The Palgrave Handbook of History and Social Studies Education

Edited by
Christopher W. Berg
Theodore M. Christou

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ISBN 978-3-030-37209-5 ISBN 978-3-030-37210-1 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37210-1

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword: Interesting Times Have Interesting Pasts

These are challenging times for history teaching and learning in many parts of the world. The opportunity, through the chapters in this book, to discuss how various societies are defining the problems and, even more, developing practices that invite wider attention, is truly welcome. This is not the first time that history instruction has faced major obstacles—the past itself provides other examples and also, happily, considerable evidence that the discipline can respond. But this is an important moment.

Two basic issues set the current scene. Most obviously, rapid changes in technology and the lingering effects of the Great Recession of 2008 prompt a substantial shift in attention to subjects in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, viewed as having particular economic and political importance and providing particularly attractive job opportunities. History and related subjects suffer in consequence, even though history graduates actually do pretty well in a varied job market and even though history has a civic importance that goes beyond jobs alone.

Adding to the STEM challenge is the growing polarization of opinion in many societies, which opens up often bitter discussions of what history should emphasize and whether, in an age dominated by claims of fake news, the subject has any standing at all. Passionate debates over topics like the fate of confederate monuments, in the United States, or the ways to teach indigenous history in places like Canada and Australia show that the past unquestionably rouses deep emotion. But the same debates may raise doubts about whether enough agreement can be reached for a history program to move forward.

Both the basic challenges, of course, can be turned on their heads. The undeniable importance of STEM calls attention to the simultaneous importance of disciplines that focus on human relationships and policy contexts: technology alone will not solve our problems and technology does not alone produce jobs. Furor over fake news cries out for disciplines that seek objectivity and that explicitly teach skills in critical thinking that measurably improve the capacity to detect fraud. Many of the chapters in this book talk about ways the

history teachers can turn challenge to advantage, precisely because their subject is so important in the present moment.

Basic debates about the value and coherence in history translate into two or three specific discussions, important to teachers and students alike, and indeed to a larger history-using public.

Debate #1. Many of the current reevaluations of history teaching revolve around the national survey course, and several of the following chapters make admirable contributions to this discussion. In most countries, a national history survey—either a single course or a variety of courses at different grade levels—has long constituted one of the hallmarks of history in public education. Students have been urged to deal with the origins and historical evolution of some of the key institutions and values in their national society, as a means of civic preparation and as a way of participating in a common national story.

The national survey remains important, but its advocates—and its teachers—have to grapple with some new complexities. Focus is probably the most obvious. There are lots of stories wrapped up in the national one, and history research over the past half-century has become really adept at embellishing the variety involved. There are histories of women, of immigrants, of racial minorities, of subordinate social classes—the list is a long one. And many of these histories form a vital part of current debates about what the nation itself is all about—about the extent to which it can no longer be just a story of old white men. Figuring out how to combine variety and coherence is not an unmanageable challenge; indeed, it can spark excitement and it can link history directly to current issues. But there is no question that this is no longer your grandfather's national survey; it requires more work, more careful decisions, and more flexibility.

The national story is also complicated by the world around us. We not only live in national societies but also live in a globalizing network—whether one approves of globalization or not. Figuring out how to locate the national picture amid suitable comparisons with other major societies, and amid the kinds of contact relationships that have built up over many centuries, requires yet another reconsideration of the standard survey approach. In many countries, the rise of world history as a teaching topic over the past 30 years has been the most important single change in history fare for at least a century. In turn, the world history surge represents at least an attempt to use history to respond to the wider context. But figuring out how to add this successfully, and what the impact on the national focus should be, are not easy tasks.

Debate #2. Challenged by STEM and the current state of civic discourse, many history programs and teachers are also working hard on a second problem area: trying to convey what is really essential about history learning from what sometimes passes as lists of what students need to know. The discussion, like the efforts to update the national survey, can really support creative teaching, but there is no question that it raises problems as well.

Here is the issue in a nutshell: good history teaching and learning focuses on a set of thinking skills, some of which are really distinctive in the discipline. But history as taught often seems to center on factual memorization, which for

many students offers little basic stimulus. Of course, history depends on facts—thinking skills don't materialize in a vacuum. And of course many people, including many history teachers, really believe that successful students should know a good many facts as part of a sound education. And finally, many school systems and their administrators, pressed for time, impose factual tests as a crucial measure of student and teacher success, compounding the problem of figuring out what history is really about.

