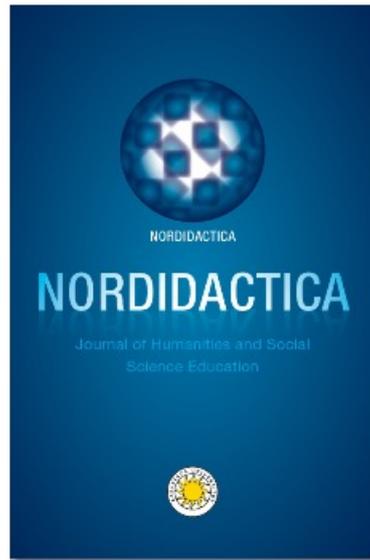


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Teaching historical thinking and reasoning in upper secondary schools in Iceland: results of an observation study

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the teaching of historical thinking and reasoning in upper secondary education in Iceland and to what extent teachers teach for these higher order thinking skills in their daily practice. We used the observation instrument, Teach-HTR, to rate 54 history lessons. It is now apparent that some form of HTR is present in nearly all of them. Nearly all included teacher's demonstration of historical thinking and reasoning and teachers also engaged students in individual or group assignments that asked for various HTR activities. However, it does not seem to be built upon in a strategic manner and certain areas are almost completely left out. The vocabulary of HTR is not deliberately used, which indicates that teachers may be drawing more from their education as historians than as history teachers. This study may provide important indicators for professional development that can be of use in teacher training and professionalization. With the help of the instrument Teach-HTR and the literature it should be possible to design a program that helps teachers focus on basic components of historical thinking and reasoning and specific behaviour, discourse and activities that bring it forward.

KEYWORDS: HISTORY EDUCATION, HISTORICAL THINKING, CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

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Introduction

This descriptive, observational study aims to gather information about history lessons on the upper secondary level in Iceland to see if and how students' historical thinking and reasoning are being enhanced. Higher order thinking and reasoning are important aims in many curricula and are recently emphasized in discussions about 21st century skills (LeT & Claro, 2009; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). The subject specific literature of history is no exception; within it there is also an increasing focus on historical thinking and reasoning (e.g. Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2018). However, little is known about to what extent teachers teach for these higher order thinking skills in their daily practice. No country can claim one 'national' way of teaching. Rather, there may be a variety within a country, in the teaching practices of individual teachers, between teachers, between teachers of different subjects and between teachers of the same subject in different countries (Clarke, Mesiti, O'Keefe, Xu, Jablonka, Ah Chee Mok, & Shimizu, 2007).

There are diverse views on the dominant factors that shape teacher's practices and whether national cultures or global cultural dynamics play a bigger role (LeTendre, Baker, Akiba, Goesling & Wiseman, 2001). However, general lesson patterns seem to be institutionalised and hence familiar to teachers from different nations. The authors of an extensive observational study, based on the 1999 Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) video archives, recommend the use of a close-up lens that focusses on details of lessons to enable a reliable national comparison of teaching (Givvin, Hiebert, Jacobs, Hollingsworth & Gallimore, 2005). Ours is a descriptive study that aims to provide important indicators for professional development that can be of use in teacher training and professionalization. Moreover, concentrating on teacher behaviour can grant clues to other important issues, such as the implementation of the formal curriculum.

In Iceland, hardly any research concerning the teaching of history at upper secondary school level has been available until now and in fact any information on history teaching is scarce (Gestsdóttir, 2013). Moreover, when it comes to teaching practices, all data is self-reported. The present study, made with the participation of almost half of all history teachers on upper secondary level, adds considerably to the literature on history teaching in the country. By using an observation instrument, Teach-HTR, the focus is on teacher's promotion of historical thinking and reasoning. In the literature on history education an increasing attention is given to historical thinking and reasoning and how it can be promoted in the classroom. Historical thinking is conceptualized as the ability to establish historical significance, use primary source evidence, identify continuity and change, analyze cause and consequence, take historical perspectives, and understand the ethical dimension of historical interpretations (Körber, 2015; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas, 2008; VanSledright, 2011; Wineburg & Wilson, 2001). Historical reasoning can be described as a set of historical thinking activities that is used to construct or evaluate a reasoning about aspects of continuity and change, causes and consequences of historical phenomena and similarities and differences (Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2018; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008).

In a previous study, we operationalized the teaching of historical thinking and reasoning (HTR) in terms of observable teacher behaviour (Gestsdóttir, Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2018). The observation instrument Teach-HTR is primarily intended as a tool for professional development. It consists of 33 items, grouped in seven categories (see Appendix 1). The development of the instrument opens up possibilities for research that have until now been challenging. In this study we used the instrument to describe teaching practices in history education on upper secondary level in Iceland, notably teacher's promotion of historical thinking and reasoning.

