



Luisa Black

History teaching today

Approaches and methods



*An EU funded project managed by
the European Commission Liaison Office
Implemented by the Council of Europe*



This manual is a result of extensive discussions held in the framework of the joint project Interculturalism and the Bologna Process, the project funded by EU and managed by the European Commission Liaison Office in Kosovo and implemented by the Council of Europe. The project set 6 workshops for education professionals who actively contributed to the success of the final manual with their ideas and vision of the future. In this way we would like to express our gratitude to the workshop group of local experts:

Fehmi Rexhepi, Arbër Salihu, Frashër Demaj, Binak Gërguri, Skënder Mekolli, Ismet Potera, Azem Azemi, Arif Demolli, Sabri Rexha, Bajram Shatri, Donika Xhemajli, Isa Bicaj, Shkodran Imeraj, Sulltane Ukaj, Osman Zeka, Emine Bakalli and Gazmend Rizaj”.

Also, big thank you to all international experts who shared their wisdom with us.

Alan Midgley, Arber Salihu, Brian Carvell, Chris Rowe, Falk Pingel, John Hamer, Leo Valenta, Mihai Manea and Robert Pichler.

All the work was done under a supervision of the Steering Board of the IBP project.

Special gratitude should be given to the History Department of the Council of Europe (Mr Jean Pierre Titz, Ms Tatiana Milko and Ms Caludine Martine-Oswald).

Finally, we are grateful to the good work and patience of the staff of the IBP project Ms Aurora Ailincai, Mr Michael Haldane, Ms Hatixhe Ramosaj supervised by Ms Sarah Keating, education advisor for SEE at the Council of Europe and Ms Sophie Beaumont, Task Manager as well as the other members of the secretariat of the European Commission Liaison Office in Pristina.

.....
Written by: **Maria Luisa Black**

Project coordinators: **Jean Pierre Titz, Emir Adzovic**

Date: **May 2011.**

Photo on the cover: **Mr Kijan Osmanagic and his mother Ms Deniza Osmanagic-Helic, Mr Emir Adzovic and Mr Peter Krapf**

Photos: **Majlinda Hoxha**

Design: **Orhan Hadzipiric**

Print: **Printing Press**
.....

Interculturalism and the Bologna Process is an EU funded project managed by European Commission Liaison Office and implemented by the Council of Europe. (www.ibp-kosovo.org)

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe nor the European Commission Liaison Office.

History teaching today

Approaches and methods

Kosovo, May 2011.

Contents

Chapter 1

Why do we teach history - *a rationale* 1

Chapter 2

Skills and Content - *where is the balance?* 7

Chapter 3

Multiperspectivity and Monoperspectivity - *the question of the truth in history?* 15

Chapter 4

Interactivity and *Critical Thinking* 22

Chapter 5

Using sources to develop *critical thinking* 31

Chapter 6

Controversial and *Sensitive Issues* 37

Chapter 7

Assessment or *evaluation* 45

Preface

This handbook is the outcome of a series of six seminars on history teaching held in connection with the joint project on 'Interculturalism and the Bologna Process' run by the European Union and the Council of Europe with the support of the authorities in Kosovo, particularly the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

My special thanks go to the coordinator of this part of the project, Ms Luisa De Bivar Black, who also took on the task of final editing of this document, so that it would be useful for all those involved in history teaching in Kosovo, especially, of course, for history teachers themselves.

I would emphasise that it is the result both of the contribution of various experts from the region and other parts of Europe, who have shared their expertise, and of the commitment and talent of all those who have taken part in the different stages of the programme. I would like to thank them all.

History teaching has been one of the features of European co-operation programmes since the foundation of the Council of Europe at the end of the 1940s. As early as 1950, the member states agreed on the need to work on a reform of history teaching geared to creating the conditions to live together in peace, mutual trust and respect for individual identities, combined with awareness of our common historical heritage.

This point was reiterated by the Committee of Ministers when it adopted Recommendation Rec (2001)15 on history teaching in twenty-first century Europe. It considered that history teaching in a democratic Europe should contribute to the training of responsible and active citizens and respect for all kinds of differences, based on an understanding of national identity and on principles of tolerance, and play a decisive part in reconciliation, recognition, understanding and mutual trust between peoples.

In a Europe increasingly characterised by the cultural diversity of all the societies from which it is made up, and the opening up of each of these societies to other countries and regions of the world, history teaching must not only contribute to everyone's knowledge of history but also provide all citizens with the skills and ways of thinking needed both to understand other people's history and to be receptive to differing views or interpretations of moments, events or periods in history.

There is nothing contradictory about this, merely an acknowledgment that each person's own history only takes on its full meaning when placed in a broader context and that understanding different viewpoints is a prerequisite for a harmonious future for everyone.

As the Secretariat pointed out at all the seminars, the experience acquired in several of the region's countries is not only beneficial for the countries themselves but also as a contribution to the discussion process and for the preparation of recommendations for the reform of history teaching throughout Europe.

Bearing this in mind, this handbook is not only the culmination of the joint efforts of those involved in history teaching in Kosovo, but also the start of a new stage.

Ólöf Ólafsdóttir
*Director of directorate
of education and languages*
Council of Europe

All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Introduction

History teaching was one of the core areas of the project Interculturalism and the Bologna Process, is an EU funded project managed by European Commission Liaison Office and implemented by the Council of Europe. It included a fact-finding mission and 6 workshops. This manual is the end product of that work and it is presented in a way that can be easily consulted and used by teachers, because it has a lot of subtitles to support a focused non-continuous reading or consultation.

But this is as far as easy goes. Let me explain. In the workshops that were organized after the fact-finding mission, I insisted that things should not be easy. Easy is what everybody does. Easy is what everybody knows. I wanted things to be clear but also challenging, because the end product of all our work was to encourage teachers to include new approaches and methods of history teaching into their daily work.

This manual is written as a record of the project and as a support for teacher's change. This, we all know, is not easy. In order to perceive change at the level of the history classroom, there has to be a lot of work at the back stage, from the drafting of new curricula and new textbooks to a systematic organizing of teacher training, and I am just stressing the major steps. The teacher is still the key to change in the classroom, and history education reform needs to include the practicing teachers.

Through the series of 6 workshops, we cascaded up to date information, offered examples of good practice, brought experts from Kosovo, the region, the Georg Eckert Institute, and from different country members of the Council of Europe to share knowledge and experiences with the local participants. There was a lot of lively debate during the sessions, and it was understood that the issues related to the reform of history education were clear to all involved in our work.

The question remains that reform is always a long-term achievement, and we need time to understand whether the decisions that were taken were the ones that allowed achieving the goals that were set. With this manual we also tried to list the main issues that reform comprises.

The last words go to all experts that travelled to Kosovo. I would like to thank them for their enthusiastic cooperation. A lot of what I have written in this manual was very strongly influenced by their participation and inputs.

Luisa Black
Author



Chapter 1

Why do we teach history: *a rationale*

What has changed in the way we look at history in the 21st century?

History is one of the classical subjects that schools teach. Before that, history was a very selective knowledge, only taught to the prince that would inherit the crown, and history books were closed in a special library labelled 'ad usum delphini'.¹

History has been taught for different reasons, as history education is a highly political field that politicians and political parties try to control. One that deeply mobilises civil society and the media. History is a theme that triggers debate and controversy.

- In Western countries, for years and years, history education was intended to produce good and patriotic citizens. Therefore, history in schools had to teach the national story and provide a moral education.
- This concept was questioned after World War II in Europe, leading to substantial changes in the way history education was approached. The major changes were felt in the 60's and 70's (like in many other spheres of life).
- In the 60's, national history dominated the curricula but no longer from a moral point of view - in fact this was to be avoided. The textbooks contained mainly narrative, with sources appearing largely as illustrations.
- In the 70's, textbooks began to present more sources and less narrative, while students had to learn by doing, i.e. they had to start working with sources. The approach continued to eschew moral education.

Today, students study history in order to learn about and understand the world they live in and the forces, movements, and events that have shaped it. They do this by working with sources as a way of developing specific skills - the skills of the historian - and the curricula once again has an ethic purpose: there is a combination between history and citizenship.

Students are not just learning about the past, but also the attitudes of democratic, tolerant citizenship. This shift has implied huge changes both in curricula, which are required to give more space to recent history, and in teaching methods.

A major aspect of these changes is the development of critical thinking, seen as a transferable skill: the ability to process information and make reasonable judgments, which is crucial in the profile of an active citizenship.

Change and Professionalism

The process of change, both in content and in methodology, has had very positive consequences for history teachers; they have become real professionals. One of the most visible results of this professionalization is that the authors of history textbooks are now practicing teachers and not university professors.

This movement can be seen in Western Europe and has also been steadily spreading to the Balkan region, where history teachers are organized into associations and involved in the reform of history education.

Professional teaching methods reached the classroom with the introduction of new curricula, new textbooks, and teacher (re)training. Professional teaching depends on the quality of training and the relative weight given to knowledge-based (content) and to skills-based (methods) history teaching.

The recognition of the importance of teacher training has been the basis for the development of teachers' associations in the different countries, which are now linked through Internet, Facebook, etc. Information travels quickly within the group of active teachers that are involved in education reform.

¹ A set of greek and latin classics kept locked to be used solely in the education of the heirs to the french throne.

Unfortunately, changes reach the classroom level slowly and need political approval. Education bureaucracy is slow.

The situation is not clearly drawn in the field, as most training systems try to balance content and methods in history teaching. As training systems become less teacher oriented (more attention to content) and more student focused (more attention to methods), the trend is towards classrooms where students are actively involved, responsible learners.

In general terms, European countries today teach history because:

- History provides identity
- Develops critical thinking skills
- Contributes to peace, stability and democracy

In the framework of the European Union and globalisation, is the concept of nation outdated?

People need identity, a sense of self and a sense of belonging; so do countries. Identities are characteristics that determine who we are. We should say identities; the concept is more accurate when used in the plural. Countries also have multiple identities. The world is now global; it is not possible to be isolated. Identity – either national or own - is a dynamic construction, revised numerous times.

The concept of identity presupposes the concept of otherness; there is a self and a non self – the other; there is a group and a non group; there are the nationals and the non nationals, and here identity relates very closely to the emergence of the nation states.

The acquisition of the sense of belonging to a national identity is a slow and complex process because to a very large extent national identity is built through the teaching of history, which is based on a curriculum that was designed to impart certain ideas and concepts.

One of these concepts is related to the inclusion of more perspectives than the national one; today curricula include national, regional, European and world perspectives; the curriculum can offer the wider and bigger picture, or it can opt for a more limited and nationalistic perspective. New countries face this question in a more dramatic way and the choices now made will have consequences in the mental framework of a whole generation.

Designing a history curriculum is a difficult task that requires reflection and democratic decision-making; it involves a lot of choices, some very controversial and sensitive. It is also the result of the way a generation conceives its future and the future of the next generation and, as all historians know, prediction is very hard and tricky, so is decision making in education.

History provides identity. History shows us models of good and responsible citizenship. History also teaches us how to learn from our mistakes and those of others. History helps us understand change and societal development. History provides a context from which to understand ourselves and others.