But against memorization, history teachers are becoming increasingly adept at clarifying what they are fundamentally aiming at. The list includes a capacity to assess evidence and deal with probable bias, one of the key components of critical thinking. It includes an ability to use evidence to build arguments, gaining facility in writing and (increasingly) oral presentations as well. And it also includes experience in dealing with the phenomenon of change, including what causes change and what kinds of continuities accompany change.

Evidence assessment; presentation; some grasp of how to interpret change—these are the basic goals of history education, and teachers at various levels are increasingly eager to clarify the goals themselves—as against the memorization trap—and work to promote them actively in the history classroom. Again, it is an exciting opportunity, but not an easy one. It supports the role of history in preparing for jobs and careers and, even more fundamentally, it develops skills that are vital in responsible civic life.

Debate #3 (possibly). For many teachers, sorting out the issues involved in an updated presentation of a national story and, even more, figuring out the best ways to promote (and advertise) the essentials of history learning are task enough. A third area is, however, worth mentioning, and it can relate to both of the more central themes.

There is, as the slogan of the American Historical Association now reads, a history of everything, and much of it is really interesting. There is a history of sleep, which helps put modern sleep concerns in active context. There is a history of birthdays, which helps explain why widespread celebration of these events awaited a new kind of value system that did not emerge until the mid-nineteenth century. (And there is a rich and illuminating history of childhood in general.) There is an intriguing history of the sense of smell and disgust, which have also changed a lot in modern times. And the list can go on and on.

Obviously, coherent and manageable history teaching cannot begin to encompass all the possible applications of history to the range of human experience. But it can raise one final issue: is the history we present to students mainly the study of well-established subjects—like wars and political systems, which certainly deserve their due—or is it also a discovery discipline, capable of illuminating topics that add breadth and excitement to the history project?

Maybe, amid all the other things to do, we can think about carving just a bit of time, in history programs, for student exposure to the discovery aspect, to the ways a range of subjects can be illuminated through historical perspective—and even for some participation. Growing interest in student research, from History Days to undergraduate research programs in college, suggests

the opportunities for student awareness of the discovery angle—just as our colleagues in the STEM fields have long realized. Having students come away from a history program with a standard question—"I wonder what's the history of that?"—and some means of following up would not be the worst result to seek.

* * *

There are various reasons to be a history teacher, and sometimes a certain degree of accident is involved. But most of us teach history not only because we find the subject matter fascinating but also because we really believe it promotes skills and perspectives that are truly useful to individuals and to society as a whole. We believe that people ignorant of history are more likely to make mistakes—repeating the errors of the past—and to be subject to manipulation. We believe that the discipline, for all its uncertainties and debates, really does promote an effort to determine the best evidence and to base claims on evidence in turn. We believe that, in a rapidly changing world, history provides genuine skills in interpreting change successfully. One of the great pleasures in a long career of history teaching, in addition to the excitement of seeing some students "get it" in the history classroom, is the opportunity to come into contact with the enthusiasm and creativity of many history teachers today. We have the means to respond to the challenges we face.

And there is one final thing that we share, as history teachers and history learners today, across national boundaries: we live in interesting times. We can also agree: interesting times have interesting pasts. Through studying history, we work to understand the connections.

Fairfax, VA, USA Peter N. Stearns

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PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: History Education in Theory, Practice, and the Space in Between

Theodore M. Christou and Christopher W. Berg

It seems particularly au courant to refer to publications as timely in introductory chapters, such as this is. History education is always timely and in time, subject to the same politics, contexts, and ideologies that dictate political will. As long as we have a need to teach about the past, we will debate what ought to be taught. According to prevailing fashion, any given curriculum can look to content (e.g., "what happened?") as the core and foundation of history education or, alternatively, to a way of understanding content, as well as the world we live in (e.g., "why do things happen?").

The past helps us to understand who we are. History tells stories of lineage, of tribe, of dissidence, of belonging. In the microcosm of state and nation, we have mythologies to cling to and others to dispel.

Perspectives on myth-making and -dispelling are multiple. "Today, we live in a complex civilization which it is necessary to understand to be adjusted to it. Schools are the means by which we accomplish this period of adjustment," reported the *Canadian School Journal*, an educational journal published

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C. W. Berg, T. M. Christou (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of History and Social Studies Education*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37210-1_1

between the 1920s and 1950s, citing William James Cooper, United States Commissioner of Education.[1] We make sense of the complexity of living through history, but also through institutions like schools. Curricula, textbooks, and disciplines—history, for instance—are means of finding meaning.