Teaching Historical Thinking and Reasoning

Different components that fall under the category of historical thinking and reasoning have become increasingly important topics in the research on history education (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015). In a previous article we introduced seven dimensions with indicators that act as behavioural markers that can be used to investigate how a teacher supports students' HTR (Gestsdóttir et al., 2018). So only a brief overview of the dimensions will be given here. The development of historical thinking and reasoning ability requires the understanding that history is always interpretation rather than a fixed body of knowledge (e.g. Chapman, 2011; Maggioni, Riconscente & Alexander, 2006). It includes strategic knowledge of how to do things in history, second-order concepts, the nature of historical knowledge and deeper understanding of some historical phenomena. We consider the communication of such objectives to students as an important dimension of the teaching of HTR. A second dimension that we identified is the extent to which teachers demonstrate HTR themselves by asking historical questions, contextualizing events or the acts of people in the past, explaining historical phenomena, discerning aspects of change and continuity, comparing historical phenomena or periods or assigning historical significance. Several scholars have conceptualized these activities as HTR activities (e.g. Chapman, 2011; Lee & Shemilt, 2004; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2018; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008; Van Hover, Hicks & Cotton, 2012). Furthermore, we considered looking at history from the different viewpoints of various historical actors, from different dimensions (e.g. economic or political), from different national or political viewpoints, or from a viewpoint that has changed through time as an important aspect of the teaching of HTR (see Stradling, 2003; Wansink, Akkerman & Wubbels, 2016). Critical engagement with historical sources in the classroom is also considered a key component of HTR (Monte-Sano, 2011; Reisman, 2012; Wiley & Voss, 1999; Wineburg, 1991). Instead of using documents, pictures or objects merely to illustrate the content, a teacher can also use sources to support HTR. This means sourcing, putting sources in context, close reading and comparison of information from different sources. Providing explicit instructions on HTR strategies (e.g. how to identify aspects of change and continuity or how to corroborate information) is also an important component when teaching students these skills (Nokes, Dole & Hacker, 2007; Stoel, van Drie & van Boxtel, 2016; Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2018). Finally, the doing history

approach (a term often used for active learning of history) emphasizes that students should be actively engaged in HTR (e.g. Barton & Levstik, 2003). Teachers can encourage this by providing learning tasks and activities or whole class discussion in which students can apply historical knowledge and strategies (e.g. Havekes, de Vries & Aardema, 2010; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2011). These will enable the students themselves to try out the components mentioned above.

Studies that investigate the effects of instructional approaches on certain aspects of historical reasoning are available (e.g. De La Paz, 2005; Leinhardt, 1997; Logtenberg, Van Boxtel & Van Hout-Wolters, 2010; Nokes et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012; Stoel et al., 2016). However, in fact little is known about how teachers do this in their daily teaching. There are indications that history teachers tend to refrain from approaches that enhance higher order thinking and instead aim at the consumption and reproduction of facts found in textbooks or conveyed by teacher lectures (e.g. Bouhon, 2009; Huijgen, van de Grift, Van Boxtel & Holthuis, 2017; VanSledright, 2011; VanSledright, 2002). This study should add to the knowledge base about teaching practices regarding historical thinking and reasoning, not least as it is based on observation, rather than self-reporting data or a case study.

History Teaching in Iceland

To date, hardly any research is available concerning the teaching of history at upper secondary school level in Iceland and no discussion on historical thinking and reasoning has taken place yet. In the Icelandic school system compulsory schooling for those aged 6-16, referred to as primary education, was followed by four years of upper secondary school which most often concludes with matriculation. Since this study took place, the upper secondary level has been reduced to three years (16 – 19 years old students). Here we will provide a brief overview of the curriculum, the structure of teacher training and the materials available to history teachers.

Curriculum

Despite the lack of research on history teaching on upper secondary level, the development of the school subject in Iceland has been documented and small-scale studies give indications of history teachers' views on specific issues, such as the teaching of world history (Arnfinnsdóttir, 2016; Friðjónsson, 2013; Gestsdóttir, 2001; Þráinsson, 2015). The current National curriculum guide from 2011 (English version 2012) does not include any goals specific to history. The last time guidelines for history were put forward was in the National curriculum guide of 1999 where the focus was mainly on knowledge. However, among the final aims of history teaching at the time (11 – 17 items, depending on the line students followed) two may be seen as related to HTR: students should be trained in evaluating the relevance and reliability of sources and they should realise the relevance and relativity of historical narrative. Neither of these is explicitly referred to as historical thinking. In fact the only specifically historical term used is historical consciousness: "History education endeavours to interpret the

past, understand the present and meet and shape the future. This has been called *historical consciousness*.¹ (Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla, samfélagsgreinar, 1999). The emphasis on historical consciousness and the emphasis on historical thinking can be considered as two different traditions of history education, the former put forward by German scholars in the 1970s and 1980s and the latter often linked to the British Schools Council History Project in the 1970s (Seixas, 2017). Although the conceptualization of historical consciousness in the curriculum guide originates in the work of German scholars, an elaboration of the implications for teaching history is lacking. We conclude that neither the historical consciousness nor the historical thinking strand is prevalent in the current National curriculum guide of 2011. Furthermore, the guide does not discuss content beyond the three core subjects: Icelandic, mathematics and foreign languages. Apart from that, all schoolwork is based on six fundamental pillars of education: literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality, health and welfare and creativity. On primary and lower secondary level (age 6 – 16), history is part of the subject social sciences (along with geography, sociology, religious studies, life skills and philosophy, and ethics). Each school can form their own combination of the subject, as long as students meet the competence criteria at the end of year 4, 7 and 10, given by the curriculum. None the less, it is obvious that many of the items of the competence criteria at the end of year 10 relate directly to history education and in fact to aspects of historical thinking, such as critical thinking, understanding of historical evidence and the ability to give explanations. Among other things, the pupils should be able to

- show their knowledge and critical view of periods, events, people, cultural bonds and courses of development during various periods that are referred to in social discourse,
- understand the role of source material, perspectives and evaluation in history and shared memories,
- explain with examples how history appears in texts, objects, traditions and memories (The Icelandic national curriculum guide for compulsory schools, 2014).