The concept of nation state as the core of history curricula is outdated

The concept of nation as a powerful entity that is the basis of any state, is a European construction of the 19th century, when national movements emerged, many linked to the shift from monarchy to republic. It was a strong and unifying concept: at the end of World War I the nation-states had prevailed.

The construction of the nation state implied an official history: a one sided mythological story that introduced heroes, symbols, national anthems, coat of arms, folklore, official language and collective memories, taught in history lessons since primary school, that generations believed were the truth about the past. In this construction of the nation, the collective – the people – had the political power. What people? The nation. What are the requirements for membership? All those that shared the same territory and did not belong to the nation were excluded from this family. Under this big construct a lot of battles have been fought, which have divided families and communities, and created a legacy of hatred that becomes more emotional than rational.

It is questionable whether the people had any political power in these processes, and history research is showing us that there are multiple perspectives of interpreting the recent past.

The situation in Europe today, with the construction of a Union, is offering a new identity for the Europeans. This identity is quite weak when you compare it with the vigour of the national ones or the current strengthening of regional identities. This balance needs to be tackled and debated when history curricula are designed.

Modern history education also equates the ambiguity of the subject: history is about the past but education is about the future. The big question that curricula need to answer is: what do we need to know from the past in order to have an understanding of the world as it is today? In fact today history is more than a narrative, more than a bag of facts: the reasons behind the facts are more important than the facts themselves. History is the only subject that through the systematic analysis of the past, using the tools of the historians (sources and evidence), develops critical thinking and offers the younger generation the possibility of learning what it is to be human.

What is the meaning of historical consciousness?

The concept of historical consciousness entails the complex, constantly changing correlation between interpretation of the past, perception of the present reality and future expectations.

In fact, historical consciousness is interested in the events (the reasons behind the facts, its consequences, the differing interpretations, etc.) but not in the memory of them (memory is disconnected to the passing time).

Historical consciousness is also linked to the idea that after finishing school history students should have acquired specific benchmarks of historical thinking; the benchmarks are expressed in concepts, and skills, like being able to put an event into its context (the bigger picture); using sources and asking questions to sources; understanding causation, continuity and change; defending standpoints and understanding the ethical issues of decision making.

Students will not acquire historical consciousness if the teaching is based on memorising, if students don't look at history as an intricate process of change and continuity, if they do not interact with source material, if they don't have the opportunity to share and debate ideas, if the reasons behind the facts and the decisions (the why's and the how's) are not dealt with in the classrooms. Students have to understand the complexity of history, the different layers of causation, and how events might be explained depending on the selection of source material and the questions asked to sources.

To fully understand historical consciousness, students must master multiperspectivity, and be able to take different historical perspectives, which implies that students have an understanding of the complexity of the past.

Finally, students should be able to understand the moral questions related to historical events, within the mental frame of a specific period that is studied, and appreciate that neutrality and objectivity are not the same.

School education provides the majority of the population with historical information for the whole of their life. That is why history teaching, first of all, must contribute to tolerance: democratic citizenship needs an open-mind, namely when facing conflicting opinions. The paradox is that

today approximately 70 per cent of information in history textbooks is related to wars, conquests and other destructive events.

Why not a greater emphasis on peace? History education can reflect and reinforce social divisions or aim at social cohesion, it can show models of good and responsible citizenship, promoting positive values and respect for otherness.

Modern States have an obligation not to discriminate against ethnic, linguistic, religious and other minorities, but to integrate them actively into society. Curricula should give fair representation of domestic minorities, as well as of the neighbouring nations and countries. The language used in curricula and textbooks should be free of terms and definitions that could provoke hatred and create images of enemies, in particular when speaking about neighbours.

Historical consciousness is shaped using a lot of inputs from a lot of sources. In history lessons there is an opportunity to organize the different information, process it (using critical thinking skills) in a systematic way, allowing students to understand and differentiate what are facts and opinions and detect propaganda. This is the contribution of history education to democratic citizenship.

Thinking Skills and History

Historians aspire to tell the truth, without totally believing that there is a truth. They are conscious that the evidence they use is fallible and deficient, as it resulted from a selection that was based on criteria. There are other sources that were left out. However successful their empathetic efforts of reconstruction might be, historians know that their viewpoints are rooted not in the past but in the present. In fact, this is historical consciousness: we analyse the past with the tools of the present, and we try not to fall into anachronisms, but we need history to make sense of what the world is now.

When designing the curriculum educators need to decide if history will teach students how to think and (actively) learn or how to memorise. This decision has implications on textbooks, teacher training and assessment.

Memorising is not thinking

Modern history pedagogy trains students in the rules of evidence and logic, to find evidence through patient analysis of sources, to place themselves in time and space, to question sources, to make inferences, to make decisions.

Historical analysis that allows for the development of critical thinking skills needs sources, and students need to ask questions to sources and find information in the material that the teacher has chosen or that the textbook offers. Using this methodology, students will assess historical change and continuity, face different interpretations and perspectives, and understand the complexity of causation and the difficulties of selecting evidence. Studying history improves decision-making and judgment.

Again, the crucial questions for curriculum developers are: what is relevant enough from the past to pass to the next generation? What do we need to know in order to understand how the world became what we perceive it to be today? This decision will help reduce the content and allow time and space to develop new teaching methods.

According to the American Historical Association (article by Peter N. Stearns), the products of historical study are less tangible, sometimes less immediate, than those that stem from some other disciplines, but the study of history is essential for the following reasons:

- History helps us understand people and societies
- History helps us understand change and how the society we live in came to be
- The importance of history in our own lives
- History contributes to moral understanding
- History provides identity
- Studying history is essential for good citizenship

Suggestions for Teachers - Identity can be taught

- Starting with family tree exercises in primary school (who are my ancestors, where do they come from) and making the family tree exercise more complex as age permits (historical context of ancestors; possible decisions that ancestors made because of specific historical situations).
- Using biographies of historical persons (Ghandi, Luther King and Mandela are good examples).
- Using the life of everyday people: how specific communities felt some historical facts, research being done in local newspapers of the time.

The importance of history in our own lives

- Asking the question What happened to your family when ... and making this more or less complex according to age.
- Asking questions such as What did you feel when you saw the images of the earthquake in Haiti ... and making students aware that history is around them and that they can be agents of change
- Asking students to List 3 or 4... turning points in their own life ... and debating change and causation around their answers
- Taking students to out of school activities, where they focus on specific situations of change around historical events (if there are any, research to be done in local newspapers or using oral history and asking the older generation where these sites might be, etc.



Chapter 2

Skills and Content - *where is the balance?*

Skills and Content - where is the balance?

Teaching and learning history is a time consuming process. History is never ending; curriculum developers need to make a selection of what to teach based on criteria. Whatever criteria, time is never enough. For generations, the national perspective was the criteria for selection. In a globalized world the national perspective is not enough, the world is bigger, selecting what to teach is more difficult. But there are other points to consider. The question is not only about what to teach (content), it is also about how to teach (skills).

Today it is believed that capacity building in education is as important as imparting knowledge. Some radical trends defend that capacities are more important than knowledge. The wise option is finding a balance between knowledge and skills. And this is very difficult; there are no clear-cut criteria. In fact there is a lot of information that students can easily access that needs to be processed. The processing of information is linked to the development of critical thinking skills and history is a most appropriate field to learn these skills.

Historical reasoning - *what happened, when, why, what followed...*¹ - is time consuming if it targets the development of thinking skills. At classroom level it needs interactive activities based on the use of sources and trained teachers, who are really concerned with the learning. It is not easy to change from a content-based teaching to a skills-based learning method. However, once started, it is quite rewarding and teachers enjoy it.

Information in textbooks should be presented in a way that could help teachers build lessons on an interactive basis and in a form of a dialogue.

One-sided version of the past?

It is possible to teach facts, focusing on transferring knowledge, telling students what to know, by giving them the answers. In most countries the reform of history education was done by educators who rejected this memory based no questions asked nationalistic history. Most teachers in Europe have taught history that way for decades. The outcome of such teaching has often been the repetition of a one-sided version of the past that generations of students learned by heart and found boring.

Education reform showed another way of teaching, based on the principle that multiple interpretations of the past exist that depend on the standpoint of the viewer and on the analysis of the available source material. In addition to the mainstream interpretation, events in history may be subject to ethnic, religious, gender-based and other interpretations. Many events are also, of course, subject to conflicting and opposed interpretations.

Modern societies are multi-ethnic, some have always been so, and others have become so as a result of globalization. Facing and adapting to this reality is nowadays a European common situation. It is therefore reasonable that, alongside the standard history, there coexist diverse memories and interpretations that all groups have to cope with and learn to respect. The history classroom is the right place to do this in an organised and systematic way.

What to think or how to think?

History education is inspired by the concept of multiperspectivity. It may be defined as a way of thinking, of selecting, of examining and using evidence from different sources in order to unravel the complexities of a situation and work out what happened and why.²

¹ Or as Madeleine Albright (first woman to become a United States Secretary of State, in 1996) put it 'who did what to whom, when and why'

² Robert Stradling, *Teaching 20th century European history*, Council of Europe, 2000, p.142.

The systematic introduction of multiperspectivity into the learning process has deep implications, namely:

- Students are asked to use sources to make well-argued judgements (interpretations) of historical events, which should mean that the classroom becomes more tolerant and respects different interpretations, distinguishing facts from opinions and argued judgements.
- The teacher acts as facilitator, moderator and resource person, as the focus shifts from teaching to learning.
- The teacher concentrates more on methodology and less on content.

If we want to teach the skills required to appreciate the complexity of different interpretations of the past, we have to use source material and teach students how to think. For this, we must ask questions.

When we apply and present different interpretations in teaching history, the impact can be enormous, in so far as we really help students to develop their own critical thinking and, in consequence, a tolerant attitude towards different interpretations.

What Skills are we talking about?

All teachers teach skills. Studying is a skill that we have learnt at school. There are many lists of skills, all logical. History uses skills that are common to other subjects, but has also specific skills. Here is a list of skills:

Acquiring information

- Reading skills
- Studying skills
- Reference and information search skills
- Technical skills unique to electronic devices

Organizing and using information - thinking skills

- Classifying information
- Interpreting information
- Analyzing information
- Summarizing information
- Synthesizing information
- Evaluating information
- Decision-making

Interpersonal Relationships and Social Participation

- Personal skills
- Group interaction skills
- Communication/participation skills

History specific skills - critical thinking skills

- Chronological coherence
- History understanding
- Historical analysis and interpretation of sources
- Empathy
- Causation
- Position taking
- Use of appropriate terms and concepts to communicate own findings

Working with sources

Should students learn about the past, or should they learn how to learn about the past, or both?

Using sources in history lessons allows covering a range of questions in a limited time period. This is possible when students are familiar with the skills they should apply when analyzing source material from the textbook or offered by the teacher. There is a question of becoming familiar with a method and then applying it comfortably in different situations. This is what transferable acquisitions are all about.

Students enjoy acting as historians, collecting and analyzing sources, hypothesizing, making inferences, reaching conclusions. Lessons become more lively and fun, students learn by doing.

