

CHANGING HISTORY TEACHING IN HUNGARY (1990–2020): TRENDS, MOSAICS, PATTERNS

Ágnes Fischer-Dárdai and József Kaposi*

The study aims at presenting the educational policy and pedagogical history framework of history teaching in the last thirty years. It also presents the theoretical and practical characteristics and milestones of the transformation of learning-teaching methodology in Hungary. The purpose of this article is to inform the domestic and international professional public about the innovations and changes affecting history teaching in recent decades thereby strengthening the legitimacy of the history didactics profession. In summary, the authors conclude that there were significant changes in central curricula, exam requirements and textbooks over the past thirty years. Key positive changes were the following: the ideological hegemony of Marxist history teaching has vanished, competence development has become the focus of teaching and learning, the contents have been modernized. The significance of the Modern Ages has increased and new values (e.g. democracy) have been defined. The plural, multiperspective, source- and activity-based approach has appeared in regulators and textbooks, the spread of learner-centered learning-teaching strategies and intelligent use of ICT tools has also started. A new approach has been established in higher education as well, however, it is a hindrance that the acceptance of history didactics as an independent field of science is still pending in both the academic and higher education spheres. Against the fortunate processes the account of the procedures is controversial, since the positive changes provided only partial results and have not brought widespread and extensive reform of history teaching.

1. Introductory Thoughts

The study aims at presenting the educational policy and pedagogical history framework of history teaching in Hungary in the last thirty years. It also presents the theoretical and practical characteristics and milestones of the transformation of learning-teaching methodology in Hungary. The purpose of this article is to inform the domestic and

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international professional public about the innovations and changes affecting history teaching in recent decades thereby strengthening the legitimacy of the history didactics profession. The authors were, on various levels and to various degrees, participants, and at times influential actors, in the processes presented in this study. From this, and as a consequence of their convictions, they advocate the aspect of continuity in the interest of maintaining Hungarian traditions, as well as the perspectives of renewal in the interest of implementing new Hungarian and foreign thinking, approaches and innovations.

2. Historical Background

Trends in history teaching in the past decades have been influenced by Hungarian historiography, which is undergoing a transformation, and reflection on international history didactics, in addition to the changing policy of remembrance and education.

From the end of the 1980s, on the eve of the change of system, the ideology-free approach to the historical past gained ground, the need for pluralist approaches became more evident as the silencing of earlier taboo topics (e.g. the Soviet occupation) became untenable. The study of history experienced the change of system as a liberation, because it could be freed from the compulsory ideological weights required in Marxist historiography.

The perspective of Europe became an important aspect that meant, on the one hand, the new legitimization of classical ideological-social and economic traditions (e.g. Judeo-Christian teachings, the principle of separation of powers, private ownership) and, on the other hand, a declaration of belonging to a geographic, economic and cultural area.

The reputable professional workshops of historiography systematically, in a far-reaching manner at institutional level, did not deal with the theoretical or practical scientific questions of history teaching, but a number of historians, at various levels and to varying degrees, participated in the preparation of and discourse over textbooks defining the rules of content (curricula, matriculation requirements) in public education.

The newest journals reporting and popularizing the latest results in the study of history (*História*, *Rubicon*) supported the professional training of history teachers. The new products of historians' research were presented not only in scientific journals and popular history

magazines, but at a number of conferences, teachers' events and seminars that mobilized history teachers. Most of these were initiated and organized by civil organizations in the profession (Teachers' Chapter of the Hungarian Historical Society; History Teachers' Association).

After the change of system, most history teachers expected from the study of history a simple knowledge, free of ideological biases, that they could pass on to their students. Today, it has become clearly evident that was an illusion at the time, and remains so today as well.

In the last 30 years, a lot of processes have been launched in the field of history teaching, which aimed to keep the processes in Hungary in sync with international trends.

Recent discourses on the teaching of history indicate that at least three or four contradictory, and in some ways mutually exclusive, historical interpretations of the past more than 100 years are present in parallel in daily practice. The struggle for the past seems to be ongoing, and each generation is looking for and offering more and more frameworks of interpretation. Unfortunately, in this struggle, simple 'sign shifts' dominate – what used to be positive to negative, and vice versa – rather than narratives trying to interpret the complex contexts of the past.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the various groups in the history and history teaching profession unfortunately do not debate the acceptance of cooperation, common basic values, but want to dominate the particular interests of the beneficiary group politically.

