



Bridging History and Special Education

Edited by Sebastian Barsch and Franziska Rein

THINK! HISTORICALLY:
TEACHING HISTORY
AND THE DIALOGUE OF
DISCIPLINES

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Interdisciplinary Perspectives on
Historical Thinking and Disabilities

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History Through the Lens of Special Education

The need and call for inclusive education for all students has been a central issue in various countries in the European context not only since the Salamanca Declaration of 1994 or the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006.¹ Since the 1970s, initiatives in the field of special education have worked towards enabling all children and young people, whether they have a disability or not, to attend mainstream schools. These efforts have been based on the principle of normalisation, initially applied to adults with intellectual disabilities.² In the 1980s and 1990s, the integration movement in many countries took systematic steps to overcome a segregated school system in which children with disabilities were educated in special schools.³ However, the state of inclusion in countries around the world is extremely diverse, ranging from an almost universally implemented inclusive system to systems in which many children with special needs continue to be educated in specific special schools.⁴

Despite these heterogeneous starting points, there are few convincing arguments against inclusive education from a human rights perspective. Even the academic literature on the effectiveness of inclusive or segregated education does not provide strong evidence for the continued existence of segregated schools.⁵ While some European countries continue to argue for inclusion and against separate schools, this debate is already considered outdated in other countries. One aim of this book is to take into account the different realities and approaches to inclusion for history education. In particular, the perspectives of teachers from different countries can provide valuable insights and enable a mutual learning process.⁶

However, different normative starting points do not mean that there are no consistent definitions of inclusion at the academic level. For example, a narrower understanding of inclusion has emerged in recent debates, focusing primarily on the integration of people with disabilities. At the same time, a broader concept of inclusion is increasingly being used to include additional categories of disadvantage that can lead to social and educational disadvantage.⁷ Such categories, which vary according to social context and societal acceptance of diversity,

1 Schwab 2020.

2 Nirje 1994.

3 Ramberg/Watkins 2020.

4 Klemm 2022.

5 Lindsay 2007.

6 Engelbrecht et al. 2013.

7 Haug 2017.

include, in addition to disability, ethnicity and migration,⁸ gender and sexual identity,⁹ and socio-economic background.¹⁰

For history teaching and academic history education, the developments and challenges associated with inclusion imply a fundamental reflection on how social diversity affects historical learning. Particularly in view of the fact that school teaching is still clearly characterised by subject cultures, it is inevitable that history education will address the issue of inclusion. Furthermore, from the perspective of history education, the pursuit of inclusive education and the full participation of all students in history classes has illuminated a wide range of research desiderata. These pertain not only to the development of robust theoretical and conceptual frameworks but also to the advancement of empirical research methodologies. Furthermore, they underscore the pressing need for well-founded, pragmatic instructional approaches that effectively translate these insights into classroom practice. Looking at the research landscape, it is striking that while there is some conceptual and theoretical work, empirical evidence on the effects of historical learning in inclusive settings is particularly lacking. A few decades ago, a number of studies were conducted in English-speaking contexts, looking at adaptive instructional settings and linguistic scaffolding in the context of digital literacy. Lifeworld approaches and biographical work were also emphasised.¹¹ In recent years there has been a trend towards more empirical research, particularly in German-speaking countries. This may be related to the previously criticised systematic approach in Germany, where the school system is still extremely segregated. At the same time, this also means that there are specific professional fields at the academic level that explicitly focus on, for example, the living and learning conditions of people with so-called intellectual disabilities.¹² However, despite these initial efforts, the number of history education research dealing with inclusion is still limited.

This volume is one of the first attempts to address issues of inclusion, diversity and historical learning from an international perspective, with a focus on disability and special education, but also beyond. It grew out of a conference held at the University of Cologne in 2023 and is intended as a further step towards bringing together, at a theoretical, conceptual and pragmatic level, different perspectives that understand inclusion in both a narrower and a broader sense. This collection compiles nine contributions that critically engage with the examination of inclusive historical education, aiming to explore its theoretical foundations, empirical dimensions and practical implications.

Heike Krösche, Christoph Kühberger, Simone Seitz, and Robert Thorp on the one hand focus their attention on a deep and systematic engagement with research that is based on theories of history education to develop and apply well-founded, theoretically grounded approaches that aim to enable a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of inclusive history education. Sebastian Barsch, Susan Krause, and Jan Siefert on the other hand focus

⁸ Tajic/Bunar 2020.

⁹ Omercajic/Martino 2020.

¹⁰ Richardson et al. 2020.

¹¹ For a review see Barsch/Barte 2020.

¹² See Rein 2021; Barsch 2020.

on the investigation and analysis of empirical data and findings related to the practical implementation and challenges of inclusive history education. Maria Papadopoulou investigates pragmatic approaches and perspectives aimed at promoting inclusive history education, linked with empirical findings.

Heike Krösche discusses the continuous construction and reproduction of social differences and inequalities in historical learning processes. Therefore, she emphasizes that the diversity of students, teachers and complex inequality structures in history education cannot be captured using rigid, isolated categories. To address diversity, it is necessary to move beyond one-dimensional perspectives on social inequality and binary thinking to an intersectional approach to the interaction of social differences. For history education research, the approach of interdependent categories is crucial, as inequality relations are embedded within categories like dis/ability. Heike Krösche concludes that history education should not only open research-driven approaches to categories of difference but also consider dis/ability as an interdependent category.

Christoph Kühberger explores the concept of inclusive historical knowledge. He builds on a broad understanding of knowledge that encompasses conceptual, factual, procedural and metacognitive aspects in an attempt to model inclusive historical knowledge based on historical and didactic discussions. He outlines a knowledge base for historical learning in schools while also examining challenges in special education when students with special needs are not inclusively considered. Using the Austrian national curricula, he analyses differences between general and special education schools in the subject History and Social Studies/Civic Education and how these differences impact the knowledge outlined in the curricula. Christoph Kühberger questions the normative foundation of inclusive historical knowledge as it aligns with diversity discourses.

Simone Seitz examines inclusive education particularly in relation to history teaching. She discusses the challenge of adapting complex historical topics to children's everyday experiences through didactical simplification. However, life and history are complex, and focusing only on children's perspectives would ignore the intergenerational responsibility of teaching, which balances child-centred and world-centred approaches. Simone Seitz argues that in difficult life situations, world education should not rely solely on children's personal experiences but also on the input from responsible adults. Teaching should encourage the discovery of new aspects of the world, co-constructed between teachers and students. Inclusive education can promote historical learning by connecting children's diverse experiences with complex issues, fostering intersubjective recognition in the learning process. Beyond that, Seitz suggests the ultimate goal is to enable children to understand and engage with the world, integrating both child-centred and world-centred learning.

Robert Thorp discusses research on inclusive history education, focusing on re-evaluating the overall objectives of history education, especially for students in special education. The existing literature on inclusive history education, primarily in English, has emphasized fostering historical thinking among learners, with significant attention given to the organization

of educational interventions. While this research is valuable, Robert Thorp argues that it is equally important to reconsider the perceived aims of history education. The chapter presents several proposed goals for history education and suggests a new perspective on inclusive history education. Drawing inspiration from Gadamer's concept of historical consciousness, Robert Thorp advocates for a broader understanding of the objectives of inclusive history education. This approach seeks to address the diverse challenges that both teachers and students face in history education.

Sebastian Barsch focuses on empirical findings on how historical learning is organized for students with disabilities in inclusive settings, particularly those with intellectual impairments. He shows that research on this topic is limited, with most studies showing that even students with severe cognitive disabilities can engage in historical thinking through biographical perspectives. However, there is little research on students with visual or hearing challenges. Inclusive projects highlight cultural participation and self-representation in history. Teachers often face challenges requiring simplified teaching methods. In addition, international studies suggest non-textual learning and direct instruction work well for students with cognitive disabilities. Barsch also concludes that project-based learning, personalized approaches and language-sensitive teaching show promise but must be used carefully to avoid discrimination.

Susan Krause presents a research report on how blind students access inner images of the past, with a focus on imaginative processes and history education. She discovered that students often mentioned childhood, family history, hobbies and current life situations, assuming that history is related to the past. However, the present became more relevant when connected to their lives. All students discussed family history, but none mentioned blindness, suggesting they consider it a normal state. The students naturally engaged with visual information, indicating that blind individuals can understand visual concepts through linguistic metaphors. Susan Krause reflects on overloading students with input and found valuable insights in open-ended tasks. Finally, the study highlights blindness as a fluid spectrum, shaped by social experiences, and emphasizes the importance of considering history education within broader social contexts.

Jan Siefert examines the role of cultural and narrative practices in inclusive history education for students with specific learning needs. He highlights the need for support in engaging with historical narratives, particularly for students lacking prior exposure. Language-sensitive history education benefits students with learning difficulties but does not fully address gaps in prior knowledge. Jan Siefert presents the genre cycle as a promising tool for inclusive history education, with teachers needing to collaborate for effective lesson planning. He stresses the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to historical education, integrating literary and language perspectives. Beyond that, he critiques the lack of focus on linguistic and cultural factors in history teaching.

Maria Papadopoulou examines the pragmatic training of primary school pupils with special educational needs in history education in Greece, specifically focusing on those with learn-

ing difficulties (LD). She emphasizes the importance of continuously identifying effective teaching methods, strategies and materials. The aim of the study was to investigate the current state of history education for children with LD in the Greek primary education system. Therefore, Maria Papadopoulou focuses on a systematic review of educational programs, teaching script and conference proceedings from 2017 to 2021. She found that only three of these programs addressed history education for students with special educational needs, and just one specifically focused on LD students. The results reveal a significant gap in relevant educational programs. The chapter shows valuable insights for educators and researchers and serves as a reference for future history education for pupils with special education needs.

A final note on the terminology used in this publication. The chapters have been written by authors from different countries and with different professional backgrounds and perspectives. The labelling of people with disabilities is often rightly part of a debate. However, we have chosen to use the terminology as it is used in different professional discourses and national contexts, but to check for discriminatory language at our discretion.

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Intersectionality and Dis/ability – A Relationship Determination From a History Education Perspective

Doing Difference as an Initial Consideration

As part of the piloting of the Explanatory Videos 2.0 project, student assistants conducted a workshop in two 6th grade classes at a Tyrolean secondary school, which was accompanied by lesson observation.¹ One of the classes was an integrated class with four learners who had special educational needs due to various disabilities. This included a girl with Down's syndrome, who was supported by the class history teacher throughout the three-hour workshop and was therefore hardly integrated into the learning process but rather excluded from it. Although this small field study is very fragmentary and the situation observed may have arisen as a result of the chosen research setting, it is still possible to draw some initial reflections on how to deal with difference in institutionalised learning contexts. Among other things, it shows how the education system itself contributes to ›doing difference‹,² in this case, the social construction of categories of difference such as disability. This clearly shows that »schools produce inequality and reproduce social inequalities in the process«.³ It is precisely the »school policy legitimisation concept« of handling special educational needs that is criticised, as this can itself be seen as a category of difference⁴ causing the problems it tries to solve. When the focus is on the student, gender and age categories such as girl and child can be assigned in addition to disability, but this also involves a reduction in complexity as these attributions are based on binary constructions. Furthermore, nothing is known about her sexual orientation, social background, religion or nationality. Nevertheless, it is clear that various (difference) attributions become visible, or are possible, and must be considered in an intersectional manner.

1 A standard and a competence-orientated video were produced as part of the Explanatory Videos 2.0 research project. In the pilot study, the question of how students rate these two versions was investigated. See Brait/Krösche 2024.

2 West/Fenstermaker 1995.

3 Lindmeier 2019, 31.

4 Lindmeier 2019, 15. The attribution of special educational needs is considered as discriminatory and inhibits participation. See More et al. 2020, 163.

Intersectionality is a multifaceted concept, and feminist intersectionality research as well as gender and queer studies have made a decisive contribution to the development of the theory in recent years.⁵ In addition, intersectionality has emerged as a cross-sectional category for analysing cultural and social relationships in the humanities, cultural and social sciences⁶ and is used in educational research, disability studies, special education and inclusive education, as well as individual subject education.⁷ Although its relevance has long been recognised,⁸ reference to the concept on the part of history education has so far been marginal in theoretical and empirical terms. For this reason, this work focuses on a theoretical approach to intersectional perspectives in research on history education with special consideration of the category of difference dis/ability.

Intersectionality – Historical and Theoretical Background

Very different concepts and perspectives such as diversity, heterogeneity and differentiation, intercultural learning and subject orientation⁹ need to be taken into account in the context of inclusive history education research.¹⁰ It is necessary to leave behind the »internal view« of history education, as Sebastian Barsch has formulated it, in the discussion of the concept of gender¹¹ to make room for more interdisciplinarity and inclusive approaches from gender studies, queer studies, disability studies, as well as special education and inclusive education. Despite its theoretical interest, intersectionality is another concept that has received little attention in the discourse on history education, although Christoph Kühberger, among others, has noted its added value for theory, empiricism and practice.¹² He argues that intersectional references manifest themselves both in the »individual historical consciousness of learners and teachers« and »in the historical-cultural products of society«, which also affects history teaching.¹³

An intersectional perspective brings into focus the multidimensionality and complexity of inequality and power relations,¹⁴ making it possible to look at interconnected axes of social inequality: that is, the interactions and overlaps between categories of inequality. In educational contexts such as history classes, social (inequality) relations are reproduced in a microcosm, so that processes of inclusion and exclusion, standardisation and normalisation determine what happens in the classroom. Both teachers and students therefore operate in

5 Lutz et al. 2010.

6 Kallenberg et al. 2013.

7 Bramberger et al. 2017.

8 Lücke 2017; Lücke/Messerschmidt 2020; Kühberger 2016; Brüning 2015.

9 In the German language discourse, subject orientation refers to the focus on the learning subject, i.e. on the respective students and their specific needs.

10 These are the keywords in the dictionary of history education. See Mayer et al. 2022.

11 Barsch 2016, 183.

12 Kühberger 2016.

13 Kühberger 2016.

14 Lutz et al. 2010, 11.

a field of tension between emancipation – that is, the possible overcoming of existing conditions – and paternalism, or the confirmation of traditional relationships.¹⁵ Learners not only bring a variety of preconditions to the (history) classroom, but they are also in a permanent process of identity formation.¹⁶ Accordingly, school diversity cannot be captured by rigid categories considered in isolation. In view of these dynamics, the intersectionality approach, by virtue of its openness, appears to be qualified as a research perspective for describing and analysing inclusive historical learning processes. This is because its strength lies in »constantly remaining sensitive to new possible omissions, denominations and exclusions«, as Helma Lutz, María Teresa Herrera Vivar and Linda Supik argue.¹⁷

At the same time, the genesis of the concept of intersectionality is much more complex than the iconic reference to the metaphor of the crossroads, coined by US legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, would suggest.¹⁸ Although Crenshaw was a major inspiration, the historical roots of this concept go back to the 19th century. In the US-American context, Black feminism and critical race theory, particularly the Combahee River Collective Statement from 1977,¹⁹ played a decisive role.²⁰ Different disciplinary and political-activism contexts also need to be included in the intersectionality discourse. In the context of the German-language reception of Crenshaw's work, the concept of intersectionality has been strongly deformed by reduction and pluralisation. Following Edward Said, Lucy N. Chebout therefore classifies intersectionality as a ›travelling theory‹ and calls for a comprehensive re-reading of Crenshaw.²¹

At the same time, the theoretical debate sparked criticism of the linear nature of the crossroads metaphor, and thus of the concept of intersectionality itself, as it implies that previously isolated categories of difference only come together at an intersection. This is an additive or one-dimensional perspective of social differences, which therefore cannot *de facto* be overcome.²² In its place, an interdependence approach has emerged as an alternative concept to capture the complexity of social inequality²³ by focusing more strongly on the interactions and interdependencies between different categories. However, the relationship between the concepts of intersectionality and interdependence is a nuanced one. An integral perspective on social categories, which was developed in an interdisciplinary project, has attracted much attention.²⁴ However, its use of the term interdependence is based on a view that categories of difference have a distinct core. In a holistic perspective on interdependencies, Katharina Walgenbach has introduced the concept of interdependent

15 Riegel 2016, 7.

16 Hellmuth et al. 2021, 5.

17 Lutz et al. 2010, 13.

18 Crenshaw 1989.

19 This statement addressed the intertwining of different forms of oppression, which was then further differentiated in the course of the 1980s.

20 Krösche/Harders 2024; Kerner 2009, 345–359.

21 Chebout 2011; see also Knapp 2005; Mefebue et al. 2022.

22 Walgenbach 2005, 48.

23 On the genesis of the interdependent perspective, see Rommelspacher 2006.

24 Walgenbach et al. 2007; Dietze et al. 2007.

categories, according to which relations of inequality are inherent in a particular category, such as gender or disability. In other words, categories are heterogeneous and structured by other categories. In this conceptualization, intersectionality functions as a generic term or framework of orientation to which interdependent categories are subordinated.²⁵ To return to the initial example, the student in the history lesson must (at least) be viewed as a disabled girl, and not in the sense of isolated categories as a girl plus disability, but as an interweaving of categories girl and disabled, both of which are relevant to inequality. In this way, multiple discriminations in the context of history lessons are adequately brought into view from an intersectional perspective. However, the dilemma of reproducing categories of difference in the classroom remains and cannot be resolved.

Intersectional issues are also concerned with the mechanisms of power and domination behind the practices of differentiation. Social systems are characterised by structures of domination and power that influence all levels of social life and lead to social inequalities and processes of exclusion.²⁶ Accordingly, power and domination relations also structure the school as a social institution, which exercises, according to Rudolf Leiprecht and Helma Lutz, a »normalising power«.²⁷ They also stress that these social differences are constructions embedded in historical-social processes.²⁸ This concern with the interrelationships of power and domination distinguishes (educational) intersectionality from heterogeneity and diversity.²⁹ While heterogeneity, diversity and intersectionality are related concepts that deal with relations of difference, they are based on different strands of discourse, which means that they cannot be used synonymously. Admittedly, these theoretical reflections are complicated by »conceptual indeterminacies«³⁰ and a »confusion of terms«.³¹ Nevertheless, these distinctions are crucial, and they have not yet been made clearly enough in the context of inclusive history education.³²

In didactic and educational discourse, heterogeneity is still closely linked to a deficit-oriented attitude and therefore typically has a negative connotation. Heterogeneity in the diagnosis of learning groups, for example, refers to the different challenges faced by students or to learning and achievement differences that have an impact on the design of lessons, particularly in history.³³ Starting from the »question of the disability-related heterogeneity«, Bernd Schönemann considers the problem of inclusive history teaching as still unresolved.³⁴

25 Walgenbach 2007; Walgenbach 2014; Walgenbach 2022.

26 On the connection between differences and power, see Kerner 2009.

27 Leiprecht/Lutz 2006, 218.

28 Leiprecht/Lutz 2006, 221–223.

29 Walgenbach 2014, 65–67.

30 Bührmann 2022, 35.

31 Walgenbach 2014, 7.

32 For their position on the concepts of heterogeneity, diversity and intersectionality, see Barsch et al. 2020b, in particular 19.

33 Brüning 2020; Schönemann 2022; Budde 2018.

34 Schönemann 2022, 115.

Even if inclusive learning can still be considered as a challenge for history education³⁵ and there are still some desiderata in inclusive history teaching research, this assessment does not reflect the current state of research. In addition to a slowly growing number of empirical approaches,³⁶ the German language *Handbook of Diversity in History Teaching*³⁷ is a prime example of this. Since social differences are understood as a natural given in the context of heterogeneity, the editors distance themselves from this term and focus instead on the concept of diversity. The additive consideration of categories of difference in the heterogeneity approach is also decisive for this decision.³⁸

More controversial is the examination of the relationship between diversity and intersectionality, which Andrea D. Bührmann and Iris Koall characterise as polarising.³⁹ From a gender studies perspective, this ambivalence is found in intersectionality being considered either a »bridging concept« or representing a »tension« between gender and diversity discourses.⁴⁰ From a domain-specific point of view, it seems obvious to assume that they represent two separate paradigms: Intersectionality is inextricably linked to reflections and analyses critical of power and authority, while diversity is more concerned with the recognition of social differences and the creation of equal opportunities.⁴¹ For a nuanced analysis of social inequalities, the historical roots of social differences must be taken into account, raising questions of continuity and change. An intersectional approach to teaching and learning history has the advantage of including the structural conditions of exclusion and oppression and overcoming one-dimensional perspectives. The relevance of the concept of intersectionality for the teaching of history also derives from the view in German-speaking countries of narrative competence as the main competence of historical learning. Accordingly, students should construct their own historical narratives by placing past events in a meaningful context and thereby deconstruct existing narratives. Since meaning is created in ways that differ from one individual to another, plural interpretations of the past are possible, leading to the characterization of historical learning »as a productive, self-willed appropriation of past realities«.⁴² This places the »learning subject with all its individual prerequisites, experiences and potentials«⁴³ at the centre of attention, which can only be done justice to if the multiple »subjective patterns of imagination and understanding«⁴⁴ are included in their entanglements and interactions, that is, in an intersectional perspective.

35 As being the title of Alavi/Lücke 2016.

36 See e.g. the empirical contributions in Musenberg et al. 2021 and Rein 2021.

37 *Handbuch Diversität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Barsch et al. 2020a.

38 Barsch et al. 2020b, 19.

39 Bührmann/Koall 2018, 3.

40 Smykalla/Vinz 2011, 11.

41 Smykalla/Vinz 2011, 11.

42 Lücke 2015, 200; Brüning/Grewe 2020.

43 Barsch 2020b, 9–10.

44 Bramann/Kühberger 2021, 314.

Dis/Ability – A Neglected Category of Difference

Intersectional questions deal with social constructions of difference and their underlying power structures. The concept of difference is ambiguous⁴⁵ and closely related to the concepts of otherness and alienness.⁴⁶ It refers to phenomena of social inequality and is embedded in the discourse on social justice and educational justice.⁴⁷ Social differences are used to construct »belonging, non-belonging and multiple belonging as well as [...] deviation, non-conformity and fragility«,⁴⁸ which means that »a category of difference such as disability or gender, in addition to the moment inherent in the individual, only emerges in social interaction«. ⁴⁹ In school and teaching practice, and therefore in history lessons, distinctions are made, categorised and differentiated.⁵⁰ This is a social practice in which the differentiations that are made need to be critically questioned as constructive practices.⁵¹ This creates a dilemma, because the process of recognising difference and critically questioning social categories manifests and ascribes their characteristics. Paul Mecheril and Andrea Vorrink explain this exemplarily from the perspective of the diversity approach:

»If, for example, pedagogy contributes to the recognition of people with disabilities, then this recognition practice confirms the powerful scheme that distinguishes between people with and without disabilities and produces this socially significant order of differences.«⁵²

The different treatment of the student with Down's syndrome in the history lesson described in the introduction is an example of the school's construction of difference dis/ability. At first glance, dis/ability appears as a binary difference between non-disabled and disabled, which corresponds to the bipolar hierarchical line of difference in the concept of »health« by Helma Lutz and Norbert Wenning.⁵³ It is doubtful whether this binary division is adequate to the complex socio-demographic conditions of a diverse society. Binary thinking is also incompatible with the interdependent categories approach, which addresses multidimensional experiences of inequality and assumes interdependencies within each category. Furthermore, the bipolar view of difference tends to focus interest on the »marked side of the distinction«, ⁵⁴ leaving the privileged side underexposed. Assigning a non-disabled/disabled

⁴⁵ Walgenbach 2014, 18.

⁴⁶ Ricken/Balzer 2007, 57.

⁴⁷ Lindmeier 2019, 26.

⁴⁸ Ricken/Balzer 2007, 57.

⁴⁹ Meyer/Lindmeier 2020, 58.

⁵⁰ Rabenstein et al. 2024, 13.

⁵¹ Lindmeier 2019, 30.

⁵² Mecheril/Vorrink 2017, 60.

⁵³ Lutz/Wenning 2001; Leiprecht/Lutz 2006, 219–220.

