

8 Developing Skills through Historical Knowledge. New Perspectives and Contributions to History Education

Maria KONTOGIORGI

Ionian University, Corfu, Greece

8.1 Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate the effect of the historical knowledge on the creative process of building cognitive skills and critical thinking and consciousness, through the role played by the school historical education. As knowledge constitutes the economic, political and cultural asset of our society, this article seeks to highlight the importance of learning history in defending social skills, by analyzing modern educational politics, focusing in history teaching. Specifically, the purpose of this announcement is to present the innovative educational method of historical empathy and rational understanding, in line with the basic methodological aspects of didactic science and the requirements of modern society, in which the student evolves.

Keywords: rational understanding, critical thinking/consciousness, historical empathy

8.2 Introduction

The development of intellectual skills is at the heart of the pedagogical interest of the history educator's research of the 21st century. History education carries an intense ideological, political and social burden, in addition to its gnostic substance. The new history lesson framework contains learning models and strategies that are interwoven with the values acquired through experience. We will be dealing with new contributions to history teaching, according to British Curriculum for History and the assessment's purpose in the historical teaching and learning, after we have a theoretical approach to the educational goals that govern the history education. The current scientific issues unfold around the emancipation of the teaching process from traditional practices. The new rationale for school history bring to the fore a declarative knowledge, with an emphasis on constructing history as an important part in historical knowledge and understanding.

8.3 Basic teaching objectives of history education

The general purpose of teaching history is to gain the awareness that the modern world is in unbroken continuity with the past. Historical knowledge has a specific purpose and orientation, incorporating the information that occurs in the student's pre-existing knowledge. The main concern of the educator is the enlargement, enrichment and processing of the pupils' mini-theories, so that, in full awareness of historical understanding, they become producers of historical knowledge. To achieve this expectation, the history teacher is required to perform his educational work through active participation in the learning process. In a context of guided cognitive discovery, the pupil and the teacher participate in a process of communicative exchange and reflection on the concept of change and continuity, aiming at the cultivation of a wide range of cognitive skills and historical culture.

History teaching is organized on the basis of the transition from the present to the past, fact which is reflected in the three individual objectives of British history education. A) Knowledge and understanding of History: Knowledge includes awareness of change, of the continuity of time, the causes and consequences of different situations and events. Learning

the ways of instruction and the conceptual code is one of the demands of the educational process. Getting historical knowledge cannot be done without linguistic mediation. Particular emphasis is placed on organizational historical concepts. Linguistic competence is an integral part of historical skills. Structural historical concepts contribute significantly to the historical understanding and formulation of new interpretative reports of the past, as they have comprehensive interpretations of events. Students create knowledge through word search. A key element in the production of knowledge and the development of historical thinking is the original speech of educators and students, in the form of historical questions, assumptions and conclusions. B) Historical interpretations: In the modern epistemological environment, knowledge is understood as a metacognitive and social skill of historical interpretation and comprehension. The new approach to the history lesson include the development of a wider research framework of epistemological analysis, which requires a clear definition of the teaching objectives. The multiplicity of objectives and their expression with action verbs, aims at transforming the cognitive process into a field of research and dialogue, in order to search for the scientifically most valid historical interpretation. The acquisition of intellectual skills contributes to the understanding of the complex world reality and the complexity of the past, present and future. The awareness and evaluation of different historical interpretations are fundamental stages in the acquisition of historical knowledge. C) Historical evidence: The structure of historical knowledge follows a historical interpretation of the remnants of the past. The student is asked to place the primary and secondary historical sources in a wider historical environment in order to evaluate them. The basic prerequisite is the development of historical skills of exploiting the evidence. A productive use of historical sources by the students, implies their critical assessment and consequently that they are being able to control the credibility and validity of the sources, to distinguish the viewpoint and the intentions of their creator, to draw information by asking questions and seeking answers, in order to be led to the final conclusions.

8.4 New perspectives and contributions to History education

Knowledge of history does not involve the reproduction of information but is produced by the student himself, who learns by developing new ways of using cognitive and conceptual tools. Learning is accomplished by highlighting the historicity of the experienced person and the familiarity with the methodological and conceptual tools of history science. Critical assessment of new information in conjunction with the pre-existing one, leads the students to conduct their own conclusions based on their own experience. In the teaching of the history lesson, the formation of historical skills and the development of activities are set as a dominant principle. An important stage in learning History is the formulation of hierarchical questions and answers when addressing methodological problems. Through the formulation of scientific questions and the semi-direct dialogue, students can develop critical thinking and be led to the discovery of knowledge, focusing on the student's motivation and interest. Educational-free development questions stimulate students' thinking and cultivate judgment and reflection, circumstances that will gradually lead to historical findings. The technique of encouragement significantly contributes to the development of motivation for students to further engage.

