

Identity, Trauma, Sensitive and Controversial Issues in the Teaching of History

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Edited by

Hilary Cooper and Jon Nichol

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History is not only concerned with change. It is also the subject of change. Everyday history books are remaindered... new editions released...journal articles removed from 'current tenses' data bases and web sites cached. History changes.

—Marnie-Hughes Warrington
Revisionist Histories (2013) London: Routledge

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PREFACE

SETTING THE SCENE

JON NICHOL AND HILARY COOPER

Introduction

The view from the college lawn in Ambleside, England, on a July day in 2004 was a picture of peace and tranquillity as we posed for the first *History Educators International Research Network* [HEIRNET] conference photo. With its backdrop of the Cumbrian mountains the sun soaked lake Windermere sparkled and glistened in the distance. Yet the scene was deceptive. In geological time the region had been a centre of earthquake and volcanic activity as the earth's tectonic plates moved, crumpled, crushed and squeezed the Cumbrian mountain chain into existence.

The major focus of the 2004 HEIRNET conference was the role of History in understanding the educational implications of the political earthquakes and volcanic eruptions of the modern world. These mainly occur along the boundaries between the tectonic plates of competing beliefs, ethnicities, faith and ideologies whose sectarian tessellated surfaces are a meld of, among other elements:

- capitalism, communism, fascism, liberalism
- federalism, imperialism, internationalism, nationalism, regionalism and tribalism
- autocracy, democracy, monarchy and republicanism
- Buddhism, Catholicism, Puritanism, Islam and Zionism.

At the tectonic plates' boundaries we find *arenas of conflict, sensitive and controversial issues and even trauma* over historical consciousness and identity - personal, communal and national - in and between polities, i.e. nation states, countries, regions, federal states and other jurisdictions. Each arena involves a unique and often lethal cocktail of elements that have deeply entrenched and complex historical roots such as those in

Israel, the Middle East and the Ukraine. **Chapter 10** on **Israel's** history curriculum outlines one such multi-factorial, evolving historical context:

“At sixty-four Israel is still a comparatively young nation state, just passing from the “developing” to the “developed” phase. The state was conceived and built by the Jewish national movement inspired by the Zionist ideology. Its establishment and most of the subsequent decades were accompanied by threats and wars with neighbouring Arab states. As these abated by the late 1970s, the security scene became dominated by a seemingly intractable conflict with the Palestinians. Complicating the picture is the fact that a fifth of the Israeli population consists of Arab citizens affiliated with the Palestinian people. Adding to this diversity is the fact that from the outset Israel was officially committed to the ingathering of the Jewish “exiles” or “diasporas.”

Israel's complexity is replicated throughout the book in its analysis of History Education in over 20 countries and jurisdictions from around the world. Typically History Education in Israel occupies a significant part of a political and populist battleground between often incompatible ideologies and interpretations, each with its competing canons (master narrative and often rival, alternative minor narratives) that draws upon historical consciousness, personal, communal and national identities and public and private memories.

Likewise the 2015 crisis and civil war in Ukraine epitomises a universal phenomenon, the polarisation between two extreme orientations: the ‘monistic’, i.e. mono-cultural, mono-ethnic and nationalistic and the ‘pluralistic’ i.e. multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and internationalistic. Often competing views on the nature and role of History Education mirror these poles. In the Ukraine there is:

“... tension between two different models of Ukrainian statehood. One is ... the “monist” view, which asserts that the country is an autochthonous [indigenous, mono-ethnic] cultural and political unity and that the challenge of independence since 1991 has been to strengthen the Ukrainian language, repudiate the tsarist and Soviet imperial legacies, reduce the political weight of Russian-speakers and move the country away from Russia towards “Europe”.

