Juan Ramón Moreno-Vera /
José Monteagudo-Fernández /
Cosme Jesús Gómez-Carrasco (eds.)

Teaching history to face the world today

Socially-conscious approaches, activity proposals and historical thinking competencies

PETER LANG

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In terms of new approaches, this book suggests activities regarding invisible topics such as social and economic impacts in history, inequalities, church and science, gender equality, power and violence, prosecuted by justice, peasantry and the urban world, family and daily life, terror or travelers and their cross-currents.

Regarding the activities, the incidence of new technologies in social relations and the effects of globalization is very remarkable for our students. The authors highlight the need for changes in teaching and learning history.

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Abstract: This book develops the challenges that history teaching must face as a curricular subject at the beginning of the 21st century. These challenges are related, both to new epistemological approaches in history education, and also to the development of new activities, active-learning methodologies, and historical thinking competencies. In fact, one of the most important targets of this book is to develop concrete actions and activities that teachers could easily adapt to their classrooms realities.

In terms of new approaches, this book suggests activities regarding invisible topics as social and economic impacts in history, inequalities, church and science, gender equality, power and violence, prosecuted by justice, peasantry and the urban world, family and daily life, terror or travelers and their cross-currents.

Regarding to the activities, the incidence of new technologies in social relations and the effects of globalization is very remarkable for our students. In this sense, active-learning methodologies are oriented towards know-how, without forgetting basic historical knowledge. Activities work with different information sources, historical evidences and problem-based exercises to make the students learn in an increasingly heterogeneous society. That way, the authors highlight the need of changes in teaching and learning history.

At this point, historical thinking competencies emerge as an educational path to follow, allowing new ways of learning: investigation of socially relevant problems, cooperation among students, critical thinking and the use of media, inquiries and scientific research, skills development and developing democratic values to improve the world today.

Keywords: Historical thinking competencies, history education, socially-conscious learning, ITC activities, globalization.

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Chapter 8. Historical thinking skills with digital resources: Causes, consequences, change and continuity

Abstract: As part of the topics dedicated to *Travels and travellers: economic, social and cultural connections* and *Churches and Religion* – historical paths of long duration and transversal to the content addressed in the traditional textbooks, in adherence to the inspiring principles of the HistoryLab project – two educational paths on Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages and Religious Discrimination have been designed, intended for the achievement of historical thinking skills and competencies. Specifically, the programming of the indicated activities and the tools used will enable the students to make historical arguments from sources; analyse and evaluate the interaction of causes and/or effects, simple and multiple; compare and contextualize the ability to explain and establish multiple and different perspectives on a given historical phenomenon; practice chronological reasoning; and connect patterns of continuity and change over time to broad historical processes or themes. The practice of "thinking historically" will also activate other cognitive fields and skill acquisitions, responding to the exercise of full and conscious citizenship (relying on history and heritage culture), through the related experiences: Interdisciplinarity in an "intercultural" vision; Education to empathy; Heritage pedagogy; Active citizenship; Reliability of digital resources

Keywords: Pilgrimages, travellers, religious discriminations, historical thinking, cultural heritage, active citizenship

Introduction

In the context of the liquid society well described by Bauman (2011) where existence itself is connoted by continuous precariousness and uncertainty, historical knowledge – despite the difficulties related to its teaching – allows, from a collective point of view, an enhanced understanding of the present; of values; the development of cognitive skills and strategies to cope with the uncertainty of the future; to deal with important social problems; to foster a democratic citizenship; to appreciate, enjoy, defend and preserve cultural heritage; and develop an awareness of temporal globality. This enables the development of intellectual skills related to what is referred to in Anglo-Saxon circles as historical thinking, that is, the creative process that historians, history teachers and students carry out to interpret sources from the past and generate historical

narratives (Seixas, 2006; Lévesque, 2008; Peck & Seixas, 2008; Wineburg, 2010; Santiesteban Fernández, 2010; Seixas & Morton, 2012).