⁵⁴ Bührmann 2022, 39.

dichotomy to the term ›health‹ corresponds to a medical approach to disability. In contrast, following disability studies, the use of dis/ability emphasizes the »effect of social attributions of meaning«⁵⁵ and includes the structural power relations and practices that contribute to the construction of difference. The now established dis/ability notation and its variants refer to the interrelationship between disability and non-disability as well as the need to analyse associated notions of normality, instead of reproducing the social mark as alterity.⁵⁶

The discussion around the concept of non-disability/disability is an example of how controversial the selection, weighting, ordering and naming of categories of difference are in intersectionality research. Although gender, class and race are considered to make up the concept's basic categories, there is constant discussion of expanding the triad, a development that is particularly necessary in the context of historical learning processes.⁵⁷ Overall, the selection of relevant social categories for intersectional analyses is characterised by a tension between openness and arbitrariness.⁵⁸ Openness allows categories of difference to be selected or developed according to empirical research questions, rather than defined in advance, or adapted to changing orders of difference and power structures.⁵⁹ At the same time, each selection is accompanied by the exclusion and marginalisation of other categories, which weakens the analytical potential of intersectionality, especially when the category of race is not included.⁶⁰ Intersectionality research also reaches its limits when multidimensional relations of inequality are viewed from the perspective of a ›master category‹, for example, in historical education studies the focus on the category of gender.⁶¹

In the context of current intersectional debates,⁶² the use of dis/ability as an independent category is controversial and as a result has been neglected.⁶³ However, there is evidence of a revived interest in its use. Christian Lindmeier has recently argued that »disability« should be considered an intersectional category,⁶⁴ and Katharina Walgenbach has referenced it in her concept of interdependent categories.⁶⁵ The advantage of viewing dis/ability as an interdependent category rather than a bipolar relationship also seems obvious from an educational research perspective, as this does not soften the core categories of race, class and gender that are central to theorising or extend the triad to include dis/ability as part of a fourth category of ›body‹ or ›health‹. In disability studies, the intertwining of dis/ability and gender in particular has been the subject of intersectional approaches and research for some time.⁶⁶ In

55 Dietze et al. 2007, 18.

56 Waldschmidt/Karim 2022, 4.

57 See the list of difference categories in Barsch 2020b, 10.

58 Dederich 2014.

59 Abay et al. 2024, 27.

60 Deflers/Muschalek 2022, 8.

61 Kühberger 2016; Konrad 2018.

62 Amirpur 2016, 84.

63 Walgenbach 2007, 55; Walgenbach 2022, 164; Raab 2007, 128.

64 Lindmeier 2023.

65 Walgenbach 2022, 168.

66 Jacob et al. 2010.

the course of a growing awareness of current social challenges such as refugee and migration movements, the interactions and overlaps between disability, migration and religion are also increasingly coming into focus.⁶⁷ However, seeing dis/ability as an interdependent category – that is, as heterogeneous in itself – means above all that relations of inequality are already inherent and created in the category itself. This can be clearly seen in the genesis of the concept of disability, which goes hand in hand with biologicistic, racist and sexist devaluations.⁶⁸

Intersectional History Education – Approach to Identifying a Subject

The category dis/ability for intersectional perspectives in historical education research is undoubtedly relevant, as this category of difference is central to teaching and learning processes in history education. School is integrated into the social system at large, with social differences being constantly (re)produced in school learning processes such as history teaching. This has implications for the educational opportunities provided to students and their school performance. Moreover, historical learning is not only diverse in terms of the students, as teachers also bring their different socio-cultural backgrounds to the classroom, and subject-specific content can be selected and treated taking into account social diversity or multidimensional attributions of difference. Accordingly, diversity-sensitive history lessons consider diversity as a resource and are based on the individual abilities, skills and ideas of the students.⁶⁹

Against this background, it seems beneficial to anchor intersectionality more firmly in historical education research as a theoretical concept and analytical dimension, while remaining open to the flexible adaptation and re-accentuation of categories of difference in the context of social change processes. This would mean introducing and using social differences in a research-led way. At the same time, a central task of history education is to focus on the significance of gender, class and especially race in historical teaching and learning processes. Unfortunately, the disability category still receives too little attention.

Intersectional perspectives question the connection between multidimensional attributions of difference in relation to power and domination. For example, Ina Kerner derives interdependent epistemic, institutional and personal dimensions from Michel Foucault's analysis of power in her consideration of racism and sexism.⁷⁰ When using intersectional approaches in the teaching of history, different interpenetrating levels need to be taken into account. The institutional or structural level frames forms of inclusion and exclusion, while the individual level is central to the role of both students and teachers in practices of inclusion and exclusion. At the organizational level, it is also necessary to critically analyse the socio-cultural positioning of both the actors in the school system and (German-language) history education in particular.

⁶⁷ Konz/Schröter 2022.

⁶⁸ Hofer 2024, 131.

⁶⁹ Barsch 2023.

⁷⁰ Kerner 2009.

Their effects on history curricula and teaching and learning materials, and thus on the selection or focus of topics, should also be considered along intersectional lines. For all three levels, the aim is to break through one-dimensional perspectives and focus on the interrelationship of different categories of difference and their significance for historical thinking as well as their influence on historical narratives. The relevance of the intersectionality concept for history education research results from: »the interweaving of social inequalities, the close connection between academic analysis and socio-political practice as well as the emphasis on emancipatory action«.⁷¹ These insights of the intersectionality approach have not yet been sufficiently taken into account in historical education research. However, a promising approach is taken by Annette Kuhn, who sees critical historical thinking as a central task of history teaching and links intersectionality with approaches to emancipatory history education.⁷² This approach takes a social perspective that focuses on social inequalities and the need to critically analyse these in the past and present.

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⁷¹ Degele 2019, 344.

⁷² Kuhn 1974.

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Inclusive Historical Knowledge: Concepts of History Education Lacking in Special Needs Schools

Domain-Specific Knowledge for History Education

In recent decades various strands of discourse in history education have dealt intensively with the question of knowledge for historical learning.¹ These strands could be bundled around the buzzword »powerful knowledge«.² However, the terms *second-order concepts* and *core concepts* used in earlier stages of this debate are also relevant.³

This paper – anchored in the German-language discourse – begins by looking at different types of knowledge for historical learning and proceeds to address the question which types of knowledge characterize school curricula in Austria. I first discuss whether or not an inclusive historical knowledge can be identified and, if so, how to frame it. In doing so, I use a broad notion of *inclusion*: that is, I consider various forms of diversity. I conclude with a case study comparing the curricula for teaching history at Austrian general compulsory schools and special needs schools, focusing on the relationship between history education and special needs education. In this paper I make a proposal for the establishment of an inclusive historical knowledge in the school curricula, highlighting the problem of the on-going unequal treatment of Austrian students at special needs schools in comparison to general compulsory schools.

What is Knowledge? Approaches to Different Types of Knowledge

The common understanding of the term knowledge is typically shaped by everyday ideas, lacking clarity and precision. Even in educational contexts this term often remains ambiguous. For example, some people claim that students today »don't know anything anymore« or that too little knowledge is being taught. When it comes to the teaching of history, the

1 This contribution is strongly based on my work already published in German (Kühberger 2020) and extending it with specific case studies relating to curricula at general compulsory schools (Allgemeinbildende Pflichtschule/ ABS) with those of Special Needs Schools (*Sonderschulen*) in Austria.

2 See Young 2009; Nordgren 2017; Chapman 2021.

3 See Bruner 1960; Lee 2005; Kühberger 2021.

criticism is that students no longer learn dates, facts and straightforward narratives about the past.⁴ However, this simplistic view disregards of course the rich academic discussions about the nature of knowledge. In fact, various theoretical models have been developed in the field of knowledge psychology that provide a precise and systematic way to classify different types of knowledge, enabling learning processes to be structured more effectively. These models enable educators to structure learning processes more effectively, identifying which specific areas of knowledge are needed for subject-specific thinking.⁵

Ryle defines three types of knowledge: declarative knowledge (›knowing that‹), strategic knowledge (›knowing how‹) and metacognitive knowledge (›knowing why‹).⁶ Anderson and Krathwohl distinguish between factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge and metacognitive knowledge (Table 1).⁷ Of course, there is some overlap among these models. However, each systematization identifies the central dimensions of knowledge and allows us to see what they have in common.

Different waves in history education and in educational policy have drawn on various aspects of these models,⁸ reflecting the diverse intentions and goals attributed to the teaching of history. In recent decades, a notable tension has emerged between content orientation and skill or competence orientation.⁹ Content-oriented approaches present a historical account as a master narrative, while competence-oriented approaches focus on case studies to examine processes of historical thinking, enabling learners to acquire a critical approach to understanding the nature of history.¹⁰ This tension often leads to a hybrid orientation in school curricula for history learning, where traditional approaches to teaching have not been set aside and coexist alongside newer ones. The acquisition of critical historical thinking is linked to content that is not infrequently oriented towards cultural, often national, ideas about the present. However, it should be noted that when dealing with the past and history, different types of knowledge are needed to understand historical reconstructions (i.e., history)¹¹ and, ideally, to deconstruct them, as well as to produce one's own historical representation (i.e., history).

4 For Germany, see Schulze Wessel 2016 or for Austria, see Helmberger 2015.

5 Fischer/Wecker 2006, 65–66. See, for example, Ryle 1948; Anderson et al. 2001.

6 Ryle 1948; Gautschi 2009, 20; Gautschi 2009, 69; Fiebig 2013, 204.

7 Anderson/Krathwohl (eds.) 2001; Kühberger 2012b.

8 See Kühberger 2012a; Ammert 2015.

9 In Austria, empirical studies have shown that not all history teachers in lower secondary schools have implemented the transition from content-oriented teaching to a skills- or competence-oriented teaching. Older, experienced male teachers in particular tend to reject a skill or competence orientation. See Kipman/Kühberger 2020, 92f. For the changing international debate, see Ercikan/Seixas 2015.

10 Bernhardt et al. 2012, 104–105.

11 On »reconstruction«, see Körber 2011, 146.

<p>Factual knowledge</p> <p>Factual knowledge is about easily definable pieces of information. However, it is impossible, even for experts, to acquire and retain all elements of factual knowledge. This type of knowledge includes terminological knowledge and knowledge about specific details, such as dates, growth rates and historical relationships.</p>
<p>Conceptual knowledge</p> <p>Conceptual knowledge is a more complex and organized type of knowledge that focuses on concepts, models and theories. It represents abstract elements of knowledge. For example this concept clarifies the ideal typical elements of revolutions, but it does not refer to specific instances of revolution, such as the 1905 Russian Revolution, which would be classified as factual knowledge.</p>
<p>Procedural knowledge</p> <p>Procedural knowledge is about the performance of specific skills, techniques and methods. It includes, for example, the knowledge of a specific method for dealing with historical sources. This type of knowledge includes knowledge of how to use subject-specific methods.</p>
<p>Metacognitive knowledge</p> <p>Metacognitive knowledge is knowledge about cognitive processes of thinking, perceiving and understanding. Reflection on knowledge and its use is a kind of strategic knowledge or knowledge about oneself.</p>

Tab. 1: Types of knowledge according to Anderson and Krathwohl (see Kühberger 2014, 23).

Michele Barricelli's definition of historical knowledge encompasses the fine-grained typologies derived from the psychology of knowledge. He follows a narrativist theory of history and emphasizes the narrative character of history without elaborating on the types of knowledge necessary to realize history: »Historical knowledge is [...] always narrative knowledge, i.e. it is always in the form of a narrative, i.e. a linguistic construct that meaningfully connects previously related facts (>events<) in a particular way.«¹² It is nevertheless important not to neglect the specific dimensions of knowledge.

Which Historical Knowledge?

Discussions repeatedly arise about which historical content is to be taught and about whether there is a canon of historical knowledge. In the call for a canon, one can recognize the desire to order, determine and pass on a crucial stock of narrative knowledge to the next generation.¹³ This is nothing other than the outdated nineteenth-century concept of encyclopedic knowledge and the tradition of preserving knowledge through schooling. The concept of canonized historical knowledge itself assumes that bodies of knowledge have a lasting validity. However, this is impossible. Bodo von Borries has shown that even well-researched historical

¹² Barricelli 2008, 7.

¹³ Greyer/Stuurman (eds.) 2007; Ammerer 2012.

questions of the French Revolution have been interpreted very differently, illustrating the problem of canonizing knowledge.¹⁴ Historical knowledge is after all a complex, changing and contradictory entity in need of constant revision. It is not a *transferable good*, but the result of a social construction – even in the classroom.¹⁵

History education is increasingly dealing with different types of knowledge as it focuses on moments that touch on the domain-specific organization of learning. Susanne Popp, for example, speaks of ›orientation knowledge‹, a concept that sharply contrasts with ›classical‹ canonical knowledge. This type of knowledge provides orientation for »elementary classifications and the development of contexts«. Orientation knowledge

»should, on the one hand, be organized in relation to epochs and, on the other hand, represent fewer collections of ›canonical‹ individual terms (in the sense of detailed knowledge, such as ›important places‹, dates, people, events) than a coarse-meshed, temporally structured, and rudimentarily systematic ›conceptual network‹ that [...] can become useful as a frame of reference for classifying new information.«¹⁶

Popp describes this knowledge as an ›instrument‹ with which newly acquired information can be processed and contexts can be developed.¹⁷ This approach, which is based on a Dutch concept,¹⁸ supports a general educational understanding of historical learning processes that follows a chronological structure of history teaching in order to integrate all epochs as far as possible. It does not aim at teaching formal or constantly recurring patterns, as is typical in historical thinking, but focuses on epoch-specific historical knowledge that students should retain from history classes as a »residual«¹⁹ in order for them to be able to orient themselves in different historical epochs. Ideal-typical characteristics of an epoch are thereby condensed into ›distinguishing characteristics‹ that provide a frame of reference for history learning.²⁰

»As, for example, in the time of monks and knights: students should know that at that time it was about the spread of Christianity in Europe, the rise of Islam, the emergence of feudalism, and the autarkic system of lords and serfs.«²¹

14 Borries 2012, 21–22.

15 Fischer/Wecker 2006, 66.

16 Popp 2009, 653.

17 Popp 2009, 654.

18 Popp 2006.

19 Counsel 2000, 66.

20 Wilschut 2009.

21 Wilschut 2009, 638.

Similar to the conception of orientational knowledge is Michael Sauer's temporal-chronological orientational knowledge, which help students classify case studies of history learning.²² A critical position towards a canonically structured ›orientational knowledge‹ is taken by Maria Galda, who argues that it is based on the unquestioned acquisition of certain given historical facts. Following Gilbert Ryle, however, she states:

»If orientation knowledge is seen rather as an accumulation of the perspectives of factual knowledge (›knowing that‹) with strategic knowledge (›knowing how‹) under the increased emphasis of metacognitive knowledge (›knowing why‹), then orientation knowledge means knowing how to orient oneself with history. This goes hand in hand with the knowledge of the constructional character of history, which consequently cannot be a canon, as a canon is a construct of itself. Based on the cognitive psychology term meta-knowledge (also second-order knowledge or control knowledge), orientation knowledge can be used to describe knowledge about how history works.«²³

Galda's position is therefore highly compatible with considerations that have been developed in the Anglo-American discourse on history learning²⁴ and in the German-speaking discourse on civic and history learning linked to conceptual knowledge.²⁵ Such an approach sees historical thinking as the primary goal of history teaching and questions the disproportionate emphasis on subject-specific knowledge.

However, the focus of orientation knowledge is not on the *case knowledge* or actual knowledge students need when encountering specific historical situations, but on domain-specific ›intelligent knowledge‹²⁶ that can be applied by the students independently to a variety of (ideally) unanticipated situations outside the contexts taught in the classroom.²⁷ The focus then is on students learning domain-specific concepts independent of the case study that are essential to historical thinking and can be transferred between different cases. These fundamental concepts can be called *basic concepts* or *central domain-specific concepts*.²⁸ They are structuring and formative for a specific domain, quite similar to what science didactics has previously done.²⁹

22 Sauer 2009, 54–55; see also Erdmann 2012. Sauer considers timelines as the appropriate methodological tool to achieve this.

23 Galda 2013, 42.

24 Lee 2005, 31–77; Seixas/Morton 2013.

25 Sander 2007, 19–24; Weißeno et al. 2009; Kühberger 2010, 43–59; Kühberger 2012b.

26 Weinert 1998, 115.

27 Popp 2009, 647.

28 Kühberger 2023.

29 Kühberger 2012b, 39; Demuth et al. 2005; Nachreiner 2015; Nerdel 2017, 19.

Concepts of historical thinking, I would argue, can be categorized in three sets:³⁰

1. *Epistemic basic concepts* reflect on how historical knowledge arises and provide insights into how to understand the past and history. They serve to establish and develop a student's ability to reflect critically on history. Epistemic basic concepts include *perspective, constructivity, selection* and *evidence*.
2. *Historical basic concepts* support the processes of meaning creation through the experience of time. Its central concept of *time* as it is used in historical thinking is structured by understanding *points in time, courses of time* and *divisions of time*.
3. *Basic societal concepts* reflect the interrelationships of human coexistence. These concepts (pre)shape and structure perceptions, interpretations of and judgments on the historical. Basic societal concepts include, for example, *power, norms, distribution, agency, communication*, among others.

These concepts, however, should not be understood as an academically oriented deduction from the top down, but rather as basic points of orientation that mediate between students' pre-concepts (prior knowledge, prior understanding) and the demands of historical learning as an academic subject.³¹

In addition to these structural considerations, however, *case knowledge* is always necessary in history teaching to enable students to think about specific case studies in a balanced and informed way. This working knowledge can be related to occasions and topics related to individual cases, which allows students to engage in mental processes of historical thinking on a specific case.

Although this is an important basis, working knowledge should not be conflated with *factual knowledge* or *outline knowledge (lexicon knowledge)*, which, once acquired, is permanently accessible to the student:

»Working knowledge is, therefore, of a quality that exhibits situational effectiveness and makes a competent examination of clearly outlined thematic parts of the past possible. This means that working knowledge cannot be clearly and universally defined (»*canon of knowledge*«), as it depends on the question posed in the lesson as to which bodies of knowledge need to be created, activated or expanded.«³²

Working knowledge, which is made available to the students in learning situations for further use, cannot be constantly reproduced.

³⁰ Kühberger 2012b, 51–58; Kühberger 2016a, 25.

³¹ Massing 2015, 229; Kühberger 2016a, 23.

³² Kühberger 2015, 91.

Is There Any Inclusive Historical Knowledge?

In Austria the national curriculum is the normative basis of historical knowledge to be taught in history classes – here understood as the sum of the various types of knowledge listed in the document.³³ It regulates detailed aspects of conceptual knowledge (i.e., core concepts like ›power‹, ›perspective‹, ›time‹, etc.) and procedural knowledge (e.g., historical thinking skills) to be acquired. The national curriculum also has a significant influence on the production of textbooks as well as on societal perceptions of the past through compulsory education. However, as history is always selective, perspectival and particular, there is the persistent question as to »how in each case decisions are made about the choice of topics and interpretations, which influence types and content of the desired knowledge.«³⁴ Curricula also function in democracies as guardians of politically legitimized historical knowledge. Consequently they must always be subjected to a critique of power – not least in order to avoid discrimination but also to ensure their sensitivity toward a diverse society: Which historical knowledge is privileged? Who is not part of this historical knowledge? Which narratives are missing? Who decides? And other questions. Curriculum development must also be evaluated in terms of who its *gatekeepers* are and how much power they have. The outcomes of the negotiations and compromises in the curriculum development process should be critically questioned in relation to different categories of diversity.³⁵

In societies that are characterized by migration, it is particularly important to reflect on how historical knowledge is taught in history classes. In a fast-changing society in which people of different social and cultural backgrounds live together and share their experiences, there is little place for the so-called desirable knowledge which perpetuates a Western perspective. For over a century, Western societies have followed a *parade of civilizations* approach to history education. In an evolutionist approach civilizations emerge and are then replaced by others in a kind of linear sequence. The European *master narrative* defines the sequence as beginning in Ancient Egypt, followed by Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, then the European Middle Ages, the Renaissance, European Empires, and so on. However, this master narrative ignores the prehistoric dispersal of humankind and its flourishing in civilizations around the world. A dominant Eurocentric narrative strand has been created and maintained, which serves to continuously marginalize and exclude non-European cultures and regions.³⁶ A critique of this narrative of a spatial preference for Europe and of Eurocentric terms (e.g. the Middle Ages) needs to play a greater role in the classroom, as does a discussion about the agencies of different societal groups: »Whoever examines age groups, migration processes, gender relations,

33 See BGBl., Jg. 2008, Teil II, 18.5.2016, 113. Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Bildung und Frauen, mit der die Verordnung über die Lehrpläne der Hauptschulen, die Verordnung über die Lehrpläne der Neuen Mittelschulen sowie die Verordnung über die Lehrpläne der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schulen geändert werden.

34 Borries 2012, 13 [translated by the author]; see Fina 1969.

35 Empirical insights for Germany can be found in Barsch 2024 and for Austria in Kühberger 2016b.

36 Schisster 2005, 36.

ownership structures brings completely different actors into play.«³⁷ For instance, in history textbooks nineteenth century workers are often portrayed as part of an underclass in a society experiencing a social ascent:

»When speaking of ›the poor‹ of the nineteenth century, textbooks mainly use categories such as poverty, toil, dirt and misery. Everyday life is set in an earthly vale of tears, showing the misery of others to elevate [...] the present over a darker past. This is an expressive image within the framework of every master narrative of ›progress‹, be it of leftist (Marxist-Leninist or social democratic), rightist, or liberal provenance.«³⁸

In this portrayal, social romanticism and social voyeurism are often intertwined.³⁹ To address this issue, it is essential to adopt the paradigm of *post-colonial studies* and ask which social groups are addressed in history lessons (*Who is allowed to speak?*). How social groups are spoken about in historical narratives shapes the cultural knowledge passed on to next generations.⁴⁰ This is illustrated by the role of gender in history teaching, which has been an issue since the 1970s. While there has been considerable progress, particularly since the second women's movement,⁴¹ the place of women in history teaching is by no means secure. It can be threatened by biased structural representations of the past and by historical narratives focusing one-sidedly on ›great men‹.⁴² Other aspects of diversity, such as those explored in *queer history*⁴³ or *disability history*,⁴⁴ are even less likely to be included in the body of knowledge of German-speaking countries. There are often still taboos towards the ›other‹, which must be overcome if inclusive historical knowledge is to be implemented in an open democratic society.⁴⁵ An intersectional perspective on the past and history – that is, a perspective that does not analyze isolated categories of difference but rather their interrelatedness – still needs to be established.⁴⁶ This unbalanced treatment of categories of difference in the historical narratives of history education can be countered by reflection on power structures in historical knowledge and its media in history teaching. A knowledge system is, after all, based on disputable understandings of social reality and on the »historical traditions of those who contributed to this system in the past and shape it in the present«.⁴⁷

37 Borries 2012, 16.

38 Sieder 1997, 15–16.

39 Kühberger 2004, 19.

40 Spivak 2007.

41 Borries 2013; Bennewitz 2016; Harding 2008; Harding 2015.

42 Windischbauer 2012.

43 Lücke 2015.

44 Barsch 2016.

45 Haydn et al. 2015, 210; Rupp/Freeman 2015.

46 Walgenbach 2014.

47 Schisster 1993, 10.

The Same Historical Knowledge for All?

The question arises whether all students should acquire the same historical knowledge in the same depth. Selective school systems already separate students into different groups who then attend different types of schools with different curricula (external differentiation) and thus determine who needs to acquire what (historical) knowledge. This stratification of the student population has negative social effects, but the threads of discourse in German history education from the 1970s calling for an emancipatory knowledge for the *underprivileged strata* were not systematically pursued. Indeed, the debate has been largely marginalized or even lost for history education in the twenty-first century.⁴⁸

Given institutional differentiation, the question of how to deal with different learning paces, capacities and performances in heterogeneous learning groups (*internal differentiation*) becomes more pertinent. Assigning learning materials to students with special needs that differ in content from those offered to other students is problematic, as it would promote cultural exclusion by depriving a priori those students of access to knowledge. Nevertheless, not all learning objects appears to be equally suitable for all types of students. However, mechanisms of exclusion can be minimized by differentiating content according to student interests, for example, by giving students the opportunity to select the case studies to be worked on. This would allow different perspectives in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, among others to be taken into account (see Georgi/Musenberg 2020). In addition, learning opportunities can be created that allow students to learn at their own pace. A didactically appropriate reduction of the number of case studies would also be useful, provided that historical events and contexts – often based on a content orientation – are not reduced in such a way that they have no benefit for critical historical thinking and the »zone of proximal development«⁴⁹ is prevented rather than promoted. It is therefore crucial to ensure that the subject matter is not altered in a way that reduces the complexity of the learning object.⁵⁰

Austrian Curricula for Historical Learning at General Compulsory Schools and Special Needs Schools

A comparison of aspects of the curricula for *general compulsory schools* (*Allgemeinbildende Pflichtschule*) from 2016 with those of *special needs schools* (*Allgemeine Sonderschule*) from 2008 – grades 5 to 8 – in Austria would be useful to find out how these types of schools cope with the challenges discussed above. Three examples illustrate these differences.

The curriculum for special needs school claims to follow a domain-specific competence orientation (see first example below). However, only superficial guidance is provided, and

⁴⁸ Kuhn 1997, 30–31.

⁴⁹ See Vygotskij 1987.

