

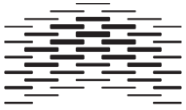
OSLO AND AKERSHUS  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
OF APPLIED SCIENCES

25 JANUARY, 2016

---

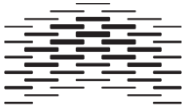
# Teaching history in divided societies

An overview of the literature



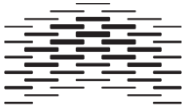
## My background

- 4 years of teacher training college (HiHm)
- Master in Multicultural and International Education (HiOA)
- 10 years of teaching experience from primary school in Oslo
- Currently PhD candidate in the PhD program Educational science for teacher education, HiOA
- My PhD project is focusing on the teaching and learning of history in post-independent South Sudan, exploring the role of history on interethnic relationships – nation building



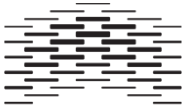
## Aim:

- An overview of the literature on history education in societies divided by lines of ethnicity, religion, language or culture (typical examples will be post-conflict, post- independence)
- This brief overview underlines challenges posed by diverse/multicultural societies as well as some positive approaches to history teaching
- Lesson learned from international research within the field can easily be transferred to European settings – globalization
- Empirical examples from research in secondary schools, South Sudan

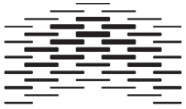


## Teaching and learning history

- After the end of Apartheid in South Africa in 1994, history was considered one of the most important subjects for delivering a values-based education (Weldon 2010).
- After the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, there has been a moratorium of the teaching of history in schools (Hodkin, 2006; Freedman et al., 2011).
- In post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina the Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats had separate history textbooks that reflected ethnic division rather than harmonization (Baranovic, 2001).
- In South Sudan the subject of history is underlined for nation building purposes: History should “develop the sense of nationalism, patriotism and national unity” (MoEST 2007, p. 169).

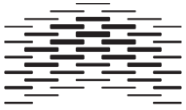


*History can even disappear when those in power don't like what has happened and want to make their role more heroic (secondary school student, South Sudan).*



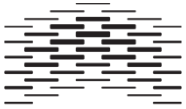
# Teaching approaches

- From existing research, the wide range of teaching approaches in history can roughly be divided into *3 main approaches* to history education based on their goals and traditions related to the learning process and representation of the past. The approaches are:
  1. Authoritarian/single perspective
  2. Multiperspective
  3. Avoidance



## ***Authoritarian approach***

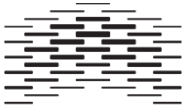
- The approaches to history education that center around the representation of an ethnically/nationally centered view, is referred to as an authoritarian approach, monocultural approach or single approach (Pingel, 2008; Stradling 2003).
- All of these somewhat authoritarian approaches have some similar characteristics; they often leave no room for counter narratives or alternative views on history education.
- Concerned about transmitting historical facts
- Collective memory constructed from above
  - Rwanda
  - India and Pakistan
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina



## ***Multiperspective approach***

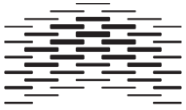
- The *multiperspective approach* to teaching history focuses on the process of critical thinking
- Collective memory emerging from below
- Underlines the need to assess historical events from different perspectives
- Murphy (2010) refers to the project Facing history and Ourselves (FHAO) where a Holocaust case study has been used in post conflict environments of Bosnia, Colombia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda and South Africa as a tool to identify connections between history and moral choices of own lives (Murphy, 2010). The use of the Holocaust case study gives the students conceptual tools for entry into the history.
- Making connections between past and present might develop the historical consciousness described by Seixas (2004).





## ***Avoidance***

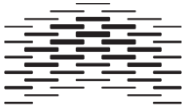
- Avoidance as a strategy when dealing with sensitive and contentious issues and narratives in education (Cole 2007; Freedman et. al. 2008).
- There are two categories of avoidance related to the teaching and learning of history:
  1. The political ban of history as a school subject immediately after conflict and in the process of reconciliation
  2. The fear of bringing sensitive and controversial issues into the teaching. Research from Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina found among teachers and parents a fear of violence reappearing, thus they expressed in interviews the need to manage classroom talk in order to avoid controversial issues.



## How is the recent violent past approached

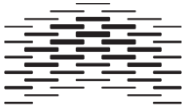
In her review of the field Poulson (2015) inductively generates three main approaches when dealing with a recent violent past. She describes them as:

1. **«Exemplary memory»**, conflict as exception, and history as citizenship – The past is used as an exemplary guide for action to the present and the future (p. 27). Shaping the history curriculum around a nation's best story (Bellino 2014a, in Paulson, 2015)
1. **A mythical unified past made official**, a narrative does is historically not correct. One example of this is the Rwandan narrative from precolonial times describing Rwandans as a peaceful people living in harmony and the fact that colonials invented ethnicity (Freedman, 2008).
1. **Ethno-nationalist narratives**, maintained by identity communities. These narratives construct strong in-out group identities, we – the other, us - them



