

CRITICAL THINKING IN HISTORY TEACHING ACCORDING TO EC RECOMMENDATIONS



Humanities

Keywords: Critical thinking, Curriculum, EC recommendations, European dimension, History teaching.

Desara Karaj

University of Tirana. Institute of European Studies. PhD (Candidate)

Abstract

One of the biggest challenges for teachers today is to keep students' interest alive during the learning process. In upper secondary schools there is an increase in interest in science subjects while subjects such as history, geography, civic education, etc ... are seen as less important even though through them students develop their thinking skills, in addition to enriching themselves with knowledge, habit and human values. In this context, motivating students to be active in the subject of history is a challenge for teachers. In this article it is intended that through a review of literature to lay out the theoretical basis of creating the appropriate conditions and climate for the use of methods that generate critical thinking in the subject of history. This paper explains the concept of learning and critical thinking, also examines the relationship between curriculum and critical thinking. The author examines the EC recommendations on the challenges of applying critical thinking in the subject of history and links them to the analysis of the current state of history teaching in Albania. In this paper the author reaches some conclusions and recommends practical solutions on how to make teaching history more motivating and interesting so that students not only benefit from mastering key competencies through it, but are motivated and feel satisfied during the learning process.

What is learning?

The main goal of the reform of the teaching process is closely related to achieving the most successful learning for all students. Learning the contents of school subjects by students is a very complex and complicated process. Learning is about an individual action of the student or pupil in trying to learn what he / she receives during the learning process. This is the action that the student does inside and outside the classroom, at home, in the library, in reading rooms, etc.

Individual character is about learning, which marks the student's activity in achieving cognition is a process which is motivated and purposeful. When talking about learning it is important to mention two concepts related to theories and models of learning. Learning theories describe the whole learning process. While learning models focus on changes that directly affect school learning outcomes. The two basic criteria for assessing learning are theoretical and practical validity. Learning patterns are theoretical in nature, while content is practical.

The Meaning of “Critical Thinking”

In numerous studies, researchers have evaluated the abilities of individuals studying in areas that required “knowledge, wisdom, practicality” - logical reasoning, grammar, humor. Determining the quality or value of our beliefs is a function of human thinking, and the kind of thinking that makes this work better is critical thinking - a skill that education aims to develop.

This means that critical thinking is not about what you think, but how you think. In 1997 in Albania, as in 8 other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the number which increased began the implementation of the project “Development of critical thinking through reading and writing” Critical thinking occurs when the parties involved make it clear that thought is dynamic, constantly changing, and inevitably changeable. This point also includes the description of the way of securing the information and the assurance that the data are really applicable. Another element is the specification, i.e. providing or giving as much detail as possible about the issue in question. Logical connection is valued as understanding the information revealed. In a sense this is a process similar to assimilation that allows the entry and “taking place” of new information near the old one and the integration of the two. Depth is an element that deals with the separation of parts of the problem and their analysis one by one, detached from each other, with the evaluation of the whole afterwards and the way these parts interact with each other. Extent of thought refers to the ideas and opinions of others and the possibility of creating an alternative strategy in addition to the primary one. Justice is the final point that refers to the independence and sincerity of truthfulness in evaluation. Critical thinking is a further advancement of existing ideas, or a change of the latter in the light of new dynamics. It is simply the ability to think logically before believing something we read or before taking action. Critical thinking can be taught. It can be learned by anyone under the action of certain conditions and especially students can learn it.

The Relationship between Curriculum and Critical Thinking

The learning process in the last decade based on the development of skills finds great use in the so-called “Cognitive Revolution”. Critical thinking is an active process a way of interacting ideas with information where the student can face a challenge. The development of critical thinking is possible when it is included in the general context of the school curriculum or daily life. Critical thinking and learning occurs when teachers understand and value the variability of ideas and learning experiences by implementing this thinking in students through learning. Critical thinking means good thinking, which is the opposite of illogical and irrational thinking. Today, public education is largely failing to cultivate the basic skills of students in critical thinking. The vast majority of students in schools and students in colleges are failing to draw reasoned conclusions based on the facts. In most cases they are taught what to think and very few of them know how to think.

Critical thinking - is the thought that has a purpose that confirms an issue, that interprets the meaning of an action or phenomenon that solves a problem. The thinker who has developed critical thinking is inquisitive and well-informed, credible. Tolerant, flexible, fair in judgment, honest in overcoming prejudices, careful in making judgments, willing to think, clear on various topics, regular on complex issues, diligent in seeking information, reasoning in the selection of criteria, focused on data search and persistent in achieving accurate results, etc. Critical thinking is based on universal intellectual values, which have as elements: accuracy, logical connection, consistency, data, reasoning, breadth, depth and clarity.