⁵⁰ Musenberg 2015, 209; Anwar 1994, 149–150; Lehner 2012.

the details on how to apply this mode of teaching, which are given in the curriculum of the *general compulsory school*, are not included. It can be reasonably assumed that the intent of the Austrian ministry of education is not to demotivate special education teachers without training in history teaching. However, the consequence is that the crucial importance of procedural knowledge in teaching history, such as knowing how to analyze historical narratives or sources, is ignored. Unfortunately, historical thinking was intentionally left out of the curriculum for special needs schools. This policy decision is misguided, as historical thinking is possible on different levels.

This finding is in line with the observation that all parts of the *general compulsory school curriculum on the nature of history* have been ignored in recommendations for special need schools.

Special needs schools	General compulsory schools
<p>»Lessons in history and social sciences/civic education deal with past, present and future perspectives.</p> <p>It therefore makes an important contribution to the orientation of pupils in time and space and to finding their identity in a pluralistic society. Particular attention should be paid to teaching historical and political skills.«⁵¹</p>	<p>»Lessons in history and social sciences/civic education deal with past, present and future perspectives, in particular in connection with human coexistence.</p> <p>It thus makes an important contribution to students' orientation in time and space, to critically reflect on finding their identity in a pluralistic society and to the development of independent historical and political thinking and acting.«⁵²</p>

Tab. 2: First example.

The *general compulsory school curriculum's* linkage of procedural knowledge with conceptual knowledge is also lacking (see second example below). Instead, the *special needs school curriculum* works with container terms from the late twentieth century and gives teachers no information on how to put them into practice.

51 Official German text from the curriculum: »Der Unterricht in Geschichte und Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung beschäftigt sich mit Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunftsperspektiven. Er leistet somit einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Orientierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler in Zeit und Raum und zur Identitätsfindung in einer pluralistisch verfassten Gesellschaft. Dabei ist der Vermittlung von historischen und politischen Kompetenzen besonders Beachtung zu schenken.« Bundesgesetzblatt (BGBl.), Jg. 2008, Teil II, 12.8.2008, 290. Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, mit der die Verordnungen über die Lehrpläne der Volksschule, der Sonderschulen, der Hauptschulen und der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schulen geändert werden.

52 Official German text from the curriculum: »Der Unterricht in Geschichte und Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung beschäftigt sich mit Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunftsperspektiven, damit in Verbindung insbesondere mit dem menschlichen Zusammenleben. Er leistet somit einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Orientierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler in Zeit und Raum, zur kritischen Identitätsfindung in einer pluralistisch verfassten Gesellschaft sowie zur Entwicklung selbständigen historischen und politischen Denkens und Handelns.« BGBl., Jg. 2008, Teil II, 18.5.2016, 113. Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Bildung und Frauen, mit der die Verordnung über die Lehrpläne der Hauptschulen, die Verordnung über die Lehrpläne der Neuen Mittelschulen sowie die Verordnung über die Lehrpläne der allgemein bildenden höheren Schulen geändert werden.

Special needs schools	General compulsory schools
»Napoleon and the French Revolution« ⁵³	<p>»Module 7 (historical and civic education) Revolutions, resistance, reforms</p> <p>Concretization of competencies:</p> <p>Question orientation offerings from representations and confront them with alternative offerings; lead discussions on the use of historical knowledge for the present and future; analyze the structure of representations.</p> <p>Thematic concretization:</p> <p>Distinguish and define the terms revolution and reform; explain selected aspects of the Enlightenment and analyze their significance for revolutions and reform movements; evaluate the impact of the Enlightenment on contemporary societies (democratic constitutional state, separation of powers, human rights); compare and evaluate political upheavals known as revolutions.«⁵⁴</p>

Tab. 3: Second example.

The third example focuses on content left out of the curriculum of special needs schools. Unfortunately, topics that would address diversity in an explicitly inclusive approach to history teaching are omitted as inappropriate for special needs education. This includes thematic case studies on race, class or gender in the nineteenth century or topics such as »violence, feelings and attitudes in the societal context between the Renaissance and the nineteenth century« or »dealing with mental and physical impairments.«⁵⁵ The thinking behind the decision by the *Austrian Federal Ministry of Education* to exclude this content remains unclear, since the curriculum for special needs schools should actually place great emphasis on the students' everyday life experiences.

⁵³ Official German text from the curriculum: »Napoleon und die Französische Revolution«, BGBl., Jg. 2008, Teil II, 12.8.2008, 290. Verordnung.

⁵⁴ Official German text from the curriculum: »Modul 7 (Historisch-politische Bildung): Revolutionen, Widerstand, Reformen. Kompetenzkonkretisierung: Orientierungsangebote aus Darstellungen hinterfragen und mit alternativen Angeboten konfrontieren; Diskussionen zur Nutzung von historischen Erkenntnissen für Gegenwart und Zukunft führen; Aufbau von Darstellungen analysieren; Thematische Konkretisierung: Die Begriffe Revolution und Reform unterscheiden und definieren; Ausgewählte Aspekte der Aufklärung erklären und ihre Bedeutung für Revolutionen und Reformbewegungen analysieren; Die Auswirkungen der Aufklärung auf gegenwärtige Gesellschaften (demokratischer Verfassungsstaat, Gewaltentrennung, Menschenrechte) beurteilen; Politische Umbrüche, die als Revolutionen bezeichnet werden, vergleichen und bewerten.« BGBl., Jg. 2008, Teil II, 18.5.2016, 113. Verordnung.

⁵⁵ See Module 6 of the *general compulsory school* curriculum. BGBl., Jg. 2008, Teil II, 18.5.2016, 113. Verordnung.

These three examples clearly reveal differences in how domain-specific knowledge is integrated in the curricula of general compulsory schools in contrast to the special needs schools in Austria. The *special needs school curriculum* has largely ignored developments in history education that have been widely discussed since the turn of the century.

Conclusion

In Austria the discussion about historical knowledge for *special needs schools* has taken place without consulting or collaborating with any representatives of history education. In fact, the developers of the *special needs school curriculum* remain anonymous, even though the members of the curriculum commission for the *general compulsory school curriculum* are well known. Furthermore, no policy paper has been published, which means that it is unclear who adapted the previous curriculum of the *general compulsory school* (2008) for the curriculum of the *special needs schools* (2008). The intentions behind this adaptation are also unknown, making it impossible to engage in a professional discussion about the matter. This is a poor starting point for cooperative collaboration between special needs educators and history educators. It is essential that the Austrian federal educational administration raise awareness that inclusion is not only a concern of special education, but also a broader issue that requires the involvement of systemic representatives in discussion about the role of historical knowledge in *special needs schools* in the future.

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All the Time in the World?

Reflections on Time in the Framework of Inclusive Education at Primary School Level

Introduction – Child and World

Time is a key concept for historical learning.¹ In this chapter I will explore the concept of time in the context of inclusive education at primary school level. I begin with the assumption that connecting children's starting points for learning with the curriculum-based requirements (or levels of competencies) is essential for primary education that is child-centered.² Crucial to inclusive education is acknowledging the diversity of these starting points for learning – shaped by children's unique experiences, prior knowledge and questions.³ However, not only the children's unique and diverse starting points are significant but also the similarities among them in order to unfold the complexity and the fundamental meanings of a foundational concept such as time – and offer new perspectives on education that is centered on the child and about the world.⁴ This relationship between diversity and similarity forms the central theme of this article, which focuses on time as a topic in inclusive primary schools.

Inclusive Education

In school education there is a tension between an awareness of the uncontrollability of the individual child's education on the one hand and the institutionally anchored mandate to steer educational processes towards the individual child's educational success on the other. Teaching is about highly complex and individual educational processes involving a child's self-construction of knowledge, and it is entangled in regulatory and administrative frameworks that stipulate which subject-related competences and knowledge acquisition are legitimized by the curricula.

1 Körber 2015, 8ff.

2 Einsiedler 2005.

3 Kaiser/Seitz 2017.

4 Biesta 2022.

An awareness of this paradox and the ability to deal with it in a competent and reflexive way in their pedagogical relationships is therefore a central aspect of the professionalism of teachers.⁵ School education is not a technology that is applied to children solely in their capacity as students; it is about pedagogical relationships with children who are inevitably persons. This insight is a fundamental premise to the further development of inclusive education and the question of how primary schools can succeed in recognizing all children as individual persons.⁶

Inclusive Pedagogy

None of us exists outside of time. We all share perceptions of time, and we all have actively engaged with time since the beginning of life with our first demands for regular rhythms of care and food from caregivers. Such fundamental experiences of time are shared by all children – and of course by teachers as well – and can therefore serve as a basis for a pedagogical conception of time.⁷ This simple but radical approach to learning through ›experience‹ can be traced back to the early works of Dewey. He describes experience using the example of artistic activity, in which momentary immersion in the process of creation merges directly with the creation of the work of art itself: In experience there is »no division between act and material, subject and object, but [it] contains them both in an unanalyzed totality.«⁸ This understanding of experience applies to the perception of time (in the sense of *aisthesis*) and learning about time, because experiencing time coincides with the construction of the experience of time.⁹ This will be discussed in more detail below.

Dewey also observes that educational experiences can only be realized in communal action, because human beings can only develop as individuals by interacting with others. And the more democratic the social spheres are, the greater the opportunity for a person to grow by engaging with the experiences of their peers.¹⁰ Dewey thus sees knowledge as socially situated – which highlights the importance of creating structures of peer-based shared experiences and problem-oriented exchanges at school as meaningful elements of inclusive education.

In the 1980s, Klafki developed general didactic foundations – particularly through his concept of *Allgemeinbildung* – that later provided a theoretical and conceptual basis for the development of inclusive pedagogy. His guiding principles of democratization and humanization paved the way in German-speaking countries for innovative approaches to a general pedagogy oriented toward open teaching with heterogeneous (inclusive) groups as a whole. Klafki's concept of categorical education describes the learner-centered principle of the reciprocal de-

⁵ Helsper 2020.

⁶ Seitz 2020.

⁷ Seitz 2005.

⁸ Dewey 1925/2018, 10.

⁹ Seitz 2004.

¹⁰ Dewey 1916/2011.

velopment of ›reality‹ and subject.¹¹ His conceptualization of a critical-constructive pedagogy through interdisciplinary teaching on key epoch-typical problems focuses attention on students' individual interests when engaging in shared problems and tasks. Diversity can then be experienced as a qualitative enrichment of cooperative learning processes.¹² These ideas provide a framework for different strands of research on inclusive education,¹³ in particular in German-speaking scientific discourse.¹⁴

Research and theory-building in inclusive education has been significantly influenced by diversity education and its underlying concept of egalitarian difference.¹⁵ This approach brings together aspects of interculturality, gender and ability/disability and critically analyzes them from the perspective of the creation and stabilization of (in)equity. Conceptually, this approach was further developed into a heterogeneity-oriented education based on the equity of rights and fundamental needs. This approach was later enriched by insights from intersectionality research, post-colonial studies and critical research into ableism, classism and racism,¹⁶ significantly strengthening the inequity-critical perspective and creating a starting point for research on teaching and learning that takes a closer look at the dynamics of participation and co-determination as well as the challenges of individual learning in the classroom.¹⁷ Combining these aspects allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of inclusive teaching.¹⁸

In summary, the linking of presence and participation to foster individual learning is a central task for an inclusive education. It responds to the heterogeneity of student learning levels and life circumstances in a differentiated and participatory way, while at the same time enabling social inclusion.

Inclusive Subject-Specific Pedagogy

Comparatively little attention has been given to subject-specific pedagogical issues in inclusion-related research to date.¹⁹ However, there has been an increase in research in various pedagogical disciplines on the conceptualization and empirical validation of inclusion-related subject teaching, which directly contributes to inclusion research,²⁰ as this volume exemplifies for historical learning.

11 Klafki 1985, 43ff.

12 Klafki 1994, 583.

13 Feuser 1995.

14 Seitz 2017.

15 Prengel 1993.

16 Boger 2023.

17 Ainscow 2005, 15.

18 Dexel 2022.

19 Seitz 2004; Seitz/Simon 2021.

20 E.g. Pech/Schomaker/Simon 2019; Barsch et al. 2020; Seitz/Simon 2021.

At the primary school level, two strands of educational research on subject teaching have been established, which investigate child-related (world) knowledge, experiences and forms of learning. In the first strand, a pedagogical reconstruction approach brings children's heterogeneous perspectives into an iterative analytical and reflexive comparison with specific professional ways of thinking that characterize adults. In the second strand, research on the format of conceptual change focuses on the successful transition of children's ways of thinking, which are regarded as a preliminary stage to »expert« ways of thinking.²¹ However, inclusion research has remained largely neglected.²² In this context, there is wide recognition of the importance of the social situatedness of learning and cooperative forms of learning.²³ Further research has also been done into the theoretical foundations of the complementary relationship between sociality and individualization.²⁴

Complexity is added to discursively produced subject matter when an openness for children's diverse perspectives is linked to the children's points of reference and experiences. Hempel describes the consideration of the children's diverse perspectives on an issue and the complexity of the issue as a »double heterogeneity«.²⁵ Alavi and Barsch argue in a similar way that societal diversity necessitates diverse approaches to history.²⁶ In doing so, they provide a critical-reflexive approach to diversity and social inequity and raise the question of how historical narratives are produced discursively. This approach assumes a principle of double-subject orientation as a theoretical foundation for inclusive history teaching, which opens up related narratives and fosters connections to social plurality.²⁷ It does not imply a naïve endorsement of diversity, but rather a conceptual merging of (in)equity and diversity dimensions in a critical analysis of the production of difference in the classroom.

Dimensions of Inclusive Education on Time

In a previous study I showed that shared approaches to understanding time are held by a highly diverse sample of second-grade primary schoolchildren including children that had been assessed as »highly gifted« as well as those who were seen as »severely handicapped«.²⁸ Traditionally, time has been structured in primary school teaching materials on the basis of a cognitive understanding of chronological and measured time, positioning it to prefigure historical learning. However, a far more promising way of structuring time pedagogically for inclusive teaching and learning at primary-school level is its pedagogical structuring using

21 Günther-Arndt/Sauer 2006.

22 Seitz 2005.

23 Seitz 2017.

24 Scheidt 2017.

25 Hempel 2007, 23f.

26 Alavi/Barsch 2018.

27 Barsch et al. 2020.

28 Seitz 2005.

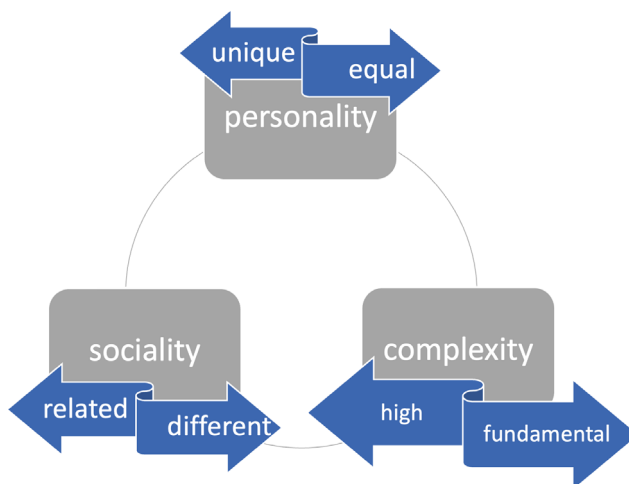


Fig. 1: Three dimensions of inclusive education.

the concepts that even very different children share.²⁹ Specifically, children experience time as an aesthetic perception or as a biographical element of life. As every child has a perception of time and a biography, these two approaches serve as promising starting points for the participation of all children in an inclusive classroom. Moreover, these two aspects of children's perspectives on time point to the philosophical and – following Klafki – fundamental dimensions of time, which means nothing other than that key societal concepts like time can be taught in an inclusive way when we first look for fundamental similarities in children's concepts *before* looking for diversity and difference.³⁰

These considerations have been used to develop a three dimensional model conceptualizing inclusive education, which serves as a starting point for further reflection on time in primary school education.

Personality

Viewing children as unique personalities is a promising starting point for considerations of pedagogical inclusion. Their uniqueness encompasses not only their basic human similarities, but also the specificity of each child's personal development and thus their interpersonal differences – because all children share the characteristic of distinctiveness. The recognition of personhood – the unique individual child among other individual children – cannot be conceived without this ambiguity.

²⁹ Seitz 2005.

³⁰ Seitz 2006.

The primary challenge for teachers is thus to ›see‹ each individual child in his or her specific life situation. That is, to see a child first of all as a person, without relying on, and thus reproducing, prefabricated constructions of difference that inferiorizes them in relation to a concept of normalcy.³¹ The view of a child as a distinctive personality is needed in order to do justice to biographically formative dimensions of development, which in turn rely on a reflexive return to the normalcy-related concepts and orientations implicit in pedagogical action.

Recognizing the child as a subject therefore implies moving away from a narrow view of educational planning for individual children and moving towards a participatory form of lesson planning. In this way, methods of observing open learning situations³² can be used to construct the ›topic‹ from both those perspectives that children share or are similar and those that are unique and distinctive, making the topic accessible to communication between the children and between children and adults. In this context, offering learning objects that open up questions can be fruitful. Individualization in inclusive lessons is then not a top-down pedagogical measure in the sense of a structurally enforced directive, but rather a democratic process in a pedagogical relationship between adults and children. In concrete terms, this could mean that a child who is constantly under time pressure will have different experiences than a child whose everyday life is characterized by monotony. Both may develop a different relationship to empty or filled time but they will both share the fundamental significance of the experience of time and the shaping of this experience through an inner attitude and the aesthetic experience.

To summarize, children should be seen in the classroom as unique individual personalities who are also equally similar to each other in precisely this respect. This distinctiveness thus refers both to basic human similarities that can create a connection between all children, as well as to the uniqueness of each child and thus to their interpersonal differences – the unique individual child among other individual children.

Sociality

The idea that equal treatment of all learners cannot be achieved by providing everyone with the same program at the same time, but conversely by addressing all children equally in their differences, has been described as an ›antinomy of differentiation‹ in professional action:³³ Equal access to time-related topics is thus only ensured by taking individual learning differences into account. Moreover, it is crucial that differences between children are not narrowly understood as differences in achievement, but rather that the variability and mutability of starting points for learning are accepted as an expression of the infinite diversity of human personalities – ambiguity is therefore also inscribed in the dynamic of difference and relatedness.

31 Riegel 2016, 53; Machold/Wienand 2021.

32 Kaiser/Seitz 2017, 63ff.

33 Helsper 2020.

This ambiguity refers to the social dynamics of creating difference and relatedness in inter-subjective relationships. Sociality, in the sense of dependence on intersubjective recognition, is an anthropological constant³⁴ and represents a fundamental basis of school education and the pedagogical actions practiced there. Children at primary school are first and foremost children who are deeply dependent on the experience of social belonging and friendship, as their most important motivation is to meet friends, build on friendships and feel related to each other as peers.³⁵

Differentiation in inclusive classrooms should therefore not lead to students being isolated by individualized ›treatments‹, but rather to their having equal access to learning objects in open learning environments supported by strengthened subject-related communication between students.³⁶ These structures allow scope for social integration and subject-related communication or dialogue-based learning. Students themselves can develop differentiation in inclusive lessons by using self-differentiating task formats³⁷ that enable research-oriented, creative and playful approaches and experiences, in the sense of Dewey.

For example, one small stimulus object like a photo showing the different ice layers in a glacier in the Alps or Dolomites,³⁸ together with a small piece of ›real‹ ice that can be touched by the children and melts in their hands, may open up a rich project on historical events and processes (e.g. the glacier mummy Oetzi) or on current societal questions around climate change or arguments about ski tourism on glaciers in the Alps from the perspective of natural and cultural heritage. Children are thus encouraged to develop questions and plan concrete tasks together in a participative way.³⁹ When concepts, questions and ideas about complex issues come up *through* learning processes, they offer the possibility of collaboration among children with diverse learning capacities. However, it should be noted that these issues can only be anticipated to a limited extent by the teacher, which has important consequences for lesson planning.⁴⁰ Observation and diverse discourse-initiated learning activities include research by children on short-term aspects of time (e.g. objects found in glaciers), debates on controversial topics, lyrics on the aesthetics of glaciers and texts on their potential to help us experience ›deep time‹ in their constant and slow-changing movement. These activities can easily involve an interplay of enactive, iconic and symbolic modes of knowledge representation⁴¹ for all children, encouraging communication among diverse learners on a topic. Inclusion-related reflection on teaching strengthens the focus on the pedagogical dimension of teaching and on enabling the experience of social belonging as well as in-depth learning among the children.

³⁴ Todorov 1996.

³⁵ Petillon 1993; Biffi 2011.

³⁶ Seitz 2020.

³⁷ Seitz 2012.

³⁸ Kaiser/Seitz 2017, 69.

³⁹ Kaiser/Seitz, 2017.

⁴⁰ Klafki et al. 1982.

⁴¹ Bruner/Oliver/Greenfield 1966.

Complexity

Building on the recognition of children as social creatures, it is now important to ask how personally meaningful experiences can be linked to complex issues.⁴² This implies starting from the individual child's specific experiences with a phenomenon or an issue. Reflection on the children's shared experiences or similarities in their approaches to time should be further developed as they can open up the view towards anthropological constants and the recognition of children as children, which is central for considerations of historical learning.

For example, a child who has had an experience with cancer in early childhood may have a particularly vivid and reflected relationship to biographic time through this unique experience – but a biographical approach to the phenomenon of time rests on the experience of time, which is shared by all children regardless of their social situation or whether they are seen as highly gifted or cognitively impaired.⁴³ These experiences can be linked directly to philosophical questions about the meaning and value of life. This approach thus represents a decisive turning point, as the focus on complexity also enables teachers to take a fresh, sensitive look at the ›object‹ of their teaching.

The project initiated by a photo of glacier ice clearly shows that focusing on the experiences of children does not necessarily lead to reduction, trivialization or simplification, but instead can open up the inherent complexity of an issue, making it accessible for communication in the classroom.⁴⁴ Questions such as »What does eternity mean?« and »How can we save our planet?« can be linked to questions like »What did the glacier look like when I was born?« or »How can we perceive and describe very slow changes in nature?« – all of which show the ambiguous character of complexity.

This means nothing less than directly linking universally meaningful aspects of time with individually meaningful bodily experiences of temporalization,⁴⁵ such as very slow movements, the experience of waiting, or the fundamental phenomenon of growing in childhood as experienced when a child meets relatives who have not seen them for a long time or when they notice that some clothes no longer fit.

Implications: Time as a Possible Link Between Child-Centeredness and World-Centeredness

Some approaches to special needs education reduce complex questions, issues and relations to children's everyday life and to what they already know. The pedagogical structurings of historical contexts and phenomena then consists to a certain extent of bringing them closer

⁴² Klafki 1994.

⁴³ Seitz 2006.

⁴⁴ Seitz 2005; 2006.

⁴⁵ Rein 2021.

to the children by ›miniaturizing‹ them. However, life does not provide miniaturized problems but instead presents complex problems that are embedded in contexts. The complexity of such problems can be seen in the question of a child »Where is time when I sleep?«

A one-sided reference to children's perspectives on aspects of time is therefore ill-suited for inclusive education, as this would mean that teachers withdraw from their intergenerationally structured responsibility as a mediator between (constantly changing) world knowledge and the child. Instead, child-centeredness needs to be complemented by world-centeredness.⁴⁶ Particularly with regard to children in difficult life situations, it would be problematic to develop world knowledge solely from children's personal experiences. Instead it requires a double reflection on what the children bring with them and on what adult educators can offer them in terms of stimulation. In other words, pedagogical reflection is reliant on reflection on aspects that may not be immediately apparent to the child, so that teaching and learning allow children to discover new dimensions that are then co-constructed in the classroom. The ›content‹ of teaching and learning is therefore not an unchangeable amount of material, but a construct that is produced discursively and actively between teachers and students⁴⁷ and which needs inequity-related reflection to ensure that marginalized aspects are not overlooked in the process.⁴⁸

To summarize, a key part of the innovative potential of an inclusive pedagogy for historical learning may be found in the possibility to develop open assignments dealing with fundamental phenomena and issues through communication between adult teachers and children – which ›lend‹ complexity to the discursively produced issues of historical learning by linking them to the children's diverse *and* shared references and experiences. Recognizing children as persons and as subjects of education dependent on intersubjective recognition thus means shaping processes of world interpretation in a communicative way without negating the generational responsibility of teachers for its success.

Like no other concept, inclusive pedagogy offers opportunities to build on anthropological commonalities and, by incorporating such universal experiences, to foreground profound questions of meaning about world knowledge. It is the simple recognition of all children as children that is expressed in the concept of inclusive pedagogy.

Thus, the question about time goes to the heart of historical learning and, insofar as the relation between child and world is reflected on critically, to the heart of inclusive education. Opening up historical learning to inclusion therefore entails an approach to time that is child-centered *and* world-centered, allowing students to experience how to live *with* the world and *in* the world.