3. History Teaching in a Hungarian and International Context

In the past three decades, a number of new processes – often connected to each other, but also sometimes conflicting or opposing – in the area of history teaching can be diagnosed.

In the 1990s, points of view and theories which were earlier unfamiliar in practice in Hungary became known all at once. With regard to the regulation of content, the theory of curriculum was of defining significance. On the one hand, it placed the perspective of the students' development in the focus when selecting teaching materials; on the other hand, it introduced the core curriculum as a type of thing that increases professional autonomy at institutional

level. Furthermore, it stressed not only a more complex approach to subjects (e.g. areas of education), but the perspective of integrative learning, too.

In addition to the conventional chronological approach, room was made for other topical, synchronous approaches, too, but the legitimacy of the chronological principle was really never questioned. That is when – in relation to the spread of constructivist pedagogy – the so-called in-depth approach (Chambliss-Calfee, 1998; Knausz, 2003: 8–11) to historical topics gained acceptance.

At this time, stress on social and cultural history, and history of mentalities increased in historiography – in connection to the spread of the postmodern approach – and the processing of topics earlier addressed on the periphery (areas outside of Europe, the history of women and children, minorities, natural environment) all became more common.

Following this change in method of approach, the emphasis of the personal horizon in remembrance policy increases, the appreciation of oral history grows, and the appearance of cultural diversity, as a value, becomes more widely accepted as well as the multiperspective and controversial approach. The so-called ‘narrative competency,’ which puts stress on thinking about alternatives, willingness to debate, the ability to form and shape opinions independently, and the development of problem-solving thinking, was placed high up in the hierarchy of history instruction goals (Kaposi, 2016).

During the period around the turn of the millennium, the competency-based way of thinking and the learning-teaching strategies based thereon became one of the defining features of educational theory. Instead of ‘explicit’ knowledge, ‘tacit or passive’ knowledge embedded in the personal or social competencies of the student were brought to the forefront (European Commission, 2007). The prevalence of this mindset was also manifested in the placement of so-called key competencies in the focus of discourse.

As a result of the competency-based approach, greater emphasis was placed on so-called key concepts, as these created the chance for students to become able to recognize the connections, similarities and differences between events, to systematize their processed historical knowledge, and to identify repeated historical patterns and generalities (Stradling, 2001; Kojanitz, 2017: 13–30).

In the past decade, in discourse over history didactics, it has become generally accepted that the development of historical

thinking¹ is one of the most important tasks of history teaching. One of the most important goals of teaching history in schools is to shape a kind of adaptable framework of interpretation with which ‘events that have been processed and known trends can be effectively applied in well structured, new situations to support the understanding of the past or the present, and interpret changes in the future’ (Kojanitz, 2013: 28–47). Furthermore, dealing with history helps them to understand those who are historically and culturally divergent, different and dissimilar and ‘apply the kind of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable the individual to effectively take part in an everyday life founded on democratic values in a civil society’ (Hoskins: 2008). In practice, such an approach to teaching ‘promotes the development of students’ competencies to act (learning by working) ahead of the mere interpretation of the events of the past (frontal learning)’ (Fischerné, 2010). In recent years, the scope of problems related to inclusion and cultural diversity has come to the fore (Barsch, et al., 2019).

This attempted overview, which is by no means complete, shows that a number of international theories and practices regarding history teaching have appeared in the professional discourse in Hungary in the past decades, not infrequently in harmony with the recommendations of ISHD and Euroclio. Ideas for reform have emerged especially in the area of content regulation, but these novelties could not be put into pedagogical practice in Hungary in a coherent manner amid the challenges posed in the system of coordination by the frequent changes to education policy and the new pedagogical paradigm.