Regarding the first point, historian Marc Bloch (1996) asserted that if misunderstanding of the present arises from ignorance of the past, it is absurd to investigate the past if it is not in the interest of the present, since what is interesting to understand is what is experienced. Therefore, the basic goal is not to teach all of the past, but to choose the content that one considers truly essential in the formation of the citizen through an outcome-based approach to history that starts from the present (Dondarini, 2000, 2007). The purpose, then, is intellectual and critical: it is intended to help students understand the issues that affect their daily lives, as a necessary condition for the initiation of citizen awareness processes that encourage them to reason, question and criticize (Fontana Lázaro, 1992). In this sense, the study of history makes it possible, as Prats Cuevas and Santacana Mestre (2011) point out, to analyze tensions in the unfolding of history, since every historical process is based on social, economic, political and generational tensions that have a longer or shorter duration; to study the causes and consequences of historical events, thus distinguishing between motives, causes, structural causality and consequences; to explain the complexity of social problems and combat simplistic views in explanations of current problems; to construct patterns of difference and similarity, determining what features are in common between seemingly different cultures in a synchronic and diachronic view and changes and permanencies in historical development; to enhance rationality in social and political analysis, shaping critical citizens who reject emotional excesses and exaggerated subjectivity; to use methods and techniques typical of research in the social sphere, simulating the job of a historian and engaging with numerous disciplines related to history, such as statistics, documentary analysis, geography, art or drawing. History, thus, has the possibility of becoming the axis on which the various social sciences are structured. As a result, it is possible to address numerous curricular issues from the study of history. Along with this possibility, historical knowledge provides a context for many other disciplines: literature, mathematics, natural sciences and so on. In fact, learning the discipline seems best suited to develop complex skills of meta-cognition and the ability to compare different ways of responding to the same stresses.

Teaching history from a critical perspective should involve the rejection of social models based on inequality and exclusion, promoting values that contribute to building a more just society, as well as the conscious involvement of future citizens in the transformation of society. These basic values include equality, rationality, tolerance, empathy, citizen responsibility and participation,

respect for other points of view and other cultures, solidarity, and defense and preservation of the natural and cultural heritage we have received as our legacy.

Moreover, learning history allows students to be introduced to information management in which they need to be critical, make value judgments, distinguish between opinions and prejudices, between descriptions and evaluations, synthesizing information, making inferences, and ultimately making judgments on controversial and debated issues (Moreno Vera & Monteagudo Fernández, 2019; dos S. Schmidt, 2019). At the same time, since there are no objective versions of the past and the present is also subject to interpretation, the study of current and historical societies can offer students a privileged learning framework in which to configure antidogmatic attitudes about knowledge and reality, helping them to process the idea that scientific knowledge is provisional and debatable, without ceasing to be rigorous.

In addition, history can guide students in approaching global and fundamental social problems, in the context of which others of a partial and local nature can be understood, seeking their historical genesis and explanation. Topics such as inequalities due to gender, ethnicity, and social class, war, the phenomenon of emigration to developed countries, and the political manipulation of heritage elements and the media constitute global problems that have an impact on the student's environment, which can initiate school research processes that enable him or her to approach their understanding.

The teaching of history must also serve to educate students in the new millennium about democracy in a broad and deep sense (Miralles Martínez et al., 2017). A democracy that requires the consent of the majority of citizens, but also diversity and antagonism; hence the importance of educating for negotiation and dialogue, to deal with conflict as a basic ingredient of social relations. In this sense, through the teaching of history, one must help build democratic attitudes, put into practice by the students' closest environment, since one cannot theorize about democracy and not put it into practice. It is about educating and participating, based on the rights and duties of the student as a school citizen, but also on the experiences, which give meaning to this knowledge by making learning meaningful and functional (Barton & Levstick, 2004).

Educating for the appreciation, preservation and conservation of cultural heritage is a specific purpose of teaching history, because heritage work connects the present with the past and facilitates the development of methods of historical analysis. Furthermore, an integral and holistic view of heritage is developed in students. The study of heritage facilitates the understanding of present and historical societies, since the assets of which a heritage is composed are witnesses and sources from which knowledge can be gained and decisions made in the

future in relation to cultural roots and traditions, at the same time awakening an attitude of respect for the diverse cultural symbols of other societies. All this should lead to an appreciation of heritage elements and other cultures, activating a consciousness of preservation and defense (Borghi & Venturoli, 2009).

