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## **Process-oriented methods in the teaching of history**

### **New avenues in the initial training of history teachers at the University of Vienna**

#### **Abstract/Summary**

Over the past years demands on the teaching profession have increased enormously both with regard to content but also with regard to educational and didactic concerns. Increased mobility in our society at large and frequent calls for more flexibility on the labour market require a new conception of "all-round-education". Consequently university-based teacher training will in the future have to take into account society's increased demand for (self)-reflexive, social, communicative and organisational skills.

At the University of Vienna a team of educationalists, historians and teacher trainers have therefore been working on developing a new curriculum for trainee teachers who are following the course "History and Social Studies".<sup>1</sup> The aims of the new curriculum lie in a better integration of the specialist historical, didactic, educational, and practical strands of teacher education. A revised curriculum which came into force in 1993 already contains steps in that direction by offering increased opportunities for classroom practice during the time spent at university.

These formal changes are the expression of a new theoretical understanding of what the didactics of history is. In this understanding process-oriented and experiential forms of learning are the centrepieces in the initial training of history teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> In Austria the first 4 semesters of university courses in the subject "History" offer the same curriculum for students seeking teaching qualifications as for students studying for a plain degree in history. After the first two years the curriculum diversifies, leading to a history degree in a further four semesters, and to a teaching degree in "History and Social Studies" after a further five semesters.

In Austrian secondary schools the subject "History" has been called "History and Social Studies" since 1962. Over the years the syllabi have been increasingly redesigned to integrate sociological concerns with historico-political ones. The subject in Austria therefore does not only cover traditional historical topics (political history in the narrow sense, military and diplomatic history, cultural history) but also areas of more recent historical interest such as economic and social history, and concerns of other social sciences such as sociology, political science, ethnology, historical anthropology etc.

## **1. Teacher training in an era of 'accelerated cultural change': complex societies and complex learning processes**

The highly industrialised regions of our planet are currently undergoing a process of rapid social, political and economic change. These restructurings have a strong impact on the cultural sphere: seemingly stable conventions are undermined, well-established norms and behaviours change rapidly. This process has been termed "accelerated cultural change".

Accelerated cultural change also has its consequences in the educational sector: the established educational institutions are coming under increasing social pressure. New suppliers from the information sector (TV, print media, adult education, private institutions and organisations) compete with schools and universities as providers of education. The range of education offered by the school and university systems is increasingly challenged and questioned. High drop-out rates at university as well as the high demand for extra tuition outside school are clear symptoms of this state of affairs.

Hitherto successful teaching methods and contents are no longer demurely and unquestioningly accepted by the young people of today. Relationships between teachers and pupils change. The situation can be summarised by saying that the demands on school teachers have grown rapidly over the last years both in terms of content as well as in terms of pedagogy.

The teachers themselves are not very well prepared for these changes and many experience feelings of insecurity. This is exacerbated by the fact that daily routine leaves teachers little room for the systematic reflection of their experience. Such a situation tends to produce simplified explanations of the problems at hand. The teachers' likelihood to fall back on authoritarian educational styles increases and the conflicts this creates are then often projected onto the pupils.

On the academic side of things it is often said that today's pupils know less than those in previous years and that they do not live up to the established educational standards. Social interaction with the pupils is experienced as difficult because they are seen as showing an increasing amount of behavioural disorders.

These attempts to explain the situation, as accurate as they may be in particular cases, will not, however, serve the cause of school education in the long run. If we continue to base our educational programs on a traditional understanding of education there is a high risk that the acceptance on the part of the young generation will decrease even further. We will become less and less able to fulfil their legitimate need for an education which they experience as useful and will therefore accept.

The accelerated cultural change sketched here means that the teaching of history is confronted with new challenges: what we need are new teaching methods that allow the learner to experience the complexity of social change. We need complex, i.e. holistic, integrated and process-oriented methods of teaching and learning. Such methods should enable the learner not only to acquire declarative knowledge about certain historical facts (e.g. the social dynamics of industrial societies, the restructuring of the family, the changing relationship of the sexes) but to also develop procedural knowledge which can be acted upon in concrete, everyday social situations - in other words such methods should help learners develop their social competence.

These changes naturally present a new challenge for teacher education. Future teachers need to be prepared for them and they need to be able to react flexibly to any problems which may arise. In order to achieve this the education and training of teachers also needs to be remoulded into a rich learning environment where the student teachers can practise the necessary didactic competencies.

## 2. The methodology of teaching history as an applied social science

In many European countries the didactics of history has established itself as an independent field over the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> Over the years it has been able to shake off its "ancillary relationship" ("Klientelverhältnis"; ROHLFES 1990:180) with "pure historical science" and to define its own area. In this new discipline, scholarly debate and theory formation has been centring around the teaching of history at schools.