4. History Teaching

An encompassing assessment of Hungarian history instruction in the past decades has not been undertaken (Ranschburg, 2004: 161–141), so in this section, we present changes that have taken place in curricula, examination requirements and the area of textbooks in addition to showing the overall picture. These show well, both separately and together, those tendencies and contradictions that can be traced back to the ideological-spiritual consequences of the change of system, the turnarounds in education policy, the ‘top-down’ will to reform and the challenges of changing approaches to pedagogical thinking.

The political change of system could not handle those problems that were already present in the Kádár system, be they active or latent (e.g. students' lack of motivation, disinterest; a lack of reading and problems understanding texts). From the mid-1990s, some teachers felt that their professional prestige had become tarnished as their earlier approach to history, adopted either voluntarily or through compulsion, had, in whole or in part, been eschewed. The underlying reason for this was that public opinion as well as some people within the profession had interpreted the political changes simply as a precursor to change. A telling example of this was the teaching of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution which was treated as a counter-revolution before the change of system, then afterward – within a period of a few months – was required to be taught as a revolution. The sudden appearance of various historical approaches also posed a challenge, as did the unsustainability of the deterministic, single-perspective approach to history. These changes were understandable, but a less fortunate side effect was the exclusion, from the early 1990s, of any kind of historical interpretation, explanation or value judgment from the teaching process, with the justification that after the earlier ideological constraints, teachers didn't want to burden teaching with new shackles of thinking.

In the spirit of the developing and expanding 'fact fetishism' (which held that only historical data should be processed), many teachers returned to the earlier outdated monologic methods, to frontal teaching, and even in extreme situations to classroom dictation, as a result of which teaching practice was characterized by the 'processology' of the deterministic approach.

In the period connected to the change of system, the attitude of teachers of subjects was characterized by confidence in the expected transformation of subject matter, both in relation to the goals and the methods of history teaching. The foundation of that confidence was primarily the opportunity offered to import topics that were earlier taboo and prohibited approaches, and to win back the professional autonomy that was earlier restricted or taken away entirely by the powers that be. In the meantime a lack of analysis on debates beyond the matter of subject content, about interpretation of history and the practical effects of the knowledge revolution taking place in the world, unfortunately contributed to the fact that the international practice based on so-called narrative tendencies, intended to address the challenges of the age, didn't make it to Hungary at all, or did not

arrive in the kind of context that would have allowed the further organic development of local traditions and the creation of a sort of synthesis that could have represented Hungarian heritage and new European requirements and trends at the same time.

The change of system significantly reduced the opportunity to influence directly the practice of everyday teaching with external means (e.g. with professional overseers). This led to a strengthening of the professional autonomy of schools and teachers of subjects. On the practical level, that meant that institutions themselves drafted their pedagogical documents and local curricula, but a resulting change in approach was produced either not at all or to a negligible degree.

The expected subject pedagogical changes did not take place. This was confirmed by observations conducted on the impact of content regulation by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (HIERD) in the 1990s which examined how history teachers were affected by the professional challenges presented by the introduction of the NCC (1995) and the curricula that followed (2001).

The observation confirmed that subject teachers continued to use the methodologies applied earlier in their classroom hours. The evaluation also showed that textbooks and knowledge-related requirements were dominant, while processing and interpreting sources played a small role.

Later assessments also confirmed that we could see a very differentiated picture in the area of history teaching in practice, too. The new matriculation examination introduced in 2005 – as a strong outcome requirement – was perhaps most able to effect change of content and methodology at the classroom level. That activity confined to merely transferring information was reduced in teachers' work, while the share of source- and activity-centered teaching practice increased, complemented by new, interactive organizational learning methods (e.g. projects, pair work, drama pedagogy) and new textbooks with new approaches (reading sources, criticizing sources, multiperspective and controversial approaches).

Naturally, this pedagogical culture shift previously described did not become widely adopted in everyday practice. Frontal and dictation methods continue to be present in classrooms as confirmed by evaluations conducted in recent years. An online survey for a recent study (Kamp, 2019) shows that a pronounced change has not

taken place in the area of everyday practice with regard to activity-centered education.