Finally, a dynamic relationship also exists between the present, past and future. Interpretations of the past arise from the concerns and priorities of the present and our perceptions of the future (conscious or unconscious). From the perspective of global education, "the future must occupy a central place in the educational process so that all students have the opportunity to regularly study, reflect and discuss possible future alternatives that are probable and plausible at all levels; from the individual to the global" (Selby, 2004). In this regard, Jacques Le Goff emphasized that "history teaches the whole of humanity where it came from, what it is, and allows a glimpse of where it is going. History dominates and illuminates the future and the present, and opens the door to the future" (Borghi, 2016, p. 9). Schools move towards the future, having the past as their main point of reference, so the study of the future could be an important prerequisite for developing in students their abilities, skills and attitudes in order to exert more control in the direction of the continuous process of changes they will experience during their lives.

For all these reasons, the study of history contributes to the development of intellectual faculties (Prats Cuevas & Santacana Mestre, 2011, p. 35). In fact, cognitive skills, acquired in people's ordinary lives, in school settings are enhanced in every teaching and learning process. If they are projected as attainable goals through work in different curricular areas, the progress made by students can be highly significant. In this context, the study of history from an early age is an excellent means of developing intellect. Working on history with an approach that views this learning as an active process of discovery and inquiry allows for rational observations in the classroom, including the ability to classify, compare, analyze, describe, infer, explain, memorize, and order ideas. These are the skills that underlie the development of the six key concepts of historical thinking as defined in the context of the Historical Thinking Project, an educational initiative directed by Peter Seixas and coordinated by Jill Colyer between 2006 and 2014 in the Canadian territory: establishing historical meaning, using primary sources, identifying continuity and change, analyzing causes and consequences, reinforcing historical perspective, and, finally, understanding the ethical dimension of historiographical interpretations (Seixas & Peck, 2004; Seixas, 2006).

Establishing historical meaning allows certain events related to the past to be given importance, abandoning simplistic and preconstituted explanations. In

this way, for example, the story of a peasant in the Po Valley during the Great War could have great relevance if placed in the larger context of the situation of workers during World War I. What seems "insignificant" thus becomes of great importance.

The competence of knowing how to use primary sources involves the skills of being able to read between the folds of history. A certain source, whatever it may be, needs to be interrogated not only for what it explicitly conveys (the information that can be gleaned from reading a text, for example). But through deeper reasoning that searches, for example, for the identity of the source's author, the motivations behind its creation and dissemination.

History, often regarded as a succession of events, is instead composed of numerous moments of continuity and change from the previous situation. Being able to understand such a setting gives new meaning to the study of history. The skills required are those of comparison and contrast, between past and present, but also between geographically close or distant places.

Skills related to reasoning are supported by the analysis of causes and consequences. In the historical discipline, in contrast to many hard sciences, causes are often anthropogenic; people, in fact, play a prominent role in promoting, shaping or resisting events. However, it is necessary to reject the single cause, accepting multiple and layered causes involving ideologies, institutions, economic and social conditions.

Understanding the foreignness of the past is a great challenge for students. But addressing it illuminates the possibilities of human behaviour, opening a broader perspective from which to evaluate our current concerns. Historical perspective means understanding the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional settings that shaped people's lives and actions in the past. In this sense, historical imagination, which is not meant to offer a complete or perfect picture of the past, is one of the most suitable tools to fill possible gaps and to give meaning to historical events through empathy and contextualization (Lévesque, 2008).

Finally, developing an ethical dimension of history and its interpretations makes it possible to trace the different ethical parameters between very different societies in space and time. This does not mean imposing anachronistic standards of behaviour on the past; however, at the same time, even the most absolute relativism is not allowable, but "if the story is meaningful, then there is an ethical judgment involved. We should expect to learn something from the past that helps us to face the ethical issues of today" (Seixas, 2006, p. 11).