⁴⁶ Biesta 2022.

⁴⁷ Reich 2014.

⁴⁸ Barsch et al. 2020.

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Inclusive History Education, Historical Thinking, and Historical Consciousness

Introduction

One of the pillars of modern educational systems is to provide education for all of its citizens. Typically, this is claimed to be crucial in order for us to have functioning societies: to participate in societal processes, citizens need to have certain knowledge and skills. A key aspect in providing this kind of education is that it should be inclusive in providing access to education for all members of society, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, or social status.¹ A school subject that has been perceived as crucial in promoting and maintaining functioning democratic societies is history.² One of the key arguments in this research is that history education, often framed in national contexts, is problematic since it may exclude minorities or marginalized groups in society. In order to avoid this, there has been a move towards focusing on the disciplinary aspects of history and developing learners' mastery of cognitive skills akin to those deployed by academic historians.³ A trend in Anglo-American history educational research focusing on students with special needs, often coined as inclusive history education, is similarly to implement and assess history educational interventions aimed at developing these same cognitive skills in order for them to access the academic expectations specified in history curricula.⁴ Or in the words of American researcher Susan De La Paz in reference to history education for students with learning disabilities:

»Disciplinary skills are [...] relevant for meeting students' future needs, because it seems likely that as students learn to reason about people in the past, they will develop more sophisticated ways of reasoning about the myriad issues and viewpoints that require critical thinking today.«⁵

1 UNESCO 2016.

2 Carretero et al. 2012; Psaltis et al. 2017; Seixas 2018.

3 Lévesque 2008.

4 Ciullo et al. 2020; De La Paz 2013; Ferretti et al. 2001; Gersten/Okolo 2007; Reisman 2012.

5 De La Paz 2013, 90.

In this quotation, we can see that De La Paz associates disciplinary skills with students' ability to reason about people in the past and to develop critical thinking that can be used to navigate in today's society. A similar argument has been made by Canadian researcher Peter Seixas. He argues that in order for history education to be inclusive and to avoid excluding marginalized learners, it should focus on the development of a disciplinary approach to history, rather than rely on traditional grand narratives or post-modern fragmentation.⁶ According to Seixas, the traditional one-sided narrative is bound to exclude marginalized groups in society and the post-modern critique of history may lead to an understanding of history as subjective and unscientific that will result in social division. Instead, he argues that it is only through history education focusing on how to bring students to grapple with how history is constructed by historians and how to assess the validity of historical narratives that history education can be inclusive, since all students will come to appreciate that there are certain standards and criteria we can apply to find out what is historically accurate.

The theoretical concept that has first and foremost come to be used to specify what disciplinary skills mean in history education is historical thinking.⁷ Historical thinking as a concept relates to how historians work with sourcing and corroboration⁸ and the ability to handle the cognitive problems historians confront when writing history.⁹ It is through a focus on these aspects that history education can become inclusive and promote a democratic society, since it would allow all learners to develop critical thinking skills through developing the disciplinary skills of historians. Consequently, the development of disciplinary skills is stipulated as the primary aim of history education. In the remainder of this text I will discuss what inclusive history education is and what it could be by problematizing historical thinking as the primary aim for history education. This is an approach to history education that contrasts to those in the predominantly German research field of history didactics.¹⁰ In the following section, I will begin by engaging in a somewhat theoretical discussion of problems related to inclusive history education framed along the concept of historical thinking that have been highlighted in research.

Inclusive History Education: A Quick Glance at the Research Field

In a review of research on history education for students with special needs, De La Paz notes that there are three types of interventions that have proven successful in promoting disciplinary skills among learners: (i) historical reading and writing in the discipline of history, (ii) historical discussions and debates, and (iii) inquiry instruction.¹¹ What these types of interventions have in common is that they focus on and require learners to approach historical

⁶ Seixas 2000.

⁷ Lee 1983; Seixas 2017; Wineburg 2001.

⁸ Reisman 2012; Reisman/Wineburg 2012.

⁹ Lévesque/Clark 2018; Seixas 2017; Seixas/Peck 2004.

¹⁰ Barsch et al. 2020.

¹¹ De La Paz 2013, 91.

narratives with cognitive distance and present evidence to enforce or debunk various historical narratives. In short, the key aim is not to learn about the past but rather to learn about the extent to which we can trust various accounts of the past, that is, to develop historical thinking.

If we accept historical thinking as the educational aim in history education for students with special needs, it follows that the central problem students face in history education is framed as mastering the ability to analyze historical source material and accounts and constructing historical narratives by applying disciplinary skills.¹² Given that disciplinary skills and historical thinking have been proven to be cognitively challenging for learners,¹³ a concern in research on history education aimed at promoting historical thinking is how to organize educational efforts to support the development of disciplinary skills among learners, rather than how to perceive the content or objective of the subject taught.¹⁴ Students with learning difficulties have been shown to be particularly vulnerable in this aspect, and inclusive history education is hence presented as a problem for these students requiring a lot of effort to help them acquire historical thinking.¹⁵

There is also evidence that students with learning difficulties show low adherence to social norms and values, which in turn affects their academic possibilities negatively, thus excluding them from the opportunity to participate in society as equal peers.¹⁶ Another aspect that has been highlighted in research is that teacher-student relationships play a crucial part in special needs education,¹⁷ but I want to argue that this relationship can also be affected by how we perceive the subject taught and its objectives, that is, what relationship we want to establish between the learner and the subject. This can be illustrated by a study by Ralph Ferretti, Charles MacArthur, and Cynthia Okolo¹⁸ with the objective of helping learners with and without mild disabilities learn historical content and historical thinking through working with historical source material covering the westward expansion in the United States during the 19th century. A recurring difficulty for students in the intervention was to understand what life in the 1800s was like. This proved to be an obstacle for students as they found it difficult to understand the historical context of the sources and thus disregarded the motives of the people living in the 19th century, made judgements from their present-day perspective, and failed to see the point of assessing the source material used and using conflicting source material to create historical narratives,¹⁹ that is, to develop historical thinking. In order to circumvent these difficulties, the teachers in the intervention chose to disregard the source material and instead tried to relate the westward expansion of the 1800s to the learners' own lives:

¹² Marino 2022.

¹³ Lee/Ashby 2000; Wineburg 1998, 2007.

¹⁴ Ciullo et al. 2020; Reisman 2012; Scruggs et al. 2017.

¹⁵ Daley 2022; Ferretti et al. 2001.

¹⁶ Jacob et al. 2022.

¹⁷ Jacob et al. 2022.

¹⁸ Ferretti et al. 2001.

¹⁹ Ferretti et al. 2001.

»Appreciating the nature of life in the 1800s presented another challenge, and we observed teachers use events from students' daily lives to help them contrast this period to their own. Thus, the immediacy and responsiveness of the classroom discussions seemed important in promoting the learning of all students.«²⁰

Through the use of historical analogy, the teachers in the intervention managed to help students make connections between their own lives and those of the people in the source material. When education was organized this way, students realized that they were studying an historical era different from their own and they started to appreciate the continuities and discontinuities between life in the 19th and 21st centuries. This, in turn, helped them analyze the source material at hand, albeit in a quite rudimentary way:

»After the intervention, compared to before, a greater percentage of students understood that bias involves the distortion of evidence to support an opinion, bias is suggested when contradictory evidence is ignored, and historians may have different opinions because they have access to different sources of evidence.«²¹

My interpretation of what this example shows is that the development of disciplinary skills in history education is facilitated when learners understand the contextual relationships between the lives of people in the past and their own lives. This may seem commonplace and self-evident, but it points toward aspects in history education and the development of sophisticated cognitive skills that I think have been disregarded or overlooked in much of the research on historical thinking: learners need to know something about the historical contexts that they engage with and they need to realize that these historical contexts matter to them.²² I hold that this problem may be connected to how we frame the history subject: is it a subject that should approximate academic ideals far removed from the learners or is it a subject that should approximate learners' needs and contexts at the expense of academic ideals?²³ It is evident that history education framed along the concept of historical thinking is closer to academic ideals than to the learners' own lives, even if we promote these academic ideals for the benefit of the learners.

There is a risk that if history education is only to be conceived according to the epistemic standards of academic history, it fails to recognize the situatedness and social hierarchies of historical knowledge and the construction thereof.²⁴ Thus, it could be argued that there is a risk that the ideal of inclusive history education through the development of disciplinary skills may work to exclude marginalized groups in society since they have historically lacked access to academic institutions and knowledge practices. A similar argument has recently

20 Ferretti et al. 2001, 68–69.

21 Ferretti et al. 2001, 66.

22 Ahlskog 2019.

23 Bernstein 1973.

24 Donnelly/Norton 2017; Keynes 2019; Thorp/Persson 2020.

been made by the Canadian researcher Sarah Reddington, who argues that incorporating the perspectives and voices of marginalized learners is key in preventing ableism and that we need to actively engage with the standards by which we approach learning situations with these learners.²⁵ If we take the arguments presented above seriously, I hold that we need to revisit and discuss the objectives with which we stipulate and approach inclusive history education. In the following section, I will try to do just that. However, due to reasons of scope, this discussion will not be exhaustive but should rather be read as an invitation to further debate in the history educational research community.

What Is the Purpose of History Education?

Departing from the challenges I have highlighted above, this section will try to do three things: (i) briefly outline a variety of legitimate aims for history education, (ii) make an argument for the need to reflect on these aims when teaching history, and (iii) propose a theoretical perspective that will encompass these aims and modestly suggest how we could approach this theoretical perspective in history education. Let us begin with the aims of history education.

From what has been written above, we can perceive one aim of history education as that of developing and promoting epistemic practices in the form of historical thinking. As I have tried to show above, history education that aims at promoting epistemic practices takes as its departure the knowledge practices of historians in academia. This is what could be called a closed framing of the history subject since the object of what is to be taught is stipulated without concern for differing educational contexts or individual learners.

Another aim is proposed by the German philosopher of history Jörn Rüsen. He argues that human beings construct and make use of history because we have a need to orientate ourselves in time.²⁶ Through history, we are able to find our footing not only in our present day lives, but also in the vastness of time, both past and future. Without historical narratives and knowledge of them, we would have no means to make sense of ourselves and the world we live in. According to my interpretation there are two aspects at play here: we use history to understand ourselves in accordance with the various categories that go along with being a human being, and we use history to understand the society we live in. From this we can glean two aims for history education: that we need to study history in order to gain individual orientation and that we need to study history in order to gain societal orientation. If the aim of history education is individual orientation, the focus of the educational effort would be to enable the individual learner to see him- or herself as a historical subject, and the point of departure for history education would be the interests and needs of the individual learner. Hence, this is an open framing of the history subject since what the subject contains can only be formulated in relation to individual learners and their contexts. History education that

²⁵ Reddington 2022.

²⁶ Rüsen 1989.

aims for societal orientation would still need to take the interests and needs of the learners into consideration but only in relation to how they can understand the development of their societies and their places in them. This framing of the history subject is thus less open.

Another aim of history education is that of establishing and upholding civility. This view has been promoted by, among others, the English philosopher R. G. Collingwood.²⁷ To Collingwood, the end of any educational effort is to establish moral behavior through self-consciousness, and he regards history as the pre-eminent subject that allows us to do that in any educational system. Through studying history, we become aware of the moral principles that underlie any civil society, and through this we will acquire moral behavior and civility.²⁸ This aim for history education could be called an ethical orientation. History education that aims at ethical orientation would relate to individual learners as moral subjects and strive to develop ethical skills among them through the study of historical examples. Learners in this mode of history education should also become self-aware in the sense that they can regard themselves as moral and rational agents in contemporary and future society. This framing is thus open in relation to learners as moral agents, but more oriented toward developing cognitive skills, albeit in a different sense than historical thinking. Perhaps the table below can illustrate how we can regard these four aims of history education:

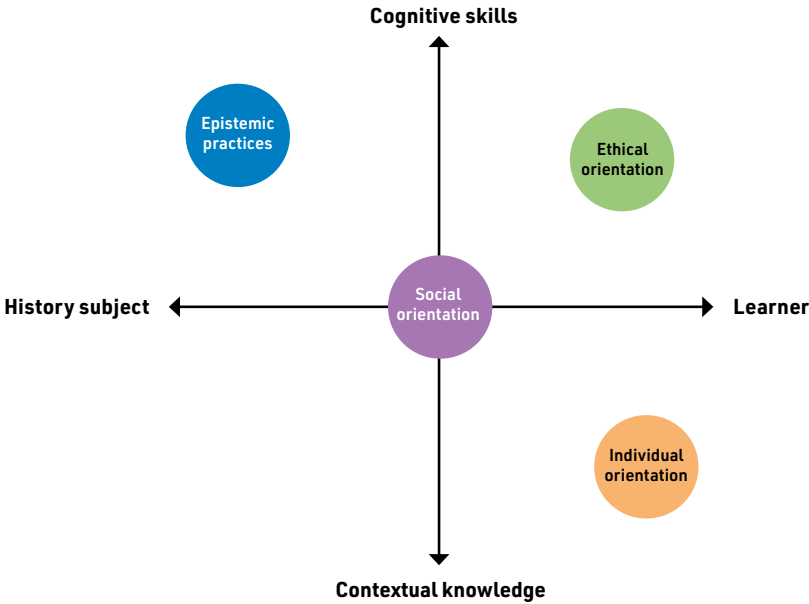


Fig. 1: Aims of history education.

²⁷ Collingwood 1989.

²⁸ Hughes-Warrington 1996.

Inclusive History Education, Again

If we return to the notion of inclusive history education with these four aims of history education in mind, we may be able to approach the problems highlighted in research in a different way. In the section above I engaged in a discussion that highlights some of the problems that have been encountered in research when we stipulate that epistemic practices in the form of historical thinking should form the aim of inclusive history education. Instead, I will propose that inclusive history education first and foremost should engage learners in building identities and strive to empower them through an acquisition of knowledge that enables all students to engage in social discourses on history and to further their place in a pluralistic society,²⁹ something that requires both substantive and disciplinary knowledge. This means that we should reflect on history education aiming at individual, social, and ethical orientation as well as cognitive skills. Thus, history education should aim at making learners see themselves as historical subjects with moral agency who can appreciate the historical dimension of our societies. However, we also need to build an awareness that any approach to history is contingent on the historical cultural context in which it occurs and we need cognitive tools and skills to deal with this cognitive problem.

As the keen observer may have already noted, these four approaches to history education are not mutually exclusive and it may be hard to analytically separate them. Where, for instance, would we draw the line between individual and ethical orientation? This is a formidable theoretical and analytical problem if we want to argue that we should stipulate the aim of history education in relation to only one of these four aims. That, however, is not what I am trying to do here. Instead, I think we can use these four aims to reflect on what may be called the complexity and, perhaps, the fluidity of history education and to envision alternate approaches to implementing, for instance, inclusive history education in the classroom. My concern is that historical thinking may be too narrow a concept to encapsulate this complexity and we may need other concepts to guide us when we stipulate the aim of history education. Therefore, I will argue for a reframing of inclusive history education that engages with the inescapable historicity of our being in the world,³⁰ inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer's view of historical consciousness.³¹ In the following sections, I will strive to make sense of this.

If we look at history education specifically, we can assume, from the discussion above, that there are two aspects that are particularly salient if we want to promote an understanding of history to all learners: (i) students need to develop knowledge about history to be able to participate in social discourses and make sense of the world and themselves, and (ii) students need to develop disciplinary skills, that is, knowledge of how history is always a reconstruction of past events that needs to be scrutinized according to certain standards. Let us begin with the first of these aspects: to develop knowledge of history and to participate

²⁹ Körber 2021.

³⁰ Thorp/Persson 2020.

³¹ Gadamer 1975.

in social discourses. German researcher Andreas Körber recently argued that any history educational endeavor must take as its point of departure the establishment of a relationship between the learner and the history subject.³² If we accept the notion that history education always takes place in a contemporary context and that learners are always positioned in and affected by that context, it makes sense to try to establish some kind of meaningful connection between the learners' contemporary context and the historical content being taught (which by the way is, of course, also always taught and re-enacted in that same contemporary context). Hence, history has to make sense to learners in order for them to appreciate it as something valuable.³³

From this line of reasoning it follows that social context plays a crucial role in history education: if we want history to engage learners and seem useful to them, which could be assumed to be a prerequisite for inclusive education, there needs to be some kind of connection to the learners' lived experiences and needs. If we take my country of origin, Sweden, as an example and we assume that we have a need for inclusive history education in Sweden, then it would seem appropriate to try to identify what threats to inclusion there are in Swedish society at present. Of course this could be a rather long and potentially contentious list, but for the sake of argument we can take increasing segregation and poverty to be just that, as was highlighted in a recent editorial in *The Lancet Regional Health – Europe*.³⁴ Now, even if segregation and poverty is something that affects Swedish society as a whole, we should not assume that it means the same thing to all Swedish citizens. As an example, my view of Swedish society and my needs as an academically and socially privileged member of that same society will probably differ from those of, let us say, a struggling learner of history in a Swedish primary school. Furthermore, we should not assume that what I think is meaningful and engaging about history education in Sweden would (or perhaps even should) be equally meaningful to the learner above. The point I am trying to make here is that we should be hesitant in assuming that all learners have the same interests and needs in relation to history education initially, and that in order for history education to be engaging and stimulating to all learners we need to pay close attention to their actual interests and needs instead of assuming that there is merely one legitimate approach to history education.

By now you are probably wondering what this has to do with inclusive history education. The argument I am trying to make is that as members of society we have different resources, beliefs, hopes, worries, and needs and this is exactly why we need to think of inclusion in relation to history education. If everyone were equal in these respects it would not make sense to even postulate the need for inclusive education in history. Now, if we want history to engage learners it seems prudent that we should try to adapt the history subject and topics we cover to the context they are being taught in and my guess is that this is something that any teacher of history will be well aware of.

³² Körber 2021.

³³ Körber/Pearce 2021.

³⁴ The Editorial Board 2023.

Instead of viewing the development of historical thinking as the only legitimate aim of history education, we should try to adapt the aim of history education to the students we are teaching, perhaps according to one or more of the four aims I proposed above. This is exactly what the teacher in the quoted passage above does: since the students have a very limited understanding of the historical context they are engaging with and consequently find it hard to make sense of what is happening and what the historical sources they have been given have to do with this, the teacher connects the historical context to a context they will be familiar with: the contemporary one in which they are leading their lives. Through this connection, then, students are able to construct a meaningful relationship between themselves and the historical context and they are then able to understand that life in the 1800s was different from life today regarding some important aspects. Cognitively you could argue that there are (at least) two things happening here: (i) students become aware that there are some enduring issues that go along with being human and (ii) the context in which people live their lives affects how they go about dealing with these enduring issues, and this is true for people living in both past and present time. This means that how we go about constructing these relationships will be contingent on the context in which we are teaching history and that we should strive to adapt the historical content to this context. This argument does not imply that our understanding of, and our relationship to history, is and should be insular, atomistic, and unique, but rather that we have to pay attention to the differences and similarities and adapt the aim of history education accordingly if we are to help students create meaningful relationships to history.

The other aspect I highlighted above deals with the development of disciplinary skills to promote an understanding that history is always constructed. As we have seen above, a common way of doing this is to introduce historical source material in the classroom. The argument is that through working with these sources, students will become aware that history is constructed and that we always have to pay attention to the sources of historical narratives. This is how we go about assessing narratives in history departments across the world. While this is, of course, an important aspect of acquiring complex disciplinary skills, it is also a cognitively challenging one. One reason for this could be that the historical narratives most people come into contact with look quite different from academic publications. In textbooks, historical fiction, computer games with historical content, films, public history media, et cetera, history is usually presented without references to source material and it is written in third- or first-person narrative form. Many learners, and especially those with limited knowledge of history, will take this to be the 'normal' form of historical exposition.³⁵ From that perspective, working with source material might fail to make sense to all learners.

One way of approaching this problem is to return to the reason why students need to develop disciplinary skills. Usually this is because we want them to become aware that history is something distinct from the past and that we construct history through interpretation of the sources that past people have left behind. In order for us to know anything about what life

35 Rantala 2012.

was for people living in the age of the Vikings, we need to have access to sources that tell us something about that life. In one sense, this is how we generally go about getting knowledge about things: through our experiences with the world, we construct knowledge of it and, if we come to doubt what we know, we need some kind of source to support our knowledge. As much as we can ask the question ›How do I know that?‹ in our normal present-day lives, we can also ask the question ›How do we know that?‹ about historical narratives.³⁶ Students with little or no disciplinary understanding of history will soon come to realize that most of the ways in which we acquire knowledge of the world in our present-day lives will not work with history, because the past is gone and will never come back.

Although this may seem to be a rather trivial approach to developing a disciplinary understanding of history, my argument is that this could be a good starting point, especially with students that find source work difficult or unappealing. Once we have established this understanding, we could deepen it with more complex activities related to source work. Another aspect that is also important to history from a disciplinary perspective is that our view of the past is always limited to the sources we have available and the perspective from which we approach these sources. As little as we can have a complete understanding of the world today, because of the constraints our own perspective places on us, we can never have a complete understanding of the past for the same reason, no matter what form of historical exposition we choose to use. Historical narratives are always contextually contingent.

A concept that I think captures these aspects of history and our understanding thereof is that of historical consciousness. While there are different approaches to the concept, I hold that Hans-Georg Gadamer's approach is the most viable one from the present perspective. According to Gadamer, historical consciousness deals with our awareness of historicity: »We understand historical consciousness to be the privilege of modern man to have a full awareness of the historicity of everything present and the relativity of all opinions.«³⁷ In relation to history, Gadamer claims that this awareness enables us to have an understanding that forces us to deal with the contextual contingencies I have stressed above:

»Historical consciousness no longer listens sanctimoniously to the voice that reaches out from the past but, in reflecting on it, replaces it within the context where it took root in order to see the significance and relative value proper to it. This reflective posture towards tradition is called *interpretation*.«³⁸

I take these quotations from Gadamer to mean two things: (i) we always stand in a relationship to history in the sense that our being is shaped by history, and because of this (ii) historical consciousness requires an understanding of reflexive perspective-taking due to the contextual contingencies in the historical narrative, its narrator, and our meaning-making of

³⁶ Körber 2016.

³⁷ Gadamer 1975, 8.

³⁸ Gadamer 1975, 9.

history as it is presented to us. In my understanding, this view of historical consciousness encapsulates the four aims of history education that I proposed above and (at least theoretically) circumvents the problems of inclusive history education that I have presented. If we accept that we are historical beings, we should pay close attention to the continuities and discontinuities of history in our present lives in order for us to appreciate the importance of the historical perspective on ourselves and the world around us. This is, however, not enough, which is painfully displayed by the various conflicts around us that stem from irreconcilable historical narratives. We also have to reflect on the provenance of these historical narratives and appreciate that they were constructed in certain contexts that influenced what problems were thought to be significant and what perspectives were applied when constructing these narratives. Furthermore, we in turn need to reflect on the significance and meaning we give to these historical narratives in our present time; why does it matter to us today that Lenin granted national independence to the Ukrainian SSR a hundred years ago and how are we to make sense of this historical fact? The answers to these questions will of course differ depending on context, but reflecting on them can hopefully make us a bit more hesitant in using history as a blueprint for understanding present-day society while simultaneously remembering that we have to use history when seeking to understand the present, due to the inherent complexity of history and our encounters with it. We must know and use history to create meaning and we have to be aware that our knowledge of the past is never complete. This is what I perceive to be a potentially viable approach to inclusive history education since it asks teachers to construct a history education that will enable and motivate learners to engage with the historical topic at hand. It strives to give learners individual, societal, and ethical orientation.

Finally, I also want to argue that this has relevance to how we perceive historical thinking and the development of disciplinary skills, both in relation to history education in schools and in the academic discipline of history. Historians have, like all students of history but possibly to a lesser degree, grappled with learning history in school. Having found the subject meaningful to them, they have come to acquire the vast amount of historical knowledge along with disciplinary training required to perform their trade. So, what it is that historians cognitively do, which sets them apart from the rest of the general population. My view is that (i) they have knowledge of history and can create meaningful relationships to and within the historical past, (ii) they have a complex awareness of the importance of perspective in history, meaning that the past always reaches them from a certain context and perspective and that their own perspective both as members of societies and research communities affect the history they construct, and (iii) they know how to assess and interpret sources to construct historical narratives. I hold that in order to do (iii) well, you need to have developed (i) and (ii).

