

CfP: 22nd biannual conference for history didactics 2017: Teaching history in the 21st century

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/ Location: DBB-Forum, Friedrichstraße 169, 10117 Berlin, 28–30 September 2017

Teaching history in the 21st century: from a historical-didactic perspective

At the general meeting of the German Society for History Didactics (KGD) in 2015, the managing committee announced the topic for the next biannual conference as 'Teaching History'. This is an area which is at the core of history didactics and also concerns questions of education policy. It is therefore not entirely coincidental that the capital of Germany was chosen as the location for the 22nd biannual conference. The conference is held with the kind support of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in co-operation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education, the Körber Foundation and Deutschlandfunk. The biannual conference in 2017 will make the case for continuing to teach history as an individual subject. It will address the diverse historical-didactic challenges which face history teaching in the present, whether in Germany or in international comparison.

The sections of the 22nd biannual conference are based on the key questions of: What? – For whom? – How? – Who? – By which means?

In the following call for applications, the managing committee hopes for exciting, controversial and constructive contributions and invites submissions which represent a historical-didactic perspective for teaching history in the 21st century.

Proposals including a short abstract must be submitted to the co-ordinator of the relevant section by **15th October 2016**. Abstracts may not exceed 6000 characters and should include details of theoretical premises, methods, empirical findings and five to ten relevant citations.

- Section 1: Prof. Dr. Holger Thünemann, Universität zu Köln, Historisches Institut, Didaktik der Geschichte, Albertus-Magnus-Platz, 50923 Köln (holger.thuenemann@uni-koeln.de)
- Section 2: Prof. Dr. Thomas Sandkühler, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Geschichtswissenschaft, Geschichtsdidaktik, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin (sandkuet@geschichte.hu-berlin.de)
- Section 3: Prof. Dr. Anke John, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Historisches Institut, Professur für Geschichtsdidaktik, Fürstengraben 13, 07743 Jena (anke.john@uni-jena.de)
- Section 4: Prof. Dr. Charlotte Bühl-Gramer, Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Didaktik der Geschichte, Regensburger Straße 160, 90478 Nürnberg (charlotte.buehl-gramer@fau.de)
- Section 5: Prof. Dr. Astrid Schwabe, Europa-Universität Flensburg, Seminar für Geschichte und Geschichtsdidaktik, Auf dem Campus 1, 24943 Flensburg (astrid.schwabe@uni-flensburg.de)

Section 1: What? Historical learning in schools – theories and topics

Co-ordinator: Holger Thünemann (Cologne)

Although history didactics has a relatively long and broad discourse tradition of historical thinking and learning, a consistent theory of historical learning which can relate to both school and non-school contexts has not yet been established. Although various concepts of historical consciousness – a key category of history didactics – and different models of historical competence exist as an implicit basis for such a theory, these have arisen from specific approaches in the discourses of the theory of history, education, cultural studies and cognitive psychology. There also continues to be a gap in systematic interaction with international discourse on historical thinking and learning, as well as historical consciousness. This deficit is notable in the absence of entries for ‘historical thinking’ and ‘historical learning’ in current history didactics reference books and dictionaries.

Putting aside the theoretical aspects of historical thinking and learning, the rise in heterogeneous and multicultural school classes introduces a necessity of discussing questions of content, sources and relevance. Is it acceptable that all periods outside of contemporary history – at least from a curricular perspective – are becoming increasingly less important? Is it not long overdue to supplement the existing relatively strong national or Eurocentric perspectives in historical learning with a clear grasp on regional or global history? Are political-historical perspectives in curricula and school text books too dominant in their current form?

A third aspect for discussion in this section is the long overdue necessity for systematically clarifying the relationship between history didactics and political and cultural education. In consideration of the significant political challenges (migration, social segregation, political radicalisation), which are not just specific to Germany or Europe at the moment, this is without doubt a fundamental aspect which is also intertwined with the discussion of whether it is possible to learn from history or if the ancient topos of *historia magistra vitae* is not hopelessly anachronistic. It is certainly evident that politicians from all parties are committed to using this topos for legitimising historical learning; in contrast, the argumentation of scholars in history didactics is somewhat more restrained.

Although this section is orientated towards theoretical submissions, the integration of empirical research findings and perspectives relevant to practice is expected.

