



**TECHNIUM**  
**SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL**

**Vol. 36, 2022**

**A new decade  
for social changes**

[www.techniumscience.com](http://www.techniumscience.com)

ISSN 2668-7798



9 772668 779000

## **Effects of the usefulness of didactic principles in teaching history today**

**Felicia Elena Boşcodeală**

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Romania

tatufelicia@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** Current studies in the field of history as a science and as a discipline show us that it is in a permanent transformation, due to the increase in the level of complexity it entails, by reconsidering previous results and then by new methodological approaches. Our research is based on history as a didactic dimension and less on the history-science component, because as a discipline history has an important contribution to defining the cultural model in which people move, without particularities of age or gender, etc. Second, our analysis considers the constants and variables that have marked the discipline of history in the last 30 years.

**Keywords.** multiperspectivity, history teaching, continuing education, school curricula, skills

### **1. Theoretical landmarks**

The purpose of our research starts from the new educational paradigms and the newest educational policies that should lead to changes in the field of school practice. Recent studies and more have shown us that history has consequences in the development of students' communication skills, to analyze sources, to stimulate critical thinking. Current didactics, as it is constructed, should lead to the formation among students of a way of thinking specific to history, and "the teacher should give the student access to the intellectual soul of the discipline" (Singer & Sarivan, 2006, p. 246).

The existence of a generation of programs in the Romanian space has, at least at the theoretical level, common elements, which have in mind the regulatory role of the students' acquisitions in terms of training. Some of the current programs are student-centered and synchronized with European educational documents, which are basic elements of curriculum design. But whatever the pace of student acquisition, there is a need to know the level reached and what steps need to be taken, for example remediation, support for excellence or reinforcement. Therefore, objective and correct measures of the level reached in each individual competence are necessary, according to which the didactic activity can be organized appropriately, in this way the student becomes aware of his own learning.

Analyzing the general teaching-learning-evaluation mode after the second half of the 20th century, we often make correlations with the communist period. The findings are that there are still many followers of the way the educational process was carried out then, which was based on a large amount of information, on the consideration that the student must assimilate

everything that had been validated in the sciences. History is a side of education that tries to solve some problems that the individual encounters on an existential level. First of all, the teacher must know these facts and understand them because we can only understand the past through the lens of present facts. Today, the interest in the events of the past has decreased, but it is necessary that this gives thought if not certain lacks, such as models, analyzes of phenomena have influenced to a certain extent the way people behave. That's why more and more didacticians emphasize how important it is to make history a more attractive object, to make today's young people to be informed about our past and not only that, but to appreciate it, instead of demanding to know amounts of information that may not be useful most of the time. The same didacticists appreciate that the understanding of history today also depends on the quality of individual experience and finding solutions to today's problems, in parallel with the support of the teaching of history in school by the European institutions.

## **2. Research methodology**

The interview as a research method is a way to verify hypotheses through questions and answers (Chelcea, 2001), a specific investigative tool that helps highlight experimental facts (De Singly, Blanchet, Gotman, & Kaufmann, 1998).

Between July 20-30, 2022, we conducted a series of individual interviews with history teachers from the country. The purpose of the investigation was to analyze the changes in the field of education in the last 30 years and the effects of these changes on the subject of history. At the same time, the structured interview sought to draw clear directions in the development of a history teacher's guide as the final product of the research.

### **2.1. Sample**

The interviews were conducted on the Zoom Platform, and the subjects were selected on a voluntary basis. I especially looked for the interviewees to have more than 15 years of experience and the first degree (one of the interviewees has 14 years of experience) in education in order to be able to accurately formulate points of view on the changes that history as a school discipline has undergone in the last three decades. Also, the interviewees completed all stages of teaching degrees, four of the interviewees have the scientific title of doctor in history, one in education sciences, eight of them held or hold management positions as general school inspector, school inspector history discipline, school manager, member of the school curriculum development group, history subject training expert, director of the Center of Excellence for the history subject, head of the methodical commission for the curricular area "Man and Society" at the school level.

A total of 14 history teachers (N=14) were interviewed, of which 6 are women (N=6), eight are men (N=8). The duration of the interview on the Zoom Platform was between 35-40 minutes. The interviewees agreed to participate in the study and to its registration.

The individual interview was conducted according to the criteria known in the specialized treatises (Chelcea, 2001) and was based on the interview guide, which I have attached in the appendix, as well as the transcript of the interviews.