As only Icelandic and mathematics are subject to centralized examination, there is no systematic verification of whether these objectives have been met.

In a similar fashion, each upper secondary school is responsible for their courses where all the fundamental pillars should feature. No systematic external control is in place. The sequence of courses is placed on qualification levels one to four and key competences of each level are universally discussed. In the National curriculum guide, all the fundamental pillars are linked to critical thinking, especially the one of democracy and human rights: “Education for democracy and human rights is based on critical thinking and reflection on the basic values of society.” (The Icelandic national curriculum guide for upper secondary school, 2012). In brief, history teachers are

¹ „Í sögunámi er leitast við að túlka fortíð, skilja nútíð og mæta og móta framtíð. Þetta hefur verið kallað *söguvitund*.“

neither required to nor do they receive instructions on how to aim at historical thinking and reasoning. However, they are expected to build their teaching largely on critical thinking which may be seen as a broadening of that term and certainly one of the prerequisites for a healthy democracy. This is in line with the ideas of scholars who see strong links between history education and education for democracy (see e.g. Barton & Levstik, 2004).

In recent discussion of national curricula, different trends have been advocated and defended. In The Netherlands and in Denmark, history teaching is linked to a canon with clearly defined knowledge goals (Wilschut, 2009; Haas, 2012). Strong emphasis on national history and the nation state is dominant in many countries (van der Leeuw-Roord, 2009). Elsewhere, like in England, the development of historical skills is in the forefront although some researchers warn against the polarization of skills and factual knowledge (Counsell, 2000; Lee & Howson, 2009). The Icelandic national curriculum seems to follow neither of these tendencies, thereby giving schools and teachers much freedom to design their approach, based on a rather general ideology.

Teacher education and professional development

When it comes to the education of history teachers on upper secondary level, they have completed either a bachelor or a masters degree in history before embarking on the programme of studies for the teaching diploma, offered by two universities. When attending the two years course at the University of Iceland School of Education (or one year course, if they have completed a masters degree) the historians belong to a group of approximately 30 student teachers of various background in social studies. Sometimes there are no historians among the students, sometimes only one or two. Consequently, the emphasis of the programme is very generic. The same goes for the teaching programme at the University of Akureyri, and, like at the University of Iceland, the teacher educator may have a background in any social subject.

These circumstances do not provide opportunities for digging deep into pedagogical issues that belong specifically to the teaching of history, any more than any other subject. The absence of subject specific pedagogy in the teacher training programme is bound to lead to a lack of practical tools and teaching methods about how to teach e.g. interpretational history (Wansink et al., 2016) or how to conduct historical inquiries (Voet & De Wever, 2017). Professional development available to history teachers through the History Teacher's Association of Iceland tends to focus on topical knowledge, rather than pedagogy.

Teaching materials

Having mapped out the external circumstances of Icelandic history teachers and their basic education, it is worth taking a look at teaching materials available to them. Lack of diverse and up to date-material has been a long-standing complaint of history teachers (Gestsdóttir, 2001). In basic courses, the choice stands between two sets of textbooks published in the early 2000. In most other courses, teachers provide the materials themselves by various means. If sources are presented in the textbooks, they usually

have the sole purpose of illustrating the content. However, if accompanying teaching materials are available, these will include primary sources, mainly in written form, and some suggestions of how to use them. Here is the main connection to historical thinking and reasoning. No direct attention is given to multiperspectivity or other aspects of historical thinking strategies but since it is certainly a vital factor in historical work, teachers will probably rely more on their education as historians than as teachers when it comes to this. Icelandic history teachers are neither trained to nor required to pay attention to those approaches. Until now, nothing is known about their pedagogical teaching practices. The latest study on teaching practices in Icelandic upper secondary schools in general reveals much emphasis on teacher centred strategies and little creative input of students (Sigurgeirsson, Eiríksdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2018). Given the open curriculum, generic trends in teacher education and limits of teaching materials available it is interesting to know if and how teachers approach historical thinking and reasoning.

Aim of the study and method

Aim of the study.

The aim of this descriptive study is to gather information about history lessons on the upper secondary level in Iceland to see if students' historical thinking and reasoning are being enhanced. As historians, the history teachers are familiar with historical thinking and reasoning. However, it might be expected to be hardly present since it is neither explicitly mentioned in the curriculum nor does the teacher training or teaching materials focus on it, as has already been demonstrated.

The research question is: *To what extent do Icelandic history teachers teach historical thinking and reasoning at the upper secondary level?*

Participants

Twenty seven history teachers, i.e. almost half of all history teachers on upper secondary level in Iceland, participated in the study. They worked in twelve schools, see Table 1.