It is also important to note that these elements are not "skills" but rather a set of concepts that guide and shape the practice of the historian, the history teacher, and his or her students, through which the mind can be shaped through disciplined

and systematic study, but above all, they teach how to think historically (Gómez Carrasco et al., 2014), allowing for the development of strategies, skills, and competencies related to the historian's ability-such as research, source selection and processing, and hypothesis formulation-and adapted to answer historical questions and understand the past in a more complex way (Vansledright, 2014).

In this context, technological resources have forcefully entered the field of education and, if used properly, can enhance and promote a bond of learning excellence between teachers and students. Indeed, the digital age, according to Viñals and Cuenca (2016), has brought about a radical change in the way learning and teaching is done. This has resulted in the creation of new ICT-related skills, which have not entered the classroom to replace the teacher, but to accompany him or her in their daily practice. In the wake of these objectives, the *HistoryLab* digital platform, containing a large number of virtual resources, allows the articulation and design of interdisciplinary, active and participatory educational paths that teach how to think historically, as the teaching proposals we present below testify.

Learning activities

The first activity we present is entitled *Ire per agros: faith and culture journeys in the Middle Ages. Pilgrimage*. It is part of the topic *Travels and travelers: economic, social and cultural connections*.

Among the contents and educational objectives being pursued is the Enhancement of faith, art and culture journeys in one's own area. Starting from the analysis of pilgrimage sources (diaries), the motivations and itineraries that drove men and women in the Middle Ages to set out to reach a destination (major and minor pilgrimages) will be analyzed. The ultimate goal is the construction of an urban trekking guide that, based on the ancient itineraries, will be able to enhance places of local cultural and environmental heritage.

The project will consist of five phases of varying lengths of time, with an estimated total time of 14–15 hours. Specifically, the first phase will be one hour, the second three, the third three/four, the fourth three and, finally, the fifth four hours.

During the sessions students will be expected to undertake some individual activities, working in pairs, and in small and large groups.

From the perspective of skills and competencies, the following historical thinking skills will be developed through the activities: chronological reasoning, comparison and contextualization, construction of historical arguments from historical evidence, historical interpretation and synthesis. In fact, students

should be able to compare causes and/or effects; analyze and evaluate the interplay of multiple causes and/or effects; link patterns of continuity and change over time to broader historical processes or themes; analyze and evaluate competing patterns of periodization of global history; and explain and evaluate multiple and different perspectives on a given historical phenomenon.

Specifically:

– Cultural competencies (for the development of fundamental knowledge) by providing the student with the cultural and methodological tools for an in-depth understanding of reality, so that he or she can face migratory situations and phenomena with a rational, critical and planning attitude.
– Social skills (for citizenship). Knowing how to act autonomously and responsibly: knowing how to participate actively and consciously in social life and assert within it one's own rights and needs while recognizing those of others, common opportunities, limits, rules, responsibilities.
– Problem solving: dealing with problem situations by constructing and testing hypotheses, identifying appropriate sources and resources, collecting and evaluating data, and proposing solutions using content and methods from different disciplines, depending on the type of problem.
– Identifying connections and relationships: identifying and representing, by elaborating coherent arguments, connections and relationships between different phenomena, events and concepts, even belonging to different disciplinary fields, and distant in space and time, grasping their systemic nature, identifying similarities and differences, coherences and inconsistencies, causes and effects and their probabilistic nature.
– Acquiring and interpreting information: acquiring and critically interpreting information received in different fields and through different means of communication, evaluating its reliability and usefulness, distinguishing facts and opinions.

The activity will be implemented according to the following schedule:

Phase I: On the meaning of travel and pilgrimage. The topic will be introduced with some terminological clarifications on the phenomenon of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, identifying the peculiarities of the journey of faith, comparing it with the motivations that prompted man to move and travel in the past.
Phase II: Analysis of narrative sources: pilgrimage diaries. Various pilgrimage journals from the Middle Ages will be analyzed and compared, identifying

ancient faith journeys to Santiago de Compostela, Rome and Jerusalem (itineraries).

Phase III: Local history. The focus will be on local history. After an introduction to the chosen medieval historical period, identification of pilgrimage routes in one's own city (Roman routes) will be made. An interactive map will be constructed with sources from the medieval period.

Phase IV: The Romans and the present. Through group activities, they will go on to identify new routes that can enhance the historical and cultural heritage, as well as the environment, of their own city.