The topics covered in the guide were the factors that have brought about changes in the discipline of history in the last 30 years, multiperspectivity in the teaching of history, sensitive and controversial issues of history, examples of teaching scenarios using multiperspectivity, the necessary contents of a history teacher's guide, suggestions, proposals for optimizing the teaching of the subject at local and national level.

## 2.2. *Data collection instruments*

Thus, 10 teachers out of the 14 interviewed stated that a negative factor that has influenced the history discipline in the last 30 years is the decrease in the number of hours allocated to the history discipline, to which is added the elimination of the history evaluation test in the final exam for admission to high school. Another negative factor is the limitation of the number of hours for studying Romanian history.

There are also changes, new, positive approaches that have marked the discipline of history in the last three decades. Of these, a third of the interviewees mentioned the moment of Romania's accession to the European Union, the adoption of alternative textbooks, school programs focused on skills that contribute to the completion of the graduate's training profile, the development of new school programs for secondary schools in history, the introduction curriculum at the decision of the school, the use of digital educational resources in the teaching of history, especially during the pandemic.

The principles of multiperspectivity and the teaching of problems sensitive to history are extremely important in the teaching of history and their approach is necessary, because otherwise the students risk seeing history from a single approach and they can no longer critically analyze even the events in their own lives, is the opinion of more than three quarters of the teachers who participated in the interviews. One of the respondents believes that it is not yet sufficiently exploited at the level of learning activities carried out in the classroom. High school textbooks, for example, made according to old curricula do not provide enough sources to study an event from multiple perspectives. There are limitations to using multiperspectivity in the classroom consistently, and first and foremost is the lack of time. The interviewed teachers recommend studying two to three sources for each historical event/process, so that students can form a more complex, complete picture of that event.

Studying an event from multiple perspectives expands the scope of its analysis and demonstrates the fact that some conflicts are born from ignorance of history. The multi-perspective has brought to the light of the research new themes, little or not addressed such as the status of women or children in various periods.

## 3. **Results and discussions**

A third of the teachers interviewed claimed that the teaching of sensitive issues depends a lot on the history teacher's approach. Often sensitive issues also concern controversies in the interpretation of a historical phenomenon/process because they separate peoples and societies in the contemporary world. Their misunderstanding often stems from ignorance of history and creates confusion, gives rise to painful conflicts, such as the one in Ukraine today. They showed that from the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict until the end of the school year, they received a lot of questions from students, parents, acquaintances, relatives, who asked them about the origins of the conflict, the connection with the Romanian space and a possible involvement of our state. Such a conflict increases the sensitivity of society and triggers a series of prejudices.

The majority of the staff interviewed claimed that the analysis of sensitive and controversial issues of history in class has the main purpose of training skills related to analyzing sources, formulating questions related to the historical sources studied, the reasons why the historical sources support the respective points of view, the details, the details that were "omitted" from these sources, etc. They explain that it is the way to approach sensitive issues that can ensure success in the classroom and avoid misunderstandings that may arise during the lesson. Also, one of the teachers mentioned that methods like simulation, role play can be used

if the issue discussed involves a group or an ethnicity, such as a religious group or an ethnic minority.

In order to appreciate the way in which the changes in the teaching method of the history subject took place, the teachers interviewed appreciated that there is a big difference between the teaching method of about four decades ago compared to the current teaching method. History was a discipline with a strictly expository teaching method, based exclusively on lecture and memorization of dates and events. There was no emphasis on critical thinking or use of material resources eg map, historical source etc.

All the teachers interviewed stated that the activity of the teaching staff in the history lesson is influenced by many elements. Apart from the material resources and the endowments of the school which are very important, the level of interest of the students for the lesson, the particularities of the class, the learning outcomes are factors to consider. Their conclusions are that without a design in advance, without knowledge of the program, the history lesson cannot be held in any form. The changes in the educational field are factors that considerably influence the teacher's activity in the classroom, as all the teachers interviewed appreciate. At the same time, the resources available to the school represent another important factor in the success of the lesson, and access to digital educational resources was one of the few advantages of the school during the pandemic that is worth mentioning.

The activity of teaching-learning-evaluation in the history class is strongly influenced by the lack of literacy skills, a colleague notes, the small number of hours allocated to the discipline of history and also by the parallel system of private meditations that lead to the decrease of the student's interest in the class activity .

