CISH Amsterdam, August 22-28 2010
International Society for History Didactics

Session
Historical Consciousness and Cultural Identities in a Globalizing World: Changing Roles of School History?

Wednesday August 25, 2010 (9:00 hours)

Conveners: prof. dr. Maria Grever and prof. dr. Peter Seixas

Governments in America, Asia, and Europe show an increasing attention for school history, patrimonial heritage, public history and other forms of popular historical culture. In the face of a globalizing world, with multinational corporations, the Internet, enhanced mobility, and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants, many governments tend to pursue the strengthening of national identity by demanding assimilation. One important strategy for fostering social cohesion and the integration of minorities is the transmission of a coherent national past to younger generations. The political use of history education, public commemoration, and other articulations of the past reduce the development of historical consciousness to a political ideology, discouraging dissenting voices and hampering complex representations. What does this mean for those involved in history education for young people: school teachers, museum curators, and heritage educationalists?
This session will address theoretical issues as well as present outcomes of empirical research. Central questions are:

- What forms of historical consciousness arise in societies characterized by a wealth of intercultural contacts resulting from increasing mobility and communication technologies?
- What are opportunities and limitations for critical response from historians and history teachers to the identity demands coming from national states, ethnic groups and social cultural agencies? What are curriculum current practices produced by officials, teachers and public historians in addressing these issues?

Kaat Wils - chair - (University of Leuven, Belgium), *Introduction*

- **Jocelyn Létourneau** (Laval University, Canada), *What history for what future of Quebec?*
- **Carla van Boxtel** (Erasmus University, The Netherlands), *Experiencing the past outside school. Towards an interdisciplinary theoretical framework for heritage education.*
- **Maria Grever** (Erasmus University, The Netherlands), *The invention of heritage education: increasing tensions or new opportunities in a heterogeneous historical culture?*

  Discussion

BREAK

- **Naureen Durrani** (University of Central Lancashire, UK) & **Mairead Dunne** (University of Sussex, UK), *Curriculum and national identity: exploring the links between religion and nation in Pakistan*
- **Keith Barton** (Indiana University, USA), *History, identity, and the school curriculum in pluralist societies: comparative research from the US, Northern Ireland, and New Zealand*
- **Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon** (IUFM du Nord Pas-de-Calais, France), *History and memory in France: doubts, contradictions, tensions*
- **Peter Seixas** (University of British Columbia, Canada), *A surprising receptivity: teachers, politicians and curriculum officials embrace historical thinking*

  Discussion

ABSTRACTS

Jocelyn Létourneau
What history for what future of Quebec?

Over the past ten years, the question of restoring the grand narrative of the Québécois has been one of the most discussed issues in Québec. Still today an open conflict persists between the partisans of two major politico-ideological currents, the 'conservatists', on the one hand, and the 'reformists', on the other, for the purpose of establishing the meaning of the story to be told about Quebec's historical experience and determining the pedagogical-educational approaches specific to the teaching of history and its methodology. This conflict took a particular step when the Quebec Ministry of Education, following the recommendations of an advisory board composed of teachers and didacticians, decided to replace the existing curriculum of National history with a History and Citizenship Education curriculum.
The purpose of this paper is not so much to resurrect the polemics surrounding the implementation of the new history curriculum as to set forth the general context and to raise the fundamental questions surrounding this particular debate: how, in a society challenged by the transformation in its socio-demographics and the flourishing of multiple and limited identities, to tell the story of the Collective? What history to propose of the past to create a common direction in the present and unlock the future? How to regenerate the National reference in a way more inclusive while not instrumentalising the past for the sake of the present? How to write a history that makes it possible for a diversified community to pass into the future while respecting the veto of the facts and incorporating the constraint of the political? In sum, how to build a history of the past that is fair both from the point of view of historical method and social cohesion?

Carla van Boxtel
Experiencing the past outside school. Towards an interdisciplinary theoretical framework for heritage education

The majority of schools in the Netherlands participate in outside school activities related to heritage, integrated in regular history lessons or in heritage projects. Although the potential of giving students the opportunity to experience the past, through, for example, exploring authentic arte facts or visiting a local historical museum or monument, a theoretical framework with which we can describe this experience and its potential for learning history is lacking. What exactly do we mean by the expression 'experiencing the past' when students encounter heritage relics and arte facts outside school? How is this experience mediated by students' entrance narratives, the conceptualization of heritage and goals and characteristics of the outside school learning activity? And what is its contribution to historical learning in primary and secondary education?
This paper is related to the NWO Research Program on Heritage Education (Grever & Van Boxtel, 2009-2014). It explores concepts and theories from several disciplines, such as History, Educational sciences, Didactics of history, geography and art, to answer this question. The focus is on how historical thinking and reasoning might contribute to the process of giving meaning to heritage outside school and how experiencing the past outside school in heritage education activities might contribute to history learning. This will be illustrated by some concrete examples from heritage education in the Netherlands.

Maria Grever
The invention of heritage education: increasing tensions or new opportunities in a heterogeneous historical culture?