The alternative “pluralist” view emphasizes the different historical and cultural experiences of Ukraine's various regions and argues that building a modern democratic post-Soviet Ukrainian state is not just a matter of good governance and rule of law at the centre. It also requires an

acceptance of bilingualism, mutual tolerance of different traditions, and devolution of power to the regions.” (Steele, 2015)

There is a logical, but not inevitable, congruence between ‘monism’ and a positivistic pedagogy for the transmission of the master narrative or canon as a body of uncontested, unquestioned ‘know that’ knowledge and ‘pluralism’ and its constructivist ‘know how’ pedagogy built around pupils under teacher guidance creating their own historical understanding through questioning, enquiry and working on sources and different interpretations .

The History Educators International Research Network [HEIRNET] Agenda

HEIRNET’s evolving agenda since our 2004 inaugural meeting has focused on the issues that Israel and the Ukraine raise and that *Identity, Trauma and Sensitive and Controversial Issues* addresses in case-studies from over 20 countries and jurisdictions. The book is based on papers delivered either at the eleven annual HEIRNET conferences or published in its *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*. Collectively the chapters address history’s educational role in a world that since 1989 has witnessed:

- the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War;
- resurgent nationalism and the emergence of new nation states;
- civil war, genocide and famine;
- war, invasion, conquest and neo-colonialism in Afghanistan and the Middle East;
- the end of Apartheid;
- the transplantation of western liberal democratic political ideologies, constitutions and practices in Asian, African and European states and jurisdictions;
- the emergence of Al-Qaeda, the 9/11 trauma and the War on Terror;
- the post 2008 economic recession and its impact upon the U.S.A., Europe and the wider world;
- the expansion of the European Union
- the economic and educational rise of the BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa;

- since 2010 the Arab Spring and the jihadist new Middle Eastern wars of religion that spill over into their geographical hinterlands in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Indian sub-continent.

While generalising from the particular is hazardous, the introductory section of **Chapter 22** on **Canada** provides an overview of the major issues involved in History Education, historical consciousness, memory and identity in the polities that the book covers:

“Educating the younger generations and instilling in them unifying *historical representations of their country are taken very seriously by state authorities in Canada* (Osborne, 2003). Yet national history and historical consciousness are hotly debated publicly. “In Canada even history divides”, once observed philosopher Charles Taylor (1993, p. 25). As might be expected, public memory often nurtures conflicting and potentially mutually exclusive stories of the nation. Interpretations of the past are not only contested but are used publicly to justify partisan decisions about the future of the Canadian nation.

These conflicting narratives of nation have their origins in the bilingual nature of Canada and the coexistence of so-called “nations within”, where nation means “a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 11). Whereas ethnic and previously marginalised groups have sought a more culturally inclusive narrative of the nation, national minorities pose a radically different kind of challenge to history. In the case of Québécois and aboriginal peoples, these groups were incorporated into the Canadian federation while maintaining their historical reference to a “homeland”. Not only do they seek greater recognition of their contribution but also collective identity, rights, and self-government.”

Historical Consciousness, Identity and Master and Minor Narratives

The book’s twenty-two chapters draw upon a common theme reflected in its title *Identity, Trauma and Sensitive and Controversial Issues in History Education*: the relationship between historical consciousness and identity in nation states, countries, states or jurisdictions [polities] and their history curricula that range from the national to the parochial and often reflect secular, ethnic, religious or other vested interests. **Chapter 8** on **Brazil** analyses the links between a polity’s political establishment and the role of history in an educational system that reflects the dominant political party’s views and interests with their cultural roots:

“the history disciplinary code is, therefore, a social tradition which characterises itself historically and which is composed of a group of ideas, values, suppositions and routines, which legitimate the educational function given to history and which regulate the order of the practice in its teaching. It contains, thus, speculation and discursive rhetoric about its educational value, the content of its teaching and the archetypes of teaching, which follow each other in [the] time and which consider themselves, inside the dominating culture, valuable and authentic.”

