations and the liberation of Yugoslavia, culture in the time of World War II.

The fourth topic, Yugoslavia after World War II, included the following contents:

- the fundamental characteristics of the post-war economic and political development up to 1950;
- the crisis of the Information Bureau;
- the border issue;
- Slovenes in neighbouring countries;
- introduction of self-management;
- international problems of modern Yugoslavia.

The latter chapter did not yet include Slovenia's attainment of independence as had, for example, the elementary school curriculum.

It has been ascertained that the history curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992 did not yet exhibit any substantial changes, such as for example more of Slovene history or topics dedicated only to Slovene history. It likewise did not include contents on Slovenia's attainment of independence. Contrary to this, the learning objectives (as opposed to the content of the curriculum itself) prior to 1991 referred above all to the socialist order of Yugoslavia, while such objectives were no longer present after 1991. After 1991 the objectives already concerned Slovene history. Thus, it has been established that the learning objectives and learning contents in the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992 were incompatible. It is believed that the writers of the curriculum adopted the new learning objectives from the curriculum for the elementary school, but for the time being had not abandoned the contents, particularly the history of Yugoslav nations. The substantive reform of the history curriculum for general secondary schools had to wait a little longer, until 1996, when the scope of the history of Yugoslav nations was significantly reduced.

## **2. History curricula for Secondary Technical Schools**

Since in the 1980s secondary technical schools or the so-called secondary school programmes shared a common educational basis for history in the 1st and 2nd years, the objectives and the contents of these two years are presented from the curriculum of 1979 and compared with the curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools of 1991.

The curriculum of 1979 had 9 educational objectives. As many as 7 objectives concerned the socio-political development of Yugoslavia, with emphasis on the workers' movement, the liberation struggle of the Yugoslav nations and on socialist humanism, reciprocity, solidarity and equal co-operation between Yugoslav nations, as was the case in the four-year history subject in the curriculum of 1986, which has already been discussed under general secondary schools. In the curriculum for four-year secondary technical schools of 1991 and likewise in the curriculum for three-year secondary technical schools of 1991 general objectives were much smaller in number, namely, there were only four, similarly to general secondary schools; of these, two objectives referred to Slovene history and none to the history of the Yugoslav nations.

In the first two years of secondary school the subject of history denoted

*/.../* reasonable continuation of the work of history lessons in the eight-year elementary school, with in-depth Marxist, dialectical shaping of the thoughts of students and their understanding of

concrete manifestations of past and contemporary life. (Common Programme Basis in Career-Oriented Education, 1979, pp. 145–146)

Despite the fact that the learning objectives emphasised the contemporary development of Yugoslavia, the learning content from the curriculum of 1979 differed completely and was divided into European and world. The curriculum stated that the subject attempted to:

*.../* by shifting the focus from political history to the comprehensive history of mankind broaden the view of young people of the entire world, of how it had gradually become interconnected from the great discoveries onwards, of the changes in focus and the interdependence of its parts, and thus eliminate the Eurocentric mindset and views. (Common Programme Basis in Career-Oriented Education, 1979, pp. 160–161)

Below the content for the 1st and 2nd years of secondary technical schools (for students aged 15–17) is presented, with emphasis on the contents that referred to the Yugoslav nations.

In the 1st year (in 1979) content ranged from the creation of man to the first socialist revolution at the Paris Commune, with emphasis placed above all on social development:

- the tasks of history and its place among the social sciences;
- the creation of man and the forms of pre-class society;
- the class societies of antiquity, the prehistoric world; migrations of the Barbaric peoples;
- the renewed social division of labour between the towns and the countryside;
- the development of trade and its influence from the 11th to the 15th century;
- the world in the age of discoveries and Reformation;
- European expansion, the world becoming interconnected, the crumbling of traditional systems in the world outside Europe, the creation of the modern European state authority;
- the technical and industrial revolution;
- the period of bourgeois revolutions;
- the temporary supremacy of Europe.

As many of the topics concerned world and European history, fewer topics related to the history of Yugoslav nations or examples from the history of Yugoslav nations were included under European events. A few examples of contents:

- the Southern Slavic ethnic cores and state formation up to the 11th century;
- mediaeval colonisation and its influence on ethnic changes;
- Southern Slavs between the German Empire, Hungary and Byzantium until the 14th century;
- the second expansion of the Islamic world;
- class struggles in the 16th century (with peasant uprisings in the case of the Yugoslav nations);
- the eastern issue (the beginning of Serbian liberation from Turkish rule).

In the content on national movements and their influence in the 19th century in Austria-Hungary and the Balkans, special emphasis was also placed on the shaping of the national consciousness of Slovenes.

In the 2nd year (in 1979) content began with the period of imperialism and the struggle of the working class for a socialist society, namely:

- the period of imperialism until World War I;

- the economic, social and political crisis of the capitalist system between 1915 and 1939, the October Revolution and the first forms of socialism;
- the global conflict between fascist and democratic powers;
- scientific, technical, social and cultural advances after World War II.

The 2nd year also contained a general overview of the economic, social and political development, where fewer topics were dedicated to the history of Yugoslav nations. To mention a few:

- the Southern Slavic workers' movement;
- the formation, development and problems of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between both wars;
- the formation and development of the Liberation Army and the nature of the United Anti-Fascist Liberation Front, the bodies of the people's authority and the federal structure of the state during World War II.

The topic Scientific, Technical, Social and Cultural Advances after World War II did not contain separate contents connected to the history of Yugoslav nations. The curriculum gave the following explanation:

In this period the history of Yugoslavia is such an important part of world development and so connected with it that it must always be discussed directly alongside this development and not in special, separate paragraphs. (Common Programme Basis in Career-Oriented Education, 1979, p. 160)

It has been ascertained that the titles of topics in the curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools of 1991 were no longer connected with the socio-economic development but with important events and processes. Thus the compulsory contents were divided into the main chronological periods:

- prehistory;
- antiquity;
- transition to the Middle Ages;
- the age of developed feudalism;
- modern times – the crisis of the feudal social order;
- bourgeois revolutions and the start of national movements;
- the period of imperialism up to World War I;
- World War I and the new political image of the world;
- the period between both wars; World War II;
- the liberation struggle of the nations of Yugoslavia;
- the world after World War II;
- Yugoslavia after World War II.

In the curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools of 1991 a great deal of other content was connected with the history of Yugoslav nations, just as in the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992. Again, some of the topics were:

- Southern Slavs between Byzantium and the Franks – the crossroads of the east and west cultural influence;
- Southern Slavs between Venice, Hungary and Byzantium;
- political, economic and social characteristics of the development of Yugoslav nations in the period of imperialism;
- Yugoslav nations between the two warring blocs;
- Yugoslavia between both wars (formation, the fight for borders, economic conditions, political order).

Two topics were dedicated to Yugoslavia alone, namely the National Liberation Struggle of the Nations of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia after World War II. In the topic Yugoslavia after World War II only the content on Slovenes in the neighbouring countries was dedicated especially to Slovene history, as had been the case in the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992. The contents in the curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools that began with the year 1945 were therefore highly similar to the contents in the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992.

The difference between the curriculum for general secondary schools of 1992 and the curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools of 1991 was that the latter contained topics that referred solely to the history of Slovenes: e.g.

- Slovene regions in antiquity;
- Carantania, the Christianisation of Slovenes;
- Slovene territory in the Middle Ages (the formation of historical provinces, the shaping of the Slovene ethnic border);
- Slovenes in the pre-March period (i.e. the period just before the 1848 revolutions);
- the year 1848 in Europe and Slovenia; the position of Slovenes in Yugoslavia, Slovenes in the neighbouring countries between both wars.

It has been ascertained that prior to 1991 the curriculum for secondary vocational and technical schools contained a substantially greater number of contents relating to world and European history with select examples from Yugoslav history. After 1991 there was still content on the history of Yugoslav nations, but some topics on Slovene history have been added. Greater changes in content have been observed in the history curricula for secondary vocational and technical schools, which were adjusted in the following years mostly due to the reduction in the number of history lessons in these schools and became adjusted more and more to the different types of technical schools.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, analysis of the curricula has shown that the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 influenced the substantive outline of the curricula, firstly in the curricula for elementary school and later in the curricula for general secondary schools. Changes were similar on both school levels. The only exception were the curricula for secondary technical schools, which followed the reform of the entire secondary school education system (reduction in the number of lessons in history and other general subjects, and increase in the number of lessons for technical subjects), thus adjusting the learning content to technical schools.

When reviewing history instruction on the basis of the analysis of two history curricula for the elementary school, it can be ascertained that in elementary schools the pupils learned European and world history, with Slovene history included under Yugoslav history. Prior to 1991 the curriculum contained many objectives and a great deal of content relating to the history of the Yugoslav nations and the nationalities of Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the self-managing socialist Yugoslavia, Yugoslav nations during World War II; after 1991 there was much less content on the history of Yugoslav nations and more on Slovene history. The curriculum of 1991 already included the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Slovenia's attainment of independence.