Working with sources in a history lesson - Historical sources have to be presented in context

- What is the chronological context? (a timeline)
- What is the geographical context? (a map)
- What are the main interpretations of the event? (the different perspectives)

Multiperspectivity

Multiperspectivity is important in the classroom: what are the different aspects of multiperspectivity?³

- *The rule of three or more* – one view is exclusive, two views invite conflict, three or more views allow genuine diversity.
- *Not only balancing one national, religious or ethnic view against another one* – there is always more than one British view, or Protestant view, or Catholic view, or Muslim view, or Serbian view, or Kosovan view. Young people need awareness of the fact that all people have multiple belongings
- Not only the perspectives of rulers and leaders but also the perspectives of young and old, city and countryside, local, regional, national and global
- *Not comprehensive, attempting to include everything but inclusive* – using the magic words such as to illustrate a few specific examples while leaving open the possibility to include anything else of relevance within the context of the Big Picture.

³ Practical examples/suggestions offered by Chris Rowe

Note that multiperspectivity does not always mean tolerance, agreement or compromise. It allows for strong opinions and continued disagreements – the key to multiperspectivity is awareness of other views

In a history lesson, a source is anything that gives me an answer to a question or helps me solve a problem. Sources can be visual – photographs, paintings, cartoons, posters; written – letters, reports, memoirs, diaries, and so on; they can be statistics and graphs, maps, archaeological or scientific artefacts, songs, radio, television, and films.

The importance of asking questions

Dealing with sources in History is not only about literal comprehension of the words or images that the sources contain. The essence of evaluating a source is analysis of the intentions of whoever originated those particular words or images.

- Who is the author?
- When was the source written?
- What type of document is it?
- Who was the intended audience?
- And what factors motivated the author to create the source?

These are the questions historians ask and that students need to practice asking. By engaging students to speculate on these questions, teachers enable students to weave an interpretation and to question the preconceived ideas that students bring into the classroom: a narrative that was acquired from the media, family and/or friends. In the schools, students are willing to study what they perceive is the 'official history' and they want to do it to pass their examinations. The history lesson is therefore a privileged space to develop critical thinking, by analysing different source material, confronting different historical interpretations, questioning bias and stereotype.

Here is a list of questions to sources that students need to practice, using them develops critical thinking skills, which are important transferable lifelong acquisitions.

Who originated it?

Remember, the key aspect of any source is the purpose of the person who originated it:

- Was it to persuade?
- To complain?
- To make excuses?
- To contradict someone else?
- Was it purely private?
- Was it meant to be seen by others?

Does it come from...

- An official document or government pronouncement?
- A high-level insider?
- An expert outsider?
- An ordinary person who has directly experienced an important event?

How well informed is the source and in what ways?

- By first-hand experience or involvement?
- By access to private or secret evidence or to key highly placed sources of information?
- By expert knowledge and understanding not available to others?
- By frequent and repeated contacts, or just “once-off” access?

How far can it be trusted?

Is there reason to suspect the reliability of the evidence, e.g. due to:

- Deliberate lying or manipulation for propaganda purposes?
- A partisan approach prejudiced by special loyalties?
- Self-justification, trying to avoid punishment, criticism, or embarrassment?
- Bland public statements that conceal the private truth?
- Wishful thinking or sentimentalizing?

How far is it corroborated by other sources? Is it typical of an important attitude or trend? - Contextualising sources

- Place each source in context – what background knowledge is needed?
- Relate each source to other sources – what sources might provide vital additional information or different perspectives?
- Assess each source in terms of what actually happened – does the source give a true account?

Suggestions for teachers

1. What is historical knowledge for teaching?

Good effective teaching happens when teachers possess a deep understanding of historical knowledge, which includes:

- Key facts, concepts and ideas;
- Procedures used by historians to inquire into the past;
- The role of interpretation and narrative in constructing historical accounts;
- Pedagogical tools and methods (matching of curriculum and pedagogy with learners’ abilities and interests);
- Understanding that telling is not teaching, nor is listening learning.

2. A framework for putting multi perspectivity into the Big Picture - Breadth

TIMELINE: THE BALKANS IN THE 20th CENTURY

Chronological Landmarks	EVENTS:	PEOPLE:	FORCES:	Ordinary Citizens	Other Views	Making Judgments
1900-1913 <i>Age of Empires</i>						<i>Why was nationalism on the rise?</i>
1914-1918 <i>The Great War</i>						<i>How did the war lead to national independence movements?</i>
1919-1923 <i>Making a New Europe</i>						<i>How did the peacemakers deal with nationalism?</i>
1919-1938 <i>Democracies & Dictators</i>						<i>Why did new Democracies struggle to keep freedom & independence?</i>
1938-1949 <i>The Second World War</i>						<i>What was the experience of war, liberation & occupation?</i>
1949-1991 <i>Europe & the Cold War</i>						<i>What was the experience of states in divided Cold War Europe?</i>
1991-2009 <i>The Years of Transition</i>						<i>How did the former Communist states adjust to the post Cold War world?</i>



Chapter 3

Multiperspectivity and Monoperspectivity -
the question of the truth in history?

Multiperspectivity and Monoperspectivity - the question of the truth in history?

A simple way to understand the concept of multiperspectivity – the idea that there are different perspectives to what we see, hear or feel – is to look at one of our hands, one side first, then the other: it is the same hand, but what we see is different. We can elaborate on different perspectives around this example in the classroom. Students understand the concept quite quickly.

The contrary of multiperspectivity is monoperspectivity, which in a history lesson we can relate to childhood, naïveté and dogmatism. Monoperspectivity is a one-sided view; in a plural global world this is not possible. Multiperspectivity relates to tolerance, communication and acceptance: confronting different perspectives is a necessary antecedent to becoming and remaining tolerant, to understanding the heterogeneity of the world, its asymmetries.

When we link multiperspectivity/monoperspectivity to history we have to face the question of the truth in history. Is there one truth? This question is generational; it relates to old and traditional nationalistic teaching and learning; democratic thinking gives space to different interpretations, space for difference.

One-sided history – the nationalistic history – is a manipulation. This is not new; Voltaire once described history as a lie commonly agreed upon. The Romans were manipulators also; e.g. after adopting Christianity, Romans were involved in the destruction of the library of Alexandria, and an important bulk of ancient knowledge was lost forever.

Multiperspectivity is an attitude, a teaching concept and a method

Teacher training needs to focus on how education reflects different concepts of history. The way a generation looks at the world, its mental frame, its culture, its lifestyle is the result of many influences, and history education plays a big role in this construction.

What we are, what we think, our identity is a construct, where family and school play a major role. What we learn (inside and outside the school) impacts on the way we look at the world: historical consciousness is common to a generation, with variations within the subcultures and existing groups in society, which is not homogeneous.

If a generation is taught the 'truth' and has no opportunity to revise it, and/or feels comfortable with that version, the thinking process is lost. When this generation teaches the next one, there is no real evolution, just repetition of the one-sided story. A generation of teachers trained to deeply believe in an interpretation of history, which is considered the truth, will perpetuate this comfortable and accepted linear story.

Democratic societies need citizens that are able to process information by using critical thinking skills. They need different stories, different interpretations of what is happening. Democratic societies include multiperspectivity. Societies are heterogeneous, including many different cultures and subcultures, many different groups, many and different interpretations. In order to give students an understanding of the world they live in, history teaching needs to be inclusive – needs to include different perspectives.

History is complex and should be taught in its full complexity; there is no absolute truth, simply because there are no absolutes; justice, beauty, perfection, etc., depend on a complex context of time and space – so does history – so do historical truths.

Introducing multiperspectivity in history education enables the development of critical thinking skills. Students need to work with historical sources; to know what are facts and what are interpretations; what is evidence; what is a well argued interpretation; what are the main and contradicting interpretations of given facts: students need to understand and practice the concept of multiperspectivity.

Multiperspectivity changes history education

Through the analysis of sources, preferably contradicting, students learn how to question the information they contain, to evaluate the value of this information vis-à-vis what they are trying to find out. Analyzing sources, selecting information from the sources, comparing different points of view, evaluating and making decisions – this is the multiperspectival work that leads to the development of critical thinking skills.

Teaching and learning history in its full complexity has many implications: choices have to be made in the curriculum, in teacher training, in textbook writing and in assessment. Introducing multiperspectivity in history education implies a long list of changes in the process of teaching and learning history that includes giving up the concept of a linear and simple narrative to be memorized.

There are many reasons for using multiperspectivity in teaching history. The basic arguments are that:

- The same historical event can be described and explained in different ways, depending on the standpoint of the historian, politician, journalist, television producer, or eye-witness,
- All historical accounts are provisional, and
- The correct version of an historical event is a concept that does not exist or is very unusual

The introduction of multiperspectivity has had a deep impact on history teaching, affecting teaching methods and classroom management. The good news is that using multiperspectivity makes history teaching more dynamic, challenging, and motivating for students and has the long-term consequence of educating generations for peace, tolerance, and democracy. It develops the capacity to think critically, process information, take decisions, and cooperate, while students are prepared to form their own judgments and opinions. The bad news is that the introduction of multiperspectivity is time consuming, needs light syllabuses, uses a lot of source material, and depends on good textbooks and trained teachers - this is what school reform is all about.

Multiperspectivity is also an attitude, a democratic one that distinguishes facts from opinions and understands that there really is no universal historical truth. The use of multiperspectivity by teachers and students implies a decentring of the educational approach, with the aim of making students aware of the many possible different points of view regarding a given event in history – whether of a state, a social class, a minority, a religious/ethnic group, etc.

Multiperspectivity is not relativism

Multiperspectivity is not relativism, because its aim is for students, after looking at events from various perspectives or standpoints and sometimes after heated argument, to make a choice that is rational and well argued, rather than one based on bias and emotion. This choice should be based on criteria grounded on ethical elements. This is inevitable for all education. To attain a rational level of interpretation based on the analysis of data is of great value in learning and is particularly appropriate in learning about controversial and sensitive issues.

Why do we need multiperspectivity in history teaching?

Modern societies are made up of different communities, with different backgrounds and experiences (stories, accounts, opinions, interpretations, and stereotypes). Society today is dynamic. Its main characteristic is its changeability, and its members have multiple identities (including age, gender, occupation, religion, and environmental attitudes), some of which can play a bigger role in their decision-making than nationality or ethnicity. In an open, democratic and tolerant society, identity is a personal choice. Classrooms - teachers and students - are a product of society and reflect its heterogeneous composition. Classrooms need democratic management with teachers who accept that students have a right to express their own opinions, which may differ from the teacher's.

Multiperspectivity, however, needs careful preparation that includes the selection of relevant (and where possible contradictory) sources, clear definition of the aims of the lesson, and a targeted choice of tasks and activities. History teaching has become a very articulate profession that needs specific training and a reflective attitude.

The evaluation and interrogation of sources is the core of history learning

When students learn history, they develop a specific understanding, competences, and skills - they learn how to think. For this, teachers use a variety of (visual or written) sources; ask questions or set assignments, activities, and tasks. The skills that students learn are specific to history literacy. They are also lifelong transferable acquisitions and will be put to use in many everyday life situations experienced as young people and adults.