Concluding Remarks

What I have presented above is my view of how historical consciousness can work as a theoretical concept to form the basis of inclusive history education. If we take the requirement of a relational approach to history seriously, we need to establish ways of making learners develop a relation to history. As such, we need to take the context of the learners into consideration in history education. Historical thinking, as it is generally presented, is not context specific but rather constructed as a generic skill that requires a lot of cognitive resources (both substantive and disciplinary), and this is what makes it potentially exclusive. Marginalized learners' needs should be taken into consideration in history education and historical consciousness as presented here would direct us toward initially allowing students to construct meaningful relationships to the historical past according to their own contextual needs, and then be presented with tools that make them appreciate how history is always a construction contingent on perspective. The view presented here argues that this is what could make history education inclusive and enable learners to participate in social discourses on history in a complex way. How we go about constructing the relationships to history that I have argued to be so crucial in order for this to happen is, however, an empirical and contextually contingent matter. If we take the notion of inclusive education and social pluralism seriously, we need to acknowledge the fallacy of stipulating a history subject and history education that disregards the social realities and needs of its learners.

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Empirical Findings on Historical Learning in Special Needs Education

Introduction

In recent years, history education has increasingly addressed the question of how to organise historical learning under inclusive conditions, both in its theoretical and pragmatic as well as in its empirical orientation.¹ Similar to other school subjects, the challenges of inclusion were initially considered against the background of the integration of pupils with special educational needs.² However, inclusion is now understood in a broader sense, which has led to an increase in the proportion of research on other categories of diversity.³ Despite some progress, the overall discussion on inclusion and history education remains in its infancy – both in terms of empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks. While the significance of inclusive approaches is frequently emphasized in literature and public debates, academic research in this area is still relatively limited.⁴ This may be due to the broader issue that concepts and models of historical thinking often rely on complex theories of history, which emphasize linguistically conveyed knowledge and place high cognitive demands on learners. In recent German-language discourse on history education, Bärbel Völkel and Franziska Rein have highlighted this problem and, building on their critique, developed alternative theoretical models of historical thinking – models in which cognition represents just one dimension among several ways of engaging with the past.⁵ Similarly, other studies have shown that specific methodological approaches – such as scaffolding – can help diverse groups of learners engage with history in ways that go beyond conventional tasks and teaching formats.⁶ Despite these situations there has been little attention paid to the systems-theoretical level, which is increasingly coming to the fore as not only inclusive teaching. Barsch, Rein and Wilkening e.g. focus more on the co-creative aspect and the interaction

1 This article condenses the findings of several German-language publications, including Barsch 2022a, *Inklusion zwischen Sonderpädagogik und Fachdidaktik*, in: Must/van Norden/Martini (eds.), *Geschichtsdidaktik in der Debatte. Beiträge zu einem interdisziplinären Diskurs*. Frankfurt/M., 111–120; and Barsch/Barte 2020, *Historisches Denken von Schüler_innen mit sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf. Einblicke in die Forschung*, in: Barsch/Kühberger/Lücke (eds.), *Handbuch Diversität im Geschichtsunterricht. Zugänge zu einer inklusiven Geschichtsdidaktik*. Frankfurt/M. 2020, 188–201.

2 Barsch 2011.

3 Barsch et al. 2020.

4 Ramberg/Watkins 2020.

5 Völkel 2017; Rein 2021.

6 Barsch 2022b.

between different participants.⁷ These facets illustrate that many concepts are evolving and that teaching methods are being further developed with a view to inclusive historical learning.

Although a range of empirical studies exists on broader inclusive themes – such as migration⁸ – this chapter will specifically examine how individuals with physical, sensory, and intellectual disabilities have been considered in empirical research from the perspective of history education.

Despite the growing relevance of inclusion in history education, empirical research on the topic remains limited. The few studies that explicitly address the category of ›disability‹ have largely been published in German-speaking countries and form the core focus of this article. Within this body of research, most contributions concentrate on students with intellectual disabilities. In Germany, for example, recent empirical studies have examined how this group engages with historical thinking and learning.⁹ Similarly, in the English-speaking world, several American studies have examined the effectiveness of inclusive practices to facilitate historical learning for students with varying cognitive abilities.¹⁰

General Research Outlook

There is little research on teaching history to children and young people with (intellectual) disabilities.¹¹ Some inclusive research projects have been conducted in the past, using oral history methods to explore the experiences of institutionalisation of people with disabilities in the context of their own biographies.¹² One of the findings of this research was that confrontation with one's own history was seen as an opportunity for cultural participation and that having a say in the reconstruction of the past was valued positively.¹³ Other studies have shown that people with severe intellectual disabilities are able to orient themselves in time from a biographical perspective.¹⁴ What these studies have not yet considered, and indeed can hardly consider, is the question of how the historical consciousness of people who cannot communicate via intersubjectively verifiable linguistic abilities such as verbal or sign language, or via AAC devices or other aids, can be empirically determined.

There is also little empirical evidence on the historical thinking of people with disabilities other than intellectual disabilities. Blind and partially sighted people have not been the subject of such research. The historical thinking of deaf people has not yet been explicitly investigated, probably also because there are only a few fully deaf people left in Western societies

7 Barsch/Rein/Wilkening 2025.

8 Barsch et al. 2020.

9 E.g., Rein 2021; Barsch 2022b.

10 For a review, see De La Paz 2013; Okolo/Ferretti 2013; Ciullo et al. 2020; Barsch et al. 2020.

11 See Barsch et al. 2020.

12 Atkinson 2004; Dillon/Holburn 2003; Manning 2010.

13 Atkinson 2004.

14 E.g. Rein 2021; Barsch 2009.

due to the introduction of cochlear implants.¹⁵ For the few learners who are fully deaf, Leonhardt assumes that the individual vocabulary of spoken language is considerably limited.¹⁶ In practice, this has often led to texts in textbooks, for example, being linguistically adapted, i.e. simplified. Specialised history textbooks for deaf students, which so far only exist in the Czech and Slovak Republics, therefore supplement texts with illustrations in sign language and have a reduced amount of text compared to standard textbooks.

There is also some research on teachers' views on the learning of history by children with disabilities. Priebe analysed the attitudes of teachers in special schools towards the Holocaust. According to her study, teachers tend to assume that isolated access to historical content through a text is not successful because the ability to listen is limited and the confrontation with many unfamiliar terms would end the student's participation in the classroom discussion.¹⁷ Musenberg and Riegert investigated how special needs teachers evaluate the implementation of history lessons with intellectually disabled students. For this purpose, seven teachers were interviewed.¹⁸ One result was that, in the view of the interviewees, the demands of historical learning (including narrative competencies, plurality and controversy) tend to be difficult to implement with this group of students.¹⁹ Given the small sample size, however, the significance of the findings is admittedly low.

Effectiveness of Teaching Methods

In an international context, there are several studies on the effectiveness of different teaching methods for learners with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms, the main findings of which are listed below. However, differences in the terminology used need to be taken into account. For example, in English-speaking contexts, the term ›learning disabilities‹ refers not to general intellectual impairment, as it does in German-speaking countries, but rather to symptoms associated with developmental disorders of scholastic skills. The concept of ›learning disability‹ as a general impairment of intellectual performance that is above the threshold of intellectual disability but below ›normal ability‹ is hardly known internationally. This category of disability is historically constructed, especially in German-speaking countries.²⁰ Overall, there are difficulties not only with the terms used. The findings and studies summarised here should be understood in the context of a social model of disability. This model states, in broad terms, that disability is not a purely physical phenomenon, but must always be seen in the context of social conditions.²¹ When we talk about cognitive disabilities

¹⁵ Söderfeldt 2018.

¹⁶ Leonhardt 2014.

¹⁷ Priebe 2006.

¹⁸ Musenberg/Riegert 2014.

¹⁹ Musenberg/Riegert 2014.

²⁰ Pfahl 2011; Moser 2016.

²¹ Oliver 2013.

or learning difficulties, we are also talking about the different worldviews behind them, which on the one hand focus on the actual neurophysiological conditions, but on the other hand also emphasise that the denial or provision of an accessible environment has an impact on learning conditions. When working with different terms from different studies, it is always important to bear in mind that there may be a different understanding of disability behind each term.

Nevertheless, an attempt to summarise the studies on the historical learning of students with intellectual disabilities or disadvantages would identify certain tendencies. First, direct instruction seems to be particularly effective at the level of declarative knowledge acquisition.²² In addition, non-textual and non-writing-based forms of instruction seem to facilitate historical learning. Research also found that learners with intellectual disabilities were able to comprehend more complex historical content when they were given support and instructions for active participation in the learning process, which was characterised in particular by the active exchange of subject-specific content in heterogeneous learning groups. Materials that support the learning and reading process through simpler text design were also effective for learning.²³ Against this background, history lessons that are activating but at the same time instructional and redundant can be seen as conducive to learning.

Ferretti, MacArthur and Okolo²⁴ investigated the effectiveness of project-based history teaching in inclusive classes. One finding was that a targeted, historical-theoretical framework for source-based work facilitated a deeper understanding of historical contexts and more effective development of historical knowledge for all students, although this effect was more pronounced among students without disabilities. Teacher-led discussions about the credibility of sources and accounts were particularly helpful. The same group of researchers investigated the extent to which classroom debates can promote historical understanding, particularly of a multi-perspectival kind.²⁵ Debate as a teaching method can be helpful in reducing the comprehension difficulties that learners experience when looking at sources and presentations. However, it was also noted that existing knowledge was often not used during the debates. In terms of willingness to participate in class debates, no difference was found between learners with and without learning disabilities. In a further study, the research group found evidence that personalised approaches to history were conducive to historical learning. Pupils who were asked to engage imaginatively with the historical content they were working on and to relate it to their own everyday experiences were better able to consolidate this content.²⁶ For students with intellectual disabilities, explicit engagement with questions of historical theory and reflection on the limits of cognition in sources and representations also appear to be particularly valuable.²⁷

22 Gersten et al. 2006.

23 Gersten et al. 2006.

24 Ferretti/MacArthur/Okolo 2001.

25 MacArthur/Ferretti/Okolo 2002.

26 Okolo/Ferretti/MacArthur 2007.

27 De La Paz/MacArthur 2003.

Language-Sensitive History Teaching

Another area that has been explored through a number of empirical studies is language-aware teaching. The research reflects both a narrow understanding of inclusion – for example, its application to pupils with learning difficulties – and a broader interpretation, where language-aware approaches are primarily developed in the context of inclusive classrooms, especially in relation to historical learning for immigrated children who are simultaneously acquiring the language of the host country. The following section therefore offers a brief introduction to the general development of language-aware teaching, before shifting the focus to children and young people with special educational needs, as addressed in relevant studies. In recent years, the role of language in historical learning has increasingly attracted attention in history didactics research.²⁸ So far, two aspects in particular have been investigated as contributing to inclusive historical learning:

1. reducing linguistic complexity (by using plain language), and
2. promoting the use of general language (with the help of scaffolding) in history learning.

Plain language is used in many contexts of history education, both in school and out of school.²⁹ However, the effectiveness of this method has mainly been studied in German-speaking countries. The concept is based on the assumption that reducing the complexity of language improves text comprehension. In a study with pupils with special needs, Alavi concluded that simple language can be problematic from an epistemological perspective. For example, linguistic simplification often leads to a reduction in the content of a source, for instance when ›Theraians‹ become simply ›Greeks‹.³⁰ Linguistic research on the use of plain language in historical exhibitions, challenges the assertion that this variant of language is better for reaching people with learning difficulties. One of the reasons for this is that this group is itself extremely heterogeneous and therefore there is no ›one method fits all demands‹ approach.³¹ The use of plain language can also be perceived as discriminatory by the group.³² However, if plain language is viewed as a collaborative process in which people with and without disabilities jointly translate texts into an accessible form, its use can yield positive effects. A study examining the joint translation of sources into plain language found that historical thinking processes were engaged during the translation. These processes included, for instance, reflecting on the bias of the source and the retrospective

²⁸ Handro 2016.

²⁹ For the English-speaking world, see e.g. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2020/10/22/plain-language-writing--an-essential-part-of-accessibility/?sh=5d4a16ff7935> (last accessed May 12, 2025).

³⁰ Alavi 2015.

³¹ Lasch 2017.

³² Bock 2014.

nature of the events described.³³ Texts in plain language can also evoke similar mental models as those in standard language.³⁴

There is a more comprehensive body of evidence on language interventions or literacy in the context of history learning. Student-centred methods such as prior knowledge activation, self-observation and strategies for recording main points appear to have a clear positive effect on historical learning, as they promote targeted interaction with text used in classrooms.³⁵ In particular, indexing strategies such as summarising and formulating questions in conjunction with peer-based forms of text processing are valuable.³⁶ In addition, texts with a much more coherent structure than traditional textbooks and a variety of scaffolds also appear to support students with special educational needs.³⁷ Overall, the (few) studies from English-speaking countries summarised here show that textual principles such as simplification, contextualisation and cross-referencing can be helpful for learning history. Instructional activities that frame text preparation, such as concept mapping and the consistent use of reflection questions, also appear to be effective.³⁸ However, this last paragraph refers primarily to findings on pupils with developmental disorders of scholastic skills, such as dyslexia, which in English-speaking discourse are regarded as ›learning disabilities‹ and therefore cannot be understood as a more general intellectual disability.

Conclusion

The few studies on inclusive history learning are difficult to compare. Nevertheless, the findings consistently indicate that strategies such as scaffolding, project-based learning, (redundant) practice loops, and phases of direct instruction can have a positive impact on learning outcomes. Moreover, an emphasis on the meta-level of historical thinking appears to be particularly effective. Engaging with the epistemological foundations of historical knowledge acquisition seems to enhance students' understanding of history. Finally, a clear focus on biographical aspects appears to support the development of temporal orientation and concepts of time, thereby laying the groundwork for historical reasoning.

The overview presented here should not obscure the fact that the overall number of robust findings on inclusive history learning, especially for special needs students, is limited and that further research is needed. In particular, it is not yet clear how interactive processes between pupils and teachers take place in inclusive settings or what participatory approaches to history are needed.³⁹ Also, there's still little knowledge about teaching methods

³³ Barsch 2020.

³⁴ Barsch 2022b.

³⁵ Mastropieri/Scruggs/Graetz 2003.

³⁶ Mastropieri/Scruggs/Graetz 2003.

³⁷ Harniss/Caros/Gersten 2007.

³⁸ Harniss et al. 1994.

³⁹ Wilkening 2024.

which are actually helpful in terms of inclusion. In order to be able to design history lessons under conditions of inclusion, a great deal of further research is needed that addresses, on the one hand, the individual perspectives related to the performance of students and, on the other hand, the systemic conditions of history learning in an inclusive society. However, all this also means that teachers often still have to act intuitively or transfer insights from other subjects and school areas to their practical work, without academic history education having been able to provide intensive answers to the conditions for the success of inclusive history learning.

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»And the GDR Was Probably Totally Gray!« – How Blind Students Access Inner Images of the Past

Field Observations and Qualitative Interviews on Historical Imagination

Introduction

In 2007 Germany signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, granting every student the right to attend a regular school. In light of this development, history education also needs to rethink its learning concepts. Lücke's call for pedagogical concepts that align with inclusive education¹ has been met with a growing body of research on the subject in recent years.² A crucial question at this point is: for whom should historical learning be designed?

I will focus on a narrower concept of inclusion, limiting my considerations to the physical sense of vision. The inadequacy of current concepts of history education for students with cognitive impairments has been repeatedly criticized. Völkel argues that they are unsuitable as they do not foster an inclusive society.³ Barsch criticizes the treatment of students with learning disabilities, who have traditionally been regarded as deviating from the norm.⁴ The complaint that history education is oriented towards a higher school level has been raised several times.⁵ However, special needs in history learning for those with forms of visual impairment has been neglected, as visual perception is often considered the dominant sense in society, and it is the norm in most learning environments.⁶ Hinz sees this as related to the implicit understanding of inclusion as a type of *integration* in special needs education.⁷

Although inclusion is about recognizing diversity, methods of repairing and restoring perceived disabilities still dominate the discourse. In this understanding, disability is commonly

1 Lücke 2015, 197.

2 Two anthologies can be cited as good examples: While Barsch/Hasberg 2014 outline different special needs in context of historical learning, Barsch et al. 2020 examine various dimensions of heterogeneity under the concept of diversity.

3 Völkel 2017, 7.

4 Barsch 2016, 75.

5 Barsch et al. 2020, 10, 13.

6 Austermann 2014, 85ff.

7 Hinz 2013, 8.

aligned with normality by providing adapted learning materials rather than recognizing and examining blindness as a social phenomenon. Therefore, much information on accessibility was provided by, for example, copies in large print or braille code.⁸ Such pragmatic advice is important in inclusive schooling, especially for teachers who often know little about learning tools for blind students. Nevertheless, research does not need to be limited to this approach.⁹ What has been missing so far are the perspectives and experiences of blind students themselves. In the case study discussed in this article, I conducted ethnographic research to gather insights in fieldwork. I observed history lessons at a school for the blind in Bielefeld, Germany and conducted qualitative interviews with three blind students. My guiding research question was how blind students imagine the past. Below, I will go into more detail about the theoretical background, methodology, and research design.

Theoretical Background

I follow an alternative approach in this study, as I take issue with the medical model of disability in the context of education. This model characterizes disability as a deviation from normativity and has been predominant in addressing issues in inclusive (history) education and visual disorder.¹⁰ While it may be useful in medical contexts or social legislation, in an educational context it can be described as deficit-oriented.¹¹ Even in special schools, which prioritize help and support, blind students are part of a socially determined environment. Therefore, a cultural model is more suitable for describing complex learning environments that extend beyond schools and are embedded in a societal context.¹²

In a cultural model, the concept of impairment is still relevant, as it is necessary to talk about individual needs and support, but the focus is broadened and directed towards the *cultural* side of disability. This perspective critically views society's characterization of disability as negative and problematic,¹³ highlighting the inherent and implicit learning about disability that occurs within a society. In the context of blindness, Walthes differentiates between *visual impairment* and *visual disability*.¹⁴ While the former refers to physical limitations, the latter illustrates the social structure in which a person is addressed as disabled.¹⁵ I believe this differentiation is not primarily about using correct terminology, but rather about identifying two pedagogical levels. The medical model of disability focuses on the

8 Austerman 2014, 90; Theyßen 2014, 157.

9 Krause earlier criticized a pragmatic shortening of the inclusive school discourse. Krause 2021, 239ff.

10 Austermann 2014, 83.

11 Pfahl/Schönwiese 2022, 283.

12 Dederich 2007, 58.

13 Dederich 2007, 58.

14 Walthes 2014, 18, cited in Böning 2014, 220.

15 There are overlaps with the social model which locates disability within society, which places barriers in the way of disabled people. A good overview of the models of disability can be found in Hirschberg 2022.

medical condition of a person, while the cultural model looks more closely at the social and cultural aspects of disability which is why I find it beneficial to start my research here.

Social Constructivist View on Blindness

In contrast to special education, disability studies consider disability within a social and societal structure, grounding their fundamental theoretical concepts in this context.¹⁶ However, history education has been relatively hesitant to adopt the fundamental concepts of disability studies.¹⁷ While approaches that derived from the field of *disability history* have been sent to have potential for inclusive historical learning and have been partially incorporated,¹⁸ I believe that disability studies should be taken more into consideration, particularly in relation to the heterogeneity dimension of physical differences. Disability studies present disability as a diverse phenomenon and avoid ableism in an educational context.¹⁹ In my research context, I rely on fundamental concepts derived from critical blindness studies. I therefore do not regard blindness as a deficit or a deviation from the norm, but as a normal condition that needs to be examined more closely.²⁰ Schulz and Gese argue that »while impairment may be considered a universal phenomenon in the context of cultural construction, the experiences of individuals with diverse forms of impairment are not homogeneous. [...] From this perspective, it is justifiable to enrich the discourse on disability with special perspectives on impairment.«²¹

This understanding shows that disability studies as a research field is shaped by the social sciences, calling for research on special needs as the dimensions of an individual's experiences. Therefore, I would like to take more account of the basic assumptions of social science when it comes to emphasising blindness as a special characteristic without simultaneously devaluing the group. In this article, I incorporate this criticism in an effort to find a suitable concept for historical learning in the context of individuals with visual impairment.

Historical Imagination and Blindness

Inclusive historical learning demands a re-examination of current educational concepts and a new focus on meeting the diverse needs of learners.²² In this context, Deile argues that the concept of historical imagination has the potential to meet the inclusive needs of learners

16 Waldschmidt/Schillmeier 2022, 73ff.

17 Musenberg can be cited as an exception for a more cultural-sociological perspective as he brings together findings at the interface between body, culture, and history; Musenberg 2017.

18 Barsch et al. 2013; Barsch/Lingelbach 2020.

19 Pfahl/Schönwiese 2022, 289.

20 Vygotski 1975, 70; Barsch/Krause 2019.

21 Schulz/Gese 2022, 402.

22 A good overview can be found in Barsch et al. 2020, where concepts such as narrativity, language, knowledge, and imagination are examined from an inclusive perspective.

and their individual perceptions,²³ as perception is not solely dependent on visual stimulation.²⁴ There are, it seems reasonable to argue, more complex ways of dealing with images of the past, even when they cannot be visualized by sight. Schörken conceptualized historical imagination without the support of external images, such as photographs or illustrations.²⁵ Instead, students who are presented with written or spoken narratives construct an internal mental image of the past.²⁶ Through active engagement in listening and conversing, students develop their imagination, enabling them to understand historical events and processes.²⁷ While Schörken focused on reviving the teacher's narrative, I concentrate on the students' reactions and references to their own inner images. There has been a reluctance in the field of history education to investigate historical imagination, as the mental mechanisms involved are too complex to be the subject of empirical research.²⁸ Consequently, it may therefore seem ambitious to make historical imagination visible in a case study. However, I believe this approach is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of how students with visual impairments construct their own mental images of the past.

Methodology

There is a general need for more empirical research on people with disabilities in the context of history education.²⁹ Kühberger criticizes the reliance on large-scale research as the predominant method for investigating historical learning, advocating instead for more qualitative research.³⁰ He specifically highlights the great potential of ethnographic research.³¹ Despite its strong reference to theory, disability studies also produces empirical research that demands significant changes to the field. Most importantly, they should consider the perspectives of those affected and ensure that people with disabilities are equally represented in scientific studies.³²

In this study, I used an ethnographic method combining non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews.³³ In my observations, I collected spontaneous verbal expressions made by students that indicated the presence of inner images. I took detailed field notes during the observations, and I used memory logs directly after observation as I did not have permission to make audio or video recordings. After describing the research environment in

²³ Deile 2020, 232.

²⁴ Walther 2022, 5.

²⁵ Schörken refers primarily to the work of Paul Ricoeur and Wolfgang Iser (Schörken 1997, 64).

²⁶ Schörken 1994, 34.

²⁷ Schörken 1994, 37.

²⁸ Borries once claimed that the instinct-driven parts of historical consciousness such as historical imagination are »shy like a deer.« Borries 1996, 5.

²⁹ Barsch/Barte 2020, 189.

³⁰ Kühberger 2021, 33.

³¹ Kühberger 2024.

³² Behrisch 2022, 110.

³³ Mayring 2022 [1983], 61.

greater detail, I illustrate my observations with an exemplary teaching unit. When analyzing the data, I employed contextual and thematic analysis. I conducted a critical reflection on the study, discussing field access, my role as a researcher, the limitations of the method, and future directions for research.

The guideline for the interviews was developed during the observations so that I could tailor questions to the research context. When conducting the interviews, I approached the research question by guiding the students on a mental journey through time.³⁴ In addition to the framework of questions, the research design of the interviews included three types of historical material that I used to stimulate the students' historical imaginations. I analyzed the interview transcriptions manually, working mainly inductively and exploratively.³⁵ This involved creating inductive categories to identify individual and shared items. In comparing the interviews, I developed a category system that I will describe below. I coded the data by identifying and then assigning relevant segments to the appropriate categories. To enhance understanding, I contextualized the data using Mayring's explicating technique.³⁶ In interpreting the findings, I discuss how the themes and categories identified in my research shed light on the students' historical imagination.

Field Access

Before I could start my study, I had to overcome some restrictions. In 2018, I sent research requests to six special schools for the blind in Germany, all of which declined my request for various reasons.³⁷ Finally, the *Opticus* school for the blind in Bielefeld granted me access to their students, who totaled about 80 students. In addition to the verbal agreement, there were further obstacles to be overcome³⁸ before I could begin research in January 2019. I was allowed to make non-participant observations of 10th graders in their history class, which was taught two to three times a week. The class had a total of ten students and was team-taught by a history teacher and an education teacher. I was not allowed to accompany the students in their everyday school life as I only had permission to observe history lessons. This would certainly have been helpful in gaining a more complex ethnographic understanding of the field. The barriers and limitations I experienced were, in Bourdieu's field theory, a form of »restriction of the field.«³⁹ He describes social fields as arenas in which actors compete for

34 Barsch used a similar time period to investigate students' historical imaginations; Barsch 2013.

35 As the basic theoretical concepts (as already discussed) were the guiding principles for my investigation, the study also contains deductive aspects.