TABLE 1

Participating schools and teachers (n = 27) and the number of videotaped lessons (n = 54)

<i>Schools</i>	<i>Total number of teachers observed</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Videotaped lessons</i>
School 1	1	1		2
School 2	1	1		2
School 3	1	1		2
School 4	3	3		6
School 5	2	2		4
School 6	4	3	1	8
School 7	2		2	4
School 8	3	3		6
School 9	3	3		6
School 10	5	4	1	10
School 11	1	1		2
School 12	1		1	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>54</i>

History is a part of the curricula of approximately 30 schools on upper secondary level in Iceland. The number of students in each school ranges from 100 – 2.200, as a whole approximately 22.000 in the autumn semester 2014 when the research was conducted (Svar mennta- og menningarmálaráðherra við fyrirspurn frá Oddnýju G. Harðardóttur um fjölda nemenda í framhaldsskólum, þskj. 533, 235. mál, 2014). 1.042 students were present when the lessons were videotaped. The selection of schools and teachers is supposed to reflect their dispersion in the country. 14 teachers from five schools are in the capital, Reykjavík, and 13 teachers from seven schools are located outside the city. The data on eight teachers comes from a larger study on upper secondary school practices in Iceland where several schools were randomly sampled from stratified groups.² The schools where the other 19 teachers work were chosen from the professional network of the first author. 36 history teachers worked in the twelve schools in question. Nine of them declined but the others allowed two of their lessons to be videotaped.

The number of history teachers on that school level may vary from one semester to another but usually it is just over 60, about 24% of them female. Of the 27 teachers who participated, 19% were female which is in relative accordance with the gender balance of the profession in Iceland. Their period of employment ranged from one to 44 years,

² Upper secondary school practices in Iceland. The research project received a grant from the University of Iceland Research Fund 2013–2015 and from the NordForsk-funded Nordic Centre of Excellence: Justice through education in the Nordic countries 2013–2018. Nine upper secondary schools in Iceland were randomly sampled from stratified groups of a population of 31 schools. Subcategories were made of academic, comprehensive and vocational schools, small and large schools, established and newly founded schools, and with regard to geographical location.

the average being 15,6 years. Their chronological age ranged from 29 to 66, the average being 46,5. This is also in line with the average age of teachers on upper secondary level, 49,8 years (Jakobsson, 2016). All of these teachers hold a degree in history (ten of them an M.A. degree, the others a B.A. degree) and have then added one or two years of pedagogical studies.

Data collection

Two lessons from each teacher, chosen in consultation with them, were observed in September – November 2014. No attention was given to the sequence of lessons; 40% of them were with the same group of students twice, 18% were observed on the same day. Since the organization of courses differs from one school to another and these lessons took place with different age groups the variety of topics was large, ranging from the history of Iraq through Icelandic middle ages and the abolition of slavery to the cold war. Moreover, many of the teachers were using their own teaching materials. All participants agreed to the use of the observations for research purposes. In the first instance, none of the teachers were informed about the exact focus of the study, they were only asked for permission to videotape a regular history lesson. The first lesson was videotaped one month after the school year had begun, the last one three months into the school year. In Iceland, the duration of lessons varies from one school to another, the most common being 60 minutes but ranging from 40 to 100 minutes. The lessons were filmed on a small camera. The first author was present during the lessons.

Data analysis

The videotapes of the 54 lessons were analysed by using the observation instrument Teach-HTR (Gestsdóttir et al., 2018). It detects 33 components of teacher behaviour that is expected to be characteristic of historical thinking and reasoning. Seven categories of teaching HTR are scored on a 4 point Likert scale, using more concrete indicators for each category that can be checked as observed or not observed. Five of those categories focus on the teacher, either communicating learning objectives related to the development of student's HTR ability, demonstrating HTR without explaining it explicitly or giving instructions on how to do it, using historical sources to support HTR, making clear that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations or providing explicit instructions on HTR strategies. The last two categories look at the teacher actively engaging students in historical thinking and reasoning, either by engaging them in assignments or whole class discussion that require HTR. The items within each category were scored whether they were observed or not, which supported the coding for the category as a whole. Each category was scored on a 4-point scale, reaching from 1 to 4 (1 if none of the items in the category were observed and increasing gradually according to the number of items observed or how much time the teacher dedicated to them).

Two raters (the first author and an assistant that was trained on a sample of 5 lessons) rated a randomly chosen set of 10 lessons to determine interrater agreement. For each of the seven items, we calculated the percentage of complete agreement (the same

score), the percentage of cases in which the two raters attributed adjacent scores (e.g. rater 1 scored a 2 and rater 2 scored a 3) and the percentage of cases in which the scores differed more than 1 point. We reached excellent agreement for the categories 'using historical sources' (80% same; 10% adjacent, 10% different), 'explicit instruction' (90% same, 10% adjacent) and 'engaging in whole class discussion that asks for HTR' (80% same, 20% different). We reached good agreement for 'communicating learning objectives related to HTR' (70% same, 20% adjacent, 10% different), 'demonstrating HTR' (70% same, 30% adjacent) and 'engaging in individual or group tasks that ask for HTR' (70% same, 20% adjacent, 10% different). We reached fair agreement for the category 'providing multiple perspectives or interpretations' (60% same, 30% agreement, 10% different).

The scale with 7 categories reached an internal consistency of .81 (Cronbach's alpha).

Research Results

Rating of 54 history lessons in Icelandic upper secondary schools revealed the difference between lessons where HTR is promoted and lessons where it is more or less absent. Table 2 gives an overview of the main categories of the observation instrument, the mean score, standard deviation and range on a 4-point scale.