Interviewing the teachers on the topic of material resources emphasized that without their use in the history lesson, the success of the didactic approach cannot take place. They all stated that the most used resources are the map, the manual, to which are added the digital resources, used mainly during the pandemic: the digital manual, various online applications, etc. Two teachers spoke about the importance of using museum collections as teaching material, and museum visits are suggested in history class. During the pandemic, free online visits to museums in the European space were extremely important, as was free access to many art collections, ex Historiana, Europeana, etc.

In order to compile a history teacher's guide, we asked the teachers interviewed what needs and expectations they would have for such a guide. The answer was that it should contain both scientific and methodical information. Especially didactic elements are the most important, because especially in the beginning period, a history teacher needs design models for calendar planning, learning units, personalized intervention plans, etc. These design models must coincide with those approved by the ministry.

A guide, to be useful, needs examples of good practice for experienced teachers, detailing specific methods, learning activities linked to specific competencies, including ways of reading and explaining school history curricula. Various assessment tools should not be missing from this guide.

During the interviews, a number of changes were suggested at the national level. One of these is the implementation of teaching career mentoring. More than half of the responses show that teachers participate in continuing education programs out of personal decisions, especially to accumulate the 90 mandatory credits over a five-year period. Most of the time the attendance at the training courses is not directly proportional to the needs in the classroom and the courses, the training seminars are not sufficiently valued. Another interviewed colleague mentioned that the evolution in the teaching career in pre-university education goes through

three stages - definitely, teaching grade II and teaching grade I, but these stages are not followed by the increase in the complexity of teaching roles. The role of mentor, trainer or evaluator for the teachers who assume them does not bring them any additional incentive, such as changes in the way of staffing or salary. Colleagues' responses therefore point to the need for alignment between schools' and teachers' priorities and the offerings of continuing education providers.

Changing the high school programs is mandatory, especially since there has been a break between the middle school and secondary programs. Current high school programs relate to the specific skills-content relationship. More than half of those interviewed expressed this. Two teachers recalled that the organization of the curriculum by content areas and not based on chronological criteria created difficulties in understanding historical events/processes and propose that the new curricula be structured only on chronological criteria.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Through the analysis of the interviews conducted with history teachers, a comparison could be made between the teaching method of the subject and the current teaching style. The interviewees emphasized that the teaching method was strictly expository, history was politicized, there was a lack of interaction between student and teacher, lectures prevailed, memorization of historical facts/processes/events was very important and for these reasons, the discipline of history was, most of the time, classified as one of the hardest subjects of education. The changes of the last three decades have been significant, as those interviewed appreciate, even if not all of them have had positive effects. Thus, first of all, history became depoliticized, then very important was the change in the approach to the discipline of history from the perspective of the training of skills that would help to achieve the training profile of the graduate. The year 2017 represented the year in which the school programs for middle school history were modified, and the contents were adapted to the age characteristics of the students.

Alternative textbooks were another important change, because themes and content were presented from multiple points of view and this helped to understand history more fully. The same benefit has the introduction of a curriculum at the decision of the school, which brings new perspectives, so far not at all or very little studied.

Conversely, the decrease in the number of hours in the history discipline was a heavy blow to the discipline, felt more and more each year. The teachers interviewed pointed out that in Romanian education, changes and reforms are constantly taking place, changes that led to the elimination of the study of the history of Romanians during two years of study, brought serious damage to national history, when in other neighboring states there is a constant emphasis on national history.

Tenure is an important turning point in the teaching career, according to all those interviewed. The exam is difficult, requires a lot of study, didactic knowledge, but provides security, the feeling of belonging to a community. Half of the teachers interviewed showed the importance of continuous teacher training. This training should focus on personalized reading of curriculum documents, student-centered instructional design and skills training, diversified classroom learning activities. Along with the participation in continuous training courses, the professional development of teaching staff, believes one of the interviewed teaching staff, can be completed by capitalizing on communities of practice in which useful good practices are exchanged, experiences are shared, etc. A colleague mentioned the importance of the training courses within the Project "CRED-Relevant Curriculum, open education for all" (Palade, 2020), an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The CRED program created learning communities

in disciplines where they promoted educational resources, borrowed examples of good practices, created learning platforms, each teacher being a resource for others.

An important theme - The principle of multiperspectivity - in approaching history is useful, but there are limitations in its application to history, such as lack of time, very busy schedules. Equally important is the approach from multiple perspectives and attention in the preparation of learning activities regarding the sensitive issues of history because most controversies are caused by ignorance of historical events.