This does, however, not mean that the theoretical convictions of scholars in the field are at all unified. Concepts like "historical awareness", "historical culture" or "historical learning" are connected with diverging ways of dealing with historical knowledge. What unites all these approaches is that they see didactics as independent of the study of history per se. In the same measure that the didactics of history has become an independent discipline it has liberated itself from its primary preoccupation with translating the results of historical study for the use in schools, that is from facilitating a smooth transfer of research results into the classroom.

*In the understanding that education has as its aim the development of socio-political and critical communicative competence, the didactics of history must be seen as that academic discipline which tries to identify those facts about the past (of a certain problem, region, social organisation, political system, civilisation) that are relevant in the current situation and also a discipline which seeks to impart this "historical knowledge" (in the interest of a projected future) in such a way that the young generation can act upon it and incorporate it into their social competence.*

This understanding of the didactics of history will not always be at a consensus with established views about "history" and "historical knowledge". Contrary to them the didactics of history sees itself in an active social role: it aims at offering tools for

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<sup>2</sup> I am referring, in particular, to the situation in (West) Germany and Austria. Relevant publications documenting this process are (in Germany): *Geschichtsdidaktik*, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, *Geschichte lernen*, *Jahrbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik* and (in Austria) *Zeitgeschichte*, and *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde* which has been edited since 1971 at the Department of Economic and Social History of the University of Vienna. For an introduction compare BERGMANN et al. (1985<sup>4</sup>) and ROHLFES (1986).

examining current social problems by showing them to be the result of historical development and hence susceptible to change.<sup>3</sup>

In this article the didactics of history is understood to be an *applied social science*. Its central concerns with regard to the teaching of history at schools are as follows:

1. In the face of current social developments, what ways of dealing with the past seem particularly necessary and useful for the young generation?
2. Which (historical) methods are appropriate for reconstructing past cultural, social, economic and political situations and their development?
3. What knowledge is necessary in order to foster a historical understanding which is relevant to the current changes in society?

In my opinion these are the basic issues which the didactics of history needs to resolve within its concrete social environment.

Consequently we also need to pursue these questions in the initial training of history teachers. We should not, however, focus on the current situation of history teaching at schools but on the demands which history teachers are likely to meet in the future. We need to ask what kind of future these teachers are being educated for.

### **3. History teachers: the job description**

The training of history teachers at Vienna University aims to support students in their task to develop a viable professional identity and to give them opportunities for acquiring the skills and competencies necessary in their future careers. In other words, the students themselves, with their concrete possibilities, expectations and experience are at the centre of the teacher education programme.

As discussed above, the demands on the teaching profession have increased enormously over the past years both in terms of contents and in terms of pedagogy.

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<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that this is a noble aim which can only ever be reached in part. I still think that the direction is right. One of the tasks which the didactics of history will have to tackle in the near future is "to move on from its normative and speculative discourse into becoming an empirical and application-oriented science" (VON BORRIES 1990:3).

This situation demands that the professional character of teaching be developed more strongly than it is at the moment. Our curriculum therefore aims at catering for the increasing need to acquire self-reflexive, social, communicative and organisational competencies. In view of the current developments in schools and society alike it seems particularly important to strengthen future teachers' ability for co-operation and teamwork.

In recent years many professional fields have been reacting to the structural changes in our society by adjusting their understanding of their own roles and thus altering their job-descriptions. If, however, we inquire into the job-description for secondary school teachers in Austria we realise with surprise that such a professional profile does not exist (ECKER 1990:55ff).

In such a situation professional training is like an enterprise without a plan where the participants (teachers/lecturers and students) are working aimlessly. Teacher education at universities is therefore in dire need of clearly formulated aims which can serve as guidelines for the development of concrete syllabi.

In developing the training programme for history teachers at the University of Vienna we have therefore developed a preliminary job-description which is based on recent literature on the subject of aims in teacher training on the one hand, and on available analyses and prognoses about the development of the school system on the other. This profile is based on the assumption that teachers need to acquire content-related *and* pedagogic competencies in order to act deliberately and successfully in the classroom.

In the following I would like to shortly present this profile for future history teachers. The profile includes:

a) high **academic competence**

We would expect this to comprise a certain flexibility in the handling of factual and methodological knowledge about the subject; the ability to establish connections between political, economic, social and cultural developments in the historical period under discussion; readiness to cross borders between academic disciplines; a choice of teaching contents which is oriented towards the present; critical and problem-oriented choice and treatment of a historical subject in a way that creates identity.

b) a fourfold **didactic competence** consisting of

- the ability to self-reflect

by this we mean the ability to act out social roles in a differentiated way and the ability to maintain a certain distance towards one's own role in the teaching situation; a transparent handling of (institutional) power; dealing with conflict constructively; the ability to recognise transference from pupils, to separate it from one's own reaction of counter-transference<sup>4</sup> and, if possible, to arrive at a functional interpretation of that reaction in the context of the classroom.<sup>5</sup>

- social and communicative competence / skills

This concerns the immediate social learning environment, that is, the classroom: process-oriented thinking and work-styles; competence in developing and implementing experience-oriented learning processes; ability to direct, analyse and reflect on processes happening within the learning group.