A community's shared culture, language and sense of identity join together the mythical, legendary and factual vertebrae of a polity in the spinal cord of its historical canon or master narrative. Each canon or master narrative tells a coherent, causally connected and chronological historical account or story drawing upon the iconic, symbolic, legendary and significant mythical and real events, individuals, movements and developments in a community's past. These discrete “stories” synthesise into a communal sense of identity, pride, belonging and participation. The master narrative can manifest itself in nationalism, patriotism, jingoism and xenophobia. In disaffected communities and jurisdictions their canon can underpin demands for autonomy and national independence and lead to civil controversy, conflict and even civil war as in the Ukraine.

A master narrative's roots draw sustenance from its community's political, religious, social, sporting, cultural and economic structures, associations and organisations, each with its own minor narratives rooted in shared histories, memories, myths, legends, tales, stories and recollections where history is “gossip well told”. These bodies with often active, social lives and identities can include:

- business associations and bodies
- charities
- clubs
- cultural: e.g. museums, libraries, orchestras, art galleries, festivals
- familial and social networks
- financial and commercial bodies
- government administration at all levels - the civil service and local government
- industrial organisations
- interest groups
- international corporations
- Internet & social media – facebook, twitter
- judiciary, the
- media – press radio, TV
- military, the – army, navy, air force
- police, the
- political parties
- pressure and lobbying groups
- professions, the
- public meetings
- publishing & broadcasting businesses and bodies
- recreational organisations
- religious, the
- schools and colleges

- secret organisations. e.g.
 - masons, cosa nostra
 - sectarian, the
 - sporting and social
- trade unions
- trans-national organisations
- tribal, ethnic, regional
- universities

We are surrounded with physical, iconic and symblic “signs” of historical consciousness and identity: memorials, monuments, statues, murals, named buildings, museums and historic sites. Each carries a clear, coded message about our relationship to a past that shapes our sense of belonging and the future. Society at large keeps its collective historical consciousness alive through multiple channels, including religious and secular services, feasts and dinners, weddings and funerals, memorials, demonstrations, commemorations, party political broadcasts, campaigns and manifestoes. More generally, the media channels produce a constant flood of radio and tv programmes, films, newspaper and journal articles, social media and websites that commemorate, memorialise, re-construct and celebrate specific historic events, movements, triumphs, individuals and developments.

Educationally the major medium for encoding canons and master narratives has been the text book. Text books transmit messages that teachers mediate to ensure their pupils assimilate and understand the canon’s significance in their developing civic sense of national identity and patriotism. **Chapter 19** on the Arab and Muslim presence in Hungarian text books notes that such texts:

“are really messages about the future. As part of a curriculum they participate in no less than the organized knowledge system of society. They participate in creating what a society has recognized as legitimate and truthful. They help set the canons of truthfulness and, as such, also help re-create a major reference point for what knowledge, culture, belief and morality really are (Christian-Smith, 1991 cited in Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005, p. 157).”

Within a polity we can map its communities’ master and minor narratives on to a three dimensional matrix with four axes.

The horizontal and vertical axes are:

- *single ↔ multiple narratives*
- *peace/reconciliation ↔ trauma/conflict/controversy.*

The diagonal axes represent the:

- *positivist ↔ constructivist polarities of pedagogy/didactics*
- *the ‘monist’ ↔ ‘pluralist’ views of the curriculum*