Prior to 1991 the curricula for secondary schools for programmes with two years of history instruction placed great emphasis on European and world history, while the history of Yugoslav nations was included only in the key events of world history. In the programmes in which history was a four-year subject Slovene history was integrated into the history of Yugoslav nations, with emphasis on the socialist structure, Marxism, the role of the workers' movement and the fight of the Yugoslav nations against the occupier during World War II. After 1991 the history of Yugoslav nations was preserved in topics such as the Middle Ages, the age of imperialism, the period between both wars, and World War II. The history of Slovenes was included under European or world events. Similarly to the curricula for elementary school analysis has shown that prior to 1991 the general objectives mostly concerned the history and the role of the history of

Yugoslav nations, while after 1991 these objectives were much fewer in number or even non-existent. At least one objective already referred to Slovene history.

It can be concluded that immediately after 1991 Slovene history was given greater importance in the history curricula for elementary and secondary schools. The fewest changes occurred in the curricula for secondary schools immediately after 1991, as content was preserved that concerned the history of Yugoslav nations. The reason for this apparent delay can be found in the thorough reform of the content of the curricula for secondary schools, which had begun in 1990 and continued until 1996, when all of the curricula for secondary schools were in fact reformed (*History Curriculum for General Secondary Schools*, 1996; *History Curriculum for Different Secondary Technical Schools*, 1996). Three acts were also issued in that year: General Secondary Education Act; Secondary Vocational and Technical Education Act and Elementary School Education Act, which concluded the comprehensive reform of the elementary and secondary school education system in independent Slovenia.

After Slovenia's attainment of independence, Yugoslav identity and history were replaced in the history curricula by Slovene identity and history. Slovene identity was seen more as linked to Europe than to the rest of the former states of Yugoslavia, especially after 2004. In addition to world and European history pupils/students became acquainted with Slovene history and cultural heritage. This is a logical development considering that until the attainment of independence the Slovene education system had been developed under foreign education systems. With the attainment of independence at the end of the 20th century the school system asserted Slovene language and ethnic affiliation, and, in the case of history, mainly Slovene/ national history. Let us conclude with the information that European history was given a greater role in the history curricula after the Republic of Slovenia had joined the European Union in 2004.

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## **History Teaching in the Republic of Korea: Curriculum and Practice**

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### **Abstract:**

*In the Republic of Korea, many history education professionals have focused on what is meant by, and how to develop, students' understanding of the discipline of history while the lay public has been focused on what students should know about the past by the end of their school courses. This article discusses issues around history curriculum and teaching and learning practice in the Republic of Korea. It introduces some Korean research trends in history thinking and students' understanding of history. It also presents issues of historiographical disputes among Korea, China and Japan and cultural conflicts between Korean neo-conservative and neo-progressive around national history curriculum.*

**Keywords:** History Teaching and Learning, History Curriculum, Historiographical Conflict, History War, Historical Understanding, Historical Thinking, Narrative, Collective Memory Approach, Korean History, World History, Global History, Republic of Korea

### **Issues around the currently revised history curriculum**

Since the first national syllabus was developed in 1948, the national curriculum in the Republic of Korea has been revised frequently. Currently the national curriculum released in 2007 is being implemented nationwide and the 2009 revised version will be implemented from 2013. The 2009 revised curriculum consists of a nine-year, common, basic curriculum and a three-year elective-centred curriculum. While the common, basic curriculum focuses on basic general education, the elective-centred curriculum is composed of selective courses based on students' interests, aptitude and career interests.

The 2007 and 2009 revised curriculum requires students to study Korean history at the primary, middle and high school levels each with different themes, depth and standards. However, world history is only compulsory in middle school. In high school, students choose two elective courses among many social science courses such as Korean History, World History, East Asian History, Korean geography, World Geography, Law and Society, Politics, Economics, Society and Culture, and Ethics. In other words, world history is not a compulsory study in high school. However, with recent historiographical and territorial disputes with China and Japan, which are written in the last section of this article, politicians and the public objected to Korean history being offered as an elective in high school. As a result, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) just before implementing the 2009 curriculum, in which all courses in high school were to be electives, strongly recommended that the school should teach Korean history as if it were a compulsory course.

Korean history has always been more prominent in school curricula than world history because history education in Korean has been viewed as a means for establishing national identity and cultural transmission. Since early in the 1990s, some politicians, scholars, and educators from both nationalistic and globalist perspectives, however, have also proposed that the teaching of world history, together with Korean history, to be compulsory not only in middle school but also in high school to prepare students to cope with the globalizing world. On February 12, 2011, a seminar entitled, 'When you understand Korea in the world context, you can globalize Korea', was held in the Korean National Assembly Library shortly after MEST designated Korean history a compulsory subject in high school. During the seminar, historians, history educators and some members of Congress demanded that also MEST declare world history a compulsory subject in the high school curriculum. However, there was little public response resulting in no amendment to the history curriculum.

***The conceptual framework of history education and the purposes of history teaching***

Peter Seixas (2007) offered three approaches to handle the problem of multiple histories: 'the collective memory approach' which recognizes that school history curricular must transmit collective memory not allowing competing accounts presented in the classroom, 'the disciplinary approach', in which students are taught the conceptual tools and strategies necessary to criticize the account, examine the base of evidence upon which it rests, and assess it in relation to competing accounts, and 'the postmodern approach', which acknowledges that competing narratives may not be resolved simply by reference to the base of evidence and suggests political and ideological purposes of historical narratives.

In Korea, history education has been conceptualized from 'a collective memory perspective' (Sun Joo Kang, 2011c). The Korean history curriculum endorses a grand narrative of continuous development of a national consciousness through several millennia, culminating in the modern Republic of Korea, thus providing Koreans with historical roots and shared cultural traditions. Teachers and historians believe that this approach of transmitting experiences and knowledge drives reasoned judgment to solve problems the country confronts and envisions its future.

School history fashioned from a collective memory perspective, however, would probably leave little room for a differing and competing perspective and undermines the plurality of perspectives. The epistemological orientation in the national curricula sends a clear message that there is one extended account which is the students' task to learn.

Korean history curricula have relied on the conceptual framework of history as teaching 'knowledge itself' rather than 'an approach to knowledge'. Historical knowledge has not been presented as a problem or as a challenge. History educators have worried that giving one grand narrative from a collective memory approach would impede students from investigating and solving problems historically. Accordingly, many scholars and teachers have emphasized teaching historical thinking although not from the disciplinary approach position but to complement the collective memory perspective.

Since the 1960s, the scholars studying in the university-based history teacher education have attempted to specify historical thinking skills with which students should be equipped. In the late 1960s, Jung In Lee (1963), Korean scholar, introduced the Japanese several theories of historical consciousness in which elements of historical consciousness were suggested and children's development stages of historical consciousness were divided under the influence of Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Jerome Bruner's approach to knowledge. For example, according to Lee, a Japanese scholar suggested that historical consciousness included awareness of origin, awareness of difference between the past and the present, awareness of change, awareness of cause, awareness of periodical relations.

Meanwhile, Korean scholars such as Woo Chul Kang (1974, 1978) attempted to develop his own definition of historical consciousness and specified 'historical capabilities' different from those of Japanese scholars. He suggested that the development of children's historical consciousness had to be evaluated in two domains: the capability to deal with historical materials and the capability to understand history. Woo Chul Kang stated that the former was related to historical investigation skills and skills of evaluating and analyzing source materials and the latter was consisted of chronological understanding, causal understanding, and historical imagination. He emphasized developing historical thinking capabilities in historical method as students analyze or understand texts about the past. In the 1970s and 1980s, Chun Young Song (1986) developed history teaching methods and strategies using source materials to stimulate children's historical consciousness mixing the Japanese theories of historical consciousness and Kang's theory of historical capabilities.

Between the 1950s and the 1980s, Korean scholars in the field of history education adopted Japanese scholarship on school history teaching and learning because they had an easier access to Japanese studies other than other country's studies and Japanese scholars had begun to focus on and established their own theories of historical consciousness and historical thinking from a perspective of psychological development earlier than Korea.

In the early 1990s, building on the theories of psychologists Jerome Bruner and Benjamin Bloom, and the Korean scholar, Woo Chul Kang's theory of historical capability, Han Jong Kim, Korean scholar, attempted to identify the characteristic practices associated with doing history as an educational activity. He (1994) examined theories of development of historical thinking or historical understanding developed in England (including studies by Hallam and Peel, Shemilt, Dickinson and Lee) produced his own theory on historical thinking. He (1994) categorized historical thinking into two domains: historical investigation which was regarded as similar to scientific investigation, and historical imagination, which included interpolation, extrapolation, historical empathy, and re-enactment. Sang Hun Choi (2005), building on Han Jong Kim's theory of historical thinking, categorized it into four domains: chronological thinking, historical investigation, historical imagination and historical judgment. Collingwood's theory (1946), viewed the job of historians as imaginative reconstruction or re-enactment of the past and this significantly influenced Kim and Choi's theories of historical thinking in the 1990s. Collingwood's theory, as used in the British studies, was used to promote historical empathy as the core part of historical thinking in Korea.