The researchers/surveyors also reported that the teachers, including history teachers, do not take advantage of the new pedagogical challenges and activities arising from changes to the role of teacher – or the spread of digitalization – as a positive opportunity, but rather as a burden, and do not see it as necessary for the knowledge they have acquired until now. For teachers using the dominant method of knowledge transfer, the new requirements (motivating and interactive methods, active student participation), that is, the so-called role of facilitator does not appear to be attractive, they are not prepared for it, nor are they convinced that it will be more effective from the point of view of preparing their students.

The pedagogical thinking about knowledge and learning has changed a lot in recent decades and putting it into practice is a long and complicated process. Learning-teaching paradigms with different approaches have been congested and different perspectives have slipped on top of each other, as a result of which practicing educators often lose their orientation skills.

A presentation of the situation of history teaching would not be complete without a look at experiences regarding students' level of preparedness (knowledge, skills, attitudes). Unfortunately, our knowledge in this area is severely lacking. The main reason for this is that in the past 30 years, there has been no broad collection of data or evaluation, based on scientific norms, seeking to discover the level of students' interest in history, their interpretation of concepts connected to the covered topics, their multilevel cause-causal associations, and their nuanced interpretation of historical figures or events. Of course, local and regional evaluations (Szebenyi-Vass, 2020: 135–167), of varying size, have taken place, but none of them were repeated a number of times, and all of them involved only a single question.

To the fundamental question of how students' attitude toward the subject of history has changed in the past 30 years, how their historical consciousness has been shaped in the course of processing the past, and the nature and the size of the role played by history instruction in the scholastic framework, we can offer no scientifically-grounded answer. That is unfortunate because during that time, the central curricular requirements have been changed six times, and as a

result the textbooks, and the requirements related to teacher training have changed three times. This is problematic, too, because a system of intervention that precedes facts and data could become the accepted paradigm, and that would put the necessity of scientific research into question in the long term.

The activities of professional history teaching organizations remain an area that has not been digested. The Hungarian Historical Society and its Teachers' Chapter have the longest standing tradition of close to one-and-a-half centuries. During the time of the change of system, the History Teachers' Association, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, was established, along with the History Educators' Union.

According to the 2019 statistics of Hungary there are 8000 history teachers in schools. 25 % of them teach in the capital city, Budapest. 75 % work in state schools (maintained by the school district system) 25 % teach in private and religious institutions. There are 10 universities in Hungary providing history teacher training which train ca. 550 history teachers on the average of the last 8 years. Admission data suggest that the high school students applying for history teacher training possess average skills and background knowledge, since the minimal score of admission to the university training is between 300 and 350 scores of the 500 total points of the admission system. 75 % of the admitted students choose secondary level training and 70 % of them receive certification. Among the 10 mentioned universities which train history teachers, 3 institutions provide serious training in history didactics. The other institutions consider it a secondary task.

The tradition of the methodology-themed journals of earlier years was continued, with a broader perspective and a wider focus on history didactics, by the online periodical *Törénelemtanítás* (History Teaching), established in 2010. The journal, available exclusively online, was a private initiative, enjoying no institutional support, organized through the cooperation of experts in history didactics at the University of Pécs, University of Eötvös Lorand (ELTE) and Pázmány Péter Catholic University, creating a professional forum for the improvement and renewal of history teaching for researchers, PhD students and practicing teachers.

There are a number of reasons that the necessary changes did not take place but exploring those requires further research. The predictability of educational policy, the strengthening of professional autonomy for institutions and teachers, support for development of

school organization, and the spread of knowledge-sharing systems and networks could do much to give impetus to the effectiveness of the process of reform in the short term. It would also be of benefit if the stress on educational policy decisions and support would shift from the so-called macro level to the micro level. Instead of system-level intervention, greater attention should be paid to and more resources ensured for support of processes in the classroom, and the professional work of teachers. One of the keystones of the process of support could be bringing society on board with regard to central innovations (e.g. educational-instructional programs, textbook development), while promoting and sharing local good practices.² This process would also serve the recovery of the original intentions of the system of professional advising, with the involvement of teacher training institutions (Kaposi, 2015: 153–166).