Section 2: For whom? Diversity, inclusion and exclusion

Co-ordinator: Thomas Sandkühler (Berlin)

History teaching is based on the ability to interpret the otherness of the past in a methodical and controlled manner. However, history teaching is also confronted with heterogeneousness in the form of diversity. Diversity is a key concept which implies that heterogeneousness should not be forced into rigid categories or rated hierarchically.

Discourse in history didactics has long called for embracing the diversity of pupils in history teaching. This is far more than an academic discussion – it is inseparable from the political and education policy questions of contemporary history teaching.

This section will address three dimensions of diversity which are particularly current, pressing and relevant in the current climate. We do, however, not ask for a phenomenological analysis of differences, but rather for an analysis of the inclusive and exclusive effects of each form of diversity in history teaching. Migration, inclusion and subject integration are at the centre of this.

Public attention has been drawn to international migration as a factor that affects and influences students' learning potential. This has arisen due to the presently unanswered question of which ideas of past, history, and historical learning migrants bring with them from their home cultures. A further question that is to be answered is how the content of history teaching in Germany can be adapted to afford migrants the opportunity to engage with the material or give them reliable orientation in the local society and maintain their traditions to achieve integration or inclusion.

Another question related to equal opportunities is how the right for disabled people to participate in education guaranteed by the UN convention can be realised in history teaching. Whether competences in historical learning can be taught in such history lessons, how the grading of such competences can include all pupils fairly and equally, and practical examples of successful inclusion have not yet been conceived either theoretically or, most importantly, empirically.

History as an individual school subject is now frequently being replaced by integration subjects in the field of social sciences. This section will not focus on the value and purpose of interdisciplinary instruction, but rather on the question of whether history teaching in Germany has become restricted to Gymnasium schools and is thus socially exclusive; or in other words, what social consequences does the erosion of teaching history as an individual subject have and what justification is there for teaching history as an individual subject in all types of schools and year groups?

Primarily, this section welcomes contributions on these problems as well as questions which are not limited to specific cases or by premature abstractions and are based on empirical findings as well as conceptual considerations which are feasible in the mid-term.

Section 3: How? Forms of teaching

Co-ordinator: Anke John (Jena)

There is a vast range of history didactics reference books and journals designed to guide and enrich teaching activities. Although information on planning, methods and evaluation is available in abundance, much of this material is difficult or impossible to follow in practice. This transfer problem between theory and practice is not a peripheral phenomenon: in empirical studies in teaching research reference to the present, source orientation and problem orientation affect the central principles of historical learning.

A key aspect of improving teaching quality is the interdependence of objectives and teaching methods. Although it is evident that the subject of history will continue to require phases in which historical knowledge and knowledge of domain-specific methods are taught, there needs to be an opportunity for project-based learning which encourages pupils to apply their knowledge in complex tasks and engage with aspects of history which interest them. Therefore, this section is concerned with a structured variety of methods and the question of how this can be encouraged in teaching and learning processes, how historical knowledge originates and how to make the rules and routines of historical learning inspiring and linked to creative thinking about history.

In this process, the many forms of teaching and learning which have been influenced by general didactics have caused some confusion in teaching concepts. When “fictitious sources” or empathetic approaches including taking the perspectives of others (how would you have behaved?) are confused with historical value judgements in research and teaching, the confusion which currently reigns in the discussion surrounding tasks and methods becomes apparent. This is where history didactics must make a concentrated effort to distinguish between ways of working and thinking in history in relation to other subjects and identify conflicts between methods and objectives which make certain methods unsuitable for teaching historical thinking.

Successful and effective knowledge acquisition is not solely achieved through structuring history teaching appropriately. Putting inclusion into practice and the realities of social inequality and migration require teaching practices which engage more with the strengths and weaknesses of individuals through differentiated learning approaches.

Finally, forms of teaching are also connected closely with the measurability and evaluation of learning results. As historical facts and knowledge of methods can be assessed more easily than complex and value-based historical reasoning, alternatives to standardised examinations such as the evaluation of learning processes which focus on individual assessment need to be discussed. Some academics have already begun to develop large scale testing procedures. Others, however, point out the dangers of standardisation destroying the individuality of historical thinking.

In general, this section therefore welcomes theoretical and empirical submissions which are concerned with objectives and methods as a recurring issue in history teaching.

