

THE PLACE OF HISTORY IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

More about the place of history in education systems in the OHTE General Report, vol.1, p. 27 - 37



Key Findings

History education is present in some form in public primary education in all member states except for Armenia, either as a standalone subject or, more frequently, as part of a multidisciplinary course. Understandably, history education is much more complex at the secondary level, where its status (compulsory or optional, standalone or multidisciplinary, focus of the curricula) varies widely not only across member states but also across different levels of education and types of schools.

HISTORY AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT



Primary Level

15
out of
16

countries covered by the report teach* history from primary level

**for most countries, it is part of a broader multidisciplinary course focusing on social sciences, humanities and citizenship education or civics*



Secondary Levels

In most countries history tends to become a separate standalone subject at lower or upper secondary level**

***variations appear when history is taught as a compulsory or optional subject*



Vocational and Technical Secondary Education

9
out of
16

countries reported history as a compulsory standalone course for students enrolled in VET education

Focus - Primary Level



In **Ireland**, history is taught as a combined subject in the first two grades of primary school, while it becomes a separate subject from the third grade onwards



Luxembourg is representative of countries where history is taught in combined modules within "sciences humaines et naturelles"

10 AREAS OF REFORM

Historical content, qualification of history teachers, student assessment, end-of-stage examinations, learning outcomes, teaching methodology, time allocated to teaching history, initial teacher training, in-service teacher training and educational resources.



There is a general move towards more **competence-based or skills-based history education** in the 16 countries

However, the results of such reforms are in some cases undermined by forms of examinations (for example university entry exams)



In-service training is the area where most countries introduced reforms recently



Most teachers

find exams to have a (very) strong influence on their history teaching, while assessment forms testing factual knowledge are commonplace across the 16 countries



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HISTORY CURRICULA

More about history curricula in the OHE General Report, vol.1, p. 39 - 49



Key Findings

- In the majority of the OHE member states, **history curricula** are not the exclusive prerogative of state institutions. Examples of civil society actors involved in curriculum design are civic organisations working in the field of education; teachers' associations; representatives of minority groups; individual teachers and independent education consultants; and even the general public.
- Cross-curricular links with other subjects are frequent. Among these, in order of importance, geography, citizenship education, art, literature, language/literacy and religious education are most frequently seen as complementary to history education.

WHO WRITES THE CURRICULA?

7 countries where **ONLY the Ministry of Education** is responsible for the development and control of history curricula

9 countries where **other state, regional and local administrations** are also involved in the development and control of history curricula

10 countries where **Civil Society** **DO** participate in curriculum development **DO NOT**

8 countries where **Minority Groups** **DO** participate in curriculum design **DO NOT**

Focus - Why involve minorities in curriculum?

A history curriculum designed in cooperation with minority representatives mirrors more closely the diversity of societies and the often divergent experiences of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic or national groups in the past. A history curriculum that includes voices of minority groups is simply put, closer to the **historical record**.

Most countries

reflect their society's diversity in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion and gender in their history curriculum. Roma and/or Travellers receive significantly less coverage in history curricula featuring in the curricula of only 9 out of 16 countries.

WHO MONITORS HISTORY CURRICULA?

14 out of **16** countries assign an institution/service/carer to assess the curriculum and its use in the classroom

Focus



In **Cyprus**, the implementation of history curricula is assessed by inspectors, the Pedagogical Institute and a scientific advisor from the University of Cyprus.

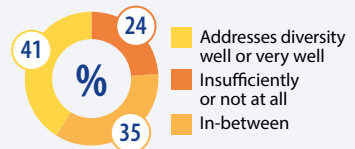
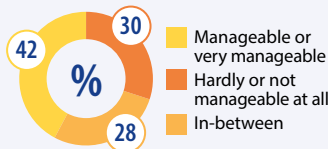
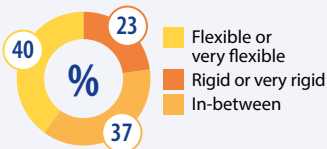


In **Ireland**, such inspections seek to identify good practices and to offer recommendations with the goal of informing both policy making and teaching practice.



In **France**, the *Conseil supérieur des programmes*, an interprofessional body consisting of academics, researchers, education specialists and elected representatives can also participate in curriculum assessment at the request of the Ministry of Education.

WHAT DO TEACHERS THINK ABOUT THE CURRICULUM?



Most teachers

consider curricula to be relatively flexible, relatively effective in addressing diversity and relatively manageable. However, a significant share of teachers find curricula hardly manageable or even unmanageable in terms of density of content.