Since the late 1990s, Korean scholars have reviewed and discussed impossibilities for achieving historical empathy from diverse approaches including a constructivist perspective and a postmodernist perspective. In particular, Ho Hwan Yang (2003), a postmodernist, asks to not only to Korean history education scholars such as Han Jong Kim and Sang Hun Choi but also foreign scholars including Sam Wineburg and so forth who defines historical thinking which historical thinking history educators are asking for. He problematizes the theory of the historical thinking defined by Han Jong Kim and Sang Hun Choi, which has been widely adopted in developing teaching and learning strategies of history. Ho Hwan Yang (2003) advocates that history education be reconfigured with a radical approach by explicitly building the course around fostering students' critical reading. This would lead them to reflectively deconstruct the power of given interpretations in historical texts. Nevertheless, until recently, Kim Hang Jong's and Choi Sang Hun's theories of historical thinking have been prominent in developing teaching and learning strategies.

Historical thinking, although the history curricula have emphasized it as a significant objective since the 1980s, has been divorced from 'content standards' and thus has rarely evaluated students' achievements or development of it. In the 2007 and 2009 curricula, the objectives of the middle school history course include that 'students have systematic and comprehensive understanding of Korean and world history and an insight into Korean society, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and an attitude of respect for cultural difference (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST, 2007 and 2011)'. Although the 2007 and 2009 history curricula promote 'students' investigation of the past using diverse historical resources and the generation of novel ideas' (MEST, 2007, 2011), the configuration of the curricular architecture focuses on providing students with a substantial amount of substantive knowledge (refer to appendix 1).

Developing historical thinking requires school history to provide students with more than two conflicting historical accounts or interpretations and an opportunity to explain the conflict. The history curriculum has to be presented in a form whereby an explicit conception of thinking is not by-passed. However, Korean history standards have been framed more on a set of history topics than on a disciplinary conception of historical thinking, thus there is a serious gap between the history curriculum and history education research.

In practice, many teachers, based on Collingwood's concept of 'getting inside' an agent's mind, have attempted to design diverse learning activities including having students write journal and newspaper articles in the persona of an historical figure. However, the teacher-developed materials and what students produce as learning activities demonstrate clearly that teachers and students do not genuinely commit to re-enactment of the past or historical empathy. In fact, many teachers do not comprehend historical empathy or how to teach it.

Many students tend to interpret or judge past actions and institutions not on the past's terms but from a contemporary perspective. They do not recognize that people in the past had different standards of justice, beauty, and normality. They have difficulty understanding past institutions and customs, looking at them

from today's standards. Anachronism, which is natural in students, impedes them from historical empathy. Therefore, the first and the most important step that teachers should take to foster historical thinking is, not to ask students to focus on 'getting inside an historical agent's mind' but to look at the 'the historical agent's world as foreign' and to 'differentiate the past from the present (Kang Sun Joo, 2012a, 2012b).

In addition, students are rarely exposed to the key ideas of evidence, change and continuity, causation and anachronism in a history course. Many teachers criticize history teaching lessons structured with giving facts to students and expecting them to regurgitate them on demand. They have been drawn to teaching historical approaches and concepts that students could use for solving problems of the past as well as contemporary ones. However, because the curriculum does include or specify history standards for historical thinking, teachers have difficulty going beyond the curriculum to create lessons of their own.

Today, Korean history educators call for historical consciousness, different from definition of Japanese scholars in the 1950~80s, means awareness of historicity, awareness of the past living in the present and an insight to solve the present problem and to suggest the direction of the future the society must take in the light of the past experiences. They view it as the substantial aim in history education while developing the competence to analyze and construct historical knowledge. Therefore, it is urgent that Korean history educators design a feasible framework that provides students with opportunities to appreciate the interpretive nature of historical accounts, while helping them develop historical consciousness.

### **Content organization in the history curriculum and issues around it**

History educators have made significant progress in differentiating the scope and theme for history education at the primary, middle and high school levels with the development of a framework for each level's organizational theme in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This framework, with little modification since its development, has been used the backbone of school history structuring. Within this framework primary school history is comprised of stories about historical figures and the history of living, middle school history with history of political events, and high school history with more complex cultural history.

#### ***The narrative approach to primary school history***

Primary school history has been taught as a part of social studies. Prior to the 2007 curriculum, in grades one to five, history was organized in topics to help students understand the difference between past life and contemporary life and incorporated geographical, anthropological, and sociological perspectives. 'Life' was the key organizing concept. This approach to social studies was adopted in the 1960s and the early 1970s and was based on the theory of a children-centred, or life-centred curriculum, developed in the United States. Pre-history to present day, organized chronologically, was taught in the first semester of grade six but the limited timeframe supported students' superficial understanding of Korean history – its origin, development and challenges.

The 2007 curriculum witnessed a dramatic change in primary history. While expanding the time span allotted to primary Korean history from a half year to one year, the time allotted to historical topics in other grades was reduced to accommodate topics in geography and social science. Accordingly, primary school students study Korean history about three hours a week in grade five only, and this remains unchanged in the 2009 curriculum.

In the 2007 curriculum, primary history was organized with stories about historical figures in political and cultural domains and the life of people at different times in history. This change was made in an attempt to teach history in its own right. However, in the 2009 curriculum, as the developers were pressured to reduce topics to be studied, coverage of the life of people was reduced and primary history now focuses mainly on stories of historical figures. These have included kings who established a new dynasty or contributed to great cultural achievements, generals and admirals, important political leaders, and some upper class women who are seen as models of morality and character. The 2009 history curriculum has been criticized for its perpetuation of heroic history from an elitist perspective.

In the 1990s, the shift to the constructivist conception of learning demanded educators to restructure

primary school history textbooks in such a way as to provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge. Young Gyu Choi (2000) suggested that a disciplinary approach be adopted as the backbone for structuring history textbooks, referring to constructivist conception of learning. His idea has partly been reflected in the way that inquiry activities with some historical questions and source materials have been added to explanatory texts.

About the same time, Ho Hwan Yang (1996, 1998) introduced the problems and effectiveness of the narrative approach to teaching history discussed in the U.S.A. The narrative approach is supported by several learning theories including Bruner's (1986) theory of the narrative mode of thinking and Egan's (1989) theory of four 'layers' in the development of historical thinking: the mythic, the romantic, the theoretic or pattern-seeking, and the study of details. Primary and middle school students are viewed in the romantic layer. The romantic layer, according to Egan, exemplifies history as dramatic narrative filled with larger-than-life characters, exciting events, and rich detail. Therefore, young students, Egan asserted, would benefit from history represented as a dynamic story replete with conflict and resolution, heroes and villains, good and evil, and other binary oppositions pitted against each other.

A few scholars were fascinated by the narrative approach arguing that the narrative texts should replace explanatory texts (Jeong Ae Ahn, 2006, 2007, Ji Won Bang, 2007). The narrative approach was also favored on the basis that young students were widely exposed to a narrative form of history and very accustomed to narrative thinking even before they start to learn history. Ji Won Bang (2007) and Jeong Ae Ahn (2007) argued that students could more easily evaluate an author's subjectivity in narrative history texts than in explanatory history texts. However, they failed to realize that it is not the kind of history texts that students are provided with that is important, but what they are taught to read, analyze or evaluate in the history classroom.

Levstik & Barton (2004) criticized the storytelling or narrative approach to history for not encouraging critical thinking and reflection, and for simplifying and overstating history. In my studies with in-depth interviews with grade four and five students, I have found that Korean primary school students, like their American peers, tend to perceive history as stories of people in the past, and interpret historical events exclusively in terms of individual motivation and achievement (Sun Joo Kang, 2011a, 2011b). Furthermore, the history curriculum organized around stories and taught using the storytelling approach deflects students' attention from the interpretive nature of history (Sun Joo Kang, 2011b).

Unless children are asked to analyze or evaluate an author's perspective or bias in texts, they simply accept the stories as presented. Therefore, the narrative approach, I argue, should include the disciplinary history framework as the backdrop for teaching practice (Sun Joo Kang 2011a, 2011b). Students need exposure to analytic historical sources in addition to narrative sources because they need to learn that historical accounts are tentative interpretations.

Yet, the narrative approach has continued to be the frame for structuring primary history textbooks. The 2009 curriculum strongly recommends that primary school history be taught with the storytelling approach (narrative), which is expected to make history more interesting and easy for students to understand (MEST, 2011). Currently, MEST and the National Institute of Korean History (NIKH), which oversaw the development of the 2009 history curriculum and the screening of history textbooks developed following the direction of the 2007 curriculum, ambitiously announced that diverse models for history textbooks, and the teaching and learning methods and materials which emphasize storytelling materials, as well as investigative activity and experience-based learning would be developed for implementation in the 2009 curriculum (Seoul Gyung Jae Sinmoon-Seoul Economic Newspaper, April 22, 2011).

### ***The conceptual framework of the middle school history course***

Prior to the 2007 curriculum, middle school world history was grouped with geography and civics in the 'Social Studies' course and Korean history was taught as a separate course called 'National History.' Beginning in the 2007 curriculum, world history was combined with Korean history in a course simply called 'History.' This transformation was a result of historians' and educators' criticism that Korean history

taught without any connection with world history was parochial and world history without any relation with Korean history as not being relevant to Korean experiences. The 2007 curriculum stated:

History connects the past with the present and Korea with the world. It is not recommended that Korean history be independent of the world. Students are encouraged to have a multi-dimensional and dynamic understanding of history rather than a plain and linear one. In middle school students shall focus on understanding Korean history connected to world history.... (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007b, p.6)

Although both the 2007 and 2009 history curricula emphasized the connection of Korean history with world history, they are in juxtaposition. They each have independent organizational themes: 'How Korean people developed cultural traditions and kept their unity throughout history'; 'How peoples in the world developed their cultural traditions in pre-modern times and how modern civilization was created in Europe and spread around the world'.