TABLE 2

Mean scores, standard deviations and range for the seven categories of the observation instrument Teach-HTR (N=54 lessons)

Main categories of the observation instrument Teach-HTR	Mean score	Standard deviation	Range
1. The teacher communicates learning objectives related to the development of student's historical thinking and reasoning ability	1.44	0.63	1-3
2. The teacher herself/himself demonstrates historical thinking or reasoning without explaining explicitly what he is doing or giving instructions on how to	2.76	0.73	1-4
3. The teacher uses historical sources to support historical thinking and reasoning	1.61	0.83	1-4
4. The teacher makes clear that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations	1.54	0.69	1-3
5. The teacher provides explicit instructions on historical thinking and reasoning strategies / the nature of historical knowledge	1.11	0.42	1-3
6. The teacher engages students in individual or group assignments that ask for historical thinking and reasoning	2.44	1.24	1-4
7. The teacher engages students in a whole class discussion that requires historical thinking and reasoning	1.44	0.82	1-4

Overall, the scores are rather low. The second category, demonstration of historical thinking and reasoning, is the most prominent one, with 2.76 on a 4-point scale. The scores go down to 1.11 for the fifth category, providing explicit instructions on HTR strategies or the nature of historical knowledge. A closer look reveals in what percentage

of the 54 lessons each of the seven categories were observed (a score above 1) (Figure 1).

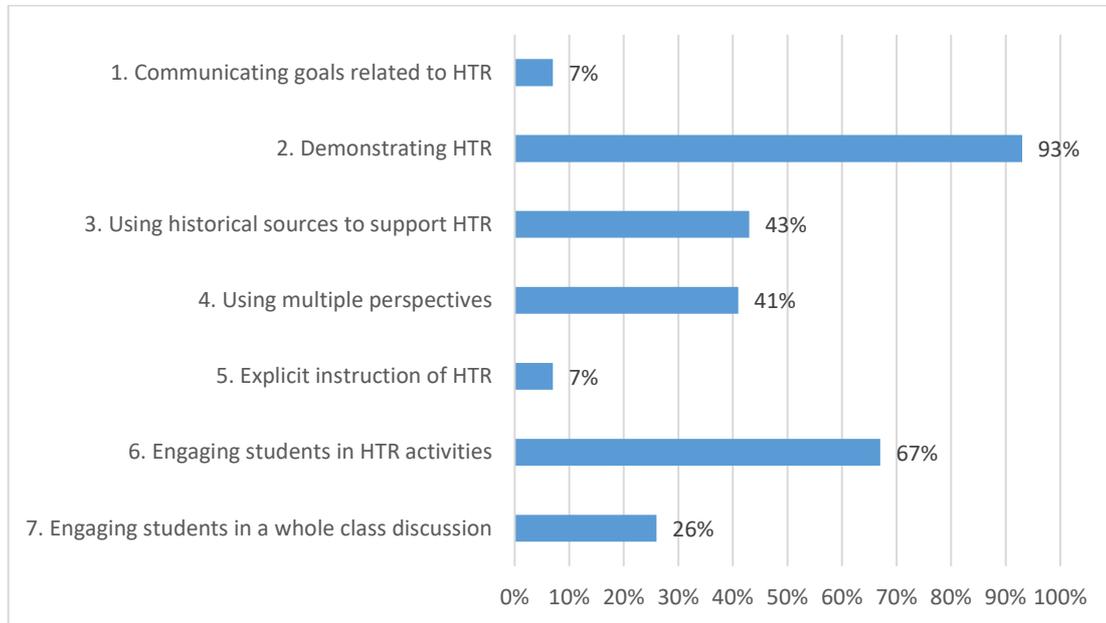


FIGURE 1.

Percentage of lessons (total N = 54) where the subcategories of the Teaching Historical Thinking and Reasoning Observation Instrument were observed.

The instrument brings forward certain variations in teacher behaviour. The categories that get the highest scores will be looked at first, moving to the ones with the lowest score, giving examples to illustrate the teaching behaviour in question.

Demonstration of historical thinking and reasoning.

The category most observed in the history lessons is the second one, The teacher demonstrates HTR without explaining it explicitly, in 93% of the lessons. The behaviour most observed is when the teacher explains historical phenomena, causes and consequences and provides historical context/contextualizes events or actions of people in the past. An example is a lesson where this category scored 4. The teacher asks a historical question (“There are 60 million fewer women than men in China, does that have any particular consequences?”), compares historical phenomena or periods (“I looked at some statistics for India and ...”), provides historical context (“this is at the same time that Gorbachev is taking off in the Soviet Union and there is a certain discourse, even in the West, that reaches China”), discerns aspects of change and continuity (“Despite setbacks, there is a considerable population increase during the 50s and the 60s, one-child policy is implemented in 1979 and it is a success, the rate of population growth has gone from 1,9% , which is a lot, in 1950 to 0,7% in 2010”) and

explains historical phenomena (“Have you heard about 1989, the protest at The Gate of Heavenly Peace?”).

However, not all the items in this category were equally present. In only two lessons did the teacher make clear that contemporary standards should be avoided when looking at the actions of people in the past and in only four lessons did the teacher assign historical significance. Both may indicate a sort of meta-thinking that is absent according to these results.