Evaluating sources is fundamental: are sources objective, subjective, ambiguous, or incomplete? Students interact with sources to interpret them and research their meaning and message, a skill that when deeply learnt becomes a powerful tool for analyzing information and understanding how language changes over time.

In pursuing their aim, teachers use source material in their lessons for a variety of reasons and in many different ways:

- To help develop knowledge and understanding,
- To help develop specific historical skills,
- As a lesson starter,
- As a basis for investigation and enquiry,
- To support arguments in the narrative,
- To offer comparative viewpoints,
- To offer conflicting viewpoints.

In seeking explanations for historical events, students develop specific competences, such as:

- Analysis,
- Evaluation, and
- Recording (making a synthesis)

And they also learn specific key concepts and skills (the tools of the historian) that underpin the study of history:

- » **Interpretation** - formulating questions that focus inquiry and analysis and distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information.
- » **Fact and objectivity** - distinguishing fact from opinion and objectivity from subjectivity.
- » **Chronologica understanding** - distinguishing past, present, and future, using dates, vocabulary, and conventions to describe historical periods and the passing of time appropriately, and interpreting data presented in time lines.
- » **Causes and effects** - understanding important and less important causes, as well as short-term and long-term and intended and unintended effects, and distinguishing between direct and indirect causes.
- » **Change and continuity** - identifying and explaining change and continuity within and across periods of history.
- » **Empathy** - entering into the way of thinking of people who lived in the past.
- » **Position taking/Use of evidence** - identifying, selecting, and using a range of historical sources to make a well-argued interpretation.

Including multiperspectivity

Interpretations are representations of the past and depend on the position of the viewer (age, gender, generation, ethnic origin, religion, profession, etc.). Introducing the concept of different interpretations in history teaching helps the development of critical thinking and tolerance:

- Different students have different interpretations of what happened.
- Interpretations are not facts and are all accepted for analysis.
- Students identify themselves with the different perspectives/interpretations.
- Students learn to respect different opinions when their own opinions are considered valid.

The history classroom should be a space for using creativity to reconstruct the past. While doing this, students develop competences in research, critical and creative thinking, and communication.

History focuses on the links between the past and the present. Students understand more about their own lives, their families', and their communities', if they appreciate important events and developments from the past. The concepts of change and continuity – concepts specific to historical reasoning, but also powerful tools for the analysis of current issues - are naturally acquired in the history lesson by comparing situations in the past.

Multiperspectivity and the learning of key concepts

It is the process of investigation, consideration, and reflection that allows students to form interpretations. To fully use different perspectives, students need to perform accurate work with the source material that either the teacher or the textbook offers. This is a step-by-step approach to working with sources.

Source analysis

In the previous chapter a lot was explained about source analysis; what we are trying to explain here is how teachers and students can use sources to develop critical thinking skills. The focus here is on the questions that are asked so that decisions are made vis-à-vis the source material available.

The methodology that is used is a step-by-step approach to the mechanism of decision-making; critical thinking should lead to informed decision.

Source analysis is a systematic approach to problem solving: complex problems are made simpler by separating them into more understandable elements. Students should apply this approach to the source material the teacher (or textbook, or specific research) offers.

Separating sources in to more understandable elements

- by asking questions,
- by brainstorming,
- by grouping the answers under general headings (separating the whole into parts),
- by making sense of the parts (putting the parts together in an understandable whole)
- by looking at:
 - the context (the big picture) into which the source fits?
 - how the source fits in with other sources on the same issue?

Making a synthesis: bringing the pieces of the analysis together to make a logical whole.

There is a lot to be said about synthesis: key concepts are syntheses with complex meanings; we teach history around these concepts; they help us understand historical trends and patterns, as well as specific events.

Examples of key concepts (synthesis)

- Revolution, counter-revolution, civil war, independence, democracy, colonization, decolonization, fascism, perestroika;
- Republic, anarchy, monarchy;
- Hierarchy, social pyramid, social status, middle class, working class;
- Renaissance, baroque, art nouveau;
- Industrial revolution, capitalism, socialism, globalization.

In a history lesson, teachers integrate skill-based learning into essentially knowledge based syllabuses, and they do it around key concepts.

Suggestions for teachers

Skills based teaching and learning (how to think) – some examples:

Skill: change and continuity

Teach around the turning points. These concepts should be examined in various spheres of history: political, economic, social, cultural, religious, intellectual, etc.

- Change, implies a clear break with the past;
- Continuity, implies the existence of a link, a progression, an evolution.

Decide

Skill: chronology (not an exercise of date hopping...)

History is set in a time frame. Without a concept of time there can be no real understanding of change, development, continuity, evolution, etc.

Students should understand historical time, different dating systems, and specific time concepts, like anachronism.

Teach with a timeline; divide the timeline of a key concept (e.g. slavery or apartheid) into decades, organize as many groups as you have decades, ask students to select the most important two or three dates in the decade, so that the class makes a new abridged timeline and reflects on/reviews choices.

Skill: empathy

Empathy is linked to creative thinking and emotional intelligence. To empathize, students need to lose the prejudices and expectations of their own time and take on the attitudes and understanding of a past age.

Think about this

If children can play the roles of others, very often imaginary others, by empathizing, what is the distinction between empathizing and perspective taking?

The skill of perspective taking (capacity of adopting various viewpoints of the same event/s) is acquired in social interaction, through dialogue. It starts in childhood when children play at being parents, doctors and patients, cops and robbers...

The confrontation with a divergent perspective is a necessary antecedent to becoming and remaining tolerant – it is essential to recognize another perspective not only as different from one's own but also as equally legitimate.

Perspective and perspectivation in discourse, by Carl Friedrich Graumann

Brian Carvel

Multiperspectivity in textbooks

The general aims of school textbook publishing are to support the work of educators in developing knowledge, skills and understanding in their pupils. Good textbooks, amongst other things, help pupils to think critically and help teachers to present significant ideas and perspectives. Textbooks reflect the curriculum aims and publishers have an important role in the value chain of education.

Some key features of modern textbooks include the use of source material, the presentation of more than one perspective and a high degree of interactivity. There are various techniques for illustrating multiperspectivity and the presentation of controversial issues. Planning a good textbook is a valuable skill. Some key criteria against which to measure the textbook plan can be posited. Similar criteria can be used by teachers in evaluating textbooks.

Examples of modern textbooks in the UK which use multiperspectivity effectively can be found, dealing with, for instance: Modern Northern Ireland; post-colonial cultural diversity in UK; social questions and class divisions in nineteenth century England. Equally examples of multiperspectival approaches in the work of the Council of Europe can be given including: new textbooks in Bosnia-Herzegovina; work with bi-communal teacher groups in Cyprus; the Black Sea initiative.



Chapter 4

Interactivity and *Critical Thinking*

1. Interactivity and Critical Thinking

The first idea: it is not possible to teach effectively without interaction.

We want students to process information, to think, have doubts, raise questions: memorising facts is not learning history.

Basically, interactive teaching requires a classroom where the teacher acts as facilitator and students search the answers to the questions, and develop activities that the teacher has suggested. In real life it means a lot of work. Firstly, the interactive teacher needs to plan carefully the activities that will be developed in the classroom, in order to reach a learning objective; secondly, the activities need to be challenging so that students feel motivated and engaged.

A lot of questions and activities without a goal is not interactive teaching. So the first step is that the teacher plans the activities of a lesson according to specific learning objectives, which are usually set by the history syllabus.

*In an interactive classroom there is a **learning outcome** and ad: the main concept/key idea around which the lesson is planned.*

Lecturing

History teachers will still need lecturing, because it is a quick way to deliver concepts and because lecturing can deliver a lot of information in a short time - information that cannot easily be presented in another way. So basically lecturing serves to deliver concepts and information; but teachers should not use it too much: students are passive, there is no feedback, no guarantee that the message is being delivered. Also, because from all learning methods lecturing has the lowest retention value, students get bored easily and stop listening.

This manual is for history teachers. It is interesting to look at the history of lecturing, how it came to be a very modern method when there were no books available, before printing was invented, when images were not needed, except of the saints. When lecturing was the only media for transmitting information, there was no point in processing it, rather the whole idea was to transmit it to the privileged few that studied, at a time when studying was mostly for the clergy. Things moved slowly, there was a lot of time, most people were born, lived and died without moving from their region.

Lecturing is a top down model of teaching.

Why are we still using a lot of lecturing?

We live in a globalised world; we can access information from a lot of different origins without leaving the comfort of our homes or offices; we can look at the world, at different continents from our own, at different cultures; we can look at pictures in a museum, watch people on the streets in real time. We have satellite maps, GPS, we read books on the computer screen, watch movies, download a lot of information.

We live in a society where people move, travel, are curious... Images are everywhere, too much information that we seldom are able to fully process. Our time is precious, because we would like to have a bit more.

But we have to process this information and understand if it is objective or manipulative. Understanding the source material in the Internet is of great importance – history students learn to process information, which is a most useful life long transferable acquisition. In school we need to focus students' attention. The classroom needs to be the place where things are organized and make sense. Again, we do need to use lecture, but not a lot of it: people retain very little of what

they hear and it is very difficult to keep focused after listening for 20 minutes, and the younger you are the more difficult it is.

We use lecture mostly to offer information, to tell students what they are doing and why; to explain the context of what students are studying. But we should not overdo it. Lecturing is a very outdated method, mostly its weight is on the teaching and it is not obvious that what we lecture is understood. Lecturing encourages memorisation, and we want processing. So we need to shift: at the end of the day the learning is more important than the teaching. We need to focus on how students learn and for that we need modern methods.

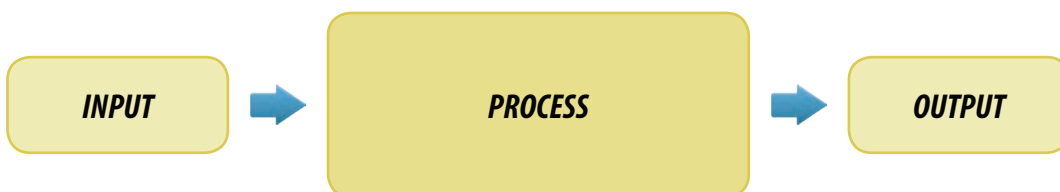
How students learn (personalized learning)

It is proven that students learn more when given an opportunity to process what they are learning; and retain more if they review or use the information immediately after learning it. These are solid arguments in favour of good planning of interactive lessons.

Interactive teaching is based on the idea that learning is processing, without some mental engagement and challenging activities there is no appropriation of content. So, teachers need to make sure that students process and that it is possible to improve the processing.

The efficacy of interactive teaching and learning is supported by systemic theory. A classroom can be seen as a system (or a subsystem of the bigger one – the school, which is a subsystem of the community, which in turn is a subsystem of the village, region... etc.). System means a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships, involving multiple interrelated elements, and where the properties of the whole are different from the properties of the parts.