The cognitive educational tools assist the teacher's work in conducting an active-experiential learning which, through the collective dialogue, seeks to direct the student into constructing historical knowledge. Learning is built around the real needs of students, using the creative and directional method. The new approach to didactic science emphasizes the educator's scientific training, to whom it offers flexibility in choosing the content to be learned. The educator can and must be the driving force of an evolutionary course in the educational process. He can bring about the intended replacement of traditional pedagogical practices with modern ones, responsive to the multidimensional attribute that he takes in the classroom, being at the same time a pedagogue and at the same time a critical thinker, researcher and

producer of his educational material. The school book is no longer an exclusive means of completing the educational project. The use of a variety of audiovisual teaching tools is absolutely necessary.

The educator must create the appropriate learning motivation to stimulate pupils' interest by making a meaningful, vivid and clear description of a situation that is intended to be experienced. The performance of foreign mentalities is achieved through the use of **historical empathy** or **rational understanding**. According to P. Lee and D. Shemilt, empathy constitutes an important special feature of historical thinking, through which comprehends otherness as a form of historical explanation. This important dimension of historical understanding include the cognitive and affective processes, aiming to history interpretations. The disciplined and systematic activation of imagination and the visualization is perceived as a mental process of capturing the thoughts, emotions, values and expectations of the actual historical subjects.

Innovation Programs, with the Leeds University's "Schools' Council Project" (SCHP) and the CHATA (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches) being the most important, are based on the distinction of the overall learning process in four "key stages" and on evaluation frameworks and aim to ensure the flexibility of the teacher, in relation to the planning of the lesson and the improvement of the teaching practice. In the modern pedagogical concept in history teaching, which is comprised of Peter Lee, Dennis Shemilt, Martin Booth, Alaric Dickinson and Rosalyn Ashby and was formed in 1962 by the London University Pedagogical Institute "History in Education", emphasis is placed on the process of acquiring knowledge, not just the content of learning, although, remembering situations and facts is very essential. The adoption of this technique helps to avoid unnecessary memorizations and at the same time enriches students with new experiences. These will serve as a prerequisite for acquiring the basic skills to which the cognitive, emotional, psychomotor and participatory goals correspond to the preparation and planning of teaching. Educational planning and the development of teaching scenarios is an equally important organizational stage. However, it is desirable to adapt the processes in the organization of teaching, according to the needs of the students in a multicultural class. The teaching method is based on the principle of self-action and the process of active participatory learning for the discovery of knowledge through the constant renewal of the educational tools. In the contemporary context of teaching history, alternative forms of learning, such as dramatization, map building, interactive dialogues – debates and substantial museum visits, are of primary importance. Furthermore, the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs: games, maps, etc.), the systematic use of surveillance material and the development of experiential activities, are undisturbed parts of a rational history understanding.

8.5 An assessment-oriented historical teaching and learning

An integral part of the learning process is the evaluation. Quality control of the educational project is evaluated through assessment. Evaluation is a continuous and systematic process that studies and takes into account information on the whole range of education. It's not just about examining or marking the student's performance. One of its functions is to determine the degree of achievement of the objectives set at an earlier stage in the organization of teaching. Continuous assessment is not only about the knowledge that students will gain, but also about the attitudes and the intellectual skills they will acquire. The questions are divided into examining and pedagogical and constitute a very dynamic means of the educator. There is no attempted policy but an invitation to a co-operation, as they assist the educator in his pedagogical work and facilitate the start and invigoration of the discussion. Through the initial - prognostic assessment the exploration of pupils' knowledge and experiences on a particular historical issue is achieved. Then the quantity and quality of the knowledge acquired by the pupils is determined, which is necessary for the feedback of knowledge. By formulating

pedagogical and free-flowing questions, students' thoughts are centered and judgment and reflection are being cultivated.

The main role and the purpose of assessment is to lead the educator and the student into more productive paths. The comprehension control process is conducted during the teaching process and is useful when does not constitute an independent part. Qualitative assessment focuses on the relationship between teacher and student while linking learning to teaching, highlighting performance scores and preference for student enrollment. The nature of the assessment is to motivate the history teacher to work in a continuous planning of action, reflection, feedback and redesign.

8.6 Building critical thinking skills through conceptual history

History education involves the transmission of those necessary mental functions that lead to the acquiring of general skills, which will provide the student with vital life skills. J. Peyrot, through the testimony of a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl, best compliments the nature of history education: "Past knowledge has made people feel more proud, allowing them to approach other peoples. The ideas of celebrities who have stamped history make us, today's people, wealthier. We live in a country where knowledge of history has always played a very important role. I think that if I did not know history at all, there would be a gap around me. Without knowledge of history I would feel inferior. The story of my family is part of my country's history. Knowledge of history allows me to understand myself and to shape my own ideals". The social role played by history is summed up in the process of creating personal and collective identity. Through the study of different cultures and the balancing of national, European and world history in the Curriculum, the aim is to develop a spirit of mutual respect and solidarity, characteristics that shape active and responsible citizens.