36 Mayring proposes a total of three analyzing techniques to ensure intersubjective verifiability in qualitative content analysis: summarizing, explicating, and structuring. Mayring 2022 [1983], 12f.

37 Such as combined special needs, lack of capacity, too many research requests, fear of disturbing students from daily routines, no interest or no response at all.

38 A written permission from the headmaster, the approval of the 70 members of the teachers' conference, written permission from the ten parents of the class, signing an official contract for six weeks and a clean criminal record certificate.

39 Social fields are arenas in which actors compete for access to different types of capital. Within these fields, there are specific rules and structures that can restrict or guide the actions of the actors. See Hilgers/Mangez 2015.

access to different types of capital. Within these fields, there are specific rules and structures that can restrict or guide the actions of the actors.

Non-Participant Observation

In an ethnographic approach, it is essential to provide a detailed description of the context in which the field study takes place. Due to space limitations, I have focused on describing the classroom design, interactions, and work assignments aimed at historical imagination. The learning environment in the classroom was characterized by a specific seating arrangement at three large work tables. Three students sat at a round table with a hole for cables for their typing machines. Four students sat at a square table, using worksheets, printed books, and pencils. A third arrangement had three students sitting at a larger table similar to the first one but with additional tools supporting their writing processes. When students worked in groups or with partners, they stayed with their tablemates, who had similar experiences with visibility. There were pragmatic reasons for this arrangement, as students with similar learning tools were already sitting together. However, this arrangement did not meet the needs of some students, who wished to work with learning partners from other tables. Cross-group collaboration was therefore prevented in favor of pragmatic arrangements.

The most observed topic that was taught in the lessons was the history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR): specifically, the methods of the GDR's state security, political demonstrations in 1989, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The students seemed highly motivated to learn about these topics and for the most part worked independently with their materials. There was a friendly and respectful atmosphere among the students, supporting each other and being aware of the challenges other students were experiencing. In many lessons, there were instructional phases in which the students were asked to use their imagination, which is essential to history learning as history can only be learned in retrospect and the historical learning process begins with imagining something in the past.⁴⁰ I would like to illustrate how references were made to internal images in the following exemplary teaching unit based on my field notes.

»Imagine Painting an Image on the Berlin Wall«

In learning about the GDR, the students were presented with pictures of the Berlin Wall. Tags and graffiti that had been sprayed on the Berlin Wall were shown and explained to them. The teacher provided different kinds of images, many about wishes and hopes for change. The students' task was to think of an image that they would paint or spray on the Wall. This assignment was aimed at students reproducing their internal images, and they were able to express their ideas quickly. One student said she would like to paint a flower because it

⁴⁰ Schörken 1994, 34.

represents beauty and hope. Another agreed and suggested a feather, which he felt could fly and represented something soft. The third was inspired by the idea of flying and suggested a white dove, which would be fitting because it represents freedom. This excerpt of a classroom teaching sequence shows that the students were able to refer to inner images, regardless of their visual experience. They were able to engage with visual content, without it being presented in large print or relief images. Imagining a historical situation and empathizing with it requires students to adopt an appropriate perspective of historical actors. I observed that the students were able to do so, with some even expressing sadness at the idea of being separated from their relatives and friends by a wall.⁴¹

I observed a range of interactions, including those between the teacher and the students, interactions among the students, and those with me as a researcher. Even though I only stayed with them for a few hours a week and tried to stay in the background, the students opened up over time and asked me many questions about Berlin. They tried to connect what they were learning about GDR history with me as a person born in East Berlin.⁴²

Guideline-Based Interviews

In February 2019, near the end of my observation period, I conducted interviews with three students who were 15, 16, and 18 years old. Initially, I had planned to interview only students who were born blind, following Walthes' criticism that blind and visually impaired people are often grouped together in special education,⁴³ as the partially sighted are able to make use of their vision, while the blind are unable to base their perception on any visual information. This led me to consider that my finding could only be generalized if all of my informants were unable to process any visual information.

However, during my time in the research field, I had to reconsider this idea. My decision to increase the diversity of my informants was based on a student, who was considered highly visually impaired, feeling excluded when learning that I was only looking for blind volunteers.⁴⁴ This violated my ethical principles and motivation to undertake this research. Moreover, I realized that this selection criteria no longer made sense, as I wanted to distance myself from a medical definition of blindness. As ›blindness‹ consists of many types of visual perception, such as born blind, presence of shadows and contours, dark and light perception, shape of vision field, level of visual acuity or angle of vision etc., even the attempt to select only those who were ›blind‹ would still show a spectrum. I observed in my fieldwork that the degree of visual impairment does play a role in learning environments and the use of technical tools, but the sense of belonging either within an institutional context like a

⁴¹ On the significance of emotions in the historical learning process, see Brauer et al. 2013; Borries 1996.

⁴² Völkel points out the importance of experiences in the living world when it comes to inclusive history education within a body-phenomenological understanding; see Völkel 2017.

⁴³ Walthes 2022, 18.

⁴⁴ Student names were changed to keep their identities anonymous.

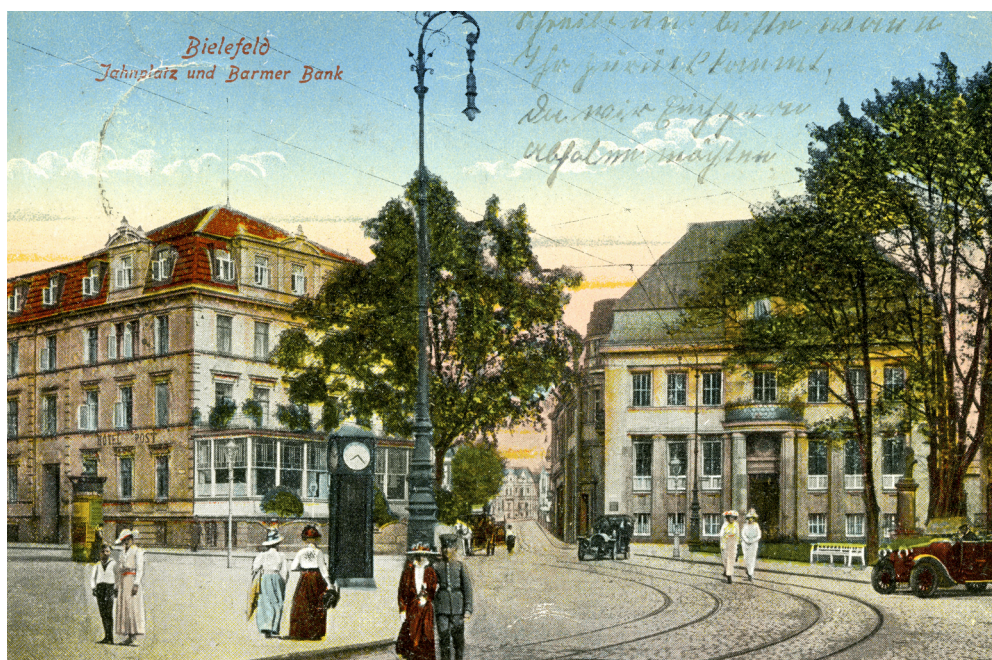


Fig. 1: Jahnplatz and Barmer Bank in Bielefeld (1901). Postcard owned by Joachim Wibbing.

school for the blind or even more important within the self-determined group of blinds, is not defined medically, as broader educational contexts are largely socially determined.

The form of the interviews was based on guidelines according to Mayring.⁴⁵ However, one of the challenges I faced was the fixed schedule of one 45-minute lesson in total. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were conducted in a room outside the classroom building. As a result, I had to pick up each student from the classroom, accompany them to the room and bring them back within this period of time. The interviews involved the use of relatively extensive historical material, including photographs, written texts, and contemporary songs.⁴⁶ The historical materials were chosen to represent a period approximately 100 years ago. Before the interview, I asked the participants to »bring something that you connect with history!« This assignment served as an opening stimulus to help establish a good start to the conversation. Imagining a historical situation is framed in the interview as »time travel«. I demonstrated this mental journey by describing a photograph from 1901 of a well-known square in Bielefeld called *Jahnplatz*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Mayring 2022.

⁴⁶ I also brought an old CD with music from the 1920s. Unfortunately, the CD player was broken, so I had to continue the interview without the period's contemporary songs.

⁴⁷ Bielefeld. Jahnplatz und Barmer Bank, postcard from: <https://joachim-wibbing.de/?m=postkarten> (last accessed May 14, 2025).

In addition to other material, I also brought newspapers from Bonn, Bielefeld, and Siegburg, published between 1915 and 1919.⁴⁸ I chose newspapers as historical sources, as they provide a wealth of visual information, particularly from the twentieth century.⁴⁹ I focused on advertisements about food rations, clothing, and announcements of homecoming celebrations to give the students an impression of German society at that time. To facilitate their understanding, I gave detailed descriptions of the images. After describing and reading the materials, I repeatedly asked the students whether they could imagine the historical situation by accessing inner images. This approach was designed to encourage students to engage with the material through guided questioning. However, I found the materials to be less productive than the open follow-up questions, which is why I will focus on them in the following analysis.⁵⁰ This experience highlights the importance in ethnographic research of conducting field observations before designing an interview.

Interview: Edda, 15 Years Old

The historical object that Edda brought to the interview was a model car given to her by her grandmother. It is an example of her individual approach to history, which seems to be influenced by her relatives and their fondness for the 1950s.⁵¹

Interviewer: You brought something with you today. Please introduce it briefly and describe what it has to do with history.

Edda: Well, it's an old Beetle and for me it has something to do with history because it's from the 1950s. And I think it's really beautiful and I got it from my grandma.

Interviewer: Ah nice! And did your grandma tell you a bit more about it?

Edda: No, just that it's from the 50s.

Interviewer: I like it. Give me the car again. I also imagined it to be heavy.

Edda: Yes, isn't it made of metal?

Interviewer: I think so. There's something written underneath. VW Cabriolet, built in 1949.

Edda: Oh, I was right ... Mom and I collect cars like that. We also have a Camaro RS from 1965.

Interviewer: Oh, great, that's a classic car then.

Edda: I think so.... And we still drive it on the road [joyful].

Interviewer: Your parents also seem to be interested in history and old things, aren't they?

Edda: Yes.

⁴⁸ Volkswacht 1919; Volksmund 1917; Sieg-Bote 1915.

⁴⁹ As the number of newspapers available online is limited, these three were chosen for pragmatic rather than methodological reasons. However, a degree of representativeness was achieved due to the newspapers' geographical and temporal proximity.

⁵⁰ According to Mayring, inductive content analysis must always be adapted to the material. The excerpts from the interviews given here illustrate the students' historical imagination. Mayring 2022 [1983], 71.

⁵¹ I quoted the following excerpts and translated them into English. I summarized the statements in a structured way at points that were only interrupted with single (approvingly) words or gestures. For simple transcription guidelines, see Kruse 2014, 358.

Interviewer: That's funny! Maybe that's been passed on to you.

Edda: Yes. I also said to my Mom: I'll take all the cars later [laughs]

After talking about the object, we started with the historical photos and newspaper material. While she was a little bit insecure during the tasks, she opened up when I read an advertisement for coats and hats. She could relate to that and told me about wearing old clothes herself:

Edda: Because we do cosplay. I have a dress from the 1950s at home.

Interviewer: What are you doing? You have to explain it to me, please.

Edda: It is ... people put on costumes, for example, a dress from the 1950s. I can maybe show you a picture later.... And with a petticoat underneath and red shoes and everything ... and matching hairstyle.

Interviewer: Oh, wow! ... And cos is the short form for costume, yes?

Edda: Exactly. And cosplay, because it's not the real people, but we imitate them, that's why.

Interviewer: And then you feel that way, too ... Like back in time?

Edda: Yes.

Interviewer: What causes this impression, what does it do?

Edda: That you feel totally different somehow.... I can't really describe it.

Interviewer: Through clothes and through what you do?

Edda: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: Exciting. So, you have an impression, so to speak? This represents the past for you?

Edda: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: And do you think this lets you go back in time, so to speak?

Edda: Yes. Somehow yes. But how it happens I can't say exactly.

Interviewer: But you feel ... feel it a little bit?

Edda: Yes, exactly!

This excerpt only partially shows the joy with which Edda talks about her hobby. She is enthusiastic and feels like being back in time, although she cannot explain it. It is difficult to say whether it is being together with her family, meeting other people, the fascination with the costumes or a certain historical interest that the costumes represent. However, it can be said that a hobby like Edda's is a typical public form of historical experience and representation.⁵² Although the fascination for old-timer cars and the historical cosplay scene both have a lot to do with external images and presentations that focus on visual details from the past, Edda feels that she belongs to that historical scene.

52 Norden et al. 2023.

Interview: Murat, 16 Years Old

In Murat's case, the historical object he brought also provides clues about his approach to history:

Interviewer: You brought an object with you today ... Please describe it briefly and tell me what it has to do with history for you.

Murat: It's a seal ... and it has something to do with history because my brother bought it for me, I don't know how many years ago.

Interviewer: Ah ok, when you were younger?

Murat: Yes... He brought it for me from Sylt because he went there.

Interviewer: Ah, okay. So, it has accompanied you throughout your childhood, you could say?

Murat: Yes.

Interviewer: And why is that something that has to do with the past for you?

Murat: I don't know exactly. Because ... we used to go there very often ... to see him.

Interviewer: Oh, he lives there?

Murat: No! He went there because he was supposed to lose weight ... because of a treatment.

Interviewer: Ah okay. I see. And you keep it because it reminds you of that?

Murat: [hugging the seal] Yes.

Murat is interested in the exercises and listened carefully. I learned the most about his historical imagination when he spoke freely and told a story of his own. Like Edda, Murat shared biographical aspects of the past when I asked him what history meant to him:

Interviewer: Then I have to ask if there is anything else for you that you want to ask or add?

Murat: I just wanted to say that my Mom, they used to ... they wanted to go to West Berlin, so they had to cross the border to the GDR, and she said they weren't allowed to stop anywhere or anything like that, and weren't allowed to enter any town. And the GDR was probably totally gray ... No trees, no nothing!

Interviewer: Ah, okay. How long have your parents lived here?

Murat: My Mom since 1973 and my father since he is 27 years old.

Interviewer: Ah, a bit later than your mother?

Murat: Yes. Because my Mom came here when she was only two.

Interviewer: Where did they come from?

Murat: Turkey.

Interviewer: That's exciting, so you have a completely different family history in another country, right? Do you have relatives there, too?

Murat: Yes. In Germany, Holland, and most of them in Turkey.

Murat's description of the car trip through the GDR is particularly interesting to analyze. When Murat remembered the word »gray« and then added »No trees, no nothing« it becomes clear that he is not referring to the color gray but rather to the metaphorical meaning of the word.

When Murat related his family's migrant background, he placed it in a broader historical context.⁵³ What I found surprising was that he never mentioned his blindness. This might have something to do with shifting group membership, where Murat's identity as part of the blind community in the school environment made his blindness irrelevant.

Interview: Paul, 18 Years Old

The historical object that Paul decided to bring was a large shell from a vacation with his family in Spain, which unfortunately broke the day before the interview.

Paul: I once got a shell from my grandmother. It was very old. She brought it back from Spain ... And when you put it to your ear, you could hear the sound of the sea.

Interviewer: And unfortunately it broke?

Paul: Yes, unfortunately [emotional, sad] When I was packing yesterday. [Clap]

Interviewer: How big was it, about?

Paul: I can't show you exactly, but ... it was a good size ... And it was beautiful, too....

It was old, too. So, I'd had it for a long time.

Interviewer: Oh, it had been with you that long.

Paul: Yes, when I was younger ... I got it when I was nine or seven or something.

Paul was the student who surprised me the most. When I spoke to the classroom teacher, she told me she expressed doubts about his suitability to participate in the study because he had been diagnosed with a learning disability and therefore was not representative of the class. Nevertheless, I was still interested in his attendance as he showed a willingness to participate, and in fact, did not see any significant difference between him and the other interviewees. However, there was some uncertainty on his part as to whether he would be the right fit, and I sensed this feeling had been transferred from the classroom teacher to Paul.

Hattie stresses the importance of avoiding negative expectations towards students in achieving inclusion.⁵⁴ I believe that such underestimation of student capabilities can lead to a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. This is supported by a study by Manning showing that a learning disability does not disqualify students from being an informant in a research project.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Rein showed that students with special needs are no exception in being able to create historical meaning through their own biography.⁵⁶

⁵³ Völkel calls this 'place identity', see Völkel 2017, 71. In the case of Murat it could also be interesting to ask what historical imaginations arise in the context of intersectionality. Lücke 2012.

⁵⁴ Steffens et al. 2016, 40f.

⁵⁵ Manning 2010.

⁵⁶ Rein 2021.

Paul talked about his biographical connection to history shortly after we began the interview.

Interviewer: Yes, and tell me, what do the past and history actually mean to you? Like, what do you associate with that?

Paul: Like the old times. That you get to know something about the past and your ancestors.

Interviewer: And what comes to mind when you think about that?

Paul: So you can find out something about your great-grandparents, for example, about what it used to be like during the war. I also learned a lot from my great-grandmother, who told me a lot. She used to be in the war, she always had to make cigars, and then during the war, she rode her bike to the cigar company and had to hide in the ditch with her bike ... and with all the tobacco and so on. That was a pretty tough time.

Interviewer: So, you learned a lot about it ... Did you also ask about it or did they always tell you that themselves?

Paul: No, I always told my great-grandmother when I slept at her place when I was little that she should tell me about the past.

Interviewer: So you found that exciting ... for you, it's important to hear about the past ... personally?

Paul: Yes.

When I presented the historical newspaper photos and material to Paul, he was the quickest to understand what it was all about. For example, the advertisements for warm clothing and coal for heating meant that it would probably be winter. He had a good sense of proportion when it came to food rations and was emotionally moved when he learned how little was available to each family. Similar to his classmates, Paul opened up much more when there was an open-ended task.

Summarizing and Conclusion

The categories that emerged from the data were access to history, family, biography, and approach to visuality. In relation to the research question, I looked for indications of imaginative processes and paid particular attention to free speech, emphasis, and emotionality. The most frequently mentioned elements were childhood, family history, hobbies, history lessons and present life situations. What the students had in common was their assumption that history meant something old from the past. However, as soon as they found something related to the present, the past became more relevant to the students. Each one talked about their own family history although they were not explicitly asked about their relatives. Even though their responses were quite personal, no one talked about blindness or visual impairment. This may be taken to confirm the basic idea that blindness is a normal state for the blind. All of the students were at ease dealing with visual information and categories. As the observations in the class have already indicated, Murat and Paul also show that as blind people they benefit from the

rich stories of sighted people. This could indicate that even when information refers to visual aspects like colors, it can be used by the blind through culturally shared linguistic metaphors (e.g., gray symbolizing drabness). This would be an important indication not to avoid or artificially substitute visual information such as coloring for the blind, but to explain in more detail its related meanings and broader contexts.

Accessibility for the visually impaired to history education thus means more than relating historical events. They can participate in visual culture if their teachers express confidence and positive expectations in their ability and a feeling of social belonging, as well as provide them with elaborate descriptions using shared linguistic metaphors.

Reflecting on the role of the researcher is a common part of ethnographic field work. I realized that I gave too much input in the interviews, overwhelming the students with extensive material. Questions about the material were given brief answers, frequently one-word sentences. However, I was able to find valuable material for my research question particularly where the students had open-ended tasks and were able to speak freely. One of the most important insights from this ethnographic study was a closer understanding of blindness as a fluid spectrum rather than a diagnostic constant. Through my field research, I observed that blindness can be defined through group belonging, shared experiences, and social actions.⁵⁷ This is confirmed by Vygotsky, who considers the will to participate in society as the key to actual participation. The blind have their own methods of adaptation in everyday life (e.g. training other sensory channels more strongly) in order to be able to achieve cultural participation in a self-empowering way.⁵⁸ For this reason it will become even more important to identify these ways and social practices in the future.⁵⁹

Finally, this ethnographic study yielded important insights for my current PhD project,⁶⁰ which shifted to public history due to COVID restrictions that prohibited school research. I quickly realized there were remarkable differences between the two research areas. In my opinion, the discourse of inclusion in the school sector is much more controversial and heated than in the public sphere. Furthermore, inclusive history education takes place in a public-school system that has to follow political regulations, which can lead to limitations and restrictions in terms of research. These mechanisms of gatekeeping and overprotection need to be reconsidered if scientific research is to retain its independence. It therefore seems important in the ethnographic approach to draw attention to these environmental conditions and to consider history education, not in isolation from their social contexts, but always as deeply embedded in them.⁶¹ By choosing a research approach that borrows concepts from disability studies, I was able to better understand the social environment in which historical learning for the blind takes place.

⁵⁷ See Länger 2002 and Mrazny 2012.

⁵⁸ Vygotsky 1993, 99.

⁵⁹ Participant research may offer a good opportunity for unbiased qualitative research, see von Unger 2014.

⁶⁰ A publication about blind historical imaginations in a museum context is planned for 2025.

⁶¹ Lücke 2012, 136.

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Teaching the Writing of Historical Narrations as an Instrument in Inclusive Learning Settings

Designing Culture- and Language-Sensitive History Lessons Through a Genre-Based Cycle, Bridging Foreign Language Teaching and Inclusive Education

Introduction

Public schools in Germany teach a diverse body of students with different individual backgrounds in numerous subject areas and sometimes by contradictory methods. For example, how phenomena are explained in history and biology is very different, even when the same teacher is teaching both subjects. A linguistic operator may be used to elicit definitions, explanations or conditions from the student,¹ but the task of explaining a causal relationship is more complicated than it might appear at first sight.²

History education in Germany faces this challenge by being sensitive to language when designing tasks to support students in historical thinking.³ But there are other aspects to be considered in a language-sensitive history class – for example, which text genre is used in student reading and analysis.

History is taught in schools by teachers whose perspective on teaching is the result of their own personal background and training. Homogeny is an illusory concept⁴ and teaching has to shift from teaching a class as if it were a homogenous entity and instead focus on each student's individual potential and needs. In view of the social, economic and cultural reality in a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, it seems obvious that institutionalized learning in schools, and particularly in history class, needs innovative teaching concepts that are based on empirical research. Given its importance for learning,⁵ language awareness has a prominent role⁶ in teaching historical thinking in the appropriate language. This focus on output reflects the paradigm shift that followed the first PISA study.

1 Lehner 2007, 14.

2 Voss et al. 2006, 199.

3 Oleschko 2019, 99.

4 Werning 2012, 304.

5 Siegmund 2019, 51.

6 Bernhardt 2020, 29.

Question

The call for promoting academic language proficiency is welcome from the perspective of language-sensitive history lessons.⁷ The question is which form this support can take for different groups of students, focusing on specific input and training.

The empirical data from the SchriFT project (see below) suggest that support is necessary. However, providing support is complicated by the dilemma of how to categorize students. The theoretical response to heterogenous learning in German middle schools (grades 4-10) takes place in the context of subject orientation. In this chapter the question then arises as to how history lessons can conceptually address the need for language support. The importance of language and its teaching is unquestioned. The crucial problem is that there cannot be a single approach to language teaching, as support measures must be adapted to the individual requirements of each student.

This chapter focuses on the linguistic skills of students and how to best address deficiencies they may have. Based on a narrow understanding of inclusion two groups of students would not receive language support in German middle schools today. The first group of students has a migration background and are acquiring German as their target language after completing their primary language acquisition. The second group are students who also have a migration background and have German as their first language, but have little contact with German in their cultural practice. A third group is made up of students with special educational needs who may show similar problems in working with texts, again for different reasons, but who do receive support. For all of these groups, the German language represents an obstacle to subject-specific learning in history lessons. The question is which concept can be used to support all groups equally in an inclusive classroom in acquiring academic language proficiency in German as target language.⁸

State of Research

There is a widespread conviction that historical learning is a significant challenge for students due to its high linguistic demands. In particular, historical narration seems to be difficult for many students.⁹ This finding is supported by empirical data. The large-scale Historical Thinking Competencies in History (HiTCH) test was criticized as too difficult for many students.¹⁰ The interdisciplinary SchriFT project concluded that students need support in using scientific language to solve writing tasks.¹¹ Charlotte Husemann's research on describing, explaining and reasoning showed different language-based difficulties for students.¹² Jan Siefert's study

⁷ Handro 2023, 2025.

⁸ Handro 2023, 2024; Siegmund 2019, 61.

⁹ Schlutow 2020, 49.

¹⁰ Trautwein et al. 2017, 119.

¹¹ Wickner 2019, 143.