A few history educators have discussed ways to deal with world history in connection with Korean history and how to teach Korean history in the world history context. Jae Ho Choi (2008) suggests that the middle school history course put an emphasis on histories of the nations, peoples, and regions that are closely related to Korean history and that other people's histories be viewed from a Korean perspective. He also advocates that those historical aspects that can be regarded as general features of human experiences or humanity be represented or explained with examples from Korean experiences. He appears to, intentionally or inadvertently, centre Korean historical experiences in conceptualizing the history course. Although he strongly argues that pluralism and multiculturalism should be core principles to develop the course, his approach has the potential to create another ethnocentrism equivalent to Eurocentrism (Sun Joo Kang, 2011c).

As alternatives, I have examined two more possible approaches (Sun Joo Kang 2011c). One is to internationalize national history, as Peter Stearns (2007), an American historian, suggests. Stearns takes two obvious approaches: comparison and contacts (international relations). He argues that the American experience of nation-making should be viewed not as an exceptional case but as one of many cases in the world history context. An international relations component for restructuring the course, he presents, must include economic linkage, cultural interactions and consumer exchanges as a subject of an economic and cultural mixture (Stearns, 2007). Adopting this approach to the middle school history course would, by giving significant attention to global currents, greatly marginalize Korean history because, unlike America, Korea's emergence in global affairs only began at the end of the nineteenth century and was on the periphery in terms of economic linkage and cultural interactions. In other words, in a history course framed with this approach, Korean history may become lost and world history may take prominence.

The other approach to conceptualizing the middle school history course is to organize Korean and World history separately each with their own themes in their own narratives (Sun Joo Kang, 2011c). If students study Korean history and world history through different narratives, they can better appreciate diverse units of historical analysis and problems of historical interpretations in relation to their multiple identities.

According to Peter Perdue (2008), an American scholar in the field of Chinese history, 'Every narrative needs a frame to structure its themes and this frame implies limits of temporal and geographic scope'. He continues: 'National history creates its frames by assuming that certain geographical boundaries and periodizations are fixed, essential properties which manifest themselves in the contemporary nation-states'.

Meanwhile, world history, in the currently redefined conception, questions the validity of nation-states or civilizations as units of historical analysis, because they limit the understanding of the diverse nature of humanity in plural, temporal and geographical scales. It undermines permanent or fixed political or cultural boundaries and re-imagines historical boundaries created by economic, cultural, and ecological exchanges. Therefore, Korean history and world history, I argue, should be constructed in narratives with

different units of historical analysis (Sun Joo Kang, 2011c). In world history, Korean experiences can be treated as one of many human experiences from a comparative perspective and also included in the world history context whenever Koreans participated in dialogues, conflicts and exchanges related to newly created boundaries of economic, cultural and ecological exchange and conflicts (Sun Joo Kang, 2011c).

### **Politics and history education**

#### ***Historiographical disputes with other countries***

As Peter Purdue (2008) pointed out, one nation's natural frontiers' are the 'lost territories' of its neighbours. This is exemplified in the case of the real and historiographical conflict between France and Germany over the allegiance of Alsace and Lorraine. Korea, Japan and China confront a similar historiographical conflict.

Koreans consider themselves the heirs of the Koguryo state which occupied much of modern Northeast China from the first to seventh centuries CE, and the Balhae state, which developed in Northeast China from the seventh to the eleventh centuries CE. Although these territories were lost to Korea, Koreans believe their histories belong in Korean history. Korean scholars assert that historical records written in the Koryo dynasty (918-1392) and the Chosun dynasty (1392-1910) support their historical and cultural continuity. Korea, the name of the country, was also widely known by Arabian traders during the Koryo dynasty. Based on these historical sources, Koreans assert that Koreans are the heirs of the Koguryo and the Balhae states. However, recently, Chinese historians claim that Koguryo is part of Chinese history because the Chosun tribes lived in the northeastern region of China for a long time and therefore their history, which Chinese historians argue as 'the East northern project', is also Chinese history.

Another historical dispute revolves around Japan's claim to the Dokdo Islets which have long been occupied and inhabited by Koreans. The Ministry of Japanese Government officially commanded to write the Dokdo islets as their territory in the history and geography textbooks (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009). The new middle and high school history textbooks including Japan's claim to Dokdo have been approved for use in 2012.

These historiographical conflicts have a great impact on the current history curriculum in South Korea, China, and Japan, evoking intensified nationalistic perspectives in each country. To ease the tension among the three countries, historians from the three countries have collaborated in writing a book on the modern history of East Asia (*Han Joog Il Gong dong Yuk sa Pyun chan Uiwon Hwai*, [The Committee on Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Collaborative Writing of East Asian History], 2007). Although this book has not been widely read, scholars and educators anticipate that continuing efforts to build a consensus on a common past among the three countries will narrow historiographical and political gaps and reduce or eliminate conflicts.

#### ***Cultural conflict between neo-conservatives and neo-progressives***

There have been cultural conflicts between neo-conservatives and neo-progressives over Korean history textbooks with the main issues being the different interpretations on the contribution of the socialist party to the anti-Japanese fight during the colonial era (1910-1945), and the political regimes of Sung-man Rhee and Chung-hee Park in the Republic of Korea from the 1950s to the 1970s. Neo-conservatives de-emphasize the socialist party's resistance to Japanese colonial rule while emphasizing Rhee's and Park's political regimes in defending liberal democracy from socialist North Korea and in contributing to Korea's economic growth. They assert that history should teach the positive side of the past instilling pride in students

Meanwhile, neo-progressives demand that the socialists' anti-Japanese fight, together with those of the nationalists during Japanese colonial rule, be included in the history textbooks. They also demand that criticisms of the regimes of dictators Rhee's and Park's for delaying democratic development while enforcing economic development at labourers' expense, especially during Park's regimes, be stated and highlighted as an important part of Korea's history.

At the end of the 1990s, in the reins of neo-progressive government, the neo-progressive perspective was

incorporated in modern Korean history textbooks. This was quickly followed by intensive neo-conservatives' attacks on modern history textbooks developed from a neo-progressive perspective resulting in the Department of Education and Human Resources, the former MEST, outsourcing the task of amending modern history textbooks to commercial publishers. A major consequence of this has been lawsuits between textbook writers, who took the neo-progressive perspective, and publishers, and textbook writers and the Department of Education and Human Resources in the 2000s and the 2010s.

### **Common teaching history practice and changing directions**

Over the last three decades tension has developed in history education between different stakeholders. Many history education professionals have focused on what is meant by, and how to develop, students' understanding of the discipline of history while the lay public has been focused on what students should know about the past by the end of their school courses.

In practice, Korean history education focuses primarily on the substantive knowledge that students are expected to acquire by the time they finish their school history program. To learn history is to learn a story: to come to know the major characters, events, and simple causal relationships of events. The interplay of social forces, for example, is likely to be sacrificed in the classroom for a simple story about dates and names. Accordingly, the practice of teachers' giving and students' memorizing facts has been prevalent in the history class. The evaluation system constructed with multiple choice tests strengthens the practice of accumulating knowledge.

The teaching of history in Korea, because of time constraints, resources and traditional norm-referenced testing, is generally inadequate in introducing students to the complexity of historical analysis. Textbooks provide opportunities to students to explore historical sources but these opportunities are used in a way that only complements textbooks' explanation about historical events, figures, or cultures of that time. More critically, these activities are often isolated activities, quickly completed and forgotten or divorced from the bulk of content that students learn.

School history is too deeply rooted in the 'tradition of teaching knowledge itself' to undergo substantial transformation. Korean history educators have not been forceful in demanding a re-conceptualization of history teaching from a disciplinary approach. However, they have advocated teaching history for an in-depth understanding of the past and the present, high-order thinking, problem-solving and life applications. Furthermore, currently, as the discourse on creative learning has gained attention, teaching history in historic places and in museums is encouraged (Kang, 2012a,2012b).

Increasingly teachers have attempted to give students opportunities to approach history as an investigative and interpretive study in their history classes. *Junkuk Yuksa Kyusa Moim* (The National Association of History Teachers) has been very active in developing diverse teaching and learning materials and strategies to make history relevant in students' lives. It has also produced alternative history textbooks from its members' perspectives to amend and complement formal history textbooks. MEST also has a long term project to transform the school social studies (history) curriculum that encourages students to engage in more in-depth investigations and problem solving.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>This article deals with the Republic of Korea's history education only. The term 'Korean' in this article refers to 'the Republic of Korea', i.e. South Korean, not including North Korea.