The system operates in a context (or environment) that influences the system and is influenced by it.



Interactive teaching/learning as a process

- » **Processing** is learning; the better the process, the more improvement in learning.
- » **Inputs** is information/communication that gets in the system (=here as the class) from the outside (mostly questions, problems to be solved, sources to be analysed, etc.)
- » **Outputs**, is information/communication that results from the processing sometimes from different groups within the class, and can become inputs and lead to new processing (=feedback).
- » **Communication and transaction** (=exchange) are the only intersystem interactions.

In an interactive classroom teachers use questions to challenge students and trigger debate, and value answers to keep promoting the learning process, organize activities – namely group work – and give teaching aids to gain and retain attention.

Learning is not a linear process it is organic (like in a farm, when we throw the seed and hope we have a good crop).

Interactivity is a bottom up method of learning.

How to Start...

An interactive lesson usually starts with a warming up activity, which might come as a question, a visual source to analyse, or a challenge. If learning is processing, teachers need to make sure that students engage with the topic of the lesson, process the issues (to reach the learning objectives) and that there is space for process improvement. So a good start is decisive.

Objectives are important for many reasons. It is good that everybody knows what is expected: where one is and where one needs to go. Objectives must be clear, and teachers should spend some time explaining to the class what are the expected learning outcomes. Teachers should not be tempted to come up with a big list of objectives. They should keep it simple, clear, understandable.

Organizing activities that will enable reaching the objectives that were set: this is the professional work of a good teacher: activities that allow/enhance the processing. In education, and certainly in history education, there is a tendency to give a lot of weight to common sense; open mindedness is the key word here; keep an open mind to the elements of the class, students are different, with their own rhythms; teachers should not give in to the tyranny of common sense. Difference is welcome.

Group work is the distinctive characteristic of interactive teaching

Students involved in interactive work influence (have an effect on) each other; they also influence/are influenced by the teacher, who acts as facilitator.

The process of working together and influencing each other is very positive in a learning context, and is more productive than individual work; all members of the group profit from the interactivity. Student assessment indicates that students learn and retain information better when working in groups. Good organized group work has other benefits: it teaches values like tolerance, respect, solidarity and responsibility, which are important for future citizens. It also develops interpersonal skills. These are life long transferable acquisitions.

Why do group work?

Good reasons to insist on good, planned, group work: students report greater satisfaction in courses where group work is assigned; employers value the skills/competences that result from group work.

The use of working groups in a classroom stimulates individual input; students obtain feedback from multiple perspectives; offers opportunities for peer instruction and allows teachers to evaluate their learning.

How to do group work

- Explain the procedure
- Form groups
- Describe task and end product
- Specify a time limit
- Ask for written

Role of teacher (=facilitator)

- Recommend a process
- Monitor progress
- Act as timekeeper
- Answer questions
- Help with doubts
- Have groups report to entire group
- Guide processing of information/results

When to do Group Work

Group work can be done in many situations, depending on the time allotted and how the class reacts to this kind of activity; these are just some possibilities.

- Warm ups
- Practice session
- Review
- Break up Lectures
- Complete assignments...

Some Interactive Techniques

- Think/Pair/Share
- Buzz Session
- Case Study
- Incident Process

Think/Pair/Share (5 - 7 minutes or more)

- Ask a question or present a problem/challenge. This should require students to explain a concept in their own words or to apply, synthesize, or evaluate what they've learned.
- Give students one minute to think about their answers individually.
- Have them pair with a colleague to compare answers.
- Ask them to share their conclusions with the class.

Buzz Session (10 - 15 minutes or less)

- Divide students into groups of 3 to 6.
- Give the groups 3 to 8 minutes to consider a specific, limited problem or question.
- Walk around the room to answer questions
- Ask for conclusions from each group on an overhead/flip chart/black board

Case Study In history lessons this activity is based on the study of an account of a situation or event of the past that an individual or a group has experienced. It is good as a long term work; also good to use written sources; develops empathic understanding.

Case study activities generally answer one or more questions that begin with how/in what way or why. It is an effective classroom method for dealing/provoking controversy and debate for (sensitive) issues for which definite conclusions do not exist. It encourages students to think for themselves, to have ideas, to contribute to the group. It develops a sense of autonomy, belonging and competence that leads to engagement and deep investment in classroom activities.

Through the activity students learn:

- To analyze, select and use source material (information).
- To analyze and debate a historical issue.
- What in-depth research is.
- The existence of open-ended arguments/statements.

Incident Process (abridged variant of case study)

- Method of learning how to solve problems and work out solutions by using actual incidents that involve real people in real situations (newspaper articles supply good materials).
- Less formal, less demanding form of case study.

Question and Answer Period 1 (good to keep attention during lecture/exhibition/film watching...)

- Lecture the class, informing that you allow a certain amount of time for questions at the beginning, middle, or end of the lecture.
- Plan this time and tell students about it in advance.
- Questions may be asked orally by individuals, groups, or in writing.

Question and Answer Period 2 (good to assess the teaching)

- Distribute cards at the start of your lesson. Ask students to write down a question they have and return it to you before the break.
- Review their questions while the students are on break.
- When they return, answer their questions while summarizing key points learned before the break.
- Use this as a transition in to the next topic.

Short Writing Exercises (good to assess the learning)

- During the lesson ask students specific questions
- Ask them to write their answers
- Collect answers and review them
- Clarify all misunderstandings/doubts

Note Review (4 - 5 minutes - good to assess the processing)

Can be used in the middle of a lesson, after a break, or at the end.

- Give students 3 minutes to read their notes and underscore or circle important points, they should also:
 - Mark anything that doesn't make sense
 - Locate missing information
- Circle the room answering individual questions while students are doing the exercise
- After they've completed the exercise, ask for questions so you can clarify doubts

Demonstration

Demonstration is one of the most effective teaching methods because of its visual impact; it consists of a visual presentation of one or more techniques, processes, skills, etc.: In history lessons, demonstration is usually done with role-plays.

You or a student, often assisted by others, go through the motion of showing, doing, explaining, etc.

Other interactive activities

- Peer instruction
- Practice sessions
- Discussion
- Brainstorming
- Games
- Field Trips
- Competition

Summary

Introducing and organizing interactive activities

- » **Give the rationale** - explain why you're doing the exercise
- » **Explain the task** - with complete and detailed instructions
- » **Define the context** - tell students how they will complete the task
- » **Explain what is to be reported** - clarify how students should structure their work
- » **Monitor the activity** - stay near to answer questions
- » **Review the activity** - highlight key points after groups have presented their results

Key ideas

- Telling is not teaching, nor is listening learning.
- You must engage students in learning activities that lead to a higher level of understanding.
- Interactive teaching is a two-way process of active student engagement with each other, the facilitator, and the content.
- Keep in mind, however, that interactivity is a means to a greater end – participant learning.
- The most effective learning involves leading students to a point of reflection on content



Chapter 5

Using sources to develop *critical thinking*

The basic ideas

- People think. This is what human beings do.
- If we don't develop our thinking skills, if we do not think about what we think, thinking is often biased, distorted, partial, uninformed.
- Good thinking, accurate, precise, objective and unbiased is the basis of quality, in our personal and professional lives.
- Teachers need to think critically and help students develop their thinking skills.

Critical thinking in history lessons is not about being critical or criticising.

It is about:

- Asking questions
- Suggesting answers
- Considering evidence
- Asking further questions ...and so on...
- Reaching conclusions/inferences

The history Iceberg



Students and teachers should be aware that past events happened – in the past, and will not be repeated. Of them there is a historical record, and only some of it is revealed to us by the work of historians. Some work is better, some not so good. History, or more accurately, historiography, represents a very small part of the past, and it is a construct, based on a selection of the existing researched and analysed sources/evidence. History is a rich field for practicing critical thinking. Based on the analysis of (usually) a selection of the available source material, the historian makes an interpretation of the sources and presents his/her conclusions; these are better if the thinking process has quality. Students, in the classroom, should use sources and do the work of historians to develop their critical thinking skills.

Could the activity of thinking. . . be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even 'condition' them against it?

Hannah Arendt

Quality thinking

Critical thinking is quality thinking. Its goal is to be clear, accurate, relevant, logical and fair. Teachers and students need to understand and practice this. Lessons need to be planned around this. It needs training.

Critical thinkers think about thinking. Critical thinking is reached when a class is actively constructing knowledge. Part of it can be collective work, but only up to a certain point: no one can construct knowledge for someone else. It is a personal journey, a process that enables students to grow as thinkers and as learners. The role of the teacher is to organize activities that help develop/enhance the thinking process.

Standards for better thinking

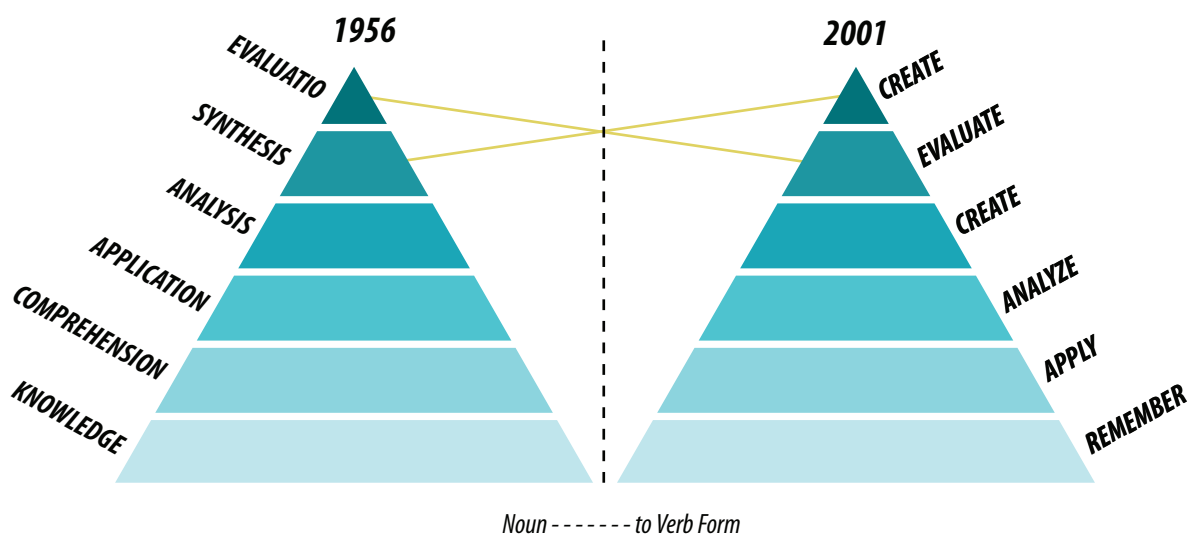
- » **Clear thinking:** we are clear when we don't confuse people.
- » **Accurate thinking:** we are accurate when we are truthful; when we are sure of what we say.
- » **Relevant thinking:** it is relevant if it is related to the topic, question or issue that is being analysed.
- » **Logical thinking:** when we think logically things make sense, they fit together.
- » **Fair thinking:** including other perspectives; free from bias, values and taboos of oneself; looking at the bigger picture

Critical thinking in history

We have all studied Bloom's Taxonomy, which is a hierarchy: each category builds on the one below. For example, application depends on comprehension, which in turn depends on knowledge. Or, to put it more simply: you can't apply something until you understand it; and you can't understand something until you know about it.