Student’s engagement in historical thinking and reasoning

The category that has to do with student’s engagement in historical thinking and reasoning, was observed in 67% of the lessons. The most present item in this category is when the teacher engages students in individual or group assignments that ask for a number of HTR activities. It can be stated in general that whether students were comparing Stalin’s and Mao’s communism or investigating the roots of the Islamic State their assignments nearly always asked for explanation or comparison of historical phenomena or concepts, had them discerning aspects of change and continuity or identifying multiple perspectives or interpretations. In these cases textbooks were rarely used, teachers provided or guided the students towards other sources. An example is when the teacher gave the students a text by Alexander Falconbridge from 1788 about the condition of slaves, followed by empathy-oriented questions. Another teacher asked the students to investigate a historical movie or documentaries and give arguments to support their evaluation.

Teacher’s use of sources and using multiple perspectives

The third highest scoring category is teacher’s use of sources. Some kind of sources are present in most history lessons but the observation instrument distinguishes between the use of historical documents, pictures or objects merely to illustrate the content, which most teachers find necessary, and the use of sources to support HTR, observed in 43% of the lessons. Most often it had to do with contextualisation and investigation or close reading of sources. An example is when the teacher used multiple photos of the skeleton of Richard III and compared his skull with contemporary portraits. In none of the lessons did the teacher refer to the role of sources as evidence in interpretation so this item was not observed at all.

The 4th category, Using multiple perspectives, had a similar score. It was observed in 41% of the lessons. An example is when the teacher discussed the withdrawal of Russia from World War 1 and explained different reactions to it.

Less observed categories

The 7th category, where the teacher engages students in a whole class discussion, was observed in 26% of the lessons. In other words, HTR activities are rarely followed up by debriefing where these activities may be deepened. Then there are categories that are hardly visible at all. These are the fifth and first ones. The items in the fifth category

have to do with the teacher giving explicit instructions on HTR strategies. They were observed in 7% of the lessons, i.e. in only four lessons (and one of them, the teacher provides explicit instructions on how to compare historical phenomena and/or periods, was actually not observed at all). The first category, Communicating goals related to historical thinking and reasoning, was also observed in 7% of the lessons.

Lesson examples

There were only few lessons that were rich in HTR and several indicators were observed. In general, a lesson where few indicators were observed might look like this particular one about Icelandic society in previous times: all categories scored 1 on a 4-point scale except the second one, the teacher demonstrating historical thinking and reasoning, which scored 3. In this lesson the teacher gave a 50 minutes lecture. He explained several phenomena and contextualized events and actions of people in the past. In other words, the teacher provided historical context and explained historical phenomena. Some drawings or photos were used as illustrations and students rarely participated.

What does a high-scoring lesson look like? In this particular lesson on the Vietnam war all but the first two categories (teacher communicating goals related to HTR or demonstrating it) score either 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. In this example the teacher used sources to support HTR and, when giving the assignment to the students, he pointed out that they would probably find sources that supported more than one ‘right’ view, thereby making it clear that there are multiple perspectives. He gave explicit instructions on HTR when he guided the students towards different ways to evaluate the movie and other sources and discussed various methods used to promote certain views. Moreover, he engaged students in HTR activities and a whole-class discussion in which students were stimulated to think and reason historically. During this lesson, the students were watching an American film that takes place during the Vietnam war in the 60’s (*The Green Berets*, 1968). Simultaneously, they worked on an assignment. The teacher stopped the film a few times to conduct a discussion where the students were provoked to think and reason historically to activate prior knowledge or deepen a particular topic. Example 1 which is an excerpt from the lesson shows the use of sources: the teacher demonstrates close reading of a source, sourcing (in this case, looking into the purpose of the source), contextualisation and evaluation of the usefulness or reliability of the source in relation to a specific question.

EXAMPLE 1. A lesson that illustrates teacher’s use of sources.

Teacher: *Well, according to this film, how is life in the American army in Vietnam?*

Students 1 & 2: *(answer simultaneously with a very positive verdict, although their exact words are difficult to distinguish).*

Teacher: *It’s like going camping, it’s like ...*

Student 1: *People are having a barbecue and all!*

Teacher: *It is like going to summer camp, easy summer camp, having a great time with the boys. ... And the Northern-Vietnamese are invisible, they are like ghosts. They appear and commit horrendous human rights violations, they kill women and children and torture people and then the American soldiers come and cure people and help little children. ...*

Student 1: *Did they make this movie to convince more people to come and join in the war?*

Teacher: *Yes, because doubts concerning the participation of the United States in the war were becoming prevalent. John Wayne said as much when he was making the movie: „I am making a movie to support our guys in Vietnam“, that’s the purpose of the film, and they said in the introduction that the US army supported the making of this movie, didn’t they? They provided helicopters and various equipment.*

Student 3: *Yes.*

Teacher: *And the vegetation, does it look like Vietnam?*

Student 3: *E-e [denying].*

Teacher: *You see, this is filmed in Virginia, on the eastern coast of the United States, and not only, this is actually filmed on an army base. The Americans simply provided a giant army base and they were allowed to build their set there. And when the film was done, the army used it [explains]. This is a good example of the cooperation of the United States army and Hollywood.*

(Discusses the situation today, a student contributes a more recent example of this cooperation).