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### **Current History Teaching in Turkey: Curricula, Debates and Issues**

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#### **Abstract:**

*The aim of this study is to review the current situation with history teaching in Turkey after the education reform introduced in 2004. Accordingly, this study mainly focuses on the structure and problems of history teaching in Turkey both at primary and secondary levels after the education reform, following confrontational debates about the role of history teaching in the construction of citizenship, and in the context of international relations, which is related to collaborative projects undertaken with a number of countries to rewrite history textbooks in a peaceful way. Current research trends in this field are also mentioned briefly.*

*Some researches show that in history teaching in Turkey the common issues that occur are related to text books, the intensity of knowledge/objectives relationships, insufficient weekly course hours and the unfamiliarity of teachers with both new history and constructivist approaches. New history textbooks and curricula continue to be a conflict area between their respective defenders who claim in turn that history teaching should either be a vehicle for constructing national identity or that it should be a vehicle for constructing global, pluralist and democratic citizenship. On the other hand, mutual work with some Arabian countries to rewrite the common past in textbooks, is on Turkey's current agenda to enhance the international context of this perspective.*

*Some researches also show that apart from debates about the nature of history's social aims and the problems of history teaching as already indicated, teachers seem ready to adopt the new history approach. In addition to this, every passing day there is a marked and rapid increase in research into history teaching and the variety of related research subjects are hopeful improvements.*

**Keywords:** Turkey, New history, History teaching, Social Studies and history curricula, Turkish history textbooks, National identity, Global citizenship, Peaceful history teaching, Controversies and debates, issues, New trends and tendencies.

#### **Education reform and new history teaching in Turkey**

In Turkey since 2004, curriculum and in this context programmes of social studies education, and history lessons, have been revised to match a student-oriented and constructivist approach. In Turkey, history lessons are placed under social studies lessons from the primary school 4th grade to the 8th. History lessons begin to separate from social studies in the 8th grade with topics such as 'The Republic of Turkey – The History of Revolution and Atatürkism'. In secondary school the contexts of lessons are programmed according to specific education programmes, and history education continues for four years in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades of high schools. However, 'Modern Turkish and World History' was obligatory for students who choose a Social Sciences route/department, whereas it was elective for students of other specialist routes (or departments) (Literature-Mathematics, Science) in the 12th grade until very recently. Within current regulations, history lessons are obligatory at 9 and 10th grades, 'The Republic of Turkey – The History of Revolution and Atatürkism' is obligatory at 11th grade and history lessons are elective at 11 and 12th grades for all students.

It can be said that history education has turned out to be in accordance with a 'new history' approach, which has run parallel to a gradual process of education reform, which began in 2004. In fact, it has been noticed that in recent years, not only have academic studies appropriate to a new history approach quantitatively increased, but the range of topics chosen for research has also diversified. On the other hand, it is difficult to say that a new history approach is reflected completely in classroom processes because of the demands created by the intensity and density of the content and the application of a prescribed approach in education programmes. Curricula contain too many objectives and it is hard to cover all of these objectives (mostly knowledge-based) within the short course hours.

Focusing on the curricula, classroom practices, debates and some improvements, this study aims to introduce an analysis of some aspects of current history teaching which have followed education reform in Turkey. According to this aim, first of all new social studies/history curricula are reviewed briefly in terms of objectives, content and a new history approach. In the light of the findings of the history teaching researches, some criticisms and problems related to classroom practices of new history teaching will be examined. Secondly, in the context of the controversies and debates about the problematic issue of the role of history teaching within citizenship education, the arguments of the two sets of defenders are presented through direct quotations as far as possible: on the one hand those who defend multicultural, democratic, pluralist, tolerant, peaceful history teaching and, on the other the arguments in defence of nationalist history teaching. Lastly, the agenda of Turkey's history teaching in an international area is introduced, emphasizing the most recent developments.

### **History subjects in Social Studies curricula**

History subjects in social studies curricula are split through various instructional themes and chapters according to context. Thus these themes link to the objectives in the curricula and correspond with chapters in textbooks. As a feature of Social Studies curricula, related to citizenship and geography disciplines there are sections about historical processes from time to time. History subjects in Social Studies curricula are split through eight instructional themes so history subjects are included in related instructional themes. For 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th graders, the Social Studies curricula instructional themes (mainly based on the disciplines of history, geography and civics) are:

1. Individual and Society;
2. Culture and Heritage;
3. People, Places and Environments;
4. Production, Distribution, and Consumption;
5. Science, Technology, and Society;
6. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions;
7. Power, Governance and Society;
8. Global Connections.

The necessity of presenting information through relating history, geography and citizenship in an integrated way is defined in related education programmes as:

... [f]or instance, when discussing Turkey's geographical regions, there should be an effort to create national consciousness and historical sensitivity by mentioning activities in these regions in the National Salvation years (1919-1922) and composing a relationship between geography, history and citizenship. (*MEB Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı*, [Board of Education], 2005)

Another aspect that requires attention along these lines is the role of the discipline of history in creating national consciousness. An emphasis on national identity and the aim of creating national identity through history education is obvious in primary school and secondary. It can be seen, however, that new programmes are different from previous monolithic social studies education programmes (which had been packed full of information), by grasping various viewpoints, using problem-solving in history education, as well as history method, education through sources and empathy; nevertheless they also continue a tendency to instrumentalize history education to construct national identity.

In this respect, history subjects as defined in Social Studies education programmes 'give priority to adopting universal values by centralizing national identity', 'accept the necessity to protect and develop cultural heritage that is the essence of national consciousness by adopting fundamental elements and processes of Turkish culture and history', with these purposes integrated perfectly with citizenship lessons with the role of creating a model of prescribed citizenship.

The direct instructional theme which focuses on history is entitled 'Culture and Heritage'. In addition to learning about national culture and history, this aspect of instructional theme respects the principle of

'expanding horizons', or moving cognitively from near to far, thus in the 4th grade focusing on family history and local history, and in the 5th grade local history. However, the 6th grade concentrates on the First Turkish States and the First Turkish Islamic States in Central Asia, and in the 7th grade Anatolian Seljuks and Ottoman State are taught. As it can be seen, this 'Culture and Heritage' instructional theme presents a totally national history-oriented history education. On the other hand, topics like Ancient Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations, the history of science and technology, and the history of Turkish women's rights are mentioned in the published programme for geography and citizenship education. The published programme links to a relevant textbook. These are written so as to cover the objectives in the curricula. A textbook should include all of the objectives: that is to say that the curriculum is directly related to a textbook.

In the 8th grade, the History of Revolution in the Republic of Turkey and Atatürkism begins with a biography of Atatürk, just before World War I and the war years, and continues with the Turkish War of Independence, the Years of the Early Republic, and finally finishes with Turkey after Atatürk and the impact of developments after World War II on Turkey and information about Turkey's candidature and the process of its application for membership of the European Union (*MEB Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı* [Board of Education], undated). The most fundamental aspect that is different in the new programme on the History of Revolution in the Republic of Turkey and Atatürkism from the previous ones is that the new programme refers to Turkish and world history in the second half of the 20th century, which had been totally ignored in previous versions.

New primary school social studies education programmes give importance not only to history as information but also to the development of historical skills as method. It is aimed at developing students' skills, for example studying with historical sources, historical thinking, inquiry, imagination, empathy, problem solving, and preparing projects. If considered in context it can be seen that there are very few topics about world history; the main focus is national history teaching.

### **Secondary school history curricula, new history teaching approaches and some issues**

When the secondary school history curriculum's general objectives (attainments), reformed in 2007, are analyzed, we can categorize these objectives as, construction of national history and nation identity, acquisition of historical knowledge, acquisition of methodological skills and acquisition of some values through history education.

Here are the general objectives of the new secondary school history curriculum (*MEB Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı* [Board of Education], 2007):

#### Objectives focused on national history and construction of national identity

- Encourage students to take responsibility to protect and develop cultural heritage by teaching Turkish history and fundamental elements and processes of Turkish culture.
- Make students understand the how national identity is constructed, the cultural elements composing this, and the necessity of conserving national identity.
- By understanding the relationship between the past and today, emphasize the significance of national unity.
- The role of Turks in the development of world culture and civilization and their services to humanity.
- Acquisition of skills of using the Turkish language correctly and effectively in both written and oral historical work.

#### Objectives of acquisition of values

- Make them to interact with different cultures while grasping their own cultural values.
- Make them understand the importance of fundamental values like peace, tolerance, mutual understanding, democracy and human rights, and make them to be sensitive about conserving and developing these values.

- Make them acquire values so that they will be diligent, scientific, art-loving and aesthetic by undertaking historical inquiries about aspects of heritage of culture and civilization that are both physical (concrete) and intellectual (not concrete).
- Make them acquire historical consciousness of the past, the present and the future.

Objectives of substantive history

- Make them informed about civilizations and people throughout history.
- Satisfy their curiosity about their own cultural world.

Objectives of second order/procedural history

- Make them use methodology of historiography, historical concepts and the skills of the historian rightly while studying history.
- Make them understand that history is not just about politics, but it composes economics, social and cultural fields, so people in ordinary life are also subjects of history.
- Make them analyze international political, social, cultural and economical interactions for different periods, places and people.

It can be said that these objectives were nourished from a proposal order that defines the meaning of quality in history education in a partially democratic Europe, (reference number 2001/15 about History Education in the 21st Century, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe). In fact, by this order, which focuses on educating active and responsible citizens, a mediating role is given to history education to develop such values as respect for all kinds of differences based on national identity and tolerance, mutual confidence among societies, recognition, understanding and conciliation, democracy, human rights (Council of Europe, undated).