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<sup>4</sup> As early as 1925 Siegfried BERNFELD wrote about the problem of transference and counter-transference:

"If a relationship between the child and the educator is to arise at all, then it will ultimately and inevitably turn into an Oedipal relationship. This will happen on both sides. The child will love (or hate or love-hate) the educator in the same way he loves or loved father or mother. Impetuously, stubbornly, or if need be, cunningly he will formulate the wishes he cherished towards father or mother and will feel forced to repeat the experiences he made then. And the teacher.... He plays his role voluntarily, with enthusiasm and devotion - under the compulsion to repeat, or - at least - under the influence of his own Oedipus complex. The child in front of the teacher is the teacher himself as a child. With the same wishes, the same conflicts, the same experiences. The factual differences count little. They are difference of their Egos - insofar as they count at all - but not differences of their drives or wishes. The teacher's actions, his granting or denying are the actions of his own parents. In the pedagogic dyad he figures twice: as a child and as an educator. .... Thus the educator is confronted with two children: the one to be educated in front of him and the one repressed within him. He cannot but treat the one as the other was treated. Because what was right for him shall be proper for the other. And so he repeats the destruction of his own Oedipus complex with the other child, with himself. He repeats it also if he appears to be doing the opposite of everything that his parents [and teachers A.E.] did to him. (1981:140f.)"

<sup>5</sup> The French ethno-psychoanalyst Georges DEVEREUX (1967; 1984:17ff) develops Freud's insight into the significance of transference for the cognitive process and describes the reflection of counter-transference (i.e. the emotive and/or associative reactions of the researcher towards his/her informants) as a centrepiece of qualitative social research. The role of counter-transference in therapeutic research is evaluated equally highly in recent psycho-analytic writing from the United States (e.g. Otto KERNBERG; James MASTERSON). - In this light it would be desirable for teachers caught up in a concrete classroom conflict to learn to understand their own reactions of counter-transference as a kind of "social resonance" of the group whose dynamics contains elements of the topic which is being treated at that moment. Teachers should be empowered to extract themselves from the emotional dynamics of the situation to the degree that their personal involvement in the learning process and the content treated can be examined; without hastily rationalising away their own share in the conflict. The teacher should be able to relate the insights thus gained to the structural dynamics of the learning group and to interpret them in the light of the topic currently treated in the classroom (e.g. conflicts in the group as mirror-images of a historical conflict which is being treated in class). - The art of this kind of intervention consists in keeping one's own self AND the group dynamics out of the discussion but to relate the dynamics of the group to the current historical topic.

- planning and design skills

This skill area requires basic knowledge of learning and developmental theories; knowledge about the appropriacy and application of different media; profound procedural knowledge in handling different teaching methods (e.g. lecture, group-work, role-play, project work) and in the handling of media.

- skills in the analysis of organisations

These skills are of importance in dealing with colleagues, superiors and parents. What is required are analytic skills which enable teachers to be realistic about the possibilities of co-operation within their organisation; also, the ability to plan and implement interdisciplinary co-operation and project-work.

In sum we need history teachers who will not only present facts about a particular historical topic but who are able to transmit its relevance for the social dynamics of the learning environment. They should be able to choose with pedagogic deliberation from an array of teaching methods, responding flexibly to the social, cognitive, and age-related conditions in the learning group as well as the realities of school-life.<sup>6</sup>

These skills should enable history teachers to fulfil the demands which we see as the central function of the subject "History and Social Studies" in the school curriculum. „History" needs to be part of cultural studies. The subject should provide theories and methods that help to describe and analyse without undue simplification the rapid political, economic, social and cultural changes that we are experiencing. We think that one of the central tasks of tomorrow's schools will be to establish a culture of deliberation and reflection in everyday school-life.

#### **4. A broader concept of didactics**

The job-description presented above already implies some of the central positions which the Vienna circle of history didactics takes up in connection with the concept of didactics and which also inform our relationship towards pedagogy in general:

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<sup>6</sup> I am aware that this sounds highly utopian in view of the status quo of both academic teacher training as well as school organisation and seems to be conceived for the coming century. At the same time I am convinced that the knowledge and skills described here are necessary in order to deal with the past constructively and satisfactorily already in *today's classrooms*.

Our teacher education curriculum is based on a broad understanding of didactics. It implies that a concrete (historical) *topic* is approached in a concrete *social environment* (the classroom and the environment it is embedded in) through certain *methods* and with the help of appropriate *media* (e.g. source texts, tapes, films, CD-ROMs) in the interest of certain consciousness-forming *aims*.