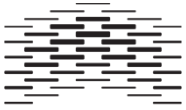
## Limitations of existing research

- Most studies use qualitative analysis of documents and texts, and has textbooks and curriculum as their main sources of data in addition to interviews
- Ethnographic studies focusing on the classroom perspective are hard to find (specifically in the global south), therefore it is also hard to develop “best teaching practices” when teaching the recent violent past
- Teaching methods and content are closely connected and cannot be treated in isolation
- Research focusing on teachers and their practices and capacities
- In a western context there is increasing research on history education and core competencies of history (Fogo 2012 - <https://cset.stanford.edu/research/core-practices>), however these competencies cannot be transmitted uncritically to other contexts



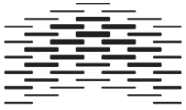
## Examples

- Dorscher and Scherlock (2007) argue that  
*through history education, the fears, prejudices, and biases of adults are often passed on to the next generation, helping to maintain conflictual relations and block the development of cooperation within and between states (p. 276).*
- A student essay, she is writing down from her interview with her grandfather about the recent civil war (1983-2005). It is interesting to read what the grandfather mentions as the causes of the war. Student essay from secondary school student South Sudan – July 2015 (handout).



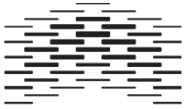
Excerpt from history lesson in secondary school, South Sudan November 2014.

Teacher: *These are our heroes. The people that scarified their life for the sake of this nation. For us to be free and of course we are free at last. So what is going on now in South Sudan, what is going on now in South Sudan like ...you see we need to speak the truth. You know what is happening now we cannot relate it to the past. **You know our past we are not fighting among ourselves**, we are just fighting for the vision of the people of South Sudanese. So what is going on now, the war between our nation ah ...among ourselves, that one you cannot time it. It is just a minor case, we cannot. Because our dream is just to fight so that South Sudanese can achieve their goals. To be an independent country, where there is a free movement come in (a student enters the room), freedom of expression all this...democratic. But thing have to change slowly by slowly. You cannot just be a nation within 4 years-5 years and then expect things to change like that. Gradually. You need to change slowly by slowly. One another step to another one..., another step to another one. But I know that we we shall have peace in this nation, never mind about that (teacher look down towards his notes while saying this last sentence and also in a lower voice).*



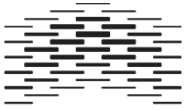
## Positive approaches and common challenges

- Facing history and ourselves (FHAO) - <https://www.facinghistory.org/> ) – workshops provided by FHAO provide opportunities for teachers to discuss and discuss own experiences of conflict, however this is not unproblematic:
  - ✓ In Rwanda these workshops were found problematic by the government which did not encourage critical reflections and open discussion on ethnicity, researchers do not find themselves welcomed in Rwanda after they critique the system
- Common textbooks



# Challenges

- Discrepancy between policy and practice
- Challenge of applying teaching methods supporting critical thinking in societies emerging from violent conflict
- Dilemma of history education for nation building, citizenship combined with multiperspective approach including all minorities
- Scholars working with collaborative textbook projects to learn each others historical narrative – is it a De-nationalizing of history? (Poulson 2015) and what are the challenges with that?



## References

- Baranovic, B. (2001). History textbooks in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Intercultural Education*, 12(1), pp 13-26, doi: 10.1080/14675980120033939
- Cole, E. A., (Ed.). (2007). *Teaching the violent past. History education and reconciliation*. Plymouth. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Bradley Fogo (2014) Core Practices for Teaching History: The Results of a Delphi Panel Survey, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 42(2), pp.151-196, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2014.902781
- Freedman, S. H., Weinstein, H. M., Murphy, K. & Longman, T. (2008). Teaching history after identity-based conflicts: The Rwanda Experience. *Comparative education review*, 52(4). Pennsylvania. The university of Chicago press.
- Freedman, S. H., Weinstein, H. M., Murphy, K. & Longman, T. (2011). Teaching history in post-genocide Rwanda. In Straus, S. & Waldorf, L. (Eds.), *Remaking Rwanda. State building and human rights after mass violence* (pp. 297-315). Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hodkin, M. (2006). Reconciliation in Rwanda: Education, history and the state. *Journal of International Affairs*, 60(1).
- Lenz, C., & Nilssen, T., R. (2011). *Fortiden i Nåtiden: Nye veier i formidlingen av andre verdenskrigs historie*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- MoEST (2007). *Syllabus for Southern Sudan certificate of secondary education*. Government of Southern Sudan, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.
- Pingel, F (2008). Can the truth be negotiated? History Textbook Revision as a Means to Reconciliation. *The Politics of History in Comparative Perspective*, vol. 617, pp. 181-198. *American*
- Poulson, J. (2015). "Whether and how?" History education about recent and ongoing conflict. A review of the research. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, 1 (1) . New York
- Seixas, P. (2004). *Theorizing historical consciousness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Stradling, R. (2003). *Multiperspectivity in history teaching: a guide for teachers*. Council of Europe.
- Weldon, G. ( 2010). Post-conflict teacher development: facing the past in South Africa. *Journal of moral education*, 39(3), pp. 353-364.