1. Evaluation
2. Synthesis
3. Analysis
4. Application
5. Comprehension
6. Knowledge

CHANGES TO BLOOM'S



Bloom's taxonomy has changed and is now adapted to what is being done in history lessons. The hierarchy is now presented as a verb, (more dynamic than the noun), meaning that the student should be active doing work in the classroom so that the critical thinking process is developed and trained.

In teaching thinking lessons

- There is a lot of sources to be analysed (visual, written, films, cartoon, artefacts, statistics, stamps, songs...)
- There are challenging tasks and problems that encourage pupils to use what they already know.
- The problems seldom have only a single correct answer.
- Pupils, either alone or discussing in pairs or groups, do a lot of the work.
- The pupils have time to struggle – the teacher gives help only when absolutely necessary.
- In the plenary sessions there is discussion about the various solutions and how they were arrived at.

Historical questions to ask

Time/Chronology - When did it happen?

Situation - What was it like?

Continuity - How long did it last?

Significance - What was important and long lasting?

Change - What changed?

Cause and Effect - Why did it change? What was the result?

Sources - What evidence is there?

Interpretation - What are the differences between different accounts? Why are they different?

Role of the teacher

Teachers need to plan lessons where students have the opportunity to do interactive work and develop critical thinking. Lessons should be motivating.

Teachers need to reflect on the reasons behind their planning, namely if they are attentive to the need of making students think. It is possible to be very conservative under the appearance of being very modern.

When revising a plan, ask your self:

1. What is the purpose of this lesson? Is there something wrong with my purpose?
2. What does this mean to me? Is it clear enough for the students?
3. Are my questions relevant? Should I include more questions? Delete any?
4. Is the source material that I have relevant? Clear? Enough? too much? Balanced (visual/written/other)? Includes different perspectives?
5. What conclusions will derive from the questions/materials? Are they logical to my purpose(s)?
6. Are my questions biased? Am I assuming something that I should not? Are there other reasonable ways of doing this?
7. What are my main concepts? Are they relevant and logical? Am I allowing students to speak up for what they think?

And after revising:

8. Is this really better?

Historical thinking is complex, like maths, it is cumulative. It has huge potential as it offers life long transferable acquisitions. There are political options in designing history curricula. They will enable – or not – the full development of critical thinking in history lessons. Political options can be related to a preference for nationalistic approaches and memorising a common, many times idealistically constructed past. This option is very outdated; it formats the mind of a generation that might not be intellectually equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century. Today's students need skills to process information: they live in a globalized world where they will have to deal with too much of it.

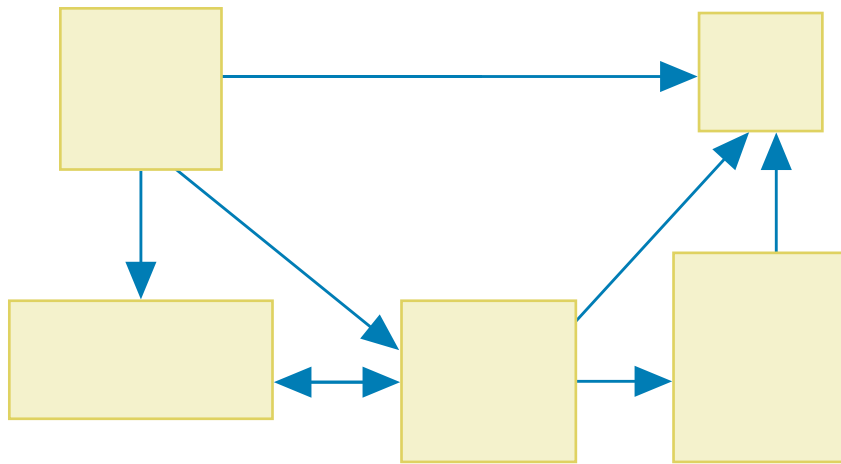
The other option is a modern one; it is linked to the development of critical thinking skills. It needs time, space in the curricula, trained teachers. In a word: investment and good will. This is to say the least. Where it has been adopted, the outcomes are positive.

Critical thinking enables students to deal with complexity, to become free of the bias, values and preconceptions of their own group and be able to reach a wider understanding of themselves, the others and the world they live in.

It is worth trying.

This is what critical thinking in a history lesson might look like.

MAKING LINKS PROVIDING EXPLANATIONS





Chapter 6

Controversial and *Sensitive Issues*

Controversial and Sensitive Issues

Defining what controversial and sensitive issues are in history education is not easy. The reason some history topics are considered controversial, and so become sensitive, is that they link past and present and provoke emotional debate. All countries have such uncomfortable issues in their histories. The question of whether they should be included in the curricula usually raises heated disputes in all sectors of society.

What makes an issue controversial?

- There are competing values and interests
- People strongly disagree about statements, assertions, actions
- Political sensitivity
- Emotions/protests become strongly aroused

History is based on evidence and interpretation

It starts with the question of how one looks at the past. Historians know that it is complex, multilayered and can be looked at through different, even contradicting, perspectives. Their work consists in selecting and analyzing sources - which are incomplete, contain gaps and biased accounts - and constructing a complete description of what might have happened.

In many textbooks, the past is presented as a linear narrative. This narrows the complexity of history and the dimension of events: the past is reduced, simplified and very often one sided. When emotional language is added, it usually means perpetuation of one-sidedness, stereotypes and intolerance(s). Such textbooks weave explanations of selected facts, that imply causality, and have a chronological dimension. They direct students to memorize: no processing of information, no critical thinking.

History education based on narratives is a product of the past; today history teaching should bring historical enquiry (doing history) into the classroom.

There is too much information

Daily, a lot of information is produced, a lot of it goes into archives, other is lost; whatever happens we don't have the time to manage it, so it doesn't make sense.

Historical narratives give us a false idea that we are able to deal with the available information, by making sense of what might be going on. It is a false idea. Narratives are manipulative, use selected information and make time flow in just one direction. History education addresses these questions and trains students to process information critically.

Can we deal with all the information?

As history educators we have to deal with the existing information. The question is how history education can do it. To start with, information has to be selected, but it has to be representative of different perspectives; we cannot manage it by simplifying what is complex; history has to be presented in its full complexity, in its different layers.

What we can do in history lessons is to select information/source material by using the didactical method of 'such as' and we make sure that the selected source material is representing different, even contradicting, perspectives.

The next step is to plan lessons where students act like historians: collecting information from sources, questioning, analyzing, interpreting, explaining...only by doing history, can students understand:

- the conflicting belief systems
- the differing perspectives of historical actors
- the different interpretations related to different historical accounts
- the tentative and provisional nature of all historical narratives

When students are doing history, they are learning how to manage information:

- what is essential and what is trivial
- what is/is not a reliable source
- what is propaganda
- what is an argued judgement and what is bias

This process takes time; curricula have to have space for this; teachers need to be trained. It is hard work, but by doing this kind of work, students acquire a life long transferable skill: processing information critically.

When teachers and students are trained in using this kind of methodology, it is not so difficult to deal with controversial and sensitive issues in the classroom. However, emotions will come up and teachers and students should reflect on some questions prior to dealing with such issues. Namely that, whatever the issue, it is not a good idea to oversimplify the world around us, and also that jumping into conclusions is not a solution. But there are other questions to be considered.

Why do I think the way I think?

Teaching controversial history is best done when students consider their own loyalties, their multiple interests and identities, recognize that it is possible to be both an insider or outsider to something and that own values can be conflicting and can change. Controversial and sensitive issues raise questions of identity and worth:

- Who am I?
- Who are we (family, group, community)?
- Who are you (colleague, friend, teacher)?
- Who are they (the others)?
- And, in consequence: the other is 'me'

Teachers and students come into the school and the classroom with their own cultural capital; they are the product of a given society, subject to memories, influences, emotions and prejudices that affect their families and communities. It is important to reflect upon and be aware of own prejudices and stereotypes; how they are embedded in mental schemes of both teachers and students. This is important because learning is not passive: when students learn they are linking the new information to what is already acquired. And teachers need to keep debate objective.

Why teach controversial and sensitive issues?

Controversial and sensitive issues have huge learning potential. In fact controversy is engaging and motivating and students learn a lot when they are actively debating or trying to find answers to their questions and doubts around the issue that is being studied. Students feel involved, they

have to reason and understand different points of view, including those of minorities, and they generally feel they are maturing and able to debate the issues outside the classroom.

Controversial and sensitive issues also stress the awareness that stereotypes pass down through the generations, helping students detect myths and bias and promoting tolerance within the classroom.

Establishing a good class room climate

The classroom is a forum and not a place for dogmatic pronouncements. When dealing with controversial issues, it is very important that teachers and students understand in what ways the recent past was and is interpreted by historians, writers, politicians, journalists and the media.

Teachers should create a classroom climate that is safe for discussion and disagreement, which means that rules need to be established/negotiated early in the class, and followed by everyone, including the teacher; students may need to be reminded of the guidelines from time to time during debate. Once students reach a consensus on a particular point, make sure they acknowledge and record the fact so they don't recycle their arguments over and over; if objectives are clear, it is possible to avoid useless emotional debate.

Suggested Ground Rules (can be applied in all lessons)

- Only one person to talk at a time - no interrupting
- Show respect for the views of others
- Challenge the ideas not the people
- Use appropriate language - no emotional language, no racist or sexist comments
- Allow everyone to express his/her view to ensure that everyone is heard and respected
- Students should give reasons why they have a particular view (debate to be tied to materials/sources)

Using multiperspectivity

Teaching methods should be based on the use of multiperspectivity, with source-based classroom activities. Sources should be chosen to represent a variety of perspectives, including contradicting one, minorities role, etc.

The rule that too many sources are confusing for the students also applies. If this is the case, teacher needs to organize group activities, where different groups have different sources. The goal is that students reach a level of rational interpretation of controversial questions.

Why others think differently from me?

One of the positive outcomes of teaching controversial and sensitive issues in history lessons is that it encourages debate about stereotypes, propaganda and manipulation, which supports intellectual and psychological growth of the students.

Teachers need to be attentive to this question, and be able to:

- Prevent reinforcing stereotypes
- Prevent the raising of tension and the increasing confusion
- Help students challenging the authority of information and sources
- by asking who does (not) benefit from them

Plan a topic to raise controversy

In the ideal world, all controversial or sensitive issues to be taught will be carefully planned in advance by the teacher. In real life, teachers need to understand that controversy may arise unexpectedly during any time in a lesson. When students are used to applying historical enquiry as an everyday method, controversy is most welcome as it promotes the ability of the students to approach the past – or any question - objectively.

Lesson planning for the teaching and learning of controversial and sensitive issues is not a closed plan that looks very clear. Conceptually, history is open-ended and provisional, and historical explanations tend to diverge.