Our "process-oriented didactics of history" contains several innovations in this respect. The training programme has a strong experience and practice-oriented component, it emphasises the practical work done within the social environment of the school and the classroom and its basic outlook is one that follows the principles of group pedagogy. Our theory building therefore draws on methods and insights offered by social-systemic and social-psychological approaches.

## **5. On the relationship between theory and practice in university-based teacher education**

On consulting the existing literature about the didactics of history it is noticeable that theoreticians from the universities have tended to produce ideas intended for direct use in the classroom. This state of affairs reflects a historically grown relationship between the two educational institutions "school" and "university", a relationship which has obviously also found its way into the basic assumptions of the didactics of history: university-based academics develop theoretical concepts for the benefit of the school-based practitioners. On the surface this may appear like a reasonable division of labour but it barely masks some serious disadvantages which have not come under scrutiny until recently (VON BORRIES 1990; SCHNEIDER 1990, RÜSEN 19991, ECKER 1992b, BERGMANN 1993). The historical development of the relationship between school and university has not only opened certain channels for co-operation but it has also obstructed them. The relationship between university teachers and schoolteachers is widely experienced as hierarchical so that horizontal co-operation is seriously under-developed or is made difficult by mutual allegations of deficits and conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I have described elsewhere (ECKER 1992c) that this practice of mutually blaming each other has a long tradition. It may create the surface impression of a division of labour but in reality it is nothing but an institutional defence mechanism (MENTZOS 1976). The universities tend to relegate the causes of (too

University-based teacher-trainers have so far paid too little attention to these barriers. In their concern for developing theories and methods to be used in schools they have been exploiting of the traditional structures without critically examining them first. This has given rise to a new dependency relationship between school and university where the role of teachers is that of mere consumers of new theories. University-based didacticians have often formulated their theories without taking sufficient account of the day-to-day needs of grassroots teachers. At the present stage there is very little serious co-operation between school and university.

In letting this happen the didactics of history has neglected a problem which is ubiquitous in today's social sciences: the problem of creating and maintaining an equilibrium and a stable link between theory and practice.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. Developing the curriculum

This imbalance between theoretical and practical concerns is mirrored in teacher education at universities - at least this is the case in Austria. The syllabus is dominated by academic and specialist interests and it is only after their graduation that the future teachers experience intensive practical training in the classroom during a one-year teaching practice called "Unterrichtspraktikum". Up until the early eighties the 9 semester university syllabus for future teachers of history featured only one (1!) specialist lecture entitled "Didactics of history". This course included a phase

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many) teaching problems to the schools. This is mirrored in the relatively low status of the "didactics people" at university departments as well as the chronic underexposure of didactic problems within the organisation of the university itself. At the schools one is often satisfied with accepting with uncritical acclaim anything bearing the label "scientific" or "academic". There is also the complementary position of strong scepticism, even hostility vis a vis academic work, which is often reduced to "only we know what it really means to teach". On the bureaucratic-administrative level this kind of institutional defence is embodied in the organisational and financial separation of the primary/secondary vs. tertiary sector, and in the splitting of educationally relevant decisions between the federal and the regional governments etc. As far as contents are concerned, the present "non-communication" is clearly visible from the fact that academic historians are rarely integrated into in-service teacher training, curriculum-development or the writing of new textbooks. These historically grown barriers between the two institutions "school" and "university" currently represent the most serious obstacle on the way towards modernising the education and training of future teachers.

<sup>8</sup> In criticising the education of history teachers for its lack of practical concern I therefore do not only mean the lack of opportunities for students to do practical work in the classroom. My criticism is even more basic than that as it equally addresses the theory-practice imbalance in the academic, general educational and sometimes even in the didactic subjects. In all these areas there exists a heightened demand for new ways of learning which make students aware of the relevance and the range of the contents at hand. In the historical subjects themselves we need to foster the integration of more experiential, process-oriented and social types of learning.

of several weeks where students would visit lessons taught by various teachers in a particular school but they did not have the opportunity to teach themselves. In short, there was no didactic training at all since the classes in educational theory and pedagogy<sup>9</sup> frequently did not relate to practical concerns either.

It was only fairly recently that a practice-related element was introduced into the curriculum of "History and Social Studies". Since the early eighties the syllabus for the first phase of the course includes a didactic seminar part of which is dedicated to practical classroom teaching. A second opportunity for undergraduates to gain classroom experience was introduced by means of the "Schulpraktikum", a six week practice phase at a school during which the students have to conduct several lessons themselves (cf. ECKER 1992c on the history of this innovation). Another reform of the syllabus which was completed in 1993 has introduced an advanced didactic seminar ("Fachdidaktikseminar für Fortgeschrittene") to be done after the "Schulpraktikum". In addition to that the syllabus now also includes two interdisciplinary courses. General regulations recommend co-operation between specialist historical and didactic seminars and make it possible to co-ordinate the courses in the didactics of history with those in general pedagogy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> At present general pedagogy and education is covered by 5 courses of ca 30 classroom hours each. These are: theory of teaching, theory of education, theory of educational systems, educational psychology, developmental psychology.