Critical thinking also means logical conclusions, rational decision-making, the art of thinking, scientific, mathematical, historical, anthropological, economic, moral, philosophical, etc. thinking. Critical thinking is a penetrating and deliberate human phenomenon that implies a critical spirit, a curiosity, a sharp mind, etc.

Meanwhile, creative thinking is the kind of thinking that leads us to new discoveries, new methods, fresh perspectives, completely new ways of understanding and perceiving things.

EC Recommendations

The main feature of history teaching and learning today is still focused on national history. This conclusion has emerged from a series of activities, research conducted by international organizations and institutions specialized in this field.

Within national history, the perspective of the majority is dominant in history. The history of "others", which may be social groups and strata, minorities, is either not treated at all or is treated with prejudice.

From this point of view, international organizations such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, history teachers 'associations of each country, the pan-European history teachers' association, EUROCLIO, NGOs, various, democratic organizations and governments are working to orient history teaching towards civic values that pose the challenge of the 21st century. But what is the purpose of these bodies, such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, in this area? Based on the studied literature, the researcher is listing the recommendations of these bodies for the governments of different countries in the field of history teaching and teaching.

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 to achieve the greatest unity among European parliamentary democracies. It is one of the oldest European political institutions and has 45 member states, including 15 members of the European Union. It is the largest intergovernmental and interparliamentary body in Europe and is headquartered in Strasbourg. In addition to national defense issues excluded from the work of the Council of Europe, the body has activities in the following areas: democracy; fundamental human rights and freedoms; media and communication; of social and economic affairs; education, culture, traditions and sports; resume; health; environment and regional planning; local democracy; and legal co-operation. The European Cultural Convention was ratified in 1954. This international treaty is open to European countries that are not members of the Council of Europe, and enables them to participate in Council programs on education, culture, sport and youth. To date, 47 countries have acceded to the European Cultural Convention; The Council of Europe has full membership countries plus Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holi and Monaco. Four specialized committees - such as the Committee on Education, the Committee on Research and Higher Education, the Committee on Culture and the Committee on Cultural Heritage - carry out tasks pertaining to education and culture under the European Convention on Culture. The committees

also have close working links with European ministers' conferences on education, culture and cultural heritage. The programs of these four committees are an integral part of the work of the Council of Europe and, like the programs in other sectors; they contribute to the realization of the three main objectives of the policy of the Organization:

- the preservation, strengthening and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms of pluralist democracy;
- raising awareness of European identity;
- the search for common positions on the great challenges facing European society.

The education program of the Specialized Committee on Education and the Specialized Committee on Higher Education and Research recently covers in-school and out-of-school activities and higher education. Currently, there are projects on education for civic education, history, modern languages, school connections and exchanges, strategies for educational reform, interfaith and intercultural dialogues, training for educational staff, recognition of qualifications, distance learning for equality and social cohesion, universities as centers of citizenship, learning and teaching in open societies, the education of Roma / Gypsy children in Europe, the teaching of the Holocaust and the legacy of European universities. "The Council of Europe also contributes to the Bologna Process for Higher Education reform, which aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010.

The term 'multiperspectivity' was rarely used in the context of pre-1990 school history education; although Professor Bodo von Borries has observed that the concept has been actively discussed and developed by several German historians, including himself, since the early 1970s.

The term began to be used more widely in Europe in the early 1990s, especially in history conferences and seminars and in workshops for in-service teacher training organized by the Council of Europe and EUROCLIO, the Permanent Conference of European Associations History Teachers.

In October 2001, at the 771st meeting of the Deputy Ministers of the Committee of Ministers of the member states, Recommendations (rec 2001) 15 on the teaching of 21st century history in Europe were adopted. These are summaries of those elements which are applicable to the teaching and teaching of the history of primary schools and to the initial and continuing training of history teachers in Europe. European Convention on Culture, signed at Paris on 19 December 1954, called on the signatory states to encourage the study of each other's history and civilization and to extend such studies to other parts of Europe.