Teacher: *But all this is a very obvious propaganda, isn’t it, we can easily see through this, can’t we? This is so obvious, in fact it is comical.*

Discussion and Conclusion

The use of the observation instrument Teach-HTR opens up new research possibilities. It enables an analysis of history lessons that is not based upon self-report but a more valid perception of teacher behaviour. Until now, most studies in history education focus on students' thinking about historical phenomena and on describing (the effects of) instructional approaches (e.g. Nokes et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012; Stoel et al., 2016), whereas hardly any studies concentrate on what history teachers actually do in their daily work. Here we described teaching practices of teachers in Iceland. Since this is an observation study, it adds to the case studies on teaching practices in history education.

Rating of 54 history lessons of almost half of all history teachers on upper secondary level in Iceland shows the strengths of history teaching, as well as the weaker points when a teacher aims at building up the teaching of historical thinking and reasoning. It is clear that nearly all history lessons included teacher’s demonstration of historical thinking and reasoning, mainly by explaining historical phenomena, causes and consequences, and providing historical context. Teachers also engaged students in

individual or group assignments that asked for various HTR activities. These are all examples of teacher behaviour that are very much associated with history teaching in general. On the other hand, in the lessons observed teachers rarely communicated learning objectives related to the development of student's historical thinking and reasoning, and explicit teaching of historical thinking and reasoning was also sporadic, even coincidental.

The research question of this study was: *To what extent do Icelandic history teachers teach historical thinking and reasoning at the upper secondary level?* It is now apparent that some form of HTR is present in nearly all history lessons. However, it does not seem to be built upon in a strategic manner and certain areas are almost completely left out. The vocabulary of HTR is not deliberately used, which indicates that teachers may be drawing more from their education as historians than as history teachers when moving in this field. It is regrettable since the variety of student's assignments demonstrate teacher's readiness to explore and advance student's higher order skills, i.e. reinforce themselves as history teachers. To follow up the activities by making it explicit that they are encouraging HTR would not take much extra effort but doing it constructively requires the teacher's familiarity not only with the appropriate procedures but also the appropriate language (Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2017). The same goes for the use of sources. The shift from the very common use of sources to illustrate the content towards a critical evaluation of sources and using sources to support an argument is not necessarily a major one, as long as teachers are aware of what they are doing. This lack of communicating HTR goals and explicit teaching or explanation of those strategies may be a result of the fact that no mention is made of it in the formal curriculum. More familiarity with the literature and the practice of historical thinking and reasoning might facilitate the process. Simultaneously, it would encourage further development of critical thinking skills who are linked to all six fundamental pillars of education, according to the National Curriculum Guide.

Our finding that in the observed lessons, the teaching of historical thinking and reasoning was only partly integrated into the history lessons resemble the findings of other researchers who also concluded that historical thinking and reasoning is only paid a limited attention (e.g. Bouhon, 2009; Huijgen et al., 2017; VanSledright, 2011). One of the explanations for the absence or scarcity of certain categories of the instrument may be the fact that neither the National Curriculum Guide nor the initial education of history teachers in Iceland accentuate any of the components of HTR, beyond critical assessment of sources, which certainly is the basis for any work on history whatsoever. In fact, it might be that in class, teachers rely more on their training as historians than their teacher training. They may promote historical thinking without realizing it, even without having the vocabulary to discuss it. A clarification of these issues is beyond the scope of our research but the connection between teaching of HTR and curriculum requirements is an interesting topic for further research.

However, this also highlights the limitations of the observation instrument Teach-HTR. When observing a single lesson or a couple of lessons as in this study, one may miss either the beginning of a sequence of lessons or the conclusion of them. E.g., this may be the reason for such few occasions where the teacher communicated learning

objectives at all, let alone those related to HTR. Some researchers have drawn attention to “the significance of the location of the lesson within the instructional (topic) sequence” (Clarke et al., 2007, p. 283). Since this variable was not included in this study, important aspects of lesson organisation, such as the communication of learning goals, may be left out. When only two lessons per teacher are observed it obviously gives a limited scope of topics. It may well be the case that some topics are better suited for teaching HTR than others, as has been suggested regarding the teaching of interpretation (Wansink et al., 2016). A more widespread period of observation would be necessary to determine if this is the case. Although some form of HTR is present in nearly all history lessons the instrument does not reveal if it is done consciously or coincidentally. Further research is needed to determine what lies behind teacher behaviour drawn out by the instrument. Finally, it is worth mentioning that it would be interesting to investigate with a larger sample of lessons and teachers how the different categories of the instrument relate to each other to see if a substantial score in one category entails a similar score in another one. It might be the case, for example, that teachers who demonstrate HTR, use sources to support HTR and provide multiple perspectives do not necessarily actively engage students in HTR through assignments, group work or discussion. We found that in the majority of the observed lessons, teachers actively engaged students in HTR by using assignments, although we do not know how much time of the total lesson teachers used such student-centred teaching approach. This finding seems to be different from the findings of a recent study of Reichenberg (2018) who found that social studies teachers in Sweden – more than math and language teachers – tended to prefer teacher-centred practices and did not spend much time on assignments, group work and discussion.