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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

More about textbooks and other resources in the OHTE General Report, vol.1, p. 51 - 75



Key Findings

Primary sources are viewed by history practitioners as essential to the discipline's specific methodological approach and thus as key to good-quality history education. However, in light of survey results indicating that a significant number of teachers rarely or never use primary documentary sources in their history classes, there is still room for improvement, all the more so in conjunction with the widespread use of online historical content indicated by respondents to the survey.

SELECTION OF RESOURCES

Focus



In **Armenia, Cyprus, Greece and Türkiye**, the Ministry of Education alone decides which textbook and other educational resources are used for teaching and learning history.



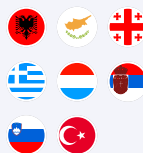
In **Portugal**, state authorities approve a list of textbooks that teachers can choose from, with some exceptions.



In **Andorra, France, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain**, all history teachers at school level decide which textbooks and other educational resources are to be used in history classes, without the involvement of the education authorities.

HOW ARE THEY USED?

TEXTBOOKS ARE MANDATORY



TEXTBOOKS CAN BE USED without an obligation to do so



TEXTBOOKS ENCOURAGED FOR USE



NO prohibition or discouragement regarding the use of any resources listed in chapter 5 of the OHTE General Report (p. 54-55) were observed in OHTE member states*

* Exception



In **Malta**, state authorities discourage the use of historiographical bibliography and literature such as historical novels and graphic novels.

WHO FINANCES RESOURCES?

14 countries provide **free resources** to be used in history classes to some extent

TEXTBOOKS ARE PROVIDED BY THE STATE



QUALITY CONTROL AND MONITORING



10 out of **16** countries include the **presentation of multiple perspectives** in quality monitoring mechanisms

WHAT DO TEACHERS THINK?

Teachers think that there is an overwhelming abundance of both digital and printed materials and that there is a need for training on how to select them for use in history classes. Some teachers question the adequacy of textbooks in representing societies' diversity.

83% of teachers use **textbooks** in every or almost every lesson in OHTE states
They are least used in **Malta, Luxembourg and Spain**

30% of teachers believe that textbooks set major constraints on how they teach history

Most commonly used resources in history classrooms



Textbooks



Websites and databases with historical content



Teachers' notes

approved by the education authorities

75% OF TEACHERS WOULD NEVER OR RARELY USE **VIDEO GAMES** IN HISTORY CLASSES
making it the least used resource in OHTE member states



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HISTORY TEACHING IN PRACTICE

More about history teaching in practice in the OHTE General Report, vol.1, p. 77 - 101



Key Findings

There is a discrepancy between teachers' preferences for certain pedagogies and the frequency with which they use them. **Didactic methods** (for example, lectures and periodisations) are the most commonly employed, although methodologies related to historical thinking and historical consciousness also feature notably. Active learning methods such as place-based or project-based learning are the least frequently used. This is related to concerns about the time allocated to history in the overall curriculum and to curriculum overload, the two most significant obstacles consistently identified by teachers to good-quality history education, followed by the pressure placed on their teaching practice by textbooks and exams.

SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT IN HISTORY LESSONS

Political & Military history

are the most common for teachers

Gender history

is the least important and common for teachers

■ Mean Importance ■ Mean Frequency*

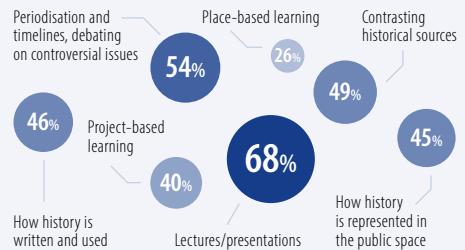
*Percentage of teachers who find these fields very or most important / almost always and regularly taught

National history is more emphasised than **local and regional history**

Modern history and Middle Ages are more covered than **Prehistory**



TEACHING METHODS AND PEDAGOGIES



teachers who **often or always use these methods** for teaching and learning history

9 out of **16** countries regulate which teaching and learning methods should be used in practice

Textbooks & Exams

Most influential factors for teachers

OBSTACLES TO GOOD-QUALITY HISTORY TEACHING

The **most significant challenges** are:

- 1** **Time allocated** in the curriculum to history, **curriculum overload**
- 2** Frequency of **educational reforms, resources and budget, size of the class**
- 3** Focus on the **demands of exams and assessment, time available** to prepare for lessons, **status of history** in school
- 4** **Lack of opportunities** for continued professional development, **lack of awareness of good practice**, availability of **qualified teachers**

Focus



In **Greece, Ireland and Portugal**, the national budgets for education have never recovered from their reduction since the economic crisis of 2008. In some cases, this has resulted in salary cuts and freezes as well as in a reduced number of teachers.