This sentiment was anticipated by Walter Lipmann in *Drift and Mastery* (1914). "We drift," Lipmann stated, relating to the progressive age that he believed permeated the first decades of the twentieth century in North America, "unsettled to the very roots of our being."[2] Lipmann lived at a time when humanity was knocking on the door of a great war. Like most wars, this made history and was a result of a way of viewing history. It displayed the most magnificent and atrocious dimensions of what it means to be human. Lipman's utterance and this introduction are divided by 105 years, yet his words sound alarmingly contemporary.

We live in a modern, unsettled world. We look to the future and, depending on our orientations to the unknown, we see either dystopia and dissent or halcyon days on the horizon. The future promises great things to come, or it is ominous and foreboding.

The past: how is it seen? The answer to the question varies. Read on, we ask.

History education tells us about how we see ourselves and the world or how we see the world and our place in it. We teach the past that fits our orientation to the contexts we live in. These orientations are contested and unmoored. If the past appears fixed and true, and if history curricula purport to teach some truth, be wary. If the contrary is the case, be wary still. How we see the past is not the past, and the past is not history.[3]

As a school inspector from the Canadian province of Ontario would note in 1934, "movements are not all of the past, but we are in the midst of them today and our senior pupils should be encouraged to read of and know them."[4] Here, we concentrate on the teaching of history, not in one province, but in multiple contexts, national and international. What movements, truths, curriculum theories are taught or contested, and in what ways are these used to bridge what Robert Stamp termed "gap between school and community," or, the world of the present and the unknown past.[5] These thoughts are indicative of the perspective that schools could align more neatly with contemporary life in order to be made into a "miniature of society."[6] In these miniatures, these school spaces, the study of what it means to be human is the telling of stories. A frequent theme is our history. It helps us to define who we are as individuals and as members of collectives.

[1] "Educational News," *The Canadian School Journal* (November, 1933), p. 403.

[2] Walter Lipmann, *Drift and Mastery* (New York: Macmillan, 1914), p. 196.

[3] Peter Seixas, *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson, 2012).

[4] "Inspector's Report," in *The Annual Report of the Minister of Education to the Government of Ontario* (1931), p. 96.

[5] Robert Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876–1976* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 165.

[6] C.C. Goldring, "The Work of a Principal," *Educational Courier* (June 1933), p. 8.

Scope and Content

This Handbook contextualizes this debate by exploring the history of history education and curriculum history. Further, it considers the current iterations of history and social studies curriculum frameworks at a moment where a paradigm shift is under way, which demand that students "do" history through an inquiry framework based on primary source analysis rather than memorize or learn historical content by other means. Granted, it may not be the first time that this shift has happened.

It has been a long-standing refrain that public schooling is a pendulum.[7] The extent to which this metaphor is valid is debatable, as curriculum Historian Herbert Kliebard argues:

> Curriculum fashions, it has long been noted, are subject to wide pendulum swings. While this metaphor conveys something of the shifting positions that are constantly occurring in the educational world, this phenomenon might best be seen as a stream with several currents, one stranger than others. None ever completely dries up. When the weather and other conditions are right, a weak or insignificant current assumes more force and prominence, only to decline when conditions particularly conducive to its newfound strength no longer prevail.[8]

This Handbook describes both those currents (the theories that shape curricula) and those conditions that permit a current to rise or to subside (the educational contexts).

It does not tell a story about history education, per se. It permits the reader to find their own context and others, to scrutinize these anew, and to begin another conversation about history education that is informed by various studies from across the globe. These studies describe the ways in which various stakeholders work within and without the parameters permitted by curriculum, space, and time. The extent to which this is a curriculum shift, as noted, depends on the place under examination.

Besides history educators, there are implications here for teacher education. Through what Dan Lortie termed the "apprenticeship of observation," teacher candidates—future history and social studies teachers—have already learned a great deal about history education before their teacher education programs

[7] Michael Fullan, "Are We on the Right Track," *Education Canada* 38, no. 3 (2010): 4–7; and Roland Case, "Our Crude Handling of Educational Reforms: The Case of Curricular Integration," *Canadian Journal of Education* 19, no. 1 (1994): 80–93, "Educational Reform in British Columbia: Bold Vision, Flawed Design," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 24, no. 4 (1992): 381–387. The metaphor perseveres transatlantic discourses; see, for instance, Bernard Barker, *The Pendulum Swings: Transforming School Reform* (London: Trentham, 2010); Kokichi Shimizu, "The Pendulum of Reform: Educational Change in Japan from the 1990s Onwards," *Journal of Educational Change* 2, no. 3 (2001): 193–205; and Carl Kaestle, "Education Reform and the Swinging Pendulum," *Phi Delta Kappan* 66, no. 6 (1985): 422–423.