4.1 *Curricula*

The restructuring of educational content regulation started in 1988, parallel with the process of the change of system. The changes were the subject of debates, of various depths and on various levels, lasting years. The 1995 National Core Curriculum (NCC) defined only the ‘core’ of requirements for subjects for tenth-graders. It modified the conventional subject frameworks (establishing complex areas of literacy) and placed the development of the students in focus, not the teaching material. The subject of history became (along with social studies and the study of humanity) a part of the integrated approach to social sciences called Human and Society Literacy Area.

As a result of this curricular concept, the volume of the earlier required content and lexical knowledge was significantly reduced. The integrated approach meant that historicity became a defining principle for various disciplines regarding society and humanity, while the complexity (Kinyó-Molnár, 2012: 289–326) suggested that the focus of the area of literacy was basically the processing of the historical past and familiarization with the foundational structures of society. Consequently, general development goals were simultaneously focused on the formation of narrative competencies (Fischer-Dárdai, 2006: 14–29) and the application of a social sciences approach.

The structure and content of the area of literacy clearly showed a significant shift from the conventionally exclusive history teaching-

centered approach to the complex social sciences approach dubbed ‘civic education.’ Consequently, the core curriculum simultaneously presented the two forms of collective memory: the communicative and the cultural memory (Assmann, 2004: 51, 53).

Taking this division into account, the curriculum, although concentrating mainly on the necessity of shaping cultural memory, also made space for the perspective of the present. The changes were experienced by a significant part of history teachers as a dismemberment of history instruction, or, as some put it, ‘the Trianon of history teaching.’ At the same time, advocates for the modernization of content saw the changes as a success (Jakab, 2003). It must be emphasized when looking at the elements of the NCC related to history instruction that content earlier focused almost exclusively on political history was significantly restructured, and the history of society, of ways of living and of culture were given significant space.

The 2003 version of the NCC updated the 1995 document on the basis of new insights created from knowledge and the increasingly accepted paradigm of lifelong learning but did not include the concrete content (the detailed requirements) of literacy areas, placing them at the level of the framework curricula. It encouraged the creation of a wide variety of framework curricula to allow the needs of the increasingly differentiated school system to be satisfied (Vágó-Vass, 2006: 197–278). In 2007, European key competencies (e.g. digital, social and civic competencies, as well as the competency of effective, independent study) that support lifelong learning were included in the NCC.

The structure and form of changes to the 2012 NCC mainly demonstrate continuity, as the supplement of the detailed content requirements (public literacy content) marked a return to the detailed requirements of the 1995 NCC. Maintaining a common cultural coding system in the spirit of the complexity of the social sciences was made the focus of the core curriculum concept (Kaposi, 2012: 5–22; 2015: 69–110). The document outlines the goal of history teaching as the understanding of the present through a processing of the past, the importance of ‘civic education,’ and, through this, the achievement of an active and aware participation in everyday public life. It stresses the application of the method of understanding narratives, the creation of a motivating learning environment and the

significance of using key ideas (Stradling, 2001) to support meaningful learning (Kaposi, 2016; Kojanitz, 2016).

The review of the curriculum process shows that a dilemma, in large part connected to the change of system, became the focus of discourse: how and to what degree should the perspective of public commitment, concentrating on society at the time, be present in addition to the traditionally culture-centered (e.g. academic and value neutral) approach of the subject of history (Kinyó, 2012). The debate played out against the backdrop of the tradition, in place since curricula were first regulated in Hungary, of the subject of history serving as the most emphatic sphere for education for citizenship, as well as playing a defining role in shaping national identity for more than a century. The subject of history retained this function even after the change of system and Hungary's accession to the European Union.

It is the main goal of history teaching in Hungary to shape awareness of national identity, but also important is forming a feeling of belonging to Europe.