It should be kept in mind that assessment of teacher behaviour is not the goal as Teach-HTR is intended to be an instrument for professional development and basis for discussion about one’s own teaching. The suitability of the instrument for that is evident. This study shows that it could be used to provide suggestions for professional development of history teachers in Iceland, as well as for the initial training of history teachers. With the help of the literature it should be possible to design a program that helps teachers focus on basic components of historical thinking and reasoning and specific behaviour, discourse and activities that bring it forward. This study supports previous findings that none of this is completely foreign to teacher’s way of working but they need constructive support to be able to implement it. This is in line with the findings of other research, for instance Barton and Levstik (2003) on the doing history approach in general, Voet and De Wever (2017) on inquiry learning, Wansink et al. (2016) on teaching history as interpretation and Huijgen et al. (2017) on teaching historical contextualization. Despite good intentions or even the impression that one’s teaching clearly reflects one’s intentions, the opposite may actually be the case. Yet, it is not obvious where to find the platform in Iceland where such matters may be addressed. The community of history educators in the country is small and renewal takes place at a very slow pace. In the initial teacher education there is hardly any space provided for issues specific to history education, since history students form only a small part of the student group. It would probably be more logical to address it on earlier

stages of their education, when they are still working on their history degree. Furthermore, teachers would have to be supported by the National Curriculum Guide, which calls for important change to the document, bringing in ideas and goals that are specific to history education.

The analysis of the Icelandic history lessons also draws out interesting topics for further research on history education. How do teachers determine their teaching approaches? Where do their motives come from and what influences their teacher behaviour? We believe that research on how teachers in one country teach historical thinking and reasoning is relevant on an international level. The items of the instrument Teach-HTR are detailed and domain-specific, both of which are necessary preconditions to a significant comparison of history teaching between nations (Givvin et al., 2005; LeTendre et al., 2001). Such a comparison might give clues regarding the effect of teacher training and curricula on history teaching and other interesting outcomes. When we can grasp how and to what extent teachers teach historical thinking and reasoning it will also be possible to investigate how this affects student's ability to think and reason historically.

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TEACHING HISTORICAL THINKING AND REASONING IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ICELAND: RESULTS OF AN OBSERVATION STUDY

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Appendix 1

Categories and items of the Teach-HTR instrument

1. The teacher communicates learning objectives that focus on historical thinking and reasoning goals.

The teacher communicates learning objectives that focus on

- 1. knowledge about historical thinking and reasoning strategies (e.g., how to ask questions, examine sources, construct an argument), second-order concepts (e.g., cause, change, evidence) and/or the nature of historical knowledge (e.g., in history knowledge is constructed, it is often insecure and not fixed)
- 2. a deeper understanding of some historical phenomena (e.g., causes and consequences, changes, significance)
- The teacher communicates learning objectives that do not focus on historical thinking and reasoning.
- The teacher does not communicate learning objectives.

2. The teacher demonstrates (components of) historical thinking and reasoning (without an explanation or explicit instruction).

The teacher

- 3. asks historical questions, problematizes
- 4. provides historical context (e.g., time, place, developments, societal characteristics/ contextualizes events, objects or actions of people in the past)
- 5. makes clear that people in the past thought differently than we do now
- 6. makes causal connections (identifies causes and/or consequences)
- 7. discerns/describes aspects of change and/or continuity
- 8. compares historical phenomena and/or periods (e.g., a comparison with the present)
- 9. assigns historical significance to persons, places, events or developments
- The teacher does not do any of this.

3. The teacher uses historical sources to support historical thinking and reasoning.

The teacher

- 10. sources (e.g., who wrote the document?)
- 11. contextualizes
- 12. does a close reading of sources
- 13. compares information from different sources
- 14. evaluates the usefulness/reliability of sources in relation to a specific question
- 15. uses information from a source as evidence in an interpretation/to support a claim
- uses historical documents, pictures and/or objects merely to illustrate the content
- makes no use of historical documents, pictures and/or objects

4. The teacher makes clear that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations.

The teacher

- 16. presents different historical interpretations, for example, of causes/consequences, changes, historical significance, or shows that interpretations change through time
- 17. presents and explores the perspectives of different historical actors regarding the same event/in the same period

- 18. presents two or more perspectives: local/regional/national/global
- 19. presents two or more perspectives: economic/political/sociocultural
- 20. makes clear that the perspective presented is only one of many or changes through time
- The teacher does not present multiple perspectives or interpretations.

5. The teacher provides explicit instruction on historical thinking and reasoning strategies.

The teacher gives explicit instructions on how to

- 21. Contextualize the events or actions of people in the past/take a historical perspective
- 22. explain historical phenomena
- 23. identify/describe processes of change and continuity
- 24. compare historical phenomena and/or periods
- 25. evaluate and use historical sources as evidence
- 26. assign historical significance to a person, place, event or development
- 27. identify multiple perspectives and interpretations
- 28. formulate arguments (pro and contra) and/or use evidence to support viewpoints
- The teacher does not do any of this.

6. The teacher engages students in historical thinking and reasoning by individual or group tasks.

Assignments that require

- 29. asking historical questions, constructing a historical context, explaining, comparing or connecting historical phenomena or concepts, describing aspects of change and continuity, assigning historical significance, and describing/comparing multiple perspectives and interpretations
- 30. the evaluation of historical sources
- 31. argumentation: supporting claims about the past or sources with arguments
- Tasks do not ask for any of the above.
- Students do not engage in tasks.

7. The teacher engages students in historical thinking and reasoning by a whole class discussion.

A whole class discussion

- 32. in which students are provoked to think/reason historically in order to activate prior knowledge and/or to deepen a particular topic
- 33. in which the teacher debriefs tasks and requires students to verbalize (and compare or evaluate) their historical thinking and reasoning
- The whole class discussion does not ask for any of the above.
- Students do not engage in a whole class discussion.