Material resources are indispensable in the teaching of history, and during the pandemic, digital textbooks and resources from educational platforms were called upon, which have now become a habit in the course of the history lesson. Although most teachers value students' digital skills, there were also respondents who claimed that their digital skills still leave a lot to be desired.

Most of the colleagues appreciated that the educational resources are an essential condition to implement the curriculum and an important factor for increasing the quality of the didactic act. A third of the interviewees emphasized the importance of the variety of open educational resources, i.e. the equal use of "traditional" resources - school textbooks, images, sources, cartoons, maps, but also resources that are the result of the development of new technologies - online platforms, educational software, interactive whiteboards etc. The textbook remains an important resource, support a third of the colleagues, and in the context of the new competence-based curriculum, the textbook acquires new roles from the simple transmission of knowledge to the possibility of organizing the instructional-educational process. One of the responses revealed that the textbook as a resource is losing ground to new technological advances, such as access to a variety of historical sources made available by numerous specialist sites.

It should be noted that all the teachers interviewed mentioned how important digital educational resources were during the pandemic. These freely licensed resources are accessible to any interested teacher and are of great importance in training and skill development, especially because of their diversity and ability to be reorganized for different purposes.

Among the most important suggestions of those interviewed regarding the discipline of history, we can mention the return to two hours of history per week and taking a test in the baccalaureate exam in history regardless of the discipline, the urgent change of school programs at the high school, because these are the older and there is a big discrepancy between gymnasium and high school programs, didactic and methodical training programs mandatory for all teachers.

## References

- [1] S. CHELCEA: Sociological research techniques. Economic. (2001)
- [2] D. KOLB: The Learning Style inventory. Boston: MA: McBer. (1981)
- [3] F. DE SINGLY, A. BLANCHET, A. GOTMAN, & J.KAUFMANN: Investigation and its methods. The questionnaire, the data production interview, the comprehensive interview. Polirom. (1998)
- [4] D. KOLB: Experiential Learning: Experience as a source of learning and development. New Jersey: Prentice Hali. (1984)
- [5] A. KORBER: Can our pupils fit into the shoes of someone else? În J. Van der Leeuw-Roord, The State of History Education in Europe (pg. 123-128). Hamburg: Korber Stiftung. (1998)
- [6] R. KOSELLEK: Their concepts and histories. Semantics and pragmatics of socio-

political language. Bucharest: Art. (2009)

- [7] R. KUMA: *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. (2011)
- [8] J.LEIF, & G.RUSTIN (1970). *Philosophy of Education*, vol I. Paris: Libraire Delagrave.(1970)
- [9] A. LOW-BEER (1994): *The reform of history Teaching, Nationhood and the state: A Study in Educational Politics*. London. (1994)
- [10] A. LOW-BEER: *The Council of Europe and history in school*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. (1997)
- [11] J. LYOTARD: *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester Unvers (1984)
- [12] A. MARGA: *Academic consequences of globalization: open markets, autonomus organizations, creative minds*. În M. Field, & J. Fegan, *Education Across Borders.Philosophy, Policy, Pedagogy. New Paradigms and Challenges* (pg. 19-28). Tokyo: Waseda university. (2005)
- [13] H. MARROU: *Historical Knowledge* . Paris: Seuil. (1954)
- [14] C. B. MC CULLAGH: *The Truth of History*. London: Routledge.(1999)
- [15] A. MC LEAN: *The motivated school*. Paul Capman Publishing. (2003)
- [16] M. NOSSEL: *Powered by Storytelling*. București: Publica. (2018)
- [17] J. NUTTIN: *Human Motivation Theory*. Paris: PUF. (1991)
- [18] E. PALADE(coord.): *Benchmarks for National Curriculum Design, Update and Evaluation*. The National Curriculum Framework. CRED. (2020)
- [19] K. PETER-FRITSCH: *Unable to be tolerant?* Oldenbourg. (2001)
- [20] R. PHILIPS: *History Teaching, Nationhood and the Stea: A Study in Educational Politics*. London. (1998)
- [21] H. PITCHER. *When Miss Emmie was in Rusia: English Governess before, during and after the October Revolution*. London: Eland Publishing. (2011)
- [22] R. RIDING, I. CHEEMA: *Cognitive Styles—an overview and integration*. *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 11:3-4, 193-215, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144341910110301>. (1991)
- [23] M. SINGER, & L. SARIVAN (2006). *Quo vadis, Academia? Milestones for a deep reform in higher education*. Sigma. (2006)