These processes also bear witness to the increasing supplementation of traditional history instruction content and requirements with the elements of education for democracy, including a shift in focus to strengthening a complex problem-solving manner of thinking about social integration and social cohesion (Halász-Lannert, 2004: 23–26). The advancement of this kind of approach in content regulation can be easily traced, as evident in both the 2003 and 2007 National Core Curriculum, and in the requirements of the 2005 matriculation examination. The intensity of the process is also shown by the fact that social studies 'grew up' to become an independent subject during the period and also appeared as a matriculation examination subject which some institutions of higher education accepted as a substitute for history when meeting admissions requirements.³

4.2 *The Matriculation Examination*

Examination development launched in 1995, after the issue of the National Core Curriculum, resulted in a significant restructuring of content and structure. Managing the secondary school expansion, which triggered admissions to higher education, was a priority goal of social policy. To this aim, the examination system was split into two

levels, in which the so-called mid-level sought to serve the function of a matriculation examination, while the higher level aimed to serve as a selection tool for institutions of higher education. In addition to the introduction of the unified, dual-level examination, examination development goals were set to present new knowledge content, make competency development a focus, establish and broaden standardization, widen the opportunity for individual students to choose their paths (flexibility) and create fairer conditions for continuing studies in higher education.

For this reason, the new matriculation examination requirements aim to recover an internal balance between the trinity of knowledge transfer, skills development and mediation of standards with regard to the educational goals of the subject. A key role in the requirements was assigned to competencies ensuring historical learning, e.g. acquisition and use of knowledge, spatial and temporal orientation, the exploration of factors that shape events, source processing, and the ability to empathize and communicate. The renewal of content served primarily to place more emphasis on social, economic and cultural trends, and on content necessary for the complex and true to life presentation of various periods, in addition to knowledge of historical events. The ratio of Hungarian and universal history topic areas reached 60:40 %, and the weight of 19th–20th century history grew. The area of lexical knowledge was reduced, because students could only be asked to recount lexical data contained in the framework curricula on the given topic in examination tasks.

In the case of the subject of history, the defining element of the examination reform was the introduction of the written portion of the examination, with the intent of achieving comparability of overall examination results, the amalgamation of examination requirements and conditions, the broader adoption of new – considered novel even from an international perspective – assessment and evaluation practices, and the application in practice of methodological reforms in terms of approach and content. The new type of written examination tasks sought to focus on the assessment of applied knowledge rather than the conventional data-centered approach.

The tasks demanded the (productive) application of what was learned in new situations rather than a reproduction of what was learned.

The requirements of the oral examination focused on the problem-centered approach to historical phenomena and events. This

was served by the thematic topic areas (economy, economic policy, material culture; population, settlements, way of life; individual, community, society; international cooperation and conflict; political institutions, ideas and ideologies; the operation of modern democracies) and the requirement that students explain, analyze and interpret the correlations of a historical problem.

An important element of the evaluation system for the matriculation examination became the pursuit of comparability. A comprehensive assessment was replaced by analytical evaluation according to competencies which express the required quality and scale of knowledge with measurable criteria. The novel correction and evaluation aspects also signaled that the criteria outlined in the task apply first of all to the operation performed (e.g. collection of information based on the given aspects, the formulation of simple conclusions from the causes or consequences of historical events) and not just the required concrete content (concepts, historical data). The matriculation examination requirements introduced in 2005 clearly focused on the formation of competency development and lifelong learning skills, as well as the aim for multiperspective and activity-based teaching. The matriculation examination started good trends in everyday teaching practices. The changes to the rules undoubtedly advanced source-centered history teaching, the new type of skill development tasks, and the development of various teaching materials supporting problem-solving thinking, as well as changes to the methods of approach in history teaching in schools (Fischer-Dárdai & Kaposi, 2006: 85–99).

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The significance of the changes was assessed in the following study from 2006, Report on Hungarian Public Education: ‘Among the teaching subjects, there is just one, and we highlight here history, considered to be rather traditional, but in which significant modernization advances have taken place: in terms of content, with the strengthening of the history of the 20th century, the study of

current affairs and civic awareness, and through the methodological enforcement of the use of sources.’ (Vágó-Vass, 2006).

5. Summary

A struggle for the acceptance of history didactics as an independent discipline has continued, with varying degrees of success in Hungary for the past three decades. It can be seen as a success that the modern aspects and recommendations mediated by history didactics have been included in content regulations (curricula, examination requirements) and textbooks, too, in the wake of top-down and centrally controlled reforms. History didactics workshops have been established, although their influence on the academic sphere has remained marginal. The operation of professional journals (and the continuation of various professional conferences, supported mainly by civil forces in the profession, have made possible, with some interruption on a smaller or larger scale, regular discourse on the theoretical and practical issues of history teaching.