Having this in mind, teachers need to plan activities and make sure to:

- ask questions more open endedly
- focus on the learning
- offer a balanced presentation of opposing views
- plan interactive lessons/activities
- set the professional scientific tone: be objective, on time, have source material organized, etc.

Students learn because they are curious, have ideas based on what they already know or have experienced, explore these ideas, discover new links, reflect upon what they are thinking, and are curious again, which leads them on to increasingly complex knowledge and more sophisticated thinking about the past and the present; about the world they live in.

The learning potential of open-ended questions comes from the way these questions motivate students' curiosity. Controversial and sensitive issues are studied if a lot of open-ended questions are asked in the activities/tasks of the lesson. Open-ended questions allow differences of opinion on issues that are not 'decided'.

Dealing with controversial and sensitive issues in the classroom

Though controversy might rise any time, there are some guidelines for the teacher to deal with controversial and sensitive issues. The first one is to clarify with the class the issue that lies at the core of the controversy. Secondly the teacher should organize students' activities/tasks making sure that they help students:

- identify different possible choices for deciding the controversy
- explore the facts and ideas behind the controversy act as historians: suspending judgement but analysing causation, analogies, construction of narratives, comparing, using empathic understanding of different perspectives, etc.

Controversial and sensitive issues and citizen ship education

It has been argued that the teaching of controversial and sensitive issues enhances the quality of democracy; because they train students to be more tolerant, to respect different opinions, accept that disagreement exists and that heterogeneity is part of the world we live in; because they train students to approach matters with scholar detachment; because they are a tool of reconciliation and understanding.

Education is crucial for the development of a more tolerant and cooperative society. Whatever we do in education we will only get results at the long-term, which justifies the urgency of some decisions if we do not want to perpetuate stereotypes, intolerance and violence.

There are also arguments that stress the need to have textbooks where emotionally loaded language and narratives have been abolished, where there is space for thinking and disagreement, where the past is analysed through impartial concepts and adjectives.

Where there are no left outs: gender, race, minorities need to be included in the textbooks, because heterogeneity indeed is the rule in the world. But because issues of race, gender and class still divide society today, any attempt to include otherness in the textbooks is also the cause of huge controversy in the media.

The same arguments are applied to a school context, where tolerance is practiced, where it is possible to build trust, where students and teachers feel psychologically comfortable and safe.

A strong democracy is built with critical thinking citizens; history education plays a huge role in this, but more actors in the field are needed. The potential for enhancing citizenship education by teaching historical controversial issues exists, but it needs a wider democratic context to produce the referred benefits. It starts in the classroom, where teacher and students have to walk the talk, but it does not end there.

This is important, and educators need to reflect upon the context of education. People react to information according to where they are. Logical problems approached one way in the classroom might be treated differently in other spheres. Information is context specific, so is behaviour. We react and think according to where we are. The classroom and the school are a context. Family, peer groups, also play an important role in formatting the mindset of the younger generations.

It takes a village to raise a child

Example of one activity in the context of teaching about colonialism and racism that can be adapted according to age and context.

Imagine that you are a Portuguese colonist in 1750. You have just arrived in this colony and you are writing a letter to a family member in Portugal:

- What will you tell them about what you see?
- What things seem new and strange to you?
- What things seem familiar?
- What do you miss?
- How do you feel?
- What might be your role/job?
- You don't understand the language of the Indians (or the Africans) so how do you communicate with them?
- What do you eat?
- What does your house look like?
- Etc.

Students relate to everyday life very easily, because the human element has an understandable dimension for them; empathy is a skill to be greatly used in this kind of exercise; stereotypes and bias can be worked in the class with this sort of activity.

Detective work

Remember that historians are like detectives they reconstitute the crime scene. When planning a history lesson, the teacher might present an unsolved problem and give clues to the students in the form of source material and questions, so that students can act like detectives and do the research. Students enjoy this kind of work. There is a good by product with this kind, as there is always some projection of the detective into the research, the teacher has way to find out and address students' stereotypes and biases and debate them in the classroom.

Controversial and sensitive issues in the class room - a possible activity

Using photos in classroom activities dealing with controversial and sensitive issues is a good idea. Students relate to visuals easily. They are a good starting point, a trigger, for debate and group discussion.

The same visual sources can be used for different age groups, the depth of the analysis depending on the age of the students.

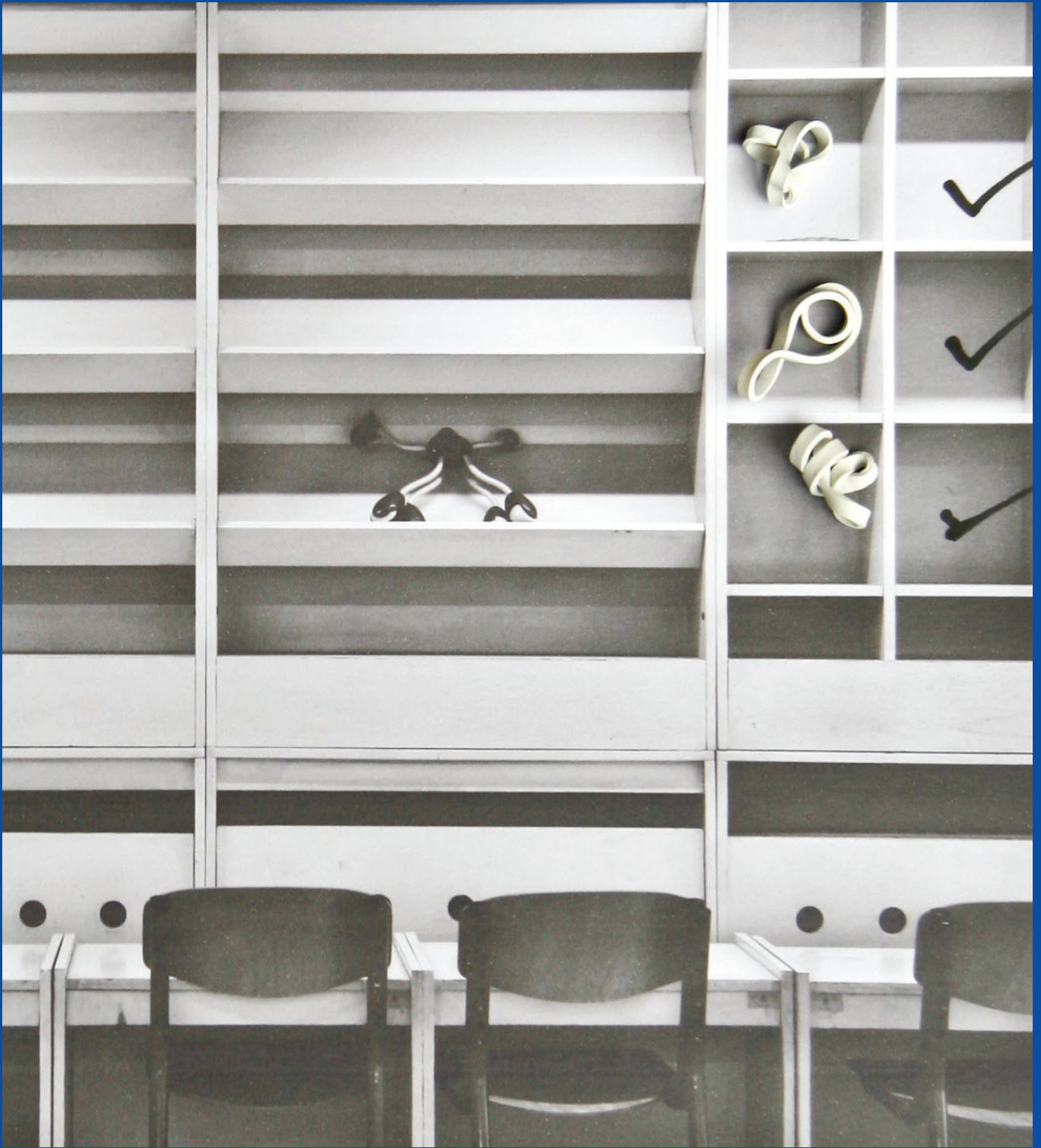
Ground rules should be clear from the start.

The activity suggested here could be adapted to other sensitive issues.

Using photographs of the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, and newspapers from around the world at that time, students can explore different/contradicting feelings and political reactions: Are these controversial? The teacher should clarify with the students the issue(s) at the origin of the controversy: what are the facts and ideas behind the controversy?

After clarifying the controversy, students should act as historians and suspend their judgements, concentrating on historical analysis in small groups with specific tasks, focusing main historical skills, such as causation, similarities, different perspectives, one-sidedness, the construction of linear narratives, simplification of complexity, use of emotional language, etc

At the end of the activity, students share their findings and reach conclusions with the help of the teacher.



Chapter 7

Assessment or *evaluation*

Assessment or evaluation

Assessment is embedded in the cluster of ideas that form the concept of democratic citizenship. Being tolerant and critical means being able to analyze and judge one's own actions and attitudes; and analyze those of the close or distant others, in a critical, non-biased manner.

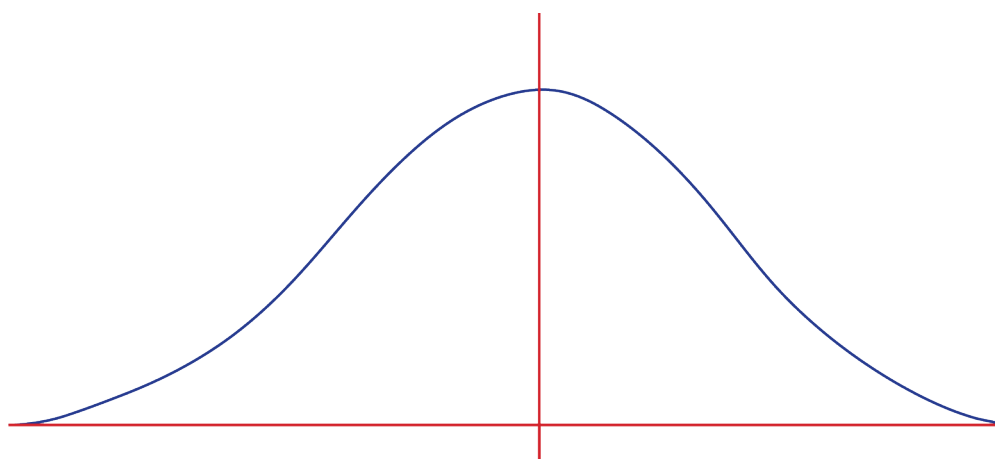
Assessment in the educational system is done firstly to improve the educational process (curriculum development, textbook writing, teacher training, classroom practice, etc.) and also for political reasons, as it provides evidence of student learning that justifies political decisions and the investment of taxpayer's money.

The historical context of assessment in education

Assessment systems in schools (and universities) were basically designed to serve selectivity: it was assumed that only a few should obtain high grades, only a few should fail, the majority of students falling somewhere in between.

The introduction of school standardised testing begun in the 19th century in parallel with mass education. Before this there was no testing. Elite education did not include testing. Standardised testing, intended as an instrument to ensure that all students were receiving equal education, brought comparing, labelling and weeding out of students within the educational systems. They also became a source of discrimination that negatively impacted upon many ethnic groups.