[8] Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893–1958* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

even begin.[9] By virtue of having been students in history and social studies classes for most of their lives, teacher candidates are not blank slates; rather, they have strong beliefs about what history is as a discipline and how it ought to be taught. Because history and social studies curricula around the globe have only recently (in a relative sense) outlined learning objectives that were based on inquiry and on historical thinking, teacher candidates are in a particularly precarious position with respect to history education.

They have somewhere between one and five years of study to relearn the purposes and means of teaching social studies and history. What is more, teacher candidates spend a great deal more time in the schools during practicum than they will learning about the research informing history and social studies education. In these practicum spaces, it is possible that associate teachers and mentors are also asked to relearn or to rethink their sometimes long established teaching habits and practices. Associate teachers are variously contesting, embracing, or being baffled by the new history and social studies curricula. The extent to which we might plot their positions on this spectrum largely depends on their own beliefs about best practices in history education and their own apprenticeships of observation.

John Dewey anticipated teachers' possible reluctance to swing toward new paradigms for teaching and learning, particularly when they have firmly established beliefs and practices:

> The tendency of educational development to proceed by reaction from one thing to another, to adopt for one year, or for a term of seven years, this or that new study or method of teaching, and then as abruptly to swing over to some new educational gospel, is a result which would be impossible if teachers were adequately moved by their own independent intelligence.[10]

Lee Shulman highlights how long-standing the traditional conception of a divide between practitioners and theoreticians is:

> The National Society for the Scientific Study of Education was only a year old when it devoted large portions of both its second Yearbook (1903) and its third (1904) to the topic "The Relation of Theory to Practice in the Education of Teachers." John Dewey's contribution, "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education," led off the 1904 volume.[11]

Both the second and third volumes of the National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE) Yearbooks thus sought to address the perceived gap between

[9] Dan Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

[10] John Dewey, "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education," in M. L. Borrowman, ed., *Teacher Education in America: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1965), p. 257.

[11] Lee S. Shulman, "Theory, Practice, and the Education of Professionals," *The Elementary School Journal 98*, No. 5, Special Issue: John Dewey: The Chicago Years (May, 1998), pp. 511–526, p. 511.

the work of university researchers and the work of teachers. Dewey's words on the subject are potentially useful to us a century after he uttered them:

> The present divorce between scholarship and method is as harmful upon one side as upon the other—as detrimental to the best interests of higher academic instruction as it is to the training of teachers. But the only way in which this divorce can be broken down is by so presenting all subject-matter, for whatever ultimate, practical, or professional purpose, that it shall be apprehended as an objective embodiment of methods of mind in its search for, and transactions with, the truth of things. Upon the more practical side, this principle requires that, so far as students appropriate new subject-matter (thereby improving their own scholarship and realizing more consciously the nature of method), they should finally proceed to organize this same subject-matter with reference to its use in teaching others.[12]

Dewey articulates what resembles a positive feedback loop. When theory is put into the hands of practitioners in a way that facilitates comprehension and application of first- and second-order thinking concepts, practitioners are able to contribute to the generation of theory through their use of it. In the case of history education, teachers understand the discipline more clearly when they have language and concepts that will help them to apply it in their instruction, which brokers the testing and development of these tools. Dewey continues:

> Scholastic knowledge is sometimes regarded as if it were something quite irrelevant to method. When this attitude is even unconsciously assumed, method becomes an external attachment to knowledge of subject-matter. It has to be elaborated and acquired in relative independence from subject-matter, and then applied.
>
> Now the body of knowledge which constitutes the subject-matter of the student-teacher must, by the nature of the case, be organized subject-matter. It is not a miscellaneous heap of separate scraps. Even if (as in the case of history and literature), it be not technically termed "science," it is none the less material which has been subjected to method—has been selected and arranged with reference to controlling intellectual principles.

The gap, real or perceived, between what Dewey calls the "higher and the lower treatment of subject-matter" dissipates when disciplines—history here is a primary case in point—involves academic research, pedagogical instruction, and practice in contexts ranging from universities to Faculties of Education and classroom spaces.[13]

[12] Dewey, "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education," p. 266.
[13] Ibid., 265.

Features and Structure

The scholars who contributed to this Handbook were given latitude and preference in how they interpreted the editors' request to engage with historical thinking and history education within their specific research and practice domains. The Handbook is divided into several thematic sections, including "History Teaching and Learning in International Perspectives," "Teacher Education," "National Curriculums, Reforms, and Reassessments," "Controversial and Difficult History," and "Future Directions and Possibilities in History Education."