In Vienna (1993) and in Strasbourg, summits of heads of state as well as EC leaders expressed the need to strengthen understanding and trust between peoples. Particularly through the teaching units it aims to eliminate prejudices and emphasize the positive influences between

different countries, beliefs and ideas on the historical development in Europe. They claimed that the ideological falsifications and manipulations of history are incompatible with the basic principles of the Council of Europe, set out in its Statute. The Deputy Ministers of the Committee of Ministers, recommended in October of the year 2001 that the governments of the member states, while respecting their constitutional structures, national and local situations and education systems, should draw up the principles underpinned by the recommendations given in the Appendix, together with the latest reforms and those of perspective in both the fields of history teaching and history teacher training.

Our big challenge is to make motivational teaching interesting in the classroom. The subject of history in pre-university education includes the periods from the birth of ancient civilizations to the present day (including the history of Albania).

The teacher, based on the objectives of this course, with all relevant instruments, encourages students to be curious about national, regional and world historical events; encourages critical thinking, the logic of events, causes and consequences (positive and negative), makes students sensitive to historical developments but also prepares them to be able to draw conclusions from the past and contribute positively to the future.

The teacher during certain topics leads the students to understand that coexistence, understanding, tolerance, respect for rights, equality, cooperation between peoples are very important values for a more peaceful continuation and in reducing problems within the country, region or in all the world. Reinforcement of these values that affect the historical development of peoples is the interdisciplinary connection in subjects such as citizenship, geography or language, where through projects with common themes in these subjects, tasks are done with group work. This method of work cultivates students to be cooperative, to accept an opinion different from the members, to debate through arguments, to respect each other in sharing responsibilities, to exchange opinions, facts or opinions with each other and finally to create Treatment of these historical moments in the lesson, requires from every history teacher, to have in mind pedagogical elements that help the student in the learning process, as well as in the objective treatment of this story aiming to present the past through of a multi-cultural and multi-perspective method.

This is important when sensitive issues of history are at stake. In this regard, a more open discussion would create opportunities for a critical look at what actually happened. History creates the opportunity for us to look at it from a variety of perspectives, but in this context open discussion, although it can lead to heated arguments, creates opportunities for positioning.

Critical interpretation is an important element in the pedagogical aspect in the subject of history. In this context, historical knowledge is definitely based on testimonies and written documents, oral histories or figurative sources, photos, films, or even memories of witnesses. Students notice that historical evidence can often be conflicting. In this prism, teachers should teach students to do different treatments and interpretations of the same historical event.

Students can identify with stories, national, regional, or even wider groups. It is often present that political leaders tend to nurture a sense of a collective identity. But to build their personal identity, students need critical skills. We as teachers must provide you with a suitable education by providing you with elements for identity building, as well as treatment with critical skills.

Different sources of history are often contradictory. In this regard we need to enable students to distinguish between fact and opinion. At the end of listing these very important pedagogical elements, I can say that the success of teaching history is judged only in a long-term plan. The challenges faced by history teachers are many, such as recent political changes and developments. Our big challenge is to make motivational teaching interesting in the classroom.

References

- Vaughn, L & McDonald, C. (2010). *The power of critical thinking*. Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.
- Musai, B. (2005). "Interactive Teaching and Learning", Tirana, CDE.
- Key concepts in the Philosophy of Education, Christopher Winch & John Gingell, 1999, Routledge: London p. 42.
- Beck, L.L., McKeown, M.G., Hamilton, R: L., & Kucan, L. (1997). *Questioning the author: an approach for enhancing student engagement with text*, Newark, DE; International Reading Association, p. 14. www.ascap.edu.al, history subject programs, (seen June 2021) www.ascap.edu.al, subject programs of history subject, (seen in June 2020)
- Bodo von Borries. (2001) "Multiperspectivity" - Utopian Pretensions or Feasible Fundament of Historical Learning in Europe, in Joke van der Leew-Roord (ed), *History for today and tomorrow; What does Europe mean for school History?* Hamburg, Korber Stiftung.
- The Council of Europe project, *Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century*, also tossed out the idea of multiperspectivity, and a chapter on it was included in the results of the teacher's book. See, Robert Stradling, (2000), *Teaching 20th - century European history*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing.
- Musai, B. (2014). *CDE Teaching Methodology*, Tirana. Center for Democratic Education.
- Zwiers, J. (2005). *Developing thinking skills in grades 6-12*. Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.
- Musai, B. (2019). *Interactive teaching and learning - Methods for developing critical thinking*. Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.
- Crawford, A., Saul, W., Mathews, R.S., & Makinster, J. (2005). *Teaching and learning strategies for thinking classes*. Tirana: Center for Democratic Education