It is defined in Turkey's history curricula that courses and activities should be oriented to develop historical thinking skills, chronological thinking, historical language, the use of different sources, enquiry, creative thinking, collaborative learning, and research skills.

The importance of activities composed of different methods and techniques for the active participation of students, emphasizes giving lessons or lectures more effectively and elegantly, and using visual communication tools such as computer, television, slides, overhead or computer projector. It is suggested that field studies, trips to museums and historical places (historical buildings, memorials, museum-cities, war places) should be included.

Another aspect that makes contemporary curricula different from previous history curricula is the approach that allocates equal attention to socio-cultural historical topics *and* political historical topics. As a matter of fact, it is asserted that historical learning should be characterized by a comprehensive approach in which political, social, cultural and economical matters are considered together. Moreover, the principle of gender equality, rendering history a subject about 'people', can demonstrate that women and men both affected the development of civilizations and cultures – another approach that differs from former curricula. However, history curricula which are designed as student-centered and include the constructivist theoretical approach of 'new history' have attracted some criticisms from teachers and academics who have raised issues about contexts and practice. These criticisms vary from technical problems like intensity of context, insufficiency of weekly course hours for activity-centred lessons, application of programmes without proper infrastructure, to interdisciplinary matters and the social aims (and objectives) of history education.

The most commonly discussed criticism is that the content of curriculum contexts (as programmes of work to be covered) is far too dense and extensive. In fact for teachers, 'there is no opportunity and possibility to plan activities in weekly 80 minutes courses with such a large amount of content and the reality of ÖSS [university entrance exam]' (Kahyaoğlu, 2008).

Significant research projects undertaken by academics reveal that teachers think that too much content and insufficient course hours (history lessons are still 2 hours in a week and compulsory for all 9th and 10th graders) are indeed problems (Bal, 2011; Aktekin & Ceylan, 2012). Some suggestions from academics and teachers are as follows: sample teaching videos should be composed and in these videos a lecture or a chapter should be modelled by the National Ministry of Education to show that weekly course hours are sufficient and activities can be practised (Bal, 2011); that weekly course hours should be increased or some detailed subjects should be removed from curricula (Aktekin & Ceylan, 2012); and that objectives for the most emphasized subjects like Turkish history, Islamic history, and Ottoman History should be decreased (*Tarih Vakfı Öğretmenler Platformu* [History Foundation Teachers' Platform], 2007).

Research that examines teachers' views about 9th grade history curricula that began to be applied in the academic year 2008-2009 (Aktekin & Ceylan, 2012), reveals that teachers approach the new curriculum positively but some of them think that to practise teaching such a programme they do not have enough knowledge, and they want continuing professional development to address these concerns. Other issues in history teaching are insufficiency of course hours, not having history classrooms equipped with necessary materials, and overpopulated classrooms. Researchers suggest giving in-service training with examples of good practice, and increasing the number and quality of visual sources in text books.

Activity suggestions and evaluation examples are presented in programmes; there are instructions about how these can be used or changed by the teachers, and teachers are encouraged to prepare new and different activities. However, except from activity planning and practice and making changes to contextual evaluation criteria based on performance, the fact that teacher autonomy (and the associated satisfaction which can be experienced through higher levels of self-organisation) is not encouraged and these are critical concerns about the structure of the programmes. It is asserted that the wide scope and knowledge-overload of the curriculum are serious obstacles which are severely limiting teachers in their efforts to organize educational activities, and for this very reason teachers extensively rely on – and indeed prefer to use – text books (Öztürk, 2009).

There is a criticism about there being no balance between knowledge and skill objectives contrary to claims in new history curricula, and the approach of just transferring information continues (Öztürk, 2009). According to this, it is hard to assert that general objectives of curricula and particular objectives of units support each other.

Other criticisms about new history curricula by some teachers are, that the objectives of the units are supernumerary and over-particular with too wide a scope, the total emphasis upon Turkish, Islamic and Ottoman history – an 'us-centered' approach that is disconnected with Europe and with world history and civilization. This approach has been seen as an obstacle preventing students from regarding themselves and their culture as a part of universal civilization (*Tarih Vakfı Öğretmenler Platformu* [History Foundation Teachers' Platform], 2007, p.3). On the other hand, it will become more pressing to learn the historical dimensions of the relationship between Turkey and the EU (as well as the rest of Europe and indeed the rest of the world) – because these understandings are the foundations for global citizenship (Saydam, 2009, p. 59).

As can be inferred from these concerns, the teaching (specifically) of European and generally world history is a problematic area in Turkey. Significant historical events that began in Europe but affected all of the world such as crusades, geographical discoveries, industrial revolution are explained very briefly, superficially and as events not related to one another (Öztürk, 2011). As a matter of fact, although topics of world history (also in social studies lessons) were until recently written in related chapters or in separate chapters, and the history of the post-World War II period was totally ignored, there seemed to be no mechanism for making a more natural link between Turkish history and the histories of Europe and the rest of the world.

This approach continued until education reform – an approach that made it difficult to grasp the change and continuity of European and world history, to realize the interactive aspect of events happening in

different geographies, and to relate events with one another to see the big picture. It was regarded as a welcome development that the 'Modern Turkish and World History' lesson (which began to be taught recently as an elective to 12th graders of Social Studies departments) would close a gap in history teaching and students would be empowered to gain multiple and comprehensive perspectives. On the other hand, the idea that this kind of important lesson should be compulsory to all students, is supported (Kahyaoğlu, 2007; Saydam, 2009).

### **The political face of teaching history: debates about controversies**

The most hotly controversial debate about history education in Turkey is between those who support history education as serving to construct and conserve national identity and those who argue that history should be presented as oriented to multiple contexts to create an identity for global and multicultural citizenship. This discussion has closer ties with a second debate about presenting a common past with other (neighbouring) countries and societies (Armenia, Greece, and Syria) in history curricula and text books.

Disconnection with the Ottoman State was initiated by republicans in the early republican years; laying the foundations for a new nation state (the Turkish Republic) and studies of the construction of a national identity gave national history writing an important role. At this point, the aim was that the new identity for this Turkish nation, as can be expected in such a context, would be shaped both by the writing of history and by history education. Initially, the most prominent emphasis was on ethnicity supported by the values of the Turkish nation. Thus elevated, the writing of history was influenced by a one-sided point of view, dominated by a narrative of the evolution and impact of events that determined the political agenda of the ideology of Turkish nationalism. This saw an integrating of Islamic values with Islamic ideology through a 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis'. Copeaux (2006, p.82) defines 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' as 'a national ideology which declares its own nationalism and defines Turkish identity by referring to Islam as a religious, moral and identity source'. After the 1980s, this was the main approach that gave the real colour to history education.

This understanding was discussed more loudly in academe and a search for solutions to change this approach began before 2000. Parallel to contemporary matters like globalization and the candidateship process for the EU, history education was revised in 2004 within the broader scope of educational reform, based on an evaluation of the Council of Europe's related decisions. Debates that have been going on for a while in academic circles about history education in Turkey, formed a fault line between who support multi-cultural, multi-perspective, 'peaceful' (in the sense of reconciliatory) history education and those who assert that the real aim of history education is to create and conserve national identity.

According to these binary positions, it seems that whereas one side focuses on the purposes of history education (its context and its function grounded in concepts like world citizenship, global citizenship, European citizenship), the other side analyzes the nature of the threats which can appear against national identity by this kind of an history education approach, and focuses on traditional aims of history education. The main ideas that belong to the approach of conserving national identity in history education are summarized well in these words of Şivgin (2009):

The official version of history will often express or embed within it doubts about the validity of alternative history and local historiography, and will point out the dangers involved in facing up to our own history, apologizing, the right to disown history, multiple identity multiculturalism, world citizenship, European consciousness, and universal history. These are seen to have the aim of breaking the power of history in constructing and maintaining the nation state and national identity. In other words, the purpose is to denationalize the Turkish people in order to give Turkey a European identity.

However, the society that wants to be given European identity has not been considered as European for 50 years by Europe. If that is so what kind of a benefit can anyone take from destroying our own identity and adopting European identity? It could be asked where global

historians would place a society which possesses European consciousness but would destroy its own national identity, and in addition, which is not accepted by Europe. It is possible both to join international organizations and institutions and yet still preserve the nation state.

In fact, you do not have a place in international organizations if you do not possess national identity. [...] in case of any crises all countries seek solutions firstly within their national borders. This fact shows us that nation states will preserve their existing situation for a long time. The necessity of being attentive about destructive expressions of national identity without considering the conditions of the country, in spite of those requests to form European consciousness and world citizenship besides local identity in text books, especially in history text books, is obvious. (Şivgin, 2009, pp. 50-1)

Recently (2008-2009) in the composition of a project entitled 'Teaching History and Social Studies For Multi-Cultural Europe', a survey of 88 history teachers and 515 history/social studies teacher candidates in two cities of Turkey (Kayseri & Trabzon), and its findings show that those in history education who were surveyed expressed viewpoints about a political agenda that reflected attitudes that are parallel to views in this paragraph.