Best Practices in the *Doing* of History

The first section, "History Teaching and Learning in International Perspectives," samples how history is conceptualized and taught in international contexts. Kaya Yilmaz's exploration of 12 secondary history teachers revealed a general dissatisfaction of curricular tools, especially, textbooks.[14] Teachers were critical of the orientation and presentation of content, flawed and romanticized narratives, and authorial authority that gives readers the impression that history is simply to be accepted without critical analysis or interpretation. Textbooks are problematic because they deny students the opportunity to engage with historical thinking and perpetuate national and patriotic narratives that might come at the expense of other inclusive narratives.[15] Similarly, the challenges posed by enduring national narratives celebrating a collective memory entrenched more in the imagination than in historical reality are not unique to the United States.

Cécile Sabatier Bullock and Shawn Michael Bullock's contribution explores the role national narratives pose in history education in France. These narratives, each a *roman national*, are embedded in the fabric of the public consciousness. They are omnipresent in curricula and in textbooks. Historically minded teachers must acknowledge that these national narratives exist but they must also contest them.

The power of nationalist and patriotic narratives is evident in many national contexts. In sub-Saharan Africa, there is the added dimension of forging a new postcolonial identity after gaining independence from colonial rule. Nathan Moyo explores this evolving process in Zimbabwe. He explores the critical role that school history plays in reframing Zimbabwean history in a postcolonial age. History also offers a disciplinary framework to encourage students to engage in active citizenship.

[14] Christopher W. Berg, "Why Study History?: An Examination of Undergraduate Students' Notions and Perceptions about History," *Historical Encounters: A Journal of Historical Consciousness, Historical Cultures, and History Education* 6, no. 1 (2019), 54–71. http://hej.hermes-history.net

[15] Christopher Berg and Theodore Christou, "History and the Public Good: American Historical Association Presidential Addresses and the Evolving Understanding of History Education," *Curriculum History* 17, no. 1 (2017), 37–55.

The problems discussed above with textbooks, national narratives, and competing political and educational interests are markedly different in the Netherlands.[16] Carla van Boxtel, Jannet van Drie, and Gerhard Stoel report that curricular materials, such as textbooks, incorporate historical thinking concepts. Here, historical thinking has been a long-standing component of the curriculum.

Historical thinking assessments in the Netherlands, such as the central examination, are aligned to the curriculum and its mandate of second-order concept coverage.[17] This is not the case in the Canadian province of Québec, which Catherine Duquette describes in great detail, although assessment may be more in line with the situation in Scotland reported on by Joseph Smith, where teachers have the necessary tools and background to effectively facilitate historical thinking.[18] The Dutch problem identified by van Boxtel and her colleagues is one of implementation and meeting new revised curriculum standards that emphasize broad historical knowledge.

Three approaches are suggested to empower ambitious teaching in historical thinking: raising historical thinking's place as a course of study within teacher education, promoting educational design strategies, and offering professional development opportunities.[19] One of the hindrances to teaching historical thinking van Boxtel and her colleagues singled out was the sheer volume of historical content teachers are required to cover. The problem of coverage is not unique to the Netherlands but is present in many international contexts.[20] A second hindrance are textbooks; though they include historical thinking concepts and materials, the authorial voice implied is one of unassailable truth and fact, which could be problematic for students.[21] In schools of teacher education, classroom management is privileged over applied methods of teaching and learning historical thinking. Van Boxtel and her colleagues convincingly argue possible solutions to empower beginning teachers while supporting veteran teachers to meet the demands of a historical thinking-rich curriculum.

[16] For greater discussion within the US context, see Sam Wineburg, *Why Learn History? (When it's Already on Your Phone)* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018) and James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2007).

[17] See Catherine Duquette's chapter in this Handbook.

[18] See Joseph Smith's chapter in this Handbook.

[19] For more discussion on professional development and other national initiatives, such as the United States' Teaching American History grant program, see, for example, Berg and Christou, "History and the Public Good," 48–49; Rachel G. Ragland, "Sustaining Changes in History Teachers' Core Instructional Practices: Impact of Teaching American History Ten Years Later," *The History Teacher* 48, no. 4 (2015), 609–640. http://www.societyforhistoryeducation.org/pdfs/A15_Ragland.pdf

[20] See, for example, Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Towards a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (2006), 1358–1370.

[21] See, for example, Berg and Christou, "History and the Public Good," pp. 49–51; Robert J. Paxton, "The Influence of Author Visibility on High School Students Solving a Historical Problem," *Cognition and Instruction* 20, no. 2 (2002), 197–248.