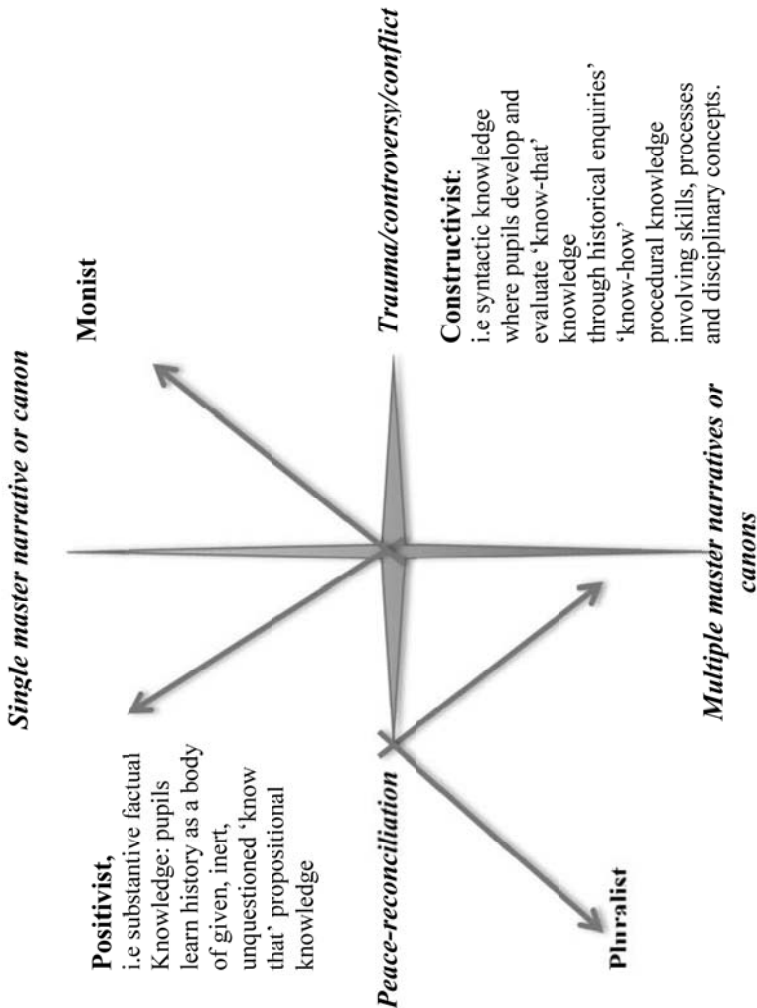


Figure i A Matrix for Mapping Master Narratives

Historiography is a background factor of historical consciousness. Bearing in mind that 'all history is contemporary history', the historiography of narratives and canons draw upon the historiography of previous eras reflected in each generation's "conventional wisdom" about a polity's

identity. In developing history curricula in new polities a common feature is the clash between atavistic and for an historiographical backbone for the radical revision of all historical curricula that takes into account the female perspective, neglect of which discriminates against 50% of the population.

So what view of historical consciousness does the book present?

Chapter 9 on Iceland succinctly summarises its three key features as:

“a complex network of (a) interpretations of the past, (b) perceptions of the present and (c) expectations of the future. History was thus seen as a mental construct, which made sense of the past in a narrative structure, while at the same time providing orientation for the lives of those passing from the past to the future.”

Chapter 5 on Quebec defines what such identity entails:

“the mental state (changeable) of the subject who, be it through action or volition, is aware of his/her temporality (regardless of the duration). It is through this understanding of one’s temporality that an individual is able to judge (or willing to judge) situations based on his/her interpretation of past events.”

The Icelandic chapter’s definition of historical consciousness is mirrored in the three views of Quebec students on what an historical mural should refer to. Some:

“1) thought that a mural should refer to the past and, as such, try to complement it; 2) [others] accepted the past, but would want to add the present; or 3) [the rest] would eliminate the past and simply show an illustration of the present.”

The triple perspectives of historical consciousness permeate chapters 1-14 on *History and Identity*.

Part I History and Identity, Chapters 1-14

The book’s first fourteen chapters examine History and Identity within the wide range of contexts that we can map on to the *Matrix For Mapping Master Narratives* (Figure i.). The chapters have multiple perspectives that cumulatively build a comprehensive picture of what is involved in the development of national history curricula based on historical consciousness, memory and identity.