For the questions (1.) 'Should it be necessary to give a place to European history in curriculum programmes?' (2.) 'Do you believe it is necessary to teach/learn subjects about European history?' 74% of teachers and 71% of teacher candidates say 'no' for the first one and 67% of teachers and 71% of teacher candidates for the second one (Saydam, 2009, p. 45).

According to Saydam (2009, p. 46) teachers and teacher candidates who undertook the survey 'assume that if there are more topics about European history it will serve EU candidacy'. In this respect Saydam (2009, pp. 45-6) asserts that, to object to the full candidacy of Turkey for entry into the European Union does not necessarily mean supporting the idea that European topics would be emphasized less in history education; the fact that teachers/teacher candidates view this topic in their own personal-political perspectives does not overlap with a (or their) pedagogical viewpoint. This finding from a research at a micro-level may inspire wider research for us to see the big picture of teachers' approaches about this subject.

The criticisms against new 9th,10th grade curricula are as follows:

Expressions like 'It encourages pupils to think, investigate, ask questions and do brainstorming,' or 'to make sure that they would be sensitive about the importance of protecting and developing fundamental values such as peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and human rights' unfortunately remain as just sentences, presentation of an image. In this period of mentioning a huge education reform, it surprised and afflicted us to see the old programme. Curricula that we analysed have strong traces of the 'Turk-Islam Synthesis' approach just as in old programmes. In this respect, it would be appropriate to criticize these curricula, as they do not embed an understanding which cares for universal values, based on human rights, a peaceful orientation, or embrace a multicultural situation for Turkey, open to differences, developing democracy consciousness and critical thinking, sensitive about genderism and social justice. (Kahyaoğlu, 2008, pp.4-5)

How the above-mentioned democratic and pluralist situation can be created by history education is a serious issue that has to be studied carefully, and the discussions about this continue. For instance, according to Çayır (2010, pp. 30-3), the lines that define the parameters of the construction of 'us' are ethnically 'Turkish' and religiously 'Muslims' (under state control). In text books ethnicist, closed and essentialist understandings of 'us' continue. These text books support the idea that different ethnic elements and beliefs do not penetrate into this closed concept of 'us'; it necessitates the development of a new pluralist understanding of 'us' understanding, facing up to our past(s), pluralizing official memory and making it democratic[a]. Çayır suggests that the suffering resulting from a one-sided ethnic-national

narrative in history should be faced and acknowledged.

He claims that to 'get even' with history does not mean 'to create a guilty, saddle-it-with-all-responsibility' attitude. It defends the idea that it means 'to recognize past which creates today's problems, to interrogate and to transform today when the factors causing conflict can be determined and identified'. Getting even with the past is the prerequisite for forming a democratic living place for today.

According to Çayır, 'an education process that gives students the opportunity to develop plural identities locally and universally can only be possible with this kind of "getting-even-with"'. For this, it is necessary to bring sensitive and conflict-related topics into the classroom and discuss them. But teachers do not feel sufficiently educated to do that. He suggests that more field-studies should be undertaken in order to prepare education materials for teaching the sensitive and conflict-connected topics whose importance he emphasized for a democratic and pluralist education.

Likewise Sancar (2010, p.128), who also believes that it is necessary to succeed in 'getting even with the past' in order to democratize collective memory and bring it to history education, thinks that there is a conflict between a history discipline (as seen in education, in wider historiography, and in text books) which he defines as 'monolithic and authoritarian', and memory which he defines as 'plural and flexible'. He asserts that the monolithic and authoritarian aspect of history (as a discipline) breaks with the awakening of groups and societies that were under pressure before; and in this way the constructive aspect of history which is written in favour of one side has been discovered. In this respect, he defines the trial to overcome monolithic and authoritarian aspects of history without getting into the trap of relativism, as one of the most significant and valuable understandings which democratic memory studies can bequeath. He suggests, in spite of a belief that our history might be full of glory and honour, goodness and fairness, it is necessary to develop a language that respects the pains of victims of the savage and dark sides of our past. In this perspective, he suggests that historiography, history education and text books should be revised.

Thus, the propositions of Çayır (2010) and Sancar (2010) contain references to 1915 events (the so-called Armenian genocide) that is a conflict issue between Turkey and some other countries. This subject is one of the most hotly contested conflict issues between those who defend 'national' history education and those who defend 'peaceful and democratic' history education. How this sensitive and polemical subject, which from time to time takes the attention of public opinion depending on contemporary developments, can be taught, seems to be a problem about which it will take time to reach agreement (Dilek & Dilek, 2010).

Arslan & Akçalı (2007) think that the context of history education should be revised so as not to arouse conflict with different identities in society and in the world, because with globalism individuals possess multiple identities and become members of more than one group. Hence, the aim of history education should not be to force an individual to possess just one kind of identity; it should free him/her in his/her choices of different kinds of identities. They evaluate this kind of peaceful, plural and democratic history education as one of the most important necessities in a changing world.

As part of a new trend in Turkey history text books are being re-written to reflect a widely held belief that it is possible to construct a democratic, tolerant and pluralist society domestically and also construct peaceful relations with other countries internationally through history education. So history education is an instrument for achieving these aims from this perspective. This is very relevant in the case of Turkey with so many borders with other countries bringing it into the international arena (Greece, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Bulgaria).

### **History teaching in the context of international relations: constructing past, today and future through 'peaceful' history text books**

After World War II, with the initiatives of UNESCO (Arslan & Akçalı, 2007), several factors have come to the agenda in a search for solutions, including getting rid of the discomfort resulting from 'othering',

understanding the trials involved in constructing national identities, and preventing the development of hostile feelings among nations. In this respect, there has been a project to revise the history text books that European countries had been using. This was recently begun in Turkey and other countries having the agenda of EU candidatureship.

After some debate it has been decided to undertake collaborative projects in Turkey and in Arab countries in the wake of an initiative by the European Committee based on a belief that those countries should mutually remove the expressions that can increase hostility and antagonism (Yılmaz, 2007). On the one hand, project work has been ongoing to adapt history education in Turkey to the norms of EU through the principles of the European Committee, and on the other hand concrete steps have been taken – even the work stopped for a while – to get rid of hostile expressions about neighbouring countries like Greece. According to this, Turkey is committed to continue this recently conducted international collaboration on good terms, also by extending these principles to the ground of history education.

According to the news (*Tarih Kitaplarından* [History Books], 2008), a Turkish foundation – The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture [IRCICA], organized a project that will examine text books of Turkey and 22 countries and make them consistent. First put on the agenda in 2007, this project began firstly between Syria and Turkey; expressions that can be defined as ‘hostile’ were examined in the text books of the two countries in the context of this collaborative study towards a common history.

It was decided to continue this collaborative-common study project with the other 21 Arab countries after Syria, and rewrite the 400 years Ottoman Empire period as a common history. There was a declaration that this peaceful history study project would define the truths without manipulation, and that it arose from the shared aims of ‘perceiving historical events as events and seeking to grow new generations without the sweeping seeds of hostility’.

The following sentences can be given as examples of expected to be revised ‘hostile’ propositions in Syrian text books:

Economic Situation of Arab Provinces Under Ottoman Occupation: The Ottoman State was not a state of science and knowledge, on the contrary it was a state of war. It was not an innovative and organized state but a rigid and disorganized one. For these reasons the Arab economy deteriorated in Ottoman time. Agriculture deteriorated, the situation of farmers worsened, many villages ceased to exist. Farmers migrated to towns because of poverty and taxes. The state ignored modern agriculture. *Waqf* lands [inalienable Islamic religious endowments] were ignored and their assets were plundered (Keylani, 2008 cited in Yiğit, 2009, p.82).

In other news recently (Syrian Opposition Begins, 2013) it was declared that Syrian history is being rewritten in the text books that are being studied in refugee schools in Turkey. One of the important changes of newly prepared text books written by opponents, is the fact that the province of Hatay (in the south of Turkey and north of Syria) is now defined as legitimately inside Turkey’s borders, and the denigratory expression of ‘Occupier Ottoman’ (once used in Syrian schools) is no longer there when the Ottoman Empire is being studied.

In the context of this peaceful history project being undertaken with Arab countries, in 2011 there were two meetings organized to revise expressions of one another’s history and culture among states which are members of IRCICA (Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture) and ALECSO (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization).

It was decided to mutually examine the text books of Turkey and Arab countries in the first meeting of this project on April 18-19, 2011. The second meeting was held on September 27-28, 2011 in IRCICA with the participation of experts from Lebanon, Tunisia, Turkey, Jordan and Yemen. It was decided to get rid of unrealistic expressions, approaches and unhelpfully imaginative speculations about Turks and Arabs.

When experts examined the textbooks being used in Arabian countries, they found out that some

prejudicial and wrong knowledge and interpretations were available in the narratives about Ottoman history and the relations between Arabs and Turks. Through the positive effects of some international congresses focusing on Ottoman history in a variety of Arabian countries organized by IRCICA, and through some of IRCICA's publications in this field recently, objective history studies on Ottoman history and Turkish people have now become possible in Arabian countries, and a decision has been made to reflect this new historiographical approach to history textbooks. Significant steps towards the implementation of this approach have been taken. Findings emerging from workshops, involving the participation of some experts from Arabian countries and Turkey, have been broadcast to the public through a comprehensive symposium, and the decisions reported to the official authorities by the member nations (*Ders Kitaplarındaki* [Textbooks], 2011; A Working Meeting, undated).

