
When IJHTLR was a figment of the imagination, the editorial team produced a declaration of intent, a mission statement for the putative journal that has since given a sense of purpose and direction:

History Education permeates the fabric of modern society. In Europe, apparently the only countries who leave history off the curriculum post-14 are Albania and Britain. The teaching and learning of history is often a source of heated public and private argument, impinging upon the worlds of politics, nationalism and cultural identity. Yet there is no forum where findings located at the intersection between scholarship, research and the classroom can be reported, reviewed and debated to inform and even influence political discourse.

Most of the papers that make up the first edition of the journal reflect the idea that history education is too important to be left up to either politicians or educationalists. In relation to society’s perceived intent for education, no matter how inchoately or incoherently expressed, history education sits uncomfortably at the intersection between the worlds of politics, journalism, educational research and scholarship and the teaching communities of schools and colleges. As such, history teachers are caught up in tensions generated through the rapid and exponentially accelerating changes that reflect a world in which nationalism, and belief in the myths which sustain it, is still an active force despite movements for pan-nationalist cooperation and even integration, and the impact of globalisation. Within Britain, pan-nationalism in Europe might appear to the public, teachers and students to be a question of deciding on the shape of cucumbers, the number of cod to be caught from the North Sea and the role of bureaucrats in Brussels. In countries like Poland, located at the intersection between the 20th century nationalisms of German and Russia the perception is different. Thus in a seminar we ran in Cracow for undergraduates in 1998, the question ‘would you prefer to be ruled from Brussels, Berlin or Moscow’ elicited a single, overwhelming response - Brussels, please. Globalisation is a related issue - the extent to which in a world of international economic organisations and instant communication and decision making either the nation-state or the pan-national community can protect the interests of its citizens. Linked to decisions taken on a world-wide scale and outside the control of national or pan-national politicians is the recognition of global concerns and issues that require a united response - be they issues of war and peace, global warming, monetary management, trading regulations or the movement of people. Yet within history education the globalist perspective of politicians sits uncomfortably alongside their prioritisation of national and even parochial interests.

Nationalism emerged as a dominant ideology in the 19th century. The first half of the 20th century saw the world ripped apart in a succession of wars fought in its name. The second half of the century witnessed a Pax Americana in which the tension between America and her allies and the perceived global threat from the Soviet Union and China preserved a global peace. Yet, at the same time, the political edifices of the 19th century empires were cracking and disintegrating along nationalistic lines. The collapse of the European empires, themselves expressions and extensions of nationalism, resulted in the emergence of nations often within the carapace of the administrative structures and within the colonial boundaries of their former imperial masters. The most extreme recent case has been the breakup of the USSR, with the new nation states emerging fully fledged from the chrysalises of their respective Soviet republics: same boundaries, same bureaucracy, same educational system, same communications and transport systems and same politicians - but with a disintegrated supra-national economic framework. Nationalism, with its political, cultural and moral imperative, permeates the consciousness of the ‘political nation’ despite its open adherence to other philosophies and creeds.
Nowhere in education do the values, beliefs and concerns of the ‘political nation’ express themselves more strongly than in their views on the formal teaching of history or its covert presence within the curriculum in the guise of ‘social studies’. History, and history education, becomes a live political issue and concern within nation states at points of evolution or transition. Different nation states respond to the challenge of a new or revised national identity in different ways. Context and circumstance dictate the political response to the educational challenge - a response that may not even involve those previously and currently involved in the development, implementation, assessment, monitoring and revision of the history curriculum. History education becomes too important to be left to historians, history educationalists and teachers. History is about the individual and collective psyche; it informs notions of citizenship and how people see themselves.