¹² Husemann 2020, 203.

on the intercultural understanding also showed the challenges students face when making causal explanations.¹³

With these empirical results in mind, it seems evident that students need support in their historical learning processes. An important target dimension is the acquisition of specialized language proficiency, defined as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in contrast to basic interpersonal communication (BIG) for everyday language.¹⁴ These categories of basic and specialized language play a very important role in language-sensitive history education in Germany.¹⁵ The SchriFT project has demonstrated that while students with a migration background show sufficient proficiency when writing in basic interpersonal communication, they need support in acquiring academic language proficiency.¹⁶ Communication in an academic language is more than merely transporting information, as it follows certain conventions in cultural practice.¹⁷ Academic language in German is characterized by its precision, high density of information and deagentification.¹⁸ Handro¹⁹ found that academic German shows sentence complexity, the nominalization of verbs and the persistent use of the passive voice.

All students, to a greater or lesser extent, face linguistic challenges in history class and would therefore benefit from language and specialized language support measures. German-language history education has therefore focused primarily on language-sensitive history lessons to address inclusion efforts.

The implementation of inclusion adds another layer of factors that play a role in planning classes, since learning to communicate in an appropriate way is part of cultural practice.²⁰ In addition to the subject discipline and its didactics, language awareness and special needs education have become relevant as well.²¹ While some teachers may have been hesitant to adopt the inclusion perspective,²² inclusion has been a mandatory topic in teacher training in Germany since 2016,²³ and it is now widely acknowledged as the norm in education. So there are certainly good reasons to take a closer look at inclusion and its categorization of the students being taught.

Even though categorization has its limits in handling diversity issues, as Sebastian Barsch²⁴ points out, it appears to be necessary, to a certain extent, for the planning and management of lessons. Diversity is the norm in education, and it is known that stereotypes and categorizations may harm students' self-perception and learning outcomes. The negative effects of

13 Siefert 2020, 364-365.

14 Kniffka 2016, 51.

15 Handro 2023, 204.

16 Wickner 2019, 141.

17 Baker 2022, 10.

18 Siegmund 2019, 53.

19 Handro 2023, 205.

20 Baker 2022, 6, 8.

21 Oleschko 2019, 95.

22 Werning 2012, 311.

23 Bernhardt 2019, 7.

24 Barsch 2023, 235.

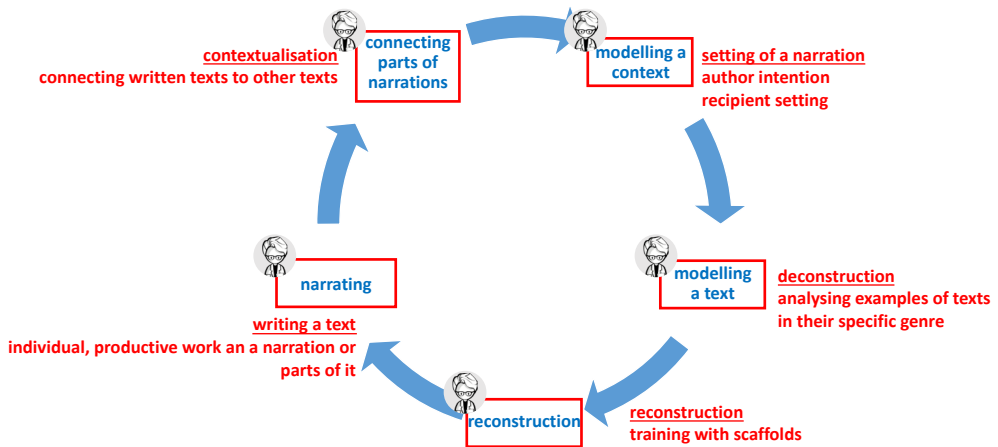


Fig. 1: Adapted genre cycle as depicted by the SchriFT project.

categories such as race²⁵ or class²⁶ can be countered by focusing on the individual student.²⁷ Moreover, a narrow understanding of inclusion overlooks how some categories can influence students' language use – for instance, migration and sociocultural background or proficiency in language use.²⁸ One promising concept to support these students is the genre cycle.

Genre Cycle as a Concept for Language-Sensitive History Class

The genre cycle (see above) is a structured methodological training program designed to promote genre and writing skills in any subject.²⁹ Its structure makes it particularly effective in supporting students with a migration background as they learn academic German.

Genre are characterized by specific structures of phrasing information.³⁰ The genre cycle identifies the characteristics of a target text, creating transparency. In the SchriFT project this was achieved by focusing on key operators³¹ such as ›designate‹, ›describe‹ and ›explain‹, which are used across all disciplines.³²

²⁵ Yildirim/Lücke 2020, 147.

²⁶ Scherr 2020, 119.

²⁷ Kühberger/Schneider-Reisinger 2020, 27.

²⁸ Siegmund 2019, 61.

²⁹ Sauer 2012, 76ff.

³⁰ Bernhardt 2020, 39; Hartung 2019, 69.

³¹ Bernhardt 2020, 37.

³² Wickner 2022, 23.

The genre cycle offers several benefits for use in inclusive learning settings. First, it emphasizes the role of language learning in history lessons, encouraging students to write their own texts at the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) level. Language learning is placed at the heart of inclusive history teaching, rather being treated as an add-on to subject-based learning. By making the linguistic requirements of historical learning transparent, the genre cycle helps students understand which speech acts they will be expected to use. Second, the genre cycle concept identifies which tools can support different groups of students at which points in the learning process. Third, the consistent implementation of the genre cycle concept addresses the need for a product-oriented approach to writing processes in history lessons. Students not only deconstruct model texts, but are also required to write their own texts in subject-specific language.

However, there are also limits to the concept, as lessons would need to be reorganized, shifting focus away from an exclusive concentration on subject content and toward an intensive training in writing skills. This approach would allow less time for content-related learning processes. Given the limited resources for a history lesson (only two hours per week in German secondary schools up to the 10th grade), it would most likely meet with considerable resistance. On the other hand, as the interdisciplinary nature of the genre cycle concept lends itself to teaching in different subjects, it would lessen the workload for individual teachers.

Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the genre cycle concept supports historical learning. While the genre cycle combines subject and language learning in an explicit intervention to equip students with genre skills for writing historical narrations, it primarily focuses on individual speech acts, such as describing and explaining, rather than whole texts. However, the genre cycle offers the possibility to initiate a writing process for entire historical narrations. This requires prior content-based learning, as students need specialized knowledge to write their own texts. This highlights the close interdependence of content and method. The genre cycle enables the linguistic component of historical learning to be explicitly combined with subject-specific learning in working with text genre.³³

This approach builds on phases of subject-specific learning in order to promote speaking and writing activities in history lessons. The concept provides teachers with instruments to

1. teach historical content,
2. teach genre analysis,
3. teach students how to write a text in a specific genre, using individual scaffolds,
4. have students write a text,
5. evaluate the text and provide feedback for revision.

In a subject-oriented lesson, it is possible to start at different points in the genre cycle. As a rule, however, it is a five-step process. In the first step, the genre cycle begins with work on model texts to understand the historical context. This step is optional if students have

33 Mainzer-Murrenhoff 2019, 45.

sufficient specialized knowledge and genre knowledge. The second step is the deconstruction of a model text. For history lessons, historical narrations are a typical target dimension. In the third step, students focus on writing in the chosen genre, using scaffolds, for example, to model the academic language needed.³⁴ Only in the fourth step do students begin writing their text in the chosen genre, for example, parts of a historical narration. In the fifth and last step, students receive feedback and revise their texts, before putting their results into the historical context.

The genre cycle in this schematic version can be adapted for different types of texts, which are deconstructed before students begin writing in the chosen genre themselves. In history education at lower secondary level, complete narrations are practically never written, as the focus is on more or less comprehensive answers to certain types of tasks, each of which requires certain speech acts. First in the 11th grade and above are students required to write an analysis containing a narration of the historical context.

Linguistic operators in the learning tasks often require that students understand parts of an entire narration, but they do not explicitly link the learning task to the historical narration. Furthermore, linguistic operators are often understood differently by students and teachers, depending on the subject being taught and their own personal practice. For example, the common operators ›describe‹ and ›explain‹ are by no means as clear-cut as one might assume. A methodical introduction to the speech acts in a particular task therefore supports students in solving tasks. This could take place in step two, deconstructing model texts, where it is possible to clarify what is expected of students.

Historical narrations are the main target dimension of history teaching as they demonstrate historical awareness. However, writing narrations in the sense of a written orientation in history is already difficult for students with German as their first language. It must be an even greater hurdle for students who are unable to draw on the schematic structures of relevant genres.³⁵ Language-sensitive teaching is therefore particularly suitable for learners who have the necessary subject knowledge but are unable to perform the necessary or expected speech acts.

In a broader sense, the genre cycle can also be viewed as training in historical-cultural practice. Every operator used in a specific writing task³⁶ is linked to a text genre, and proficiency in genre is recognized as an important aspect of history education.³⁷ Learning how to write in specific genres is cultural learning, because these genres also appear in the public sphere.

Whether or not the genre cycle is used, the theoretical separation of students into different categories has implications for the assessment of their competency in historical learning. These implications must be taken into account when considering the learning potential of the genre cycle for inclusive history lessons.

³⁴ Siegmund 2019, 58.

³⁵ Hartung 2019, 73.

³⁶ Bernhard 2020, 37.

³⁷ Hartung 2019, 74.

Implications for Assessment

The influence of prior knowledge and well-known stories on historical learning is not only important for designing lessons and measures to support students. The impact of content available in the public sphere on historical concepts is acknowledged in theory, but few empirical studies have been conducted. This is particularly relevant for performance assessment. To develop targeted tools to support students, teachers need to identify in classroom practice which teaching arrangements are most likely to help the specific needs of different groups of students. This applies to both historical and linguistic learning.

As discussed, students have a significant advantage, at least in theory, if they are exposed to multiple historical narrations outside of class.³⁸ This practice allows them to perform while being assessed without expending cognitive resources on formulating speech acts. In contrast, students learning German as a second language (in primary school) or as a foreign language (in secondary schools) need greater access to language learning in history lessons than the first group of students does not need, or at least not to the same extent.

When students already have the necessary proficiency in the target language, the historical narratives they are familiar with outside of class provide them with a foundation for participation in class.³⁹ Without this prior knowledge, students are at a disadvantage that cannot be easily compensated for, let alone made up for. One concept to support these students is to teach them in their first language.⁴⁰

This issue also poses a problem for empirical research into interventions in historical learning. The perspective of language-sensitive history education overlooks the fact that students may not actually be able to perform speech acts themselves, but instead rely on patterns acquired elsewhere. In fact, knowledge conveyed through historical culture can be seen as having a distortion effect on speech act performance, which can have a significant impact on empirical research.

Implications for Empirical Research

Greater consideration of the socio-cultural context in which students are taught historical narrations is crucial for empirical research, both in terms of extending the concept of inclusion and for measuring actual student achievements in historical learning. Available narrations should not be understood solely as having a distortion effect on empirical research, but rather as a reflection of a student's membership in one or more narrative communities, which fundamentally influence their chances of participating in history lessons.

³⁸ Barricelli 2019, 27.

³⁹ Bernhardt 2020, 43.

⁴⁰ Engin 2019, 489–493.

Given this extended understanding of inclusion,⁴¹ empirical research must determine the content that interventions should contain, as they are also part of intercultural competence.⁴² When specialized declarative knowledge is examined, there is no empirical access to identity-forming, orientation-giving narrations.⁴³ These narrations often deviate from theoretical ideals, and instead exhibit novelistic or belletristic characteristics.⁴⁴ Consequently, when faced with the challenge of writing historical narrations, students may rely on other genre conventions and narrative styles they have learned.

For empirical research, an understanding of a student's knowledge as a bias effect in the exploration of linguistic competences is insufficient, as it fails to account for the influence of culture. What is needed is the investigation of knowledge in different narrative communities, as a separate subject of history education. A deeper understanding of existing historical narrations in the public sphere would be as exciting as it would be momentous for research, theory development and teaching practice.

Empirical classroom research should strive for maximum reliability, despite the limitations imposed by pragmatic research questions. When empirically studying student performance in history education, researchers must take greater account of the bias effects that exist outside the classroom. The availability of historical narrations in novels, films and digital games in German can distort the linguistic performance shown by different groups of students. As their content can only be fully understood with a certain proficiency in the German language, access to these media is correlated with specific socio-cultural backgrounds. When these historical narrations influence historical education discourses, they may create a distorted perception of the student's actual and potential performance.

Using world history as subject content for assessing students' language performance therefore seems reasonable, as declarative knowledge and familiar narratives would not distort performance. This approach would also allow for a clearer and unambiguous understanding of the tasks and material basis of historical learning. However, it is essential to consider not only the time factor when planning lessons, but also the significant cognitive load placed upon students involved in interventions. Requiring them to write historical narratives without their being able to draw on existing knowledge can be demanding and requires extensive preparation.

⁴¹ Barsch 2023, 234.

⁴² Fischer 2011, 338.

⁴³ Wacker 2022, 29.

⁴⁴ Sieberkrob/Lücke 2017, 218.

Application in Inclusive Learning Settings

This chapter has so far been rather theoretical and the practical relevance of a language-sensitive approach to history education needs elaboration. In average learning groups at comprehensive schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, there are officially no more than three students with special educational needs in a classroom. Learning disabilities are the most common disability, affecting 37.1% of the students, with 13.9% diagnosed with special needs in the area of language.⁴⁵ In addition to students with special needs, there are other students facing language-related challenges in the classroom. This includes students with a migration background but also those who do not officially have a migration background⁴⁶ and are considered native speakers despite not using the German language outside of school. The exact number of students who fall into these two – not identical – categories is difficult to determine, as it varies considerably depending on the region and type of school.⁴⁷ However, it is clear that teachers face language-related challenges in their history lessons in most classrooms.

Given the challenges of teaching students with diverse language backgrounds, one approach is to use the same material for all three groups, supplemented with linguistic and possibly methodological scaffolds. This could involve reworking existing textual material to use simplified language,⁴⁸ which adapts the aspects of a text that are characteristic of academic writing. Standard textbook materials often include instruments to support historical learning, such as word explanations, cross-references and a glossary, which appear to increase student engagement with the learning materials. However, it is important to note that findings about the success of the differentiation measures cannot always be directly inferred from observing student engagement with the learning materials. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the three groups need different materials that meet their respective needs.

For students with special educational needs, word explanations can be an insurmountable obstacle, while immigrant students absorb them as new vocabulary. Indeed, research suggests that learning in two languages may enhance vocabulary and proficiency in different discourses.⁴⁹ However, students who lack access to the narratives of the surrounding German-speaking community may understand the words but struggle to contextualize them, as they may miss underlying subtexts and metaphors.⁵⁰ Ultimately, socio-cultural background remains the decisive factor influencing academic success, particularly for these latter two groups, and this applies not only to the core subjects of German, Mathematics and English, but also to history lessons.

⁴⁵ Saalfrank/Zierer 2017, 107.

⁴⁶ IT NRW 2022a.

⁴⁷ IT NRW 2022b.

⁴⁸ Barsch 2019, 80f.

⁴⁹ Link 2023, 65.

⁵⁰ Siefert 2020, 414.

In fact, teachers have to consider many different levels of differentiation when planning history lessons.⁵¹ In a language-sensitive classroom, this requires them to concentrate on three main levels:

1. History lessons are inherently language-sensitive, focusing on the word, sentence and text levels with direct reference to historical narrations. Language teaching is an intrinsic part of the didactic approach to history teaching, as it concerns the production and reception of texts in the genres that are important for subject-specific learning. The perspective is reflected in the first step of the genre cycle.
2. History lessons employ an extended concept of inclusion that considers not only cultural aspects of historical learning but also the availability of narratives in the target language. Other narratives remain underrepresented in German school curricula.⁵² The functioning of historical narrations is a direct object of historical learning, encompassing both reception and production. When planning lessons, it must be assumed that students lack prior declarative knowledge and are unfamiliar with the narratives of the German-language storytelling community. The genre cycle takes into account the intermediality and referentiality of texts, making these aspects transparent in the first and last step.
3. History lessons have moved beyond a solely subject-specific logic to incorporate historical-cultural narratives that are not organized chronologically. Developing an approach to historical-cultural narratives in history education is a challenging and controversial undertaking.

When narratives are the focus of a lesson, there is always a connection to the narrative paradigm of history teaching. However, a reference to task-oriented didactics is also possible, as learning tasks can be seen as parts of narratives. In fact, the answers to certain tasks can be understood as a genre. The genre cycle offers a suitable tool for both approaches, although subject-specific learning is not explicitly considered a prerequisite for the genre approach.

The genre cycle, as conceived in the SchriFT project, offers the possibility of designing appropriate scaffolds with adaptations to the respective target groups of language teaching. These adaptations would reflect the issues considered earlier. The genre cycle also has the advantage that it provides a basis for lesson planning when promoting writing. However, further research is needed to bridge the gap between the specialized didactics of history, German as a foreign language and special needs education. The consideration of language-sensitive genre didactics is particularly challenging for teaching students with limited language proficiency,⁵³ and simple solutions for their inclusion have not been very successful.⁵⁴

51 Kühberger/Schneider-Reisinger 2020, 27.

52 Siefert 2024, 241.

53 Sieberkrob 2022, 293.

54 Saalfrank/Zierer 2017, 138.

For the assessment of narrative proficiency in the text genre of historical narration, it has been conclusively shown that students cannot simply draw on already known narrations. Instead, they must demonstrate genre competence and narrative competence, both in completing tasks and in writing narratives.⁵⁵ In fact, as Sebastian Barsch has proposed, the limitations of the narrativity paradigm in history education need to be addressed.⁵⁶

A reasonable doubt about the origin of specialized knowledge naturally remains, but the distortion effect is significantly reduced. Consider that students in 13th grade have already dealt with the French Revolution twice, which means they require less narrative competence to complete tasks on the Revolution as they can rely on already known speech acts. However, empirical research has yet to determine whether these students have genuinely learned to write a historical narration, demonstrating a level of cognitive academic language proficiency, or if they are just repeating narratives they are already familiar with.

To maintain data integrity, no scaffolds or differentiation measures are used as part of the intervention. Instead, in the best case scenario, the actual narrations and genre skills of the students are recorded. A study could be extended by using scaffolds to test the effectiveness of language support. These scaffolds could then be adapted to support specific target groups.

In order for students to write a historical narration independently and without prior knowledge of the historical event (which would entail a distortion effect) as part of an intervention study, the students first need prior knowledge. Learning materials are combined with operator-based tasks on descriptions and explanations in order to build up prior knowledge. This corresponds to stage three of the genre cycle.

Conclusion

Inclusion efforts in the German school system focus on special education support concepts as well as considerations about cultural and narrative practice. In an extended concept of inclusion, it is essential to consider the learning needs of students who are also learning the language and, most importantly, cannot fall back on knowledge of historical narrations in the public sphere. These students require support in developing the narrative practice of specific genres. While this deficit primarily affects students with a migration background, other learners may also struggle with gaps in the narratives of the German-speaking community. However, their deficits in the target language may conceal this issue.

Concepts of language-sensitive history education and special education are undoubtedly crucial and can be a solution for certain groups of students. Students with learning difficulties or with insufficient reading and writing skills should benefit from the use of targeted scaffolds. However, students who cannot draw on well-known narrations due to a lack of knowledge tend to remain at a disadvantage. This highlights the necessity of teaching cultural

⁵⁵ Hartung 2019, 73.

⁵⁶ Barsch 2019, 89.

literacy, which encompasses not only knowledge but also reading and writing proficiency to understand cultural narratives and metaphors.

Students with linguistic problems can benefit from language support scaffolds. However, those with a migration background will continue to face challenges, as they lack access to the narrations that are passed down in the German-language storytelling community as part of socialization.⁵⁷ The genre cycle may be a suitable instrument to structure support for these students in inclusive learning settings.

As part of school learning, these students need access to the very historical narratives that are often taken for granted within the classroom, as they are essential for student participation in the lessons. This highlights the need for a greater conceptual sharpening of historical-cultural education, which should prioritize making these narratives accessible to all students.

These challenges for students may intersect,⁵⁸ which makes it difficult to find the right instrument for support. Students can be simultaneously affected by the ›speechlessness‹ resulting from their socio-cultural context, the learning hurdles in acquiring a foreign or a specialized language, or a lack of prior knowledge in history content and subject-specific text genres. A careful diagnosis is therefore necessary in order to support learning processes in historical thinking.

Given the limited resources in the school system and a lack of canonical narrations, teachers may seek to provide this historical content to students. However, this content is not readily available as conventional learning materials. Instead, historical films and novels, comics and manga as well as digital games convey historical narrations that can be beneficial in the classroom. Moreover, it is a quite complex matter how students learn historical contents in another language.⁵⁹ Extracurricular cooperation partners, such as libraries, can be valuable contacts for accessing materials and resources.

This tension between different aspects of historical learning can be addressed directly in class by using teaching concepts such as the genre cycle, in which language and content learning are combined and used productively in language-sensitive history teaching. The genre cycle makes it possible to organize content and language learning in such a targeted way that all groups of students can be supported. However, the genre cycle as a concept for planning a complete series of lessons breaks with the discipline-exclusive logic of historical learning. Research into developing the concept and implementing it would benefit greatly from classroom studies. The didactic perspectives of disciplines like German literature and language studies could also prove beneficial in developing differentiated tools for historical learning.⁶⁰

The lack of consideration for the linguistic and (sub)cultural conditions⁶¹ of historical learning is surprising given that the discourse on intercultural competence has a wide reach

⁵⁷ Oleschko 2019, 96.

⁵⁸ Oleschko 2019, 95.

⁵⁹ Link 2023, 265.

⁶⁰ Bernhardt 2020, 30.

⁶¹ Baker 2022, 18.

and permeates a range of disciplines.⁶² Originally developed in the context of international workplace settings, intercultural competence can be applied to schools if they are viewed as organizations.

This chapter has introduced a new perspective for historical learning and contextualized it with the genre cycle from the SchriFT project, providing a practical framework for implementation in differentiated learning settings. The genre cycle offers a number of perspectives for language teaching, including the empirical recording of narrative and genre skills as well as internal differentiation for teaching based on an extended concept of inclusion. Although the empirical results of the SchriFT project suggest some positive effects, this methodological approach to promoting historical learning among learners with different needs nevertheless offers opportunities for further empirical research, particularly into concepts for internal school support. Case studies of the implementation of the genre cycle as a language-teaching component of historical learning in school history lessons could provide valuable insights into its effectiveness.

Outlook and Open Questions

History education must develop tools that provide targeted and precise support for all students. This applies to students with special educational needs and to those learning German as a foreign or a second language as well as students with problems using German as an academic language. Given the wide variety of reasons for language learning, the support tools such as scaffolds must be as precise as possible to cater to the needs of individual students.

In the context of the SchriFT project, limited research has been conducted into the genre cycle instrument, indicating a need for further empirical studies on individual support instruments are needed. The effectiveness of the genre cycle must be demonstrated by empirical research, showing that its steps actually improve specialized language skills, including the use of scaffolds.

Short-term interventions will not be sufficient, as language learning is a time-consuming process, particularly for writing skills in subject-specific text genres. Furthermore, the linguistic specifics of those genre that are exclusive to history⁶³ must be taken into consideration.

A longitudinal empirical study of language skills in text genres relevant to history education would be beneficial to assessing the effectiveness of scaffolds and the genre cycle. There is still a need for research into the empirical foundation of history teaching, particularly language-sensitive history teaching. The results could serve to professionalize the training of history teachers during their studies.⁶⁴ Ultimately, it remains a challenge to make lessons

⁶² Schröder 2011, 310.

⁶³ Siegmund 2019, 58.

⁶⁴ Lochon-Wagner 2019, 17; Schlutow 2020, 52.

comprehensible for all students and still promote specialized language proficiency⁶⁵ and the ability to switch between codes in German as the target language.⁶⁶ The SchriFT project proposes the genre cycle as a concept that supports each individual student in writing historical narrations in the appropriate genre and in an adequate academic register.

Further discussion is needed on how schools can respond to criticism that German curricula remain quite Eurocentric, including the content taught in history education.⁶⁷ Specifically, German history education has yet to consider whether and how the curriculum might be adapted to support a more diverse student body.

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⁶⁵ Barsch 2019, 85.

⁶⁶ Bermingham/O'Rourke 2018, 162.

⁶⁷ Siefert 2024, 241.