This model of evaluating – standardised and measuring – was based on the idea that the outcomes of learning were determined by the ability (mostly intelligence) of students, which should be normally distributed, and by normal it referred to the Gauss curve of normality, or bell curve, that looks like this:



Measuring tests should spread students out, according to the curve. The grading of students, in such model, was based on how students' performance compared to each other. Indeed, it measured the distance between the students. This model assumed that what is being measured, the learning of knowledge, was stable over time.

Still, the process of teaching and learning is dynamic; teaching produces change, which is unstable; the process refers to knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Educational reform introduced new concepts that revised all teaching methods including assessment and reliability of standardised tests was questioned. Today we want teaching to reduce the variance between students, namely by assessing how the learning process is developing. By obtaining and analysing feedback from

the students, the teacher revises lesson plans and introduces changes to improve the quality of learning. This is a dynamic, self-regulating process.

Measurement models are still administered and are important indicators for re-organizing schools to meet the learning needs of all students. This is an on-going process. Examining underwent a profound change and today it is a specialised activity, government controlled, debated in society, scrutinised by experts and the media, and regularly revised and improved. Reviewers usually include stakeholders in the education system and independent expert analysts. Assessment systems should ensure that all students receive fair treatment in order not to limit students' present and future opportunities. They allow for multiple methods to assess student progress and for multiple but equivalent ways for students to express knowledge and understanding.

Improving the learning process through assessment

All good teachers are interactive

Modern teaching is interactive: the teacher adapts his or her approach to the needs of the student(s). The teacher knows about the students' need because he or she receives feedback from them. Interacting is a systemic activity: teachers give inputs to students and get outputs from students in the form of feedback.

Interactive learning of history is a multi-way process: the learner may be interacting with the teacher, with other students, with resources, or with all three. Assessment is a crucial aspect of interactivity. It is central to the learning process, aiming at understanding and improving students' learning; it is also a process of looking at students' achievement.

Assessment is a learner – centered effort

From the Latin verb *assidere*, which literally means to sit by the side.

It refers to a very common teaching practice of observing the students' learning processes and acting on those observations to improve what they are doing. It is the most significant influence on student learning.

Assessment is an integral part of history teaching and learning. It is important to find out that the class achieved (short and long term) the objectives and learning outcomes.

Are we all - teacher and class - travelling in the same direction?

Some basic principles:

- Evaluating is not an end in itself, but a means to an end; it is part of the instruction and its purpose is to improve students learning.
- Decisions that teacher makes on assessment should be made in accordance to the purpose for which the teacher is assessing (this keeps the teacher in focus).
- If the purpose is clear, the kind of evaluation that will be most appropriate can be planned.
- Evaluation should be continuously and frequently used during instruction, so that the teacher obtains feed back from the students and revises the lesson plans according to specific needs of the class.
- After the instructional cycle, teacher evaluates if the learning outcomes have been reached.
- It is a good idea to include self-assessment from the students during and/or at the end of the instructional cycle.
- Good assessment requires a variety of techniques and teachers should be aware of their limitations (weaknesses and strengths).
- There is no justification for collecting data on pupil performance, unless a use of the data is clearly in mind.

Summative and Formative assessments

When we think about testing and grading we are referring to summative assessment. This is a specific type of assessment, comprehensive in nature, which provides accountability and is used to check the level of learning at the end of each unit. Teachers have to be very attentive to using various methods and measures in order to have a comprehensive plan that is fair, because it differentiates between the various levels of learning.

When we think about improving the quality of student learning, we are referring to formative assessment - a specific type of assessment that is not evaluative and does not involve grading students. Both summative and formative assessments can lead to curricular modifications, after analysis of the results, when it clearly shows that specific courses have not met students' learning targets.

Class room assessment

Teachers are responsible for improving students' learning; the everyday technique all teachers use for this is classroom assessment, largely because the quality of student learning is proportional (albeit not exclusively) to the quality of teaching, so that teachers can improve learning if they improve their teaching, by reflecting upon their own work.

There are other techniques:

- Good learning involves very clear goals and objectives and giving students early feedback, so it is also a good idea to tell the students what is expected of them at the end of the lesson and the unit.
- Good learning is clearly linked to a teaching that is creative and able to revise its methods and practices; teachers should ask themselves questions such as why couldn't I get the message across and what is still not clear, to the class
- Sharing experiences and reflecting with colleagues improves the quality of classroom assessment.
- Classroom assessment does not involve special training and a teacher who is assessment-oriented is a teacher open to change (it is an attitude).

Teachers' assessment should occur at any point along the continuum of the process:

- Start the lesson by making sure required background knowledge is recalled.
- Finish the lesson with two questions: What was the most important point of today's lesson? What remains unanswered, difficult, or less clear?
- Find hidden barriers and biases to learning.
- Ask for a one-sentence summary - this can be homework.

Testing - arationale

After students have been instructed, when the unit is finished, the usual procedure is to test. Evaluation is a comparison of the students' performance with a standard by means of a measuring instrument: when the unit is ended, the standards to be used are the learning objectives.

Good assessment is objective based: what learners should be able to do, in terms of observable behavior; good tests have a high degree of validity (it measures what it is supposed to measure) and reliability (consistency).

Good tests...

- Are part of the instructional cycle and are well planned;
- Have clear and complete directions, tell students how they should record their answers, how they will be scored, how they can correct mistakes;
- Are well printed and easy to read, use appropriate and accurate vocabulary;
- Items correspond to what was taught in the unit – knowledge, skills and attitudes; the number of items is adequate, there are difficult and easy items (the test will discriminate), there is no guessing effect, there are no identifiable cues within the test.

Teachers will also consider the time when the test will be distributed, the noise in school, the classroom and space distribution, etc.

The tests that can be graded quickly – the selective response tests - and give an accurate overview of what was in fact learnt are difficult to construct. Teachers need to practice if they want to introduce this kind of test.

1. True - False questions

- The student should not write the letter T or F, but only in true items.
- Just one idea per item.
- True/false items all stated in a positive mode.
- No superlatives.
- To eliminate ambiguity, test-items using adjectives should be stated as a comparison or elaborated upon.

2. Multiple - choice

- One idea per choice.
- The stem of the question should present a complete problem.
- Negative words should be capitalized and/or underlined.
- The choices "all of the above," "two or more of the above," and "none of the above," should not be used.
- The choices should be similar in length and detail.

3. Completion

- There should be no clues.
- All blanks should be of uniform length.
- The omitted phrase should be no longer than three words.
- Words or phrases omitted should not be trivial words or phrases.
- There should not be so many

4. Matching

- The left column items identified with numbers; the right column items identified with letters; students to match items by writing the letters in a space to the left of the test-item number (not with arrows).
- The items in both columns should belong to the same general class.
- There should be between five and ten items in the left column, and more items in the right column than in the left.

Essay questions

Essays have the potential to reveal students' abilities to reason, create, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate source material. Essays assess students' understanding of and ability to think with subject matter content and source material.

Writing good essay questions require training and practice. It is not easy to write clear and precise questions; nor is it easy to develop reliable and fair scoring criteria. Grading students' answers is difficult, judgmental (attention to bias and stereotypes) and time consuming.

When writing essay questions

- Identify the intended learning outcome to be assessed and avoid using essay questions for objectives that are better assessed with selective response items.
- Clearly define the task, its scope, and present it in a problem situation, clearly developed.
- State the criteria for grading and specify the relative point value and the approximate time limit.
- Write a model answer (teacher usually spends 1/3 of the time students spend).
- When you finish it is a good idea to have a colleague critically review the essay question.

Attitudes – emotional intelligence and assessment

Many educational systems today agree that history teaching develops specific skills and concepts, such as change, continuity, cause, perspectivity, etc. One of the skills history reasoning mostly uses - empathy - can be defined as the ability to understand something from another's point of view. It is also an attitude. It is a fact that studying history deals with values, attitudes, and moral reasoning. Teachers have to be aware of attitudes, as they will be present in classroom activities, especially debates, and have to determine what attitudes should be included in the objectives that are part of the lesson plan, according to the intended learning outcomes. Teacher should evaluate whether those aims are being achieved.

Empathy, which is embedded in history learning, is linked to emotional intelligence. For a clearer idea as to how emotional intelligence can be developed (and evaluated) in a history lesson, we can use the affective domain of Bloom's taxonomy, which helps teachers focus on specific questions and issues and organize tasks, activities, and, of course, assessment:

- » **Receiving:** Are students receptive to beliefs and values different from their own?
- » **Responding:** Do students consider the views of others in the light of those person's values and beliefs?
- » **Valuing:** Do students reflect upon the formation of their own perspectives, beliefs and values?
- » **Organizing:** Do students explain the contribution made by diverse perspectives to the development of society and re-examine their own beliefs and values?
- » **Characterizing:** Do students characteristically approach diversity issues in a manner that respects and appreciates different beliefs and values?

Remember!

There is no justification for collecting data on pupil performance, unless a use of the data is clearly in mind.

History teachers need to reflect on their own personal beliefs and values and always try to reach the level of professionalism. Reflecting and debating these issues with colleagues enable teachers to become aware of the questions formative everyday assessment involve. Assessing students learning during lessons is important, and its aim is to improve the learning process.

Teachers should avoid presenting opinions and other value judgments as if they were facts and/or implying preferences by a particular choice of students or by not opening up opportunities for all pupils to contribute their views to a debate.

Teachers need to think about body language, what messages it might send to the class, namely teachers must not reveal their own preferences by facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, etc.

Prior to assessing, professional teachers must make some decisions. These decisions involve questions such as:

- What concept, skill, or knowledge am I trying to assess?
- What should my students know?
- At what level should my students be performing?
- What is the main focus: reasoning, memory, process or attitude?

History teaching: the integrated approach

- Assessment should not be separate from the teaching and learning of history. Assessment should grow naturally out of the course of study, testing the knowledge, understanding, and skills that students have gained.
- Lesson plans should not be seen in isolation. Each lesson plan should fit into a logical sequence. Not all important skills and activities will be fitted into every lesson.
- Teachers and students should both know clearly what is going on.
- Lesson plans and assessment schemes are not secrets for teachers only. Everybody should be aware of the Big Picture (the context).
- Pace is important: lessons should be lively enough to keep enthusiasm high, but they should be planned so that there is enough time for student involvement - for questions to be asked and answered.
- Test and examinations should not be speed tests. They should allow students the chance to feel proud of what they can do.
- The use of historical sources and of multiperspectival approach is important for assessment, as well as for lessons and textbooks.

Teachers' help desk for writing tests

1. Verbs to be used for objective items

- Classify
- Identify
- Match
- Recall
- Recognize

2. Verbs to be used for objective and essay questions

- Analyze
- Apply
- Compare
- Infer
- Interpret
- Predict

3. Verbs to be used in essay questions

- Compose
- Defend
- Develop
- Evaluate
- Explain
- Justify
- Propose



*An EU funded project managed by
the European Commission Liaison Office
Implemented by the Council of Europe*