Chapter 1 on Northern and Southern Ireland explores how history can bring communities together through an increasingly shared past that

develops a common identity grounded in a ‘pluralist’ orientation that contrasts sharply with their countries divided ‘monist’ pasts. These pasts resulted in civil war in the 1920s and from 1970 over 20 years of internecine armed struggle that led to some 3000 deaths in Northern Ireland. The chapter:

“... concludes by demonstrating that in a post-modern, increasingly globalised world, shared educational ideas and political aspirations emerging from the Irish peace process are acting to bring the respective history curricula back into symmetry and, thereby, providing opportunities for increased co-operation.”

Chapter 2 illuminates the depth and strength of feeling about a ‘monist’ history curriculum in **Hong Kong** that preserved and protected a Hong Kong community identity. Since 1997 when China regained control over Hong Kong the ex-British colony’s inhabitants had retained a history curriculum that reflected a canon of a shared communal past. In 2012 China introduced a new rival ‘monist’ history curriculum that replaced Hong Kong’s historical canon and identity with that of China’s. The result was public demonstrations in which, amazingly, 100,000 people took part.

“The end of the September protests seemingly drew debates over national education in Hong Kong to a close. However, the contestations over teaching the topic of national identity have existed in society since the colonial era. Although teaching national identity was sometimes debated even during the colonial era, after Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty, teaching the topic of national identity has become an increasingly important issue that defines Hong Kong’s relations with China as well as Hong Kong’s future.”

The focus of **Chapter 3** on **Spanish** text books is in marked contrast, focusing on the factors that influence text book representation of a canon of national identity. It argues that current Spanish text books present colonialism from a contemporary, euro-centric, sanitised perspective that reinforces simplistic stereotypes of imperialism as being benign, non controversial and positive. The text books draw upon a “naïve, Eurocentric historiography that uses the nation state and the myth of continued progress as the sole framework for explanation”, ignoring the realities of massacre, genocide, racism and brutal exploitation. Analysis of the text books shows:

“the persistence of a ‘rosy tradition’ sustaining certain continuity with the old colonial propaganda, for instance minimising or ignoring colonial

violence; treating colonised territories and metropolis asymmetrically, disregarding non-European history; conveying a stereotypical image of colonised and colonisers through pictures, and resorting to maps with a colonial perspective.”

Cyprus, the subject of **Chapter 4**, is a classic case study of competing master narratives or canons that enshrine diametrically opposed views of the country’s past so as to shape its future. Since the Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern part of the island in 1974 it has been divided between the southern Greek and northern Turkish communities. The heated debates within the southern Greek Cypriot state are between a ‘monist’ Hellenocentric position that argues that the history curriculum should be based on Greek history, culture, identity and links to Greece and the diametrically different ‘pluralist’ Cyprocentric approach that promotes the reunification of Cyprus with shared identity developing from a history curriculum based on peace and reconciliation between the two communities, rooted in a shared heritage. The depth of feeling was shown when the editors of this book were invited to Cyprus to participate in a history conference on reunification: the tangential involvement of the Cypriot government led to public demands for the minister of education’s resignation!

Chapter 5 addresses the key issue of what forms the historical thinking and historical consciousness of two groups of French Canadian and First Nation [aboriginal / native American] students take in **Quebec**. The chapter examines in detail the theoretical background to their sense of identity in the context of the Quebec curriculum for Citizenship and History. It reports research on the two groups’ perceptions and understanding of their own historical consciousness in relation to a visual, iconic representation of the Quebec master narrative or canon: The Mural of Québeckers. It is a huge trompe-l’oeil whose inscription reads: “The Québeckers’ Mural tells the history of Québec and incorporates numerous characters specific to the capital”. The researchers interviewed students about the relationship between the mural and their views of their own sense of national identity and what they would like to include in a mural that represented their view of Quebec society.