<sup>10</sup> The Austrian system provides two levels for the regulation of university courses and subjects. The so-called "Studienordnung" (Regulation of Studies) provides the general framework for university courses in a particular subject and is binding for all Austrian universities. For "History and Social Studies" this Regulation includes the following clause: "Courses are to be selected bearing in mind the future professional didactic and interdisciplinary demands on the graduates".

Within the framework laid down in the "Studienordnung" each university develops its own "Studienplan" (Plan of Studies i.e. syllabus). This syllabus, then, contains more concrete formulation of aims as well as provisions concerning the content and internal structure of the course. The current syllabus at the University of Vienna includes the following clause: "...§8...The second phase of the course is dedicated to expanding and deepening specialist historical knowledge and skills as well as to the development of didactic and professional skills." The didactic part of the curriculum pursues the following aims: "It is the aim of the didactic training of students of "History and Social Studies" to further relations with the practice of teaching history in secondary education, to introduce students into the theoretical and practical foundations of their subject, to enable them to reflect upon the various decision levels in the teaching of history (choice of topic, preparation, planning, classroom management, evaluation), to provide opportunities for classroom experience over and beyond the "Schulpraktikum" thereby introducing them to the basic problems of their subject - in short to contribute to the development of the students' didactic competence necessary for the exercise of their future profession. In the interest of the professional development of future teachers of "History and Social Studies" the classes in didactics are to occupy a central co-ordinating and integrative role in the pursuit of this aim. "

All classes included in the didactics curriculum are interdisciplinary in character. There is a progression from Didactic Seminar 1 to the Schulpraktikum to Didactic Seminar 2. The first didactic seminar must have been completed before entering the Schulpraktikum.

Even though the new curriculum is still biased towards academic historical interests it does allow for the second phase, i.e. the last 2 ½ years at university, to take the shape of a series of "projects". This involves the co-ordination of several types of courses around one or several focal topics. A model like this evidently makes it necessary for those who teach these courses to co-operate in content and organisational matters.<sup>11</sup> It is our aim for the immediate future to win over more university teachers to take part in such integrated projects. In our experience the barriers between specialist historians and specialist didacticians are best overcome by working together on a concrete project. This is the path we want to follow in the education of future history teachers.

## **7. Didactics as a self-referential learning system**

The discussion in the previous sections has shown that in the education of secondary school teachers "university" has traditionally stood for "theory", and "school" has traditionally stood for "practice". A teaching degree used to differ very little from a general degree in history, didactics as an independent field did not exist at all or had very little prestige, and future teachers started to get serious classroom experience only after their graduation.

At the University of Vienna we have been working on improving this situation in two ways:

a) Over the last 15 years we have developed a model for our seminars which integrates representatives from all three fields involved: historians, didacticians and school teachers. The seminars in the didactics of history are thus run by a team of four to five trainers. These are usually one historian who is responsible for supervising the historical content of the course, one didactician responsible for overall co-ordination, moderating the plenaries, keeping track of supervising the learning process, and three school-teachers each of whom advises a group of

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<sup>11</sup> At present only a limited number of such projects are being carried out. Most of them include two to three different courses and run over one or two semesters. In recent years we have also developed a model of post-graduate courses co-organised by several departments of the Arts Faculty, e.g. on the didactics of exhibitions and museums, on project-oriented work in education and the arts, film and the humanities.

students in the planning and implementation of their classroom teaching. (cf. diagram on the organisational structure of the didactics seminar in the appendix)

In this interdisciplinary seminar-type, historian, didactician and teacher embody for the trainee teachers the three central functions which they will have to integrate in their future professional work:

- historical knowledge
- didactic skills
- counselling skills.

What has been created here is a new social structure within the institution of the university intended to counteract the deficits described above by bringing together teachers from both university and school to work on a common project. This idea mirrors the systemic basis of our work: we are aiming at re-moulding didactic training into a self-referential learning system.

One of the central concerns of this model is, then, to redefine the relationship between the two educational sub-systems "school" and "university". Teacher training should no longer be seen as a vertical, hierarchic process where the university produces theories to be used by schools but as teamwork, as a horizontal co-operation between experts from different parts of the education system who are working for a common aim.

b) Our second strategy is to provide trainee teachers with more opportunities for gaining teaching experience during the time they spend at university. The latest syllabus (effective since the academic year 1993/94) is showing first results in that direction. In the 9 semester university course there are now three longer practice phases during which students can gather hands-on experience as history teachers at schools (cf. section 6). Apart from the 6-week "Schulpraktikum" there are also the practice phases which form an integral part of the two didactics seminars. The weekly seminar meeting held at the university can then serve to reflect the experiences made at the school.