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Training Primary School Pupils with Special Educational Needs in History Education in Greece with a Focus on Learning Difficulties

Investigation of the Current Situation, Educational Proposals, and Perspectives

Introduction – The Legal Framework of Special Education in Greece

The concept of special education in Greece was first defined by Rosa Imbrioti in 1939, who originally used the term ›therapeutic treatment‹ and described it as the education of children whose physical and mental development is hindered by individual and social factors.¹ Over time, this term gave way to the term ›special education‹, which nowadays encompasses not only childhood but later stages in life as well. Special education is considered a fundamental human right of every child, and its provision is seen as a ›debt of society‹.² However, the concept of special education had not made any substantial progress by 2000, as it failed to promote inclusive education.³ Although the legal framework has since been modernized, the lack of suitable programs for all students with special needs is still a pressing issue. As a result, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which guarantees equal opportunities for all students, remains unfulfilled in Greece.⁴

Under the heading of special education, a broad and flexible range of processes and programs was established through different legislative procedures and arrangements. This diversity is reflected in the educational and diagnostic services available, including integration departments established in mainstream schools under law 2817/2000 (Government Gazette A' 78/14.3.2000), which serve students with mild special educational needs.⁵ In addition to integration departments, another type of special education is parallel support, in which special education teachers support up to seven children in each classroom. This service is provided by the state to children with autism or sensory problems in kindergarten and all levels of primary education unless there is a department of integration in the general school.

1 Imvrioti 1937, 180–183.

2 Polychronopoulou 2003.

3 Lampropoulou/Padeliadou 1995.

4 Lampropoulou et al. 2005.

5 Zoniou-Sideri 2004, 379–394.

Furthermore, school units of special education aim to meet the needs of children with special needs, with the majority (approximately 91.5%) in primary education and only a small percentage (5.7%) in secondary education.⁶ The services offered by these units mainly focus on psychological support and less on speech therapy and rehabilitation. Diagnostic assessment counseling and support centers operate as diagnostic, advisory and organizational bodies.

Modifications in the General Classroom

Using the term learning difficulties instead of the term learning disabilities allows for a broader and more inclusive discussion of the challenges students may face in the learning process. Unlike learning disabilities, which refer to specifically diagnosed conditions, learning difficulties encompass a wider range of struggles that students might encounter, including those that are temporary or less severe and may not meet the formal criteria for a disability.⁷ This term is particularly useful when discussing general educational strategies or interventions that benefit all students, not just those with diagnosed disabilities.⁸

Many students with LD are able to meet the requirements of the standard curriculum, although in some cases, adjustments to its content and form need to be made. However, regardless of whether they differ in terms of level of difficulty or methodology of approach, the same objectives should be common to all students as should instructional interventions.⁹ To support students with LD in the general classroom, educators can employ a range of approaches, including universal design (or design for all), differentiated instruction, modifications and adaptations, and assistive technology.¹⁰

Universal design helps remove obstacles in terms of curriculum design, instructional materials, teaching methods, instructional technology, while enhancing opportunities for teaching and learning, regardless of students' cultural, socioeconomic background or gender.¹¹ The positive impact of universal design on the education of all students, particularly those with LD, has been shown in empirical studies.¹² Universal design emphasizes the need to create a flexible curriculum that can be adapted to the needs of students, as opposed to traditional approaches whereby students are required to adapt to the curriculum.¹³ In the context of universal design, the easy-to-read method was developed to create texts that can be used by different groups of students with writing difficulties. It is a system of transcribing, modifying or presenting texts that facilitates reading and especially comprehension, stimulates

⁶ Panteliadou 2004.

⁷ Reid/Valle 2004, 1–13.

⁸ Graham/Bailey 2007, 446–481.

⁹ Skidmore 2004.

¹⁰ Tziviniku 2016.

¹¹ Spoon et al. 2007, 108–116.

¹² Dalton et al. 2002.

¹³ Meyer/Rose 2005, 13–35.

thinking and imagination, and increases access to reading material for all those who have difficulty reading for various reasons.¹⁴ The method's basic principles include: using simple but appropriate vocabulary; defining all terms and abbreviations; employing literal language; organizing factual information in a logical manner; directly referencing the topic; using short sentences and lists; employing active syntax; using the second person singular to provide instructions; incorporating attractive and relevant illustrations; and applying appropriate formatting, such as generous line spacing and margins, to create a clear and readable layout.¹⁵

Universal design builds on and broadens the dynamics of differentiated instruction,¹⁶ allowing teachers to use individualized criteria to assess their students and modify their own teaching methods. When students with LD are included in general education classes, the diversity in the classroom increases, and teachers respond by seeking to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of a heterogeneous group of students.¹⁷ Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach that considers the different learning needs of the students to improve their performance and promote equal opportunities in education. Its implementation has been shown to lead to significant progress in students' cognitive development.¹⁸ By highly engaging students in the classroom, it has been demonstrated to be an effective means to improve the learning performance of all students, in particular those with learning deficiencies.¹⁹ Differentiated instruction can support students by modifying the time, space, mode, and presentation of the educational material. For instance, they may involve extending the time to complete a task, providing opportunities for oral responses, modifying the presentation of instructional material by repeating instructions, reading questions aloud, and using larger fonts and graphic organizers.

Use of Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are a visuospatial way of organizing important information and recording relationships and associations.²⁰ The visual representation of how information is presented in a text contributes to its organization, comprehension, prioritization, analysis and memorization.²¹ They can be implemented either before, during or after reading. Graphic organizers given before reading are combined with the instructional technique of brainstorming, a process that helps students recall information they have previously received. During reading, graphic organizers help students organize information, while using them after reading facilitates the recall

¹⁴ Arabatzis 2009.

¹⁵ Nomura et al. 2010.

¹⁶ Tomlinson 2014.

¹⁷ Papadopoulou 2014, 30–46.

¹⁸ Dara/Kanellopoulou 2019, 192–213.

¹⁹ Hogan 2014.

²⁰ Bouchard 2005.

²¹ Brasell/Rasinski 2008; Willis 2008.

of information and summarizing the content of the text.²² Organizers include webs, text boxes, Venn diagrams, spider maps, event sequence diagrams, conceptual maps, story maps and flow charts. The use and creation of various graphic organizers provides assistance to students in grouping their ideas and classifying them in a logical order.²³ It is a tool that supports the cognitive system in the production, representation, structuring, restructuring, retrieval and use of knowledge.²⁴ Graphic organizers are particularly effective in supporting the development of literacy skills in students with LD, as they increase the capacity for information storage while reducing cognitive load.²⁵ By eliminating the need to hold large amounts of information in working memory, students with LD can focus on understanding a particular idea,²⁶ which also helps decrease levels of student anxiety, particularly those with LD.

Alternative Methods

Teaching history to children with LD can also be facilitated by other methods. Research shows that multisensory methods significantly enhance students' engagement and academic performance, especially for those with LD. The multisensory method includes visual aids, role-playing games and listening to audio.²⁷ Visual aids and pictures are not used for mere decoration but as sources of information. Images, in particular, offer the possibility for direct communication of the viewer with the subject matter, encouraging the viewer to take a critical approach to the reality it depicts. Images can be used effectively in all phases of teaching: at the beginning of the lesson, to stimulate interest; during the lesson, to support discourse or develop dialogue; and at the end, to help synthesize and conclude the topic.²⁸

Another effective strategy is comparing a textbook passage with a similar passage in a different textbook to determine which text was more helpful in understanding the content. A comparison-based approach fosters students' critical and creative thinking. For higher classes, transcribing textbook passages into a different format, such as dialogue, can be a useful aid to comprehension.²⁹ Providing opportunities for students to engage in dialogue with each other and develop their views on various topics can be particularly effective for developing deeper conversations and more meaningful connections to the material.³⁰

By carefully combining these methods and approaches, teachers can create a positive environment in which to teach history to children with LD. However, it is essential to realize that

22 Singleton/Filce 2015, 110–117.

23 Moher et al. 2009, 264–269.

24 Vassarmidou/Spandidakis, 2015.

25 Sweller/Chandler 1994, 185–233.

26 Ellis 2004.

27 Gulati et al. 2024.

28 Kazantzi 2021.

29 Dull/Garderen 2005, 27–31.

30 Heacox 2018, 1–3.

each child is unique and that these activities are not necessarily appropriate for all students. Children should understand that any difficulties they may face are not obstacles to learning, but a step closer to discovering how to better learn. The main task for teachers is to help each student find the best way to learn.

Despite recent efforts to implement effective teaching methods, tools and strategies in schools, there is still a need to ensure that historical education is accessible to students with LD. To address this challenge, it is crucial to design educational programs and lesson plans across a range of educational fields, including history. As the concept of inclusion expands, there is a growing need to explore more meaningful ways of teaching students with special educational needs, who have a basic right to access to all subjects taught in schools. Organizing the learning process in an appropriate way can enhance participation and make teaching an enjoyable process for all students.

Objectives of the Research Study

The aim of this research is to examine the current state of the Greek primary education system concerning the teaching of history to children with LD. This investigation was carried out through a systematic literature review focusing on educational programs available in teaching script repositories and articles published in the proceedings of prominent Panhellenic conferences held between 2017 and 2021. The study identifies a significant gap in educational programs for teaching history to children with LD and proposes an educational scenario designed to address this issue. The scenario is based on a thorough literature review of scientific databases and presents the key elements of a lesson plan tailored to the needs of students with LD, aiming to support their inclusion in history education in Greece.

Methods

The primary objective of this study was to examine the number of programs providing interventions for teaching history to children with special educational needs, particularly with LD. Other objectives were to identify the types of special education cases addressed, the educational levels targeted, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance student participation and involvement.

The initial hypothesis was that there is a particular lack of educational programs for teaching history to students with LD. This hypothesis was generated through a literature review and discussions with teachers who expressed similar concerns regarding the instruction provided in this field of education and the lack of methods to engage and motivate students with LD. To confirm the hypothesis, I followed the methodology of systematic literature reviews. A systematic literature review is considered a necessary process before conducting a follow-up

study that would determine whether the findings of the literature review add new data to the scientific literature.³¹

The research was conducted by accessing the websites of well-established educational institutions and organizations as well as the websites of prominent Panhellenic and international conferences and their published proceedings. The study was limited to English and Greek-language material. These sources were chosen due to the growing interest of teachers and education practitioners in showcasing their educational programs at conferences. The publication of educational programs in conference proceedings is a rigorous process that requires blind peer review by at least two members of the scientific committee of the conferences, ensuring that the educational programs have validity and credibility.³²

The four key questions in this study are:

What is the current situation regarding the teaching of history to children with special educational needs in the Greek primary education system?

Is there adequate support for students with LD attending inclusive classes in mainstream primary school classrooms?

What are the needs of teachers for better support in teaching history to students with LD?

What teaching methods would characterize a feasible proposal designed to meet the specific educational needs of students with LD?

To ensure a high degree of reliability and validity, I followed the guidelines for the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analysis (PRISMA). This protocol outlines the four key steps of identification, screening, eligibility and final selection, which I have applied in this systematic review study.³³

To ensure the validity of the review, I identified and screened material using clearly defined and consistently applied inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that only relevant research was included. To minimize the risk of bias in selection, I ensured the search strategy was transparently documented, detailing the databases searched, education level, subject matter and any additional sources consulted. The review was limited to programs published between 2017 and 2021 to focus on the latest developments in history education, discover new research ideas and detect the approaches, methods and techniques being currently used by history teachers in the context of inclusive classes in primary schools in Greece.

The subsequent steps of the PRISMA protocol involved determining the eligibility criteria and the final selection of published articles. This was achieved by evaluating article titles and abstracts to ensure their relevance and avoid duplication. Subsequently, I thoroughly reviewed the selected articles in full text to identify the types of special education and exclude the articles that did not report educational programs, interventions, or teaching scenarios.

31 Sterne et al. 2001, 101–105.

32 Hames 2007.

33 Liberati et al. 2009.

Results and Discussion

The search identified 14 national and international conferences, with a total of 61 national educational programs related to special education and history education.

	Conference	Year	City	Special education publications	History education publications	Special and history education publications
1	9th Panhellenic Conference: ICTs in Education of Educators for the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Teaching Practice	2017	Ermoupolis, Greece	3	2	X
2	9th International Conference on Open & Distance Education. The Design of Learning	2017	Athens, Greece	X	3	X
3	6th Panhellenic Conference of Education Sciences	2017	Athens, Greece	16	X	X
4	5th Panhellenic Conference on the integration and use of ICT in the educational process	2017	Athens, Greece	2	2	X
5	11th International Conference on ICT in Education	2018	Thessaloniki, Greece	2	1	1
6	5th Panhellenic Educational Conference of Central Macedonia. Utilization of ICT in Teaching Practice	2018	Thessaloniki, Greece	X	5	X
7	6th Panhellenic Conference. Integration and Use of ICT in the Educational Process	2019	Athens, Greece	4	1	X
8	7th Panhellenic Conference of Education Sciences. Education of gifted individuals in Greece	2019	Athens, Greece	5	X	1
9	10th International Conference on Open & Distance Education Shaping together the future of education.	2020	Athens, Greece	1	1	X
10	8th Panhellenic Conference of Education Sciences. Education of gifted individuals in Greece. Ideological – Political – Psychological. Educational Conditions for the Education of Gifted Individuals.	2020	Athens, Greece	5	X	X

11	9th Panhellenic Conference of Education Sciences: The Education of Teachers of Gifted Students in Greece	2020	Athens, Greece	1	X	X
12	10th Panhellenic Conference of Teachers on ICT. The 10th Annual Conference on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in teaching practice.	2020	Ermoupolis, Greece	X	1	1
13	11th International Conference on Open & Distance Learning. ICODL. Experiences. Challenges. Perspectives.	2021	Athens, Greece	X	1	X
14	12th Panhellenic and International Conference on ICT in Education.	2021	Florina, Greece	2	1	X

Tab. 1: Total number of conferences conducted focusing on special education and history education from 2017 to 2021.

The first educational program with a focus on teaching history to children with special educational needs in primary education was ›Educational Robotics and Down Syndrome: Utilization for Teaching the Odyssey‹. This experimental study investigated how students with down syndrome designed, constructed and programmed a robot model of Odysseus' ship. Student participation was monitored and evaluated both before and after the intervention. Analysis of the results showed an improvement in terms of learning outcomes and child participation.

The second program was ›Proposal of an Educational Program for Gifted Students in History‹. This program focused on the development of critical thinking in 11–12-year-old students who were assessed as gifted. An argumentative reasoning model was used to evaluate their problem-solving skills. The content was related to the historical period of the Turkish occupation in Greece.

The third program was ›Designing Materials Based on the Principles of Universal Design for Learning: An Example of the History Lesson‹. It presented educational material based on the principles of universal design for learning in order to ensure access for all learners, especially those with LD.

The findings of this study highlight a significant lack of educational programs for teaching history that are adapted to the special educational needs of students with LD. The consequences of this neglect are a reduction in the interest and active participation of these students in the classroom, which hinders their inclusion in the educational process. However, the benefits of a teaching approach to history adapted to the specific needs of students with LD are multiple, both for the students themselves and for an inclusive society.

The culture of the school is deeply intertwined with the culture of society,³⁴ and research emphasizes the need for a shift towards more inclusive thinking and action in schools to provide to future citizens with fair opportunities in social and professional contexts. Schools

³⁴ Garcia et al. 2009, 239–250.

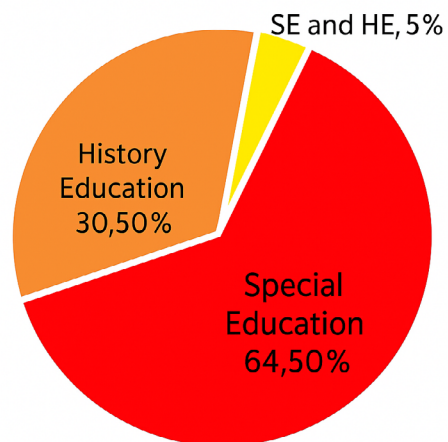


Fig. 1: The percentage of educational programs that relate to special education, history education or both subjects.

should strive to become more inclusive and provide fair learning opportunities, since the effects of academic failure can be seen in both the school and later social and professional paths of individuals.³⁵ For these reasons, it is particularly important that children with special educational needs receive the same level of education as their peers, with recognition of their unique needs and challenges. Educational programs should be designed to be accessible to all students and their families, taking into account the diverse needs of the student population.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of educational programs that relate to special education, history education or both.

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of the reported educational programs focused on special education, in total 42 (64.5%), while 16 (30.5%) focused on history education. Out of the total educational programs reviewed, only three programs (5%) were specifically related to teaching history to children with special educational needs in primary education. Among these, only one program focused on teaching history to children with LD. Table 1 reports the conferences conducted from 2017 to 2021 that focused on either special education or on history education or on both as well as the number and focus of publications from each conference.

Designing a Hypothetical Educational Scenario

Due to the meagre results of the systematic literature review, it was decided to create an educational scenario to illustrate methods and practices suited to history teaching for students with special needs. These methods and practices were derived from a review of the international literature. The articles were selected from scientific databases (Google Scholar, Research

³⁵ Acedo 2008, 5–13.

Gate, Academia) and limited to English-language publications published in international peer-reviewed scientific journals. Repositories of teaching scripts were also used. The citation rate of the published articles was set as a criterion to ensure their use by multiple researchers and their high impact on teaching students with LD. A number of long-term research studies were also selected to increase the reliability of the methods selected.

Before developing the scenario, a thorough assessment of students with LD was carried out in order to comprehensively identify areas of difficulty and collect information about their skills and interests. This process is crucial for making informed teaching decisions that meet the needs of the students.

As students with LD often struggle with text comprehension strategies and encounter difficulty in following textual content, the first stage of the scenario was constructed by implementing reading comprehension strategies.³⁶ Research has shown that reading comprehension strategies are an essential component part of teaching any subject, as they help to enhance the comprehension of students, especially those with LD.³⁷

The second phase of the scenario was structured using a visual organizer, as its effectiveness in teaching students with LD has been proven.³⁸ Content enhancement routines (to which visual organizers belong) have been tested for more than twenty years at the University of Kansas Learning Research Center with very encouraging results. Visual organizers are an important tool for explaining processes, achieving better understanding, decoding and retaining information by individuals with dyslexia.³⁹ They are easy for teachers to use to help all students in identifying causal relationships and drawing inferences.⁴⁰ A visual organizer can be used to present hierarchical relationships, cause/effect, compare/contrast, circular or linear sequences, and explore critical questions. Students can also use visual organizers as tools to recode instructional material and enhance their ability to process information.⁴¹ Visual aids also provide multiple ways of understanding historical events and concepts by making the material more interesting and accessible.⁴²

A visual organizer can be structured using the SMARTER planning steps tool, which has been shown to help teaching students with LD in an inclusive classroom.⁴³ In addition, a visual organizer could be designed using the guidelines outlined in the British Dyslexia Association's (2018) guide to presenting materials to people with LD, supplemented by principles of universal design. However, students may be distracted by organizers with excessive information, small font sizes, or bright colors. In history education, their structure should be systematically integrated to ensure effective improvements in historical thinking and awareness.

36 Xanthi 2011; Panteliadou 2011, 185–182; Panteliadou/Botsa 2007.

37 Pereira/Nicolaas 2019.

38 Bulgren et al. 2007.

39 Aziz et al. 2013; De Santana et al. 2012.

40 Porpodas 2002.

41 Botsa 2008, 18–31.

42 Kluth 2021.

43 Lenz et al. 2004.

ess. These principles have been shown by empirical studies to have a positive impact on the education of all students, particularly those with LD.⁴⁴

The final stage of the scenario was based on a visual resource, an online video, which served as a means of assessing and evaluating knowledge. Educational videos are particularly effective in engaging students with LD in the learning process and providing them with improved access to information.⁴⁵ Furthermore, information and communication technologies (ICT) can provide access to primary and secondary resources, creating a unique learning experience for students by fostering the creation of an exploratory and collaborative environment. Teachers have a rich source of material to complement textbook content,⁴⁶ including online virtual learning environments, virtual museum visits, and the use of multimedia, interactive materials, all of which provide opportunities for students to engage in historical research.⁴⁷

The critical study of historical testimonies is a crucial aspect of historical thinking, which enhances skills such as documentation and historical reference, the investigation of historical questions, the evaluation of the validity and reliability of historical testimonies, and the identification of the perspectives that each historical testimony expresses.⁴⁸ The processing of images cultivates visual observation,⁴⁹ and more than any other medium, images offer a direct communication between the viewer and the subject matter, encouraging the viewer to take a critical approach to the reality it depicts.

Although the literature documents suitable practices and methods for teaching history to students with LD and their potential benefits when carefully targeted, these practices are rarely applied in educational settings. Reasons for failing to implement effective teaching methods may include the persistence of traditional, knowledge-centered teaching methods and the limited knowledge and expertise among general education teachers to adapt their teaching to support children with mild educational needs.⁵⁰ The significant challenges and obstacles that teachers encounter in implementing appropriate teaching methods are often attributed to limited time, resources and expertise to teach history in inclusive classrooms. Developing tailored teaching approaches for students with special educational needs is recognized as both time-intensive and challenging, as it requires a deep understanding of student needs to efficiently produce methods and materials. Establishing clear goals and objectives is crucial from the outset, as is identifying suitable methods and tools to effectively achieve them. Therefore, teachers should receive incentives to pursue additional training, including scientific and pedagogical training, to become actively involved in the design and implementation of history teaching.

⁴⁴ Urton et al. 2024.

⁴⁵ Ghorbani et al. 2019, 79–90; Lynch et al. 2017, 120–147.

⁴⁶ Vakaloudi/Dagdillelis 2014, 59–75.

⁴⁷ De La Paz 2013, 89–105; Kalogiros/Smyrniou 2012, 71–88.

⁴⁸ Seixas 2017, 593–605.

⁴⁹ Kress/Van Leeuwen 2020.

⁵⁰ Panteliadou 2011.

The hypothetical educational scenario proposed here aims to stimulate others to develop educational scenarios for teaching history to students with LD and provide motivation for new teachers to incorporate similar approaches into their teaching. By revising traditional teaching methods and formulating new educational approaches, this scenario is intended to contribute to the enhancement of scientific knowledge in the field and modernization of educational processes. This scenario could also aid in developing a comprehensive and uniform public policy for the integration of programs suitable for the teaching of history to students with LD. National policy makers have the potential to create education systems that provide equitable learning opportunities if they critically use the results of research on inclusive education and adapt them to the local context.⁵¹ Even minor adjustments in educational practices can significantly contribute to the transformation of schools into more inclusive environments.⁵²

Conclusions

The primary objective of this study was to investigate how history is taught to children with special educational needs, particularly those with LD, in Greek primary schools. A significant gap in the literature was identified, with only three out of 61 programs addressing special educational needs and just one specifically focused on students with LD. To address this scientific deficit, I conducted a systematic review of international literature to identify effective strategies and tools for teaching history to students with LD.

These findings were then used to create a hypothetical educational scenario to provide impetus for improvements in the teaching of history to students with LD in Greek primary schools. The scenario highlighted the benefits of using tools such as smarter planning steps and visual organizers for both students with LD and students with more typical development patterns. The study also investigated whether students with LD receive adequate support in inclusive classes and found that while some interventions do take place, they primarily focus on skills like phonological awareness, with little attention given to more general education issues. The research question can be clearly answered in the negative, indicating that there is a significant lack of educational guidance for teaching history to students with LD, and there are no curriculum adaptations for history, as are provided for subjects like language or mathematics, which have established guidelines and resources for teaching students with LD.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for better support and training for teachers to effectively teach history to students with LD. It suggests that in-service teacher training and the development of specific educational programs would benefit both students and teachers. Ultimately, the study aims to influence Greek educational policy to integrate more inclusive and effective programs for teaching history to students with special educational needs, particularly those with LD.

51 Rose 2010; Nind 2014, 525–540.

52 Schwab/Hessels 2015, 237–254.

What is the current situation regarding the teaching of history to children with special educational needs in the Greek primary education system?

The current situation reveals a significant gap in the teaching of history to children with special educational needs in Greek primary schools. Only three out of 61 programs address special educational needs, and just one specifically focuses on students with learning disabilities (LD). Moreover, there are no curriculum adaptations for history, unlike other subjects like language or mathematics, which have established guidelines and resources for students with LD.

Is there adequate support for students with LD attending inclusive classes in mainstream primary school classrooms?

The support for students with LD in inclusive classrooms is not adequate. Although some interventions are implemented, they primarily focus on skills like phonological awareness, with little attention given to broader educational areas like history. This indicates a lack of comprehensive support for students with LD in mainstream primary school classrooms.

What are the needs of teachers for better support in teaching history to students with LD?

Teachers need better support in the form of in-service teacher training and the development of specific educational programs designed to help them teach history effectively to students with LD. This would equip them with the necessary tools and strategies to address the unique educational needs of these students, such as using visual organizers and other tailored teaching methods.

What teaching methods would characterize a feasible proposal designed to meet the specific educational needs of students with LD?

A feasible proposal would include methods such as SMARTER planning steps and visual organizers, which have proven beneficial for both students with LD and those with typical development patterns. These methods can help structure the teaching of history in a way that is accessible and effective for students with LD, promoting their engagement and understanding.

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