If we look at the process in terms of unrealized goals, then we see that history didactics were not fully accepted as an independent discipline in either the academic sphere or the sphere of higher education. In the study of history, the conventional approach with regard to the goals system of history teaching continues to dominate according to which awareness of the content and connected facts selected within the school framework are the most important goal of teaching. In the past three decades, the professional ties between the profession of history and history teachers, which may be said to have been well ordered before the change of system, have loosened.

If we look back considering the results of the restructuring of history teaching, we can establish that significant changes can be diagnosed from the aspect of content and methodology in documents, curricula, examination requirements and textbooks, too.

With regard to content regulation, the defining element of the era was the 2005 reform of the matriculation examination, from a number of aspects. First, the process of preparing the regulation stretched over several government terms, and it involved the airing of opinions of a wide professional circle in full view of the public. Second, this reform brought into practice the mandatory written examination, which emphasized competency-centered teaching and

the importance of sources, as well as emphasizing in the essay section the process of thinking rather than facts.

On the whole, changes in content regulation advanced the development of a various kinds of teaching materials supporting source-centered history teaching, the new types of skill-development tasks and problem-solving thinking, as well as the changes to the manners of approaching history teaching in schools, and the drafting of various interactive and reflective methodologies, alternative programs and novel textbooks.

As one of the authors claimed a few years ago, at a history teacher conference in Hungary the instruction of history in Hungary is contradictory, as, both in the area of theory and practice, the educational characteristics of various historical dimensions of time slip over each other, and these often contradictory phenomena function in parallel in everyday practice. In history teaching in Hungary today, the single point of view, narrative-centered teaching based on conventional teacher presentation/dictation are present as well as the educational practice that uses the question method and multiperspective approach, is source-based, activity- and experience-centered, and builds on project work while often taking form in digital networks. Thus the general picture of the everyday practice of history teaching offers and allows for different interpretations when examined from various perspectives.

Long-term social policy goals (national and European identity, social solidarity, commitment to democracy), the ever-changing culture of remembrance and diverse historiography, as well as the changed perception of knowledge, induce history teaching with a complex approach, of which the ultimate goal is establishing historical literacy. Stories that are experience-based and that pique students' interest, that contain the building blocks for establishing a narrative way of thinking, must become the center of school study. For this reason, the designation of historical content processed in the school framework must be made more flexible, allowing the power to motivate students' interest to organically connect with the purpose of passing on the traditional national cultural code system. The further increasing weight of the modern and present time in the practice of history teaching, as well as finding a new balance between global and local topics, appears to be unavoidable. Developing historical and key competencies as well as thinking must be made a priority, and the learning of basic comprehension skills necessary to interpret

documents, linguistic or other communication (e.g. visual) codes, and the recognition of tools and techniques used for manipulation are becoming ever more important requirements.

Our paper presents mainly a review of the main trends of history teaching in the quarter of a century starting from 1990. These were defined especially by a commitment to European values and the resulting attempt to implement intentions to modernize: differentiated culture of remembrance and historical thinking, multiperspective approach, competency-based activity-centered learning practice. We have attempted to present those changes that aimed to bring Hungarian practices (theoretical, practical) in sync with international trends. The process of public life and educational policy in recent years – the ongoing intense political struggle for the past, the more pronounced role taken by the state – have produced new perspectives and policy intentions, emerging amid divergent circumstances and forms of practice both at the central administration and local levels. An evaluation of these new phenomena, tendencies and problems – in possession of sufficient historical perspective – can be the subject of a later analysis.

Notes

¹ International literature on the subject uses the expressions historical consciousness or historical reasoning, and sometimes historical literacy is the designation.

² This was confirmed by the 2018 Save As and 2020 First Hand conferences of the Teachers Chapter of the Hungarian Historical Society, <https://tanaritagozat.tortenelmitsulat.hu> (21.03.2021).

³ The process of curriculum development in the period 2016–2020 and the content regulations ordered in 2020 as well as the context of their introduction are not addressed.

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