## 8. Process-oriented didactics of history

We would like to stress that we do not think practice is a valuable asset *per se*. Especially in training situations practice needs to be accompanied by evaluation and reflection. Within a framework that provides advice and support trainee teachers are given the chance to try out which teaching methods work for them and which do not. They can practice how to deal with different historical topics through different approaches and media and in different social situations. What is necessary after that is a process of reflection. The practical experience needs to be discussed, systematised and checked for its theoretical relevance.

Behind this assumption lies the conviction that school and university education are still largely built on ritualised forms of learning which tend to hinder rather than foster cognition and insight into complex situations.<sup>12</sup> Future-oriented education, however, demands co-ordinated, integrative and process-oriented forms of learning which facilitate the connection of knowledge and insight, of content and social process. It needs forms of learning which transcend the treatment of specialist knowledge as a kind of mental challenge but make that knowledge real in terms of concrete social competence.

Looking for theoretical support in developing our model for teacher education we were not able to turn to traditional pedagogy: classical educational theory is based on the dyadic model of "the teacher" and "the pupil". Now it has of course been a fact for the last two hundred years or so that teaching at schools and universities happens in larger groups: one teacher practically always meets several pupils (sometimes hundreds). In our theory building we have therefore taken on board ideas and recent insights from fields such as group dynamics and group pedagogy, social psychology and organisation development and analysis (cf. BERNFELD 1925; FÜRSTENAU 1964 and 1967; COHN 1973; SCHWARZ 1974; HUBER 1976; SELVINI-PALAZZOLI 1976; SCHÜLEIN 1977; GROSSMANN/WIMMER 1980; LUHMANN/SCHORR 1979 and 1982; DIEM-WILLE 1986; WIMMER/OSWALD 1987).

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<sup>12</sup> Forms of teaching which are geared towards generating knowledge which can be tested in exams have a specific social function: they are similar to initiation rites in that they help testees to gain experience in overcoming their fears. They are less amenable, however, to creating insight and social competence. On this compare also ERDHEIM 1982, also FÜRSTENAU 1967 and BERNFELD 1925.

Our current theoretical concern is to develop an understanding of pedagogy and didactics as disciplines of social science. The central idea of this approach *is to acknowledge the teaching situation as a social structure in its own right*. In terms of its application this means that any training course geared towards learner independence can be successful only if the process of training itself is viewed and treated as an independent social structure.

In this understanding it is evident that the social dynamics taking place in the teaching situation itself has to be recognised as being part of the learning process - and it has to be made explicit in order to be useful for further learning. Any insights gained from the explicit discussion of social processes must then feed into the planning of the next learning phase.

For the didactics of history this means the awareness, which has to be kept alive at all times, that the teaching situation is a social structure in its own right. Only if the teaching is organised in a dynamic way can it engender learning which produces insight into historical processes. This idea, however, has not gained much currency neither in the training of specialist historians nor in the history teaching in schools.

For social history this means in particular: if it is one of the central insights of the discipline that social structures change and are changeable then the learning environment, being a social structure itself, has to be organised in such a way that it remains changeable (for all parties involved). The task of conveying historical change in a particular area can be completed successfully only if what is said on the content level is related to the events on the social level of the learning group (between teachers and students, between students and students...), made explicit and fed back into the learning process.

Misunderstandings on the social plane cause blockages on the content level. The reverse also holds: if an otherwise plausible hypothesis about the content level fails to be understood, this suggests that there are (latent) social conflicts between the persons involved in the teaching situation.

In our understanding, therefore, learning (especially learning about history) is above all a social process.<sup>13</sup>