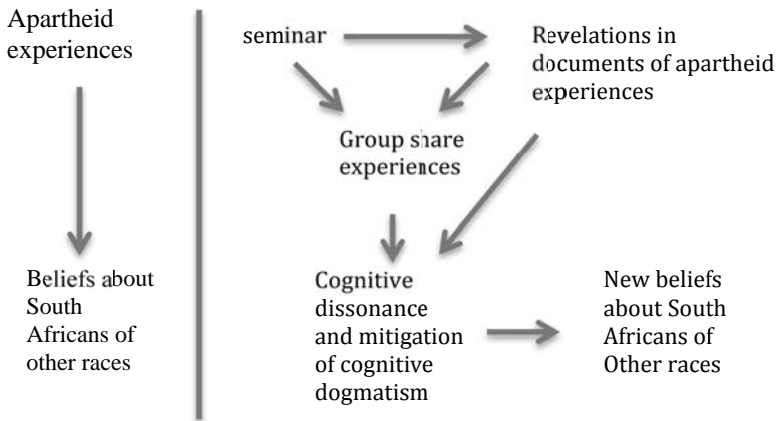
Pre and post apartheid **South Africa**, **Chapter 6**, starkly reveals the problem of moving from a ‘monist’ curriculum grounded in the apartheid regime’s racist ideology of white supremacist identity and its official historiography to a diametrically different ‘pluralist’ curriculum. The post apartheid curriculum was based upon the Mandela government’s ideological commitment to a multi-ethnic and cultural rainbow nation with

its related beliefs and historical consciousness. These incorporated modern historical scholarship's revisionist interpretation of South Africa's past. However, the new curriculum had no supporting pedagogy, education and training of teachers to implement it:

"Teachers, who had just emerged from Christian National Education, fundamental pedagogics and a highly authoritarian and structured educational framework, were left with a constructivist curriculum and no guiding framework at all."

We address this issue below in the preface's final section on pedagogy. The chapter reports a pilot project, *Facing the Past*, aimed to transform the orientation of teachers that would underpin an appropriate way of teaching the new curriculum – a transformation elegantly summarised in figure 6-1.

Figure 6-1



National history curricula can involve negotiation and compromise that involve reconciling discordant political interests that, as in Northern Ireland, Hong Kong and Cyprus, can reflect a range of regional and factional interests. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated in **Chapter 7**, an insider view of this grim reality from Tony Taylor, a key expert figure in the creation of the **Australian** national history curriculum in 2010. The curriculum was subject to the whims, fancies and vacillation of competing national and eight federal jurisdictions' politicians pursuing their own parochial interests and agendas. Tony's account is a roller coaster of the nightmare that the process involved, with a picture emerging of him as

ringmaster trying to control eight feral, fighting lions. In places the chapter reads like a transcript from a reality TV programme. Tony judiciously sums this up:

“The author argues that these interventions which have been both political and educational, together with the well-intentioned process of consultation has led to unfortunate design changes and to politically-motivated delays in curriculum implementation which could lead to its being overturned by a successor conservative coalition government.”

Chapter 8 deals with the different phases of History Education in **Brazil** from 1889 to the present that have reflected the radically different educational policies of successive governmental regimes. The chapter also has a detailed theoretical and epistemological section that explains the factors that underpin national history curricula, with a focus on history education being a balance between what is known, substantive content, and how it is known, historical thinking - the syntactic, disciplinary procedural knowledge. Such syntactic knowledge incorporates high level thinking skills, processes and disciplinary concepts that also meets the demands of education in Brazil today to be transformative:

“The transformation of certain procedures and attitudes towards substantive content relevant to History Education can be understood from the perspective of previous curricular content that was impoverished, fragmented and handled unsystematically and related themes that had lost their conceptual validity and value. Such themes have become vapid words, unrelated to and ungrounded in the collective experiences of those who aim to make the history of the Brazilian people past and present to relate to the demands for the development and transformation of contemporary society.”