This paper focuses on the emergence and meaning of heritage education in contemporary historical culture. Politicians consider this educational field promising and expect a renewed sense of national connectedness. Cultural minority groups claim their 'own' heritage. Their actions are often a local response to the perceived shortcomings of national education policy. At the same time several of these groups articulate a transgression of cultural boundaries and a hybridity of past relationships. In the Netherlands, for instance, the debates about the Dutch involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, initiated by Caribbean Dutch people, show that these contested memories are linked to global processes and require an open approach for education. Next, educational experts indicate that young students are sensitive to heritage and 'living history'. The spatial and physical dimensions of historic sites offer youngsters a sensory experience, through which they might gain a different kind of knowledge that enlarge their historical understanding. Yet, history teachers and academic historians become uneasy when heritage education seems a government-sponsored state cult on 'national heritage'. Moreover, in their view heritage often involves a staged authenticity that simplifies the past and shortens temporal perspective, hence distracting youngsters from gaining historical literacy.
Although several governments finance heritage education projects, there is hardly any research that provides insights to the implementation of meaningful heritage education in schools. This paper is related to the NWO Research Program on Heritage Education (Grever & Van Boxtel, 2009-2014). It examines the pros and cons of heritage education in the light of the rich diversity of the student population in Europe.

Naureen Durrani and Mairead Dunne
Curriculum and national identity: exploring the links between religion and nation in Pakistan

This paper investigates the relationship between schooling and conflict in the context of Pakistan using an identity construction lens. Our discussion draws on data from curriculum documents, student responses to specifically designed classroom activities and single sex student focus groups. In the paper we explore how students, in four state primary schools in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan, use curricular content and school experiences in making sense of themselves as Pakistani. The findings suggest that the complex nexus of education, religion and national identity in Pakistan tends to construct ‘essentialist’ collective identities. To promote national unity across the diverse ethnic groups comprising Pakistan, the national curriculum uses religion (Islam) as the key boundary between the Muslim Pakistani ‘self’ and the antagonist non-Muslim ‘other’. Ironically, this emphasis creates social polarisation and the normalisation of militaristic and violent identities, with serious implications for social cohesion, tolerance for internal and external diversity, and gender relations.

Keith Barton
History, identity, and the school curriculum in pluralist societies: comparative research from the US, Northern Ireland, and New Zealand

Based on empirical research with students and teachers, this paper examines the relationship between history and identity in three countries in which the school history curriculum differs dramatically. In the United States, school history is used first and foremost to create a shared sense of national identity, and students from a variety of backgrounds see history as a way of establishing who “we” are as a nation; differences among ethnic groups are expressed largely as variations on the overall theme of national progress and

development. In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, history is too controversial to be presented in school as a single master narrative and the curriculum instead relies on a balanced portrayal of Unionist and Nationalist perspectives and on the use of historical evidence. Students there see the purpose of history as a way of developing an appreciation of multiple perspectives, but without a unifying narrative they are left at the mercy of the sectarian historical narratives they encounter outside school. In New Zealand, meanwhile, national history is almost entirely ignored in schools, and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds fail to see themselves represented in a largely Eurocentric curriculum; as a result, history becomes a purely academic exercise with no direct relationship to students' identities or to social diversity and cohesion. This paper examines the advantages and drawbacks of each of these three approaches and suggests how school history in modern pluralist societies might more effectively incorporate the perspectives of students from diverse social backgrounds.

Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon
History and memory in France: doubts, contradictions, tensions

The relations between history and memory in French schools foster debates and claims that have become more acute during the last decade, with the increasing public and political use of history and memory. The matter is both a political issue and a cultural one. The effects on schools are clearly present but inconsistently so. Commemorations and the "duty of remembrance" are more and more frequently prescribed, but teachers do not necessarily comply. The present government emphasizes the aim of promoting a national identity – not without inconsistencies between primary and secondary school history curricula, and not without teachers themselves discussing some issues. But didactical questions raise issues not only about the prescribed and taught history content; they must also address teaching practices and the learning results, more often wished than effective. Empirical research, however scarce on this topic, provides some results that shed light on the complexity of the situation.

Peter Seixas
A surprising receptivity: Teachers, politicians and curriculum officials embrace historical thinking

There exists a broad consensus among history education researchers and university-based educators (in Canada and internationally) that *historical thinking* should have a central place in the shaping of history curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. This consensus contrasts quite starkly with the political ends—particularly in the service of national unity and identity—which history education has traditionally served. Yet, at the classroom level, the number of Canadian teachers who have the tools to embed a well-framed conception of historical thinking into their teaching is still very small. Since early 2006, a Canadian initiative, "Benchmarks of Historical Thinking," has worked to address that weakness.
This paper places the initiative within the context of history education debates in English Canada, examines the development and conceptualization of the project, and then traces its reception and prospects among ministry officials, textbook publishers and teachers. What is perhaps startling and unexpected is the broad acceptance of this reform effort, emerging out of a period when English Canada went through a milder version of what the US and Australia confronted as "history wars," in a jurisdictional arena where history and social studies—more than any other school subjects—are jealously guarded by the provinces. In the potentially difficult field of history education, what was it that made this reform so acceptable among education stakeholders?