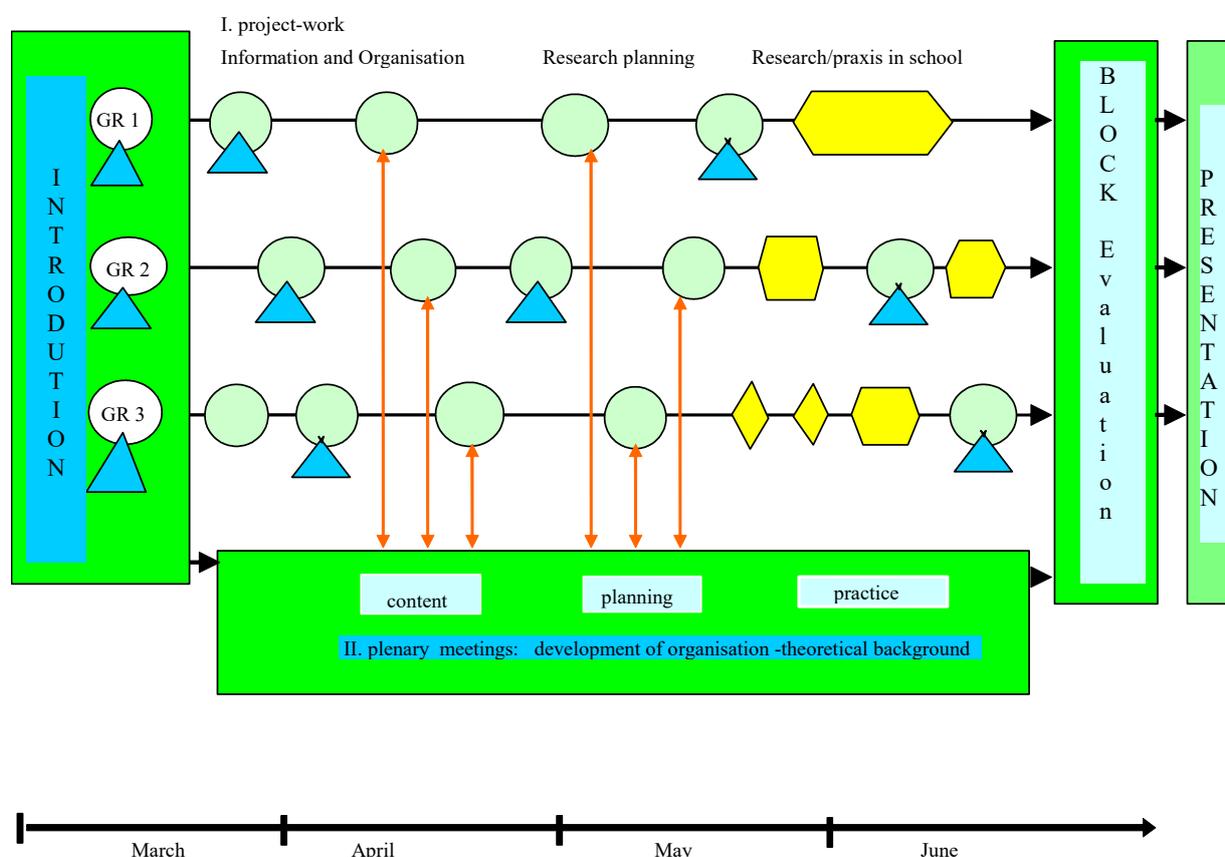
## **9. The didactic seminar: concept and organisation**

The training programme for the didactic seminar runs on two organisational levels. The first level involves the trainee teachers in researching a historical topic, planning lessons about the topic for a concrete group of pupils, teaching the actual lessons and a debriefing with the advisory teacher. Later they discuss their experience in the seminar plenary and produce a written report. This level is run in project groups with one teacher responsible for three to four students. The work is self-organised and the teacher occupies the role of advisor, not group leader.

The second level involves weekly 3-hour meetings of all the project groups. These meetings have the function of supplying the theoretical foundations for the practical work. School curricula and textbooks are discussed, the individual project groups present the content-based work they have done, students get to know different teaching methods and different media and they have the opportunity to discuss their lessons plans and how they worked together with the team of lecturers and with their colleagues. Furthermore they are offered ways to develop their competence for reflecting upon their own practice.

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<sup>13</sup> We therefore do not consider learning to be an exercise in (self) castigation that is always directed towards an authority which defines the aims. We consider learning to be a form of curiosity about the insights a specific subject might give. This is always combined with an interest in sharing these insights with other people or in telling them about the results of one's cognitive process.

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE of the INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR in HISTORY DIDACTICS<sup>14</sup>**


## 10. Experience-oriented learning

In developing the trainees' competence for reflecting their own practice we start from the assumption that they all possess classroom experience from their own schooldays. We consider this experience made as pupils as a resource which should be exploited in teacher education. In order for this to be successful, however, it is necessary to disengage that experience from the affective load it carries. In other words it is necessary to empower the trainees to distance themselves from their personal memories in order to make these memories accessible to didactic reasoning and to operationalise them with regard to their own future profession.

<sup>14</sup> Colours blue and light blue mark the activities of the teacher trainer, colours green and light green those of the trainee students. Colour yellow symbolises a form of practical experience in school (history class) which is done by the students (praxis and in parallel observation of praxis by peers), the circles symbolise group work in self-organisation, the arrows symbolise forms of co-ordination and feedback.

We assume that whenever this previous experience fails to be disconnected from its affective load, i.e. when the trainee does not manage to map the experience made earlier in life onto his new adult role as teacher, this represents a potential handicap for the future teacher. If this process fails it is likely that in a situation of conflict the teacher will automatically take recourse to his / her childhood or adolescent experience, simultaneously calling up all the emotions that were present then (cf. BERNFELD 1925; footnote 4). The reader will readily recognise such situations knowing that they are unpleasant for teacher and pupils alike. Moreover they tend to be totally irrelevant to the topic that is being dealt with.