In **Chapter 9** we find a fascinating study of developments in **Iceland** where Icelandic history is universally popular. The school history curriculum before 1999 was an informal canon or master narrative that reflected historical consciousness embedded in public opinion. The canon consisted of a set of causally linked topics of major developments, iconic events and symbolic individuals in Iceland’s past that cumulatively shaped Icelanders’ historical consciousness and identity. The 1999 national curriculum reflected the government’s highlighting of the role of history in the promotion of national identity:

“Matters of national education such as the language, national culture and the history of the land and nation should be given special status in the

curriculum. The prerequisite for a flourishing national culture in the face of ever-increasing foreign influence is a vibrant connection between the nation and its language, culture and history.”

Teaching is apparently conservative, with the perpetuation of a text book based pedagogic transmission model of the substantive knowledge at the history curriculum’s core.

Chapter 10’s focuses on **Israel**’s evolution and development since 1949. The rationale of the new state’s national history curriculum was the story of Israel’s heroic survival against external and internal enemies and how that would help shape its future. The changing curriculum has developed against

- the backcloth of a rapidly developing historical consciousness rooted in the biblical past and current, traumatic events;
- discordant, disputatious political parties and interest groups with rival historical canons and national narratives;
- the division between supporters of a ‘monist’ national curriculum for pupil assimilation of a given uncontested canon of national history and backers of a ‘pluralist’ curriculum to develop critical historical thinking:

“The pendulum swung from expressive populist ethnocentricity to critical inquiry and diversity and back. New policies are haphazardly and partially enforced until a rival coalition reaches power and debates curricula by publicizing the attempts to undo or alter them. Little attention was given to the ways teachers or students actually enacted and perceived the curriculum.”

Central to the historical dimension of **Malta**’s national curriculum, **Chapter 11**, is a pedagogy based on pupil development and evaluation of declarative, substantive ‘know that’ knowledge through the procedural, syntactic ‘know how’ knowledge that pupils working as young historians develop. Here pedagogy takes centre stage:

“Today it is no exaggeration to say that, of all school subjects history is the one which has undergone the most radical transformation as far as its pedagogy is concerned. History teaching in Malta now focuses on the learning of specific history skills and concepts, and analyses and interpretation of primary and secondary sources.”

The pedagogic focus continues in **Chapter 12** on **New Zealand** students’ development as young historians through course work:

“In New Zealand senior secondary school students are not required to follow a history prescription and up to a half of their courses for national qualifications are based on internally assessed course work where they enjoy a high degree of autonomy over what they choose to study. This chapter ... examines the extent to which students learn how to think historically when they engage in this type of learning... Students who are successful in conducting internally assessed research projects are developing advanced understandings of how the discipline of history operates.”

History Education in the Republic of **Korea** [South Korea], **Chapter 13**, analyses the country’s populist master narrative or canon’s substantive knowledge that pupils are expected to assimilate through the teaching of the school’s history syllabi. While history educators have created a sophisticated approach to History Education based upon history as a discipline, contemporary historiography and an understanding of the role of history as the temporal dimension of citizenship, the contrast with what goes on in schools is stark:

“To learn history is to learn a story: to come to know the major characters, events, and simple causal relationships of events. The interplay of social forces, for example, is likely to be sacrificed in the classroom for a simple story about dates and names. Accordingly, the practice of teachers’ giving and students’ memorizing facts has been prevalent in the history class. The assessment system constructed with multiple-choice tests strengthens the practice of accumulating knowledge.”

The final contribution to the opening section on **Turkey**, **Chapter 14**, starkly confirms the intensely political and controversial nature of the history curriculum in a country or jurisdiction facing a strategic choice over its future. The crucial Turkish questions are what history should be taught in its schools and how on the ‘monist’ to ‘pluralist’ spectrum? Should the history be national, multi-cultural or global? A quotation from 2009 highlights the Turkish government’s dilemma if it abandons a traditional, ‘monist’ nationalistic history curriculum in favour of a ‘pluralist’ multi-cultural, global version with a European orientation:

“The official version of history will often express or embed within it doubts about the validity of alternative history and local historiography, and will point out the dangers involved in facing up to our own history, advocating the right to disown history, multiple identity multiculturalism, world citizenship, European consciousness, and universal history. These are seen to have the aim of breaking the power of history in constructing and maintaining the nation state and national identity. In other words, the

purpose is to denationalise the Turkish people in order to give Turkey a European identity. However, the society that wants to be given European identity has not been considered as European for 50 years by Europe. If that is so what kind of a benefit can anyone take from destroying our own identity and adopting European identity?"