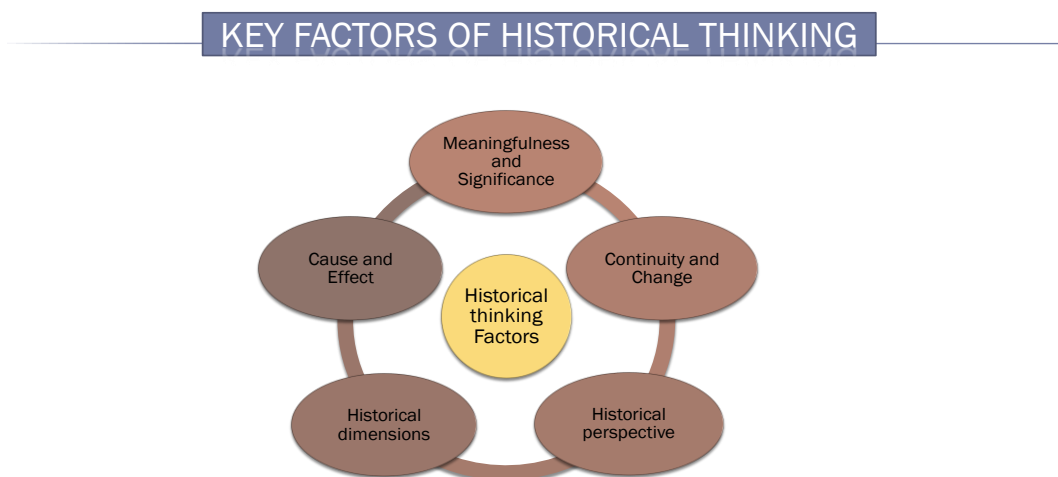


Figure 1: Historical thinking Factors

History teaching is a chronological and thematic process. Therefore, the greatest importance is the development of competences that integrate knowledge into the historical space-time. The basic characteristics of historical thinking are as follows: historical meaningfulness and significance, proper use of historical sources (the source is given for investigation, not for study and hence the teacher must be able to know many ways of using them), the continuity and change in time (what remains and what changes over the years, cause and effect (the reasons are not predefined or recorded to the student as given information, but are an object to be searched), adopting a certain historical perspective (the historian who teaches history is called

and must express moral judgments without prejudging his narratives, understanding the historical dimensions of history.

In a child-centered teaching, in which the cooperative method is dominant, the educator creates the appropriate learning motivation for the student, making him able to challenge, so as to develop critical thinking and historical consciousness. According to contemporary history teaching framework, the dominant request is the developing of the following critical thinking skills: analyzing and synthesizing ability, availability of information, evaluation criterion, documentation and argumentative ability and rational understanding of the values and motives that shaped the action (causality view by linking historical events to each other). History education bears the burden of defending the critical spirit and the development of skills for students, and it must fulfill this purpose.

TEACHING THE SKILLS

- ✓ HOW TO THINK
- ✓ SOURCES
- ✓ INTERPRETATION
- ✓ DIFERENT PERSPECTIVES

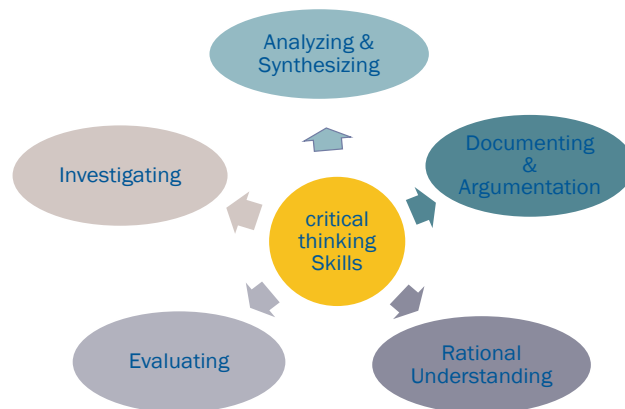


Figure 2: Critical thinking skills

8.7 Conclusions

In the light of the above, school historical knowledge is efficient when it sets a clear goal from the outset, the fulfillment of which puts the student in a continuous process of guided cognitive discovery, with an emphasis on acquiring skills. Children need guidance in order to discover and build their knowledge. We aim to develop exploratory skills for students and provide them with all the necessary resources to help them understand the world, judge actions and behaviors, formulate their own definitions and acquire their own experiences. It should be pointed that by mediating the educator and adopting the appropriate teaching methodology, essential historical knowledge is produced that promotes social skills.

8.8 References

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