Section 4: Who? The stakeholders

Co-ordinator: Charlotte Bühl-Gramer (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

In addition to research into theoretical concepts and empirical studies of pupils, history education research has increasingly focused on the role of teachers at all three stages of teacher training in Germany as stakeholders in history lessons.

So far, this research has focused on teachers' subjective theories and beliefs as well as their professional competences. In terms of knowledge of history, there is much less research into addressing minimum standards of subject knowledge in teacher training and the meaning of ancillary subject knowledge in relation to teaching history. Moreover, a systematic qualification assessment process according to the recommendation of the KMK in 2013 is also considered an important contribution to the qualitative development of teacher training. Within this context, it is important to question whether dispositions and competences which suggest professional competence in history teaching should or can be determined before and at university (e.g. through online self-assessments) or whether professionalisation processes occur over a longer time span.

Standard qualifications for history teachers is clearly a myth. This is not only with regard to the federal education system in Germany and the different school types but also the question of who actually teaches the subject of history, who is permitted to teach history and who is not (history teaching by non-history teachers, and inclusion and exclusion in the teaching profession due to admission requirements). This is also connected to the question of how history teaching will change if cultural and ethnic diversity due to migration become defining factors within the teaching profession.

However, this section should also describe the role of stakeholders in teacher training during all three phases of teacher training in Germany. So far, there has been little research into this area, particularly in the second and third phase of training. Questions regarding the context of their actions, qualification, socialisation, motivation, 'habitus' and attitudes towards the teaching profession have mostly remained unanswered, as have calls for the development of a competence profile for teachers at the advanced stage of teacher training (Referendariat) and professional development.

In addition, this section would like to address the stakeholders who have the power to influence educational policy at the ministry level in Germany. Decisions, regulations and recommendations of stakeholders in education policy have a direct effect on history teaching in the form of standardisation. What and who triggers decision-making processes, which concepts and 'beliefs' define history teaching and 'good history teaching' and which notion of knowledge is conceptualised in regulations and recommendations still remains a matter for further resolution.

Submissions are desired in this area which address the different groups of stakeholders outlined thus far, discuss theoretical concepts and empirical findings and also serve to refine terminology in the field of subjective professional convictions (beliefs, attitudes, ideas, behaviour, subjective theories, epistemological beliefs).

Section 5: By which means? Digital media in historical learning

Co-ordinator: Astrid Schwabe (Flensburg)

In a digitalised society, in which especially young people's worlds are often dominated by digital media, history teaching is facing new challenges. Digital learning media and open educational resources are on everybody's lips; textbook publishers are announcing digital agendas and investing heavily in e-learning platforms and additional services to complement their history teaching publications, although e-books still remain an exception. Meanwhile other stakeholders are offering an immense volume of digital learning material consisting of diverse methods and varying quality.

The didactic considerations of using digital learning material are still at an early stage in many areas of history teaching. This includes fundamental questions regarding the definition of historical-didactic media and the characteristics of digital media in historical learning. How do specific structural characteristics of media effect the use of illustrations and sources presented in hypertext? Which elements can influence historical thinking and learning processes in novel and alternative ways?

Furthermore, the formulation of subject didactic quality criteria and evaluation criteria for digital (learning) material in competence-orientated history teaching has not yet reached maturity. In particular, it is a desideratum to state the development of reception and appropriation processes of historical content in different digital media and the historical learning processes they trigger in terms of empirical research.

This section wishes to respond to and direct current discourse in digital historical learning by focusing (although not exclusively) on digital media in history teaching. In this context, one key area is the field of tension between traditional and purportedly 'new' digital teaching media. This area has been deemed worthy of comparison as the suspicion has arisen that, on closer analysis, many seemingly new ideas are old ideas which have been transferred to digital technology. This section is concerned with answering questions on the special nature of digital learning media and especially the value added in comparison to analogue teaching media, particularly with reference to historical learning, and reflecting on potential strengths: where can digital media enable specific access to a historical phenomenon which analogue media cannot convey at all or can only convey in a less convenient or appropriate form? What opportunities are there for self-directed historical learning according to individual requirements (in terms of inclusion and coping with heterogeneity) or for the integration of public history in competence-orientated history teaching (in terms of historical media competence)? And does a digital turn offer history teaching a potential to improve its public perception and make it more attractive and meaningful for pupils?

Submissions of a normative-conceptual and pragmatic-analytical kind are desired, with a particular interest being placed on the presentation of empirical findings.