Part II: The Traumatic Past and Sensitive Issues, Chapters 15-18

Chapters 1-14 focused on the nature and role of history education in polities where it becomes embroiled in often vicious, vindictive and hostile disputation that however in a physical sense remains peaceful – a *History Cold War*. A fundamental element in *History Hot Wars* involving violence is trauma from the past where a nation state, jurisdiction or community, the victim, regards itself as the physical victim of aggression. The context of such traumas is:

- wars between countries and states,
- conflict within them involving rival communities and jurisdictions, i.e. civil war or military occupation
- the collapse of social order and the rule of law as for example in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the Ukraine since 2001.

Traumas can become iconic, symbolic events in a community's canon, with a focus on a particular event or incident that encapsulates the victimisers treatment of the victim community. Such traumas can involve the full horror of man's inhumanity to man, including civil war, deportation and diaspora, ethnic cleansing, execution, genocide/holocaust, interrogation, torture, murder and mass murder / slaughter, individual and mass rape, political imprisonment and suicide bombing.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in **Chapter 15** *Greek Society's Confrontation With Traumas Caused by National Socialism: the case of the Distomo Massacre (9 June 14th 1944) History Text Books and Memory Politics of The Local Community*. The trauma of the Distomo massacre lives on in the historical consciousness of the local and national **Greek** communities. The authors sketch what this involves and its implications that are shared in analogous traumas that other nation states, countries and jurisdictions have suffered in the past:

"Two of the most significant characteristics of post-modern societies are presentism as a dominant status of historicity and confrontation with the traumatic past, namely that of World War II. Considering Distomo as one

of the cities-symbols that endured the genocidal violence of National Socialism, as one of the main loci of memory in the Greek historical martyrdom, and as a focal point in the European network of martyr cities, the aforementioned confrontation concerns firstly, the management of the event in reference to identity and historical consciousness, a choice that points towards certain politics of memory in the local society, and, secondly, the moral claim for the recognition of the city's suffering and the undertaking of responsibilities by the German State.

In the case of Distomo's Massacre, a balance for "memory's economy" does not exist -and should not be "constructed". On the side of the "victimisers", guilty oblivion, and subterfuge are prevalent (with a few exceptions). On the contrary, on the side of the victims, there is an excess of memory, if not, "hyper-memory". The only way there could be a balance is under the condition that the re-united German State will at last recognise its responsibilities and understand its moral duty to ask for hands-on repentance for the genocidal practices of the Nazi troops."

Chapter 16, also from the University of the Aegean, **Greece**, has a 'pluralist' focus on how to use cinema to teach about traumatic, sensitive and controversial historical issues. The authors argue that the study of contemporary history, the *History of the Present* requires radical changes in historiographical approaches and related pedagogy in a "proper educational environment" that in this case incorporates film:

"Cinema could probably be part of this new methodology as it is considered to be a constructive teaching tool and provides wide possibilities for the teacher. The authors have carried out, as described in our paper, a research programme with Aegean University students. They identified the extent to which the participants have familiarized themselves with the ways of decoding the messages of cinema as a medium, as well as demonstrating the ability to connect these messages with the difficult issues of constructing collective memory and historical truth."

While the research results were inconclusive, the project reinforces that History Education in the digital age should draw upon alternative modes and genres for representing and understanding the past such as film.

Chapter 17 is a report of a detailed research project on how well **American** adolescents were able to:

"understand decision-making in historical contexts of conflict, where socio-historical understanding implies ethical reflection on the part of the historical agents ...ninth and tenth grade students considered why one