Phase V: Presentation of the guide to municipal institutions. The guide will be presented to municipal institutions and citizens, promoting the routes identified and proposed for the enhancement of historical and cultural heritage. Guided tours are proposed on weekends.

Regarding the moment of evaluation, at the end, the assessment will take into account the skills of each student. The level of knowledge, skills, competencies and abilities acquired; commitment and constancy in work; interest in the discipline; active participation in the educational dialogue; and the ability to personally rework the content will be assessed.

During the course of the activity, the teacher can make use of the extensive repertoire of digital resources available in *HistoryLab*, and in particular can use the following sources.

- https://orbis.stanford.edu: a geospatial model of the Roman world that takes all these conditions into account and calculates distances not in hours but in days of walking, just as ancient writers did: under average conditions, one could walk 30 km, or 20 Roman miles, per day. This figure is as valid today as it was two thousand years ago.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxm7CQ5LUB8: a video made by the Italian educational platform "Hub scuola" explaining what pilgrimage is.
- https://www.viefrancigene.org/it/: the official wesite of the Francigena Route as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe
- http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/pilgrimlibraries/tag/venice/: virtual Pilgrim Libraries: books & reading on the medieval routes to Rome & Jerusalem
- http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il: Historical maps of cities of the world.

The second activity we present, closely linked to the previous one, is entitled: *Religious Discrimination in Europe* and it is part of the topic *Churches and Religion*.

Through the activity we intend to pursue the following teaching objectives. Students will be able to understand that despite the progress made throughout history to achieve religious tolerance, discrimination on the basis of faith is still present. Students will therefore learn about the long journey of religious tolerance, the discrimination still in place, and the possibility of reflecting on these issues to make proposals for religious tolerance. Through this activity, they learn to dialogue with different religious and cultural positions in an atmosphere of mutual respect, confrontation and enrichment. They learn to read and understand sources and documents, to rework and expound on the topic; to find relationships between facts and phenomena distant in time and space; to relate to the municipal administration as active and participatory citizens; and to use specific, clear and precise language.

The activity – which will alternate moments of individual study with small and large group work – will be divided into six phases, totaling an estimated sixteen to eighteen hours. First phase: 1–2 hours; second phase: 2–3 hours; third phase: 3 hours; fourth phase: 4 hours; fifth phase: 4 hours; sixth phase: 2 hours.

The historical thinking skills to be developed during the course of the activity are as follows: establishing historical significance; identifying continuity and change; analyzing causes and consequences; taking historical perspectives; understanding the ethical dimension of historical interpretations; and using primary sources.

With regards the structuring of the activity, the proposal envisages the following stages.

First activity: through brainstorming, students can recount facts about religious discrimination (what is religious discrimination, whether they have heard or read about incidents of religious discrimination, why, etc.) The teacher can write the interventions on the board and give the exact definition of religious discrimination and perhaps other examples of discrimination.

Second activity: The teacher shows the classes ministerial documents and/or other international charters of rights. The students, divided into small groups (each group works on one source), have to find the articles that talk about religious tolerance. The teacher at this time acts as a guide.

Third activity: back in the large group, students explain to each other the principles of religious tolerance they found. They can also make a poster or other product on the topic.

Fourth activity: reflecting historically on the long journey of religious freedom (e.g., European religious wars, the French Revolution), students are asked by the teacher to reflect on contemporary religious discrimination, especially in a

local dimension (e.g., the absence of places of worship for some faiths, school cafeterias not providing meals for some faiths).

Fifth activity: Students, guided by the teacher, write a project in which they try to overcome the discrimination they have detected.

Sixth activity: The teacher makes contact with the powers that be (local government, school director, city council, etc.) to allow students to show and present their project. Hopefully, the local government will accept the proposal to help overcome obstacles to religious freedom.

Naturally, visits to religious heritage elements, news reports, videos and documentaries can be added to the sequence of activities.

At the end, the assessment will take into account the skills of each student. The level of knowledge, skills, competencies and abilities acquired; commitment and constancy in work; interest in the discipline; active participation in the educational dialogue; and the ability to personally rework the content will be evaluated.

During the course of