Thus, South Africa, upon the collapse of Apartheid, was faced with the problem of reconciling its past with its future. One alternative to reconciling the historically irreconcilable was to promote a view of the past based upon collective amnesia. Robert Siebörger examines different responses in a society that included strong support for a ‘period of denial about its past’. In South Africa, not only was revisiting the past considered too painful, but it was also feared that history as a school subject would exacerbate tensions, divisions and fissiparous tendencies. The political nation’s response was to create a curriculum that deliberately excluded the historians’ and history educators’ voices. Instead of a subject with a substantive and syntactic base, the government created a content free, skills-based Outcomes Based Education [OBE] curriculum. As in the primary curriculum for Northern Ireland, by leaving out anything that is potentially controversial there is a danger that pupils fail to see its relevance.

The implementation in South Africa of the OBE curriculum has proved unsatisfactory: a government review has recommended a radical revision with the re-introduction of history as a discrete curricular subject aimed at promoting learners’ sense of national and international identity. The problems of implementing such a curriculum are immense, relating as they do to the existing teacher stock of skills, knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes. Jacqui Dean, in *Coping with Curriculum Change in South Africa*, explores in detail a project for the re-education and re-training of an annual cohort of some 12 History teacher trainers/advisors and history teachers within the Western Cape. Here there is a conscious attempt to implement a teacher education/training model based upon action research linked to reflective practice. The project grounded personal development in a cycle of demonstration and modelling of good practice, followed by implementation of ideas and approaches within the project members’ own educational context. Through this approach, the project hoped to alter the teachers’ orientation and praxis in a direction that subsequently the South African government’s review of the OBE curriculum has recommended!

The central issue that the Siebörger and Dean papers raised, the historical education that students are entitled for citizenship, was also addressed within a second new national context, that of Rumania. Laura Capita, Hilary Cooper and Iosif Mogos in *History, Children’s Thinking and Creativity In The Classroom: England and Romanian Perspectives* report upon a small-scale project that initially focused upon the quality of questioning as a factor in developing critical thinking in pupils. The comparative study however raised within the context of a single reviewed lesson the issue of creativity and the open-ended, affective, expansive, exploratory and imaginative thinking that this promotes. If we are attempting to promote a curriculum which develops the cognitive qualities that citizens of a modern state should be entitled to acquire, then is the issue of creativity one that the history education community needs to address? How can creativity, linked in to notions of ‘involvement of students in the learning activities’ be developed within our existing curricula? One facet is to harness the power of the microcomputer to the ability of children to both undertake historical investigations and express their understanding through tools that the computer provides. Kate Watson, Kevin O’Connell and Derek Brough report upon a
curriculum development project using a readily and universally available tool - hyperlink. As with the Romanian example, *Hyperlink: A Generic Tool for Exploratory and Expressive Teaching and Learning in History* focuses upon an approach in which the expressive creativity of the teacher has allowed the pupils to be involved in exploratory, open-ended thinking.

The complexity of historical thinking, both from the pupils’ and teachers’ perspectives is central to Shari Levine Rose’s *Fourth Graders Theorize Prejudice in American History* and to Penelope Harnett’s *History in the Primary School: Re-Shaping Our Pasts. The Influence of Primary School Teachers’ Knowledge and Understanding of History on Curriculum Planning and Implementation*. Shari Levine’s article locates pupil thinking in the richness of contextualised knowledge that they can bring to the classroom, both individually and collectively. Through the fusion of ‘school’ history with ‘life’ history it suggests that we can encourage and promote a level of understanding in pupils of complex citizenship issues that relate directly to their adult roles. As such, it is a supremely optimistic paper that suggests a possible solution to the question of teaching history within the new nation states of Europe, Africa and Asia. Penelope Harnett reviews the complexity of teacher knowledge and understanding that underpins, shapes and forms their classroom practice. The lesson to be learned is the danger of top-down government curricular and training initiatives that do not reflect the complexity of the teaching and learning situation.

The breadth of experiences furnishes a contrast with the current standardised and utilitarian initial teacher training curriculum which focuses on the acquisition of a narrow range of standards and provides little opportunity for reflection (DfEE, 1998). The primary teachers within the case studies were able to transform the written curriculum into meaningful experiences for their children. They did this by reflecting on their own knowledge and beliefs and linking them to their evaluations of the needs and interests of their children.