The national education ministries of two countries, Greece and Turkey, which have had conflict and tension in their communal memory of a common past, expressed their desire to take steps through friendship between the two countries in 2005 and viewed education especially history education as an instrument to support this path of friendship. On the other hand, in the context of the project of writing peaceful history text books, the proposed changes in a history text book for the 6th grade that was being prepared in this respect was met with negative chauvinistic reactions especially from the church because of the fact that it the revisions were not sufficiently national and religious. Because of these reactions the new history text book in which the hostile expressions against Turks appeared, was removed, having been studied for just one year, but after this there was a return to traditional expressions that defined Turks as 'massacrers' (Dilek & Dilek, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

In history education in Turkey there is a problem with text books because of the sheer quantity and density of knowledge that is expected. This is compounded not only by insufficient course hours, but also by the unfamiliarity of teachers with a new approach, and these are confirmed as being some of the most widely experienced problems that researchers and teachers emphasize. Despite history text books conserving their importance in new history curricula, it has become a really problematic issue owing to the limitations imposed by demands made about the presentation of knowledge, a general lack of opportunity to teach and learn using multiple perspectives, and an insufficiency of visual sources for teachers to use.

In this respect many fundamental changes are needed. Besides revising text books to address the criticisms discussed, there is a need for a more widespread use of materials and projects to build structures for alternative approaches to history education, alongside professional development to encourage teachers to use these materials. In fact, preparing materials such as web sites and activities to develop skills especially source-based learning, historical thinking and understanding, necessitates careful study and time. It seems really advantageous for teachers to use their time and energy economically to accumulate these skills sufficiently and in turn present them for the use of their students.

Change is urgently needed too in facilitating work with primary sources in Ottoman history education, translating them from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary/current usage in the Turkish language. This is a necessity before such primary sources can be used in history teaching, but really troublesome work for teachers. A work project supported by EUROCLIO was completed in Turkey lately with an accompanying activity book (Köksal, 2012) prepared appropriately using the new history education approach. This can be evaluated as a concrete and effective step in the right direction.

The problem of insufficient history course hours can be regarded as going hand-in-hand with the tendency towards a strict approach to history education inside the walls of schools. However, spreading history education into after-class activities by various audio-visual and written materials, as well as developing strategies and materials to provide history as a subject for cheery intellectual consumption may be an option.

For instance, a TV series about events in a period of the Ottoman Empire has become popular in Turkey. Dilek (2012) conducted action research into student activity over four years, examining differences in the

quality of student activity within the timeframe during which the TV series was on air, and concluded that student products and inside-classroom processes (their history newspapers, works of art and inside-classroom dialogues) were different from their products when the TV series was not on air. In the latest application students are seen to have an intense interest and curiosity generally for Ottoman history, and especially the topic of Ottoman women, and they had as a result developed a positive attitude for Ottoman history/Ottoman women.

This motivation can be an effective instrument to differentiate historical truths from constructive narratives in order to acquire substantive historical knowledge, as well as multiple perspectives and critical thinking aspects which belong to the method or the syntactic base of history. It is worth noting that written materials like historical novels, history magazines, cartoon novels, especially visual-audio/mediatic products like movies and series have considerable potential for helping learning outside school. Orienting students to museum and field trips can be included among these. Briefly, we can think about alternative ways to continue historical learning outside school according to the interests and needs of students in spite of a conditioning to acquire all kind of knowledge and skills exclusively in the schools.

As a country whose internal and external agenda changes severely and quickly, in Turkey education and especially history education get its share from this intense, slippery and changing agenda. In this respect, on the one hand there are multiculturalism, global citizenship, and ideological conflicts about the construction of the past and historical memory; on the other hand it can be seen through the current positive relations with neighbouring countries (both European and Islamic) that we have a common past. This has a deep impact on the context, approach and tendencies of history education.

Hence, history continues to be an inevitable instrument of citizenship education. While giving meaning to today from looking to the past, we continue to construct the past from different perspectives again and again through the manipulation of contemporary issues and politics. In this respect, countries continue to define the progress of international relations by the interventions they make towards both the narratives of the past and the collective memory that had been constructed in this way.

History education especially has an important mission in the development of ideas of citizenship, but the context and purposes of text books continue to be formed in an unsatisfactory way, often through conjecture and by the manipulation of political developments. Besides this the aspect that so markedly differentiates the programmes of history education which are part of the latest education reform from previous history curricula in Turkey is in that in the reformed curriculum there is the addition of the interdisciplinary purposes of history.

According to this, while history education continues to carry social aims for constructing citizenship identity, there are also aims to acquire methodological skills like historical thinking and working like a historian, etc. However, the nature of history and postmodern principles of historiography (different perspectives, conflictive interpretations, historiography as not absolute truths but as the narrative of historians, empathy, original documents seen also as a product of one's perspective) do not articulate easily in parallel with the social aims.

Academic works about history education in Turkey have been increasing in number and their scope has been widening. As has been seen, it is possible to speak about new tendencies in history education across the Turkish republics and Arab countries, and these new trends are affecting the Ottoman image in the text books of Islam countries, in comparative history education, in early childhood history education, and in the history of women and gender education. Other work is being undertaken involving some building on previous work such as methods and techniques used in history education, historical thinking and learning, history education in respect to citizenship education, and the examination of text books at national, transnational and international levels.

Taking the views of Çayır (2010) and Sancar (2010) under the related title ('Current History Teaching in Turkey: Curricula, Debates and Issues') into consideration, it can be said that there is a need for more

work to be done about sensitive and conflict-related subjects. It seems that Turkey logged quickly into education reform, quickly increasing the number of universities and postgraduate degrees, although there are criticisms, problems, conflicts and insufficiencies. A positive step that can be taken in the path of solving the problems and conflicts is if criticisms and discussions are evaluated by good sense they can thus become positive contributions to the debates, especially if different sides tend to understand one another's points of views and controversial or antagonistic debates return to constructive ones.

In addition to this, it needs to be made easier for teachers to apply a new history education approach. Indeed there are many teachers who feel positively about it by mutually taking on board the findings of, and feedback from, action research while sharing professional dialogue in the context of continuing professional development. It cannot be stressed enough that a priority must be to give teachers the opportunity to research and develop this new approach, and resource materials to accompany this need to be produced with the involvement of teachers themselves.

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#### **Submissions:**

##### **Length**

maximum - 6,000 words.  
[4,000 words preferable]

##### **Type face / layout**

Word Processor	Word
Font	Arial
Font size	11
Spacing	Double

**Abstracts:** 200-250 words.

**Title Page [separate sheet]**

**Title:**

- Capitalise each word

**Author**

- forename or initials
- surname
- institution or affiliation
- town/city
- country

**Correspondence**

- corresponding author
- postal address in full
- email address

**Title:**

- Capitalise each word
- Italics

**Author**

- forename or initials
- surname
- institution or affiliation
- town/city
- country

**Abstract:**

- abstract [the word]- bold, title case, non-italic
- colon following
- text - italicised
- length c. 200-250 words

**Keywords:**

- the word , bold, space above and below abstract and the first section,
- colon following
- keywords : Capital letter for first word in a phrase, lower case for other words separated keywords/phrases by a comma
- up to 20 keywords

### **Section titles**

- capital letter start, lower case throughout
- bold
- single space above and below

### *Sub-sections*

- capital or lower case letter start, as appropriate
- bold
- double space above

### *Sub-sub sections*

- capital or lower case letter start, as appropriate
- bold
- text runs on

### **Text**

- no justification to right
- start paragraphs flush with left border

### **Quotations**

- blocks of text - indent .63cm., no quotation marks
- inside the text - use quotation marks, single quotation mark at start and end of quote

### **References in text**

#### *single reference*

- round bracket - open (
- surname: capital letter then lower case
- comma
- date
- comma
- page or pages p. or pp.
- page or page numbers
- round bracket - closed )

#### *double or multiple references, and, author named in text*

- semi colon between list of references
- two authors cited within a set of brackets - and is &
- author named in text, date of article follows in brackets

### **Numbered explanations in text**

put these as endnotes at the end of the article before acknowledgments

### **Figures**

Mentioned in text as Fig. number, i.e. Fig. 1

- Fig. with full stop after
- space and number
- caption - capital letter start, rest lower case, not bold
- running numbers in text from 1-n.
- inserted immediately after paragraph, or as is best for publishing, i.e. if a full page figure

### **Tables**

Mentioned in the text in brackets, (Table 1)

- CAPITALS FOR TABLE
- running number plus full stop
- inserted in text as soon as appropriate before or after mention
- caption - capital letter start, rest lower case

### **Capitalised Abbreviations**

- give abbreviation after first full use of term within the text
- use square brackets [ ]

### **Correspondence**

- capital first letter, italic i.e. *Correspondence*
- no space
- full postal address
- email address

### **References: Harvard Referencing System**

please use this version:

[http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/studyskills/harvard\\_referencing.htm](http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/studyskills/harvard_referencing.htm)

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