We therefore try to create opportunities for the trainees to contemplate their own schooldays. This is done for instance through role-plays where the trainees act out concrete situations from the history classes they experienced. During the follow-up of such role plays it is important to guide the trainees towards a differentiated description of their frequently diffuse schoolday memories. The follow-up also includes a discussion of the situation from various perspectives (teacher, pupil, learning group, relevance for the topic) as well as an evaluation of the implications for the trainee's future work as a teacher.

This example shows our understanding of the term "self-referential learning system": certain theoretical assumptions, some of which have been discussed in earlier sections of this article, constitute the general framework of our work in teacher training. In the concrete context of the seminar, however, we jointly develop the theory in such a way that the participants can establish connections with their own level of knowledge and experience. Each student teacher brings his or her own idea of history teaching with them. If this is not addressed during training it will continue to exist alongside the theory presented in the training courses and there is the danger that the two will end up in (unconscious) conflict. In our training seminars we therefore try to reappraise at least part of the trainees' history of history teaching and learning.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This experience based approach also enables us to keep alive the process of theory formation within the training situation. Each new group of trainees represents a new challenge: at the outset we never know in how far the theory components developed in previous seminars will be relevant and plausible to this particular group. The experience fed into the process by the student teachers engages us in a continuing discourse which forces us to check, expand and revise our theoretical assumptions.

In the training situation we are concerned with the trainees' past which is more or less co-extensive with the history teaching they themselves experienced during their schooldays. The seminar aims at providing them with tools (theoretical and methodological) to help them examine their own past. This means that the trainee teachers carry out historical research also in the didactic part of their education and training. They are made into objects of historical research in order to develop their competence for self-reflection.

Summing up we can say that also on the individual level our training scheme focuses on what we have defined as our central concern in education and training: the professional identity of history teachers:<sup>16</sup>

## 11. Training the trainers

It is quite obvious that a model of teacher education and training as it has been sketched in this article demands of the teacher trainers a high degree of competence on various levels, especially in those areas which I defined as targets for future history teachers (cf. section 3). Most of the staff currently involved in training history teachers at the University of Vienna have largely acquired these skills outside the university by following courses in group dynamics and group pedagogy, organisation consultancy, and similar training programmes. It seems very important to me to stress that our model includes the demand for the trainers to always continue their own training.

As mentioned earlier the prestige of didactics is still relatively low inside the universities. In the interest of implementing our vision of a future-oriented teacher education we must try to create awareness about the importance of didactic problems among university teachers. It therefore seemed reasonable to create opportunities for university teachers to develop their own didactic qualifications and to institutionalise these training programmes in the university itself.

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<sup>16</sup> The level of self-reflection quite naturally feeds back into the main concern of history teaching, namely reflection about the past. This concern is made visible with the help of a piece of the trainees' personal life-history - that is their own past as school pupils. - This experience-based approach thus serves as an example of how "history" is always made, experienced, suffered but also shaped and changed by people. In this way the trainees experience that they themselves possess "history" and that they are - consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly - part of the historical process.

A course for the development of the teaching skills of university teachers at Vienna University has been developed by a group of lecturers from various departments of the faculty. This four-module course was first run as a pilot in 1993 and was then taken on by the personnel development committee of the university senate. The course is now part of the university's in-service training programme which includes further courses in tertiary sector didactics but also in academic management.<sup>17</sup> We hope that this will in due course also improve the position of didactic concerns in the curricula of the courses taught at the University of Vienna.

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<sup>17</sup> We have thus managed to motivate university teachers to contemplate the effects the ongoing accelerated cultural change has on the tertiary sector and have placed didactics right at the centre of the discussion.

## 12. Conclusion

This article concludes, then, with a review of the ways in which the teacher trainers keep their own process of self reflection open and moving and I hope that the model of teacher education and training which I have presented has created interest and curiosity. I do not hesitate to admit that some of the things reported here are not yet firmly institutionalised or even widely accepted. Even though the reforms have been going on for fifteen years much still depends on the initiative of a few dedicated individuals.

Most of the training models described here require extensive content-oriented and organisational co-ordination on part of those who teach them. Within the institution of the university the value of such co-ordination work is still widely underestimated. We nevertheless firmly believe that an up-to-date curriculum for the education and training of teachers can only profit from such forms of interdisciplinary co-operation. Each step into that direction would definitely increase the quality of university teaching: it would have positive effects on the transmission of specialist contents and it would improve the social integration of individual classes so that both the academic and the job-related aspects of the university course would profit.

Ultimately this would mean that we have reached a new quality in the university-based education and training of history teachers - it would also mean a small contribution towards a more democratic understanding of education.

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