Penelope echoes Jacqui Dean’s report on the South African training initiative. Its implication is that the implementation of a history curriculum for citizenship based upon the liberal values that governments support will require an extensive programme of teacher re-education and training that is far more sophisticated than one based upon a technicist, competency-based approach. Petr Baranov brings us face-to-face with the problems of the interface between history education and education for citizenship. *Some Russian Approaches to Civil Education: Problems and Perspectives: The Historical Perspective* raises fundamental questions about the attitudes, values and perspectives of a society grounded in an authoritarian culture. In identifying possible ‘growth points’ for citizenship education within the family, the peer group and approaches to teaching and learning that assimilate citizenship attitudes, values and behaviours, it has explicit messages for the professional development of history teachers both within Russia and elsewhere.

All of the papers in this edition reflect on the complexity of historical education when set against the rapidly evolving and changing contexts of nation states and the Zeitgeist of their ‘political nations’. Keith Crawford in *Researching the Ideological and Political Role of the History Textbook - Issues and Methods* reflects upon the implications of this for textbooks, a major if not the major vehicle for history education:

… school textbook knowledge is socially constructed and … evidence from national education systems strongly suggests that textbook content is manufactured by powerful groups who see it as being central in the creation of particular forms of collective national memory designed to meet specific cultural, economic and social goals.

Robert Guyver’s review of *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness - Reflections and Provocations*, and Joke van der Leeuw-Roord’s *Working With History: National Identity as a Focal Point in European History Education* address both the question of the nature of history education within the
European context and the issue of what kind of history education we should support. As with the other papers in this edition, the focus is upon the promotion of critical, informed thinking that rest upon a set of shared assumptions about the nature of civic society. Joke van der Leeuw argues for a common approach to history teaching that develops a sense of the past base upon three precepts:

- understanding that different interpretations of the past, develop or construct different understandings of the present and influence different options for the future;
- pupils should be able to understand the world they are living in and to understand how it came about;
- these issues should be related to elements such as space, perspective and perception.

A central, unresolved concern is for the history education community to inform and influence those groups within the ‘political nation’ that determine the nature of the history curriculum and related initial teacher training and continuing professional development. As this edition suggests, the ‘political nation’ reflects a view of history based both upon a mythic, nationalist re-invention of the past and a view of history and its teaching as the transmission of knowledge about that mythic past to a new generation of citizens. The role of the history education community is to educate our masters to see history teaching as a factor in the entitlement of children to be members of plural, liberal and democratic societies that respect the rights of all, irrespective of gender, race or creed.

Good history teaching can diffuse the worst effects of nationalism by maintaining higher standards of scholarship and philosophical integrity. Jörn Rüsen's critique of the errors of ethnocentric history wisely identifies three lacunae, though his first and third points are closely connected:

- dualism of values where the positive evaluation of one's own history is set against the negative evaluation of the history of others;
- "Whiggism" - an unbroken continuity, tracing one's own development from origins to the present and relevant projections of the future;
- a clear location of one's own positive development at the centre of history in terms of time and space and a corresponding discriminating marginalization of others' histories.

(Cf. Rüsen, in Macdonald, 2000, p. 81, as reviewed by Guyver in this edition of IJHTLR.)

This can be turned into two important recommendations. The history of 'other' countries and communities should be respected, and not just marginalised or seen in a negative light. The development of any nation is never an unbroken continuity from its origins, and should not be seen as always central to global developments even where there are clear parallels elsewhere. Underpinning any choice of substantive contexts should be a clear commitment to fostering objectivity and creativity in historical thinking, though many teachers of history are struggling to do this against the current of politicised curricula and school systems. The principles behind the highest standards of scholarship in history can and should equate with the highest standards of citizenship.