“

Many parents still think that history is memorisation and that it is just a question of knowing a lot, as much as possible, about that subject instead of improving the skills that students need.

Focus group participant



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LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

More about learning outcomes and assessment in the OHTE General Report, vol.1, p. 103 - 123



Key Findings

A variety of **assessment tools and methods** are prescribed by the education authorities in OHTE member states, and an even wider range are used by teachers in practice. When they are in place, final examinations, which assess both knowledge of historical content and historical thinking skills, influence both the teaching practice and the assessment because the teachers will focus mainly on enabling students to pass the exams.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

Historical Thinking

Living together in diverse democratic societies

Identity building

Memorising information

is the **learning outcome** found the

MOST RELEVANT by

86%

82%

65%

54%

of teachers

Identity Building as a learning outcome

66% OF TEACHERS find the development of **national pride** relevant

65% OF TEACHERS find the development of a sense of **European identity** relevant

Focus



In **Andorra, Cyprus, Greece** and **Portugal**, teachers find the development of national pride less important than teachers in other OHTE countries.



In **Albania, Armenia** and **Türkiye**, history teachers find it very relevant for students "to learn and remember historical facts, dates and processes".

ASSESSMENTS

15 out of **16** countries prescribe **knowledge-based** questions & **source-based** questions



The **MOST** frequently used methods are



ORAL ASSESSMENT



FACTUAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HISTORICAL EVENTS OR PERSONALITIES

The **LEAST** frequently used methods are

activities that assess students'



COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE



HISTORICAL EMPATHY



NOT ALL ASSESSMENT METHODS ARE EQUALLY SUITED FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF EACH LEARNING OUTCOME

EXAMS

IN **10** out of **16**

countries, **history** carries the **same weight as other subjects** in the overall assessment framework

MOST COUNTRIES

conduct **examinations** that include history at the **secondary level**

End-stage examinations are used by

15 out of **16** countries, assessing knowledge of **historical content** and **historical thinking skills**

30% of teachers indicated that **exams** influence their teaching **strongly or very strongly**

Making **exams** one of the **MOST** important factor that influences what teachers teach in practice

HIGH-STAKES EXAMS at the end of the school year of cycle

pressurise teachers to:

- 1 Teach students with a view to **memorising facts**
- 2 Spend more time training students **how to pass the exam**



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HISTORY TEACHERS AND THEIR EDUCATION

More about history teachers and their education in the OHE General Report, vol.1, p. 125 - 139



Key Findings



- **Prospective history teachers** in the vast majority of OHE member states hold an academic degree in history and a master's degree in pedagogy and/or didactics. There is a discrepancy between primary and secondary education: primary school history teachers in most member states, unlike those in secondary schools, are not required to possess extensive and in-depth subject knowledge.
- There is a notable discrepancy with respect to in-service teacher training. While education authorities in most member states encourage and offer a variety of training, these are often poorly attended when they take place outside of regular working hours and/or are not financially supported by the authorities. With regard to their preferences for specific areas of in-service training, teachers prioritise training in ICT, innovative teaching resources, historical thinking competences and active learning methods.

HISTORY TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS AND INITIAL TRAINING



Academic qualifications



History teachers

In **primary schools** are graduates of general pedagogical departments. They generally do not hold degrees in history (didactics)

In **secondary schools** are required to possess specialist subject knowledge to a satisfactory extent



Entry procedures

Initial training and practicum

during final year of undergraduate studies



during postgraduate specialisation



practicum as a distinct procedure & prerequisite for the right to teach



Exams and evaluation

Selection based on exam



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Provided by

Agencies that belong to or are supervised by the state



29%

of teachers attended **one or two training seminars** organised by **education authorities** within 3 years prior to the survey (2023)

11%

of teachers attended on average **one course** per year, provided by **NGOs**

4 out of 10

teachers said they **do not know** if "there is a maximum number of working days that they are allowed in order to attend teacher training on history teaching"

If training takes place during teachers' working time and/or if it is financially supported, teachers are more likely to attend.

Focus



In **Cyprus** a number of training courses, including training courses in history, are compulsory and take place both outside and within working hours.



In **Albania**, it is compulsory for teachers to dedicate at least 18 hours over three days per year to in-service training.



In **Luxembourg**, training is compulsory and takes place entirely during formal working hours.



In **Armenia, Malta** and **Spain**, the completion of a certain number of hours of training is linked to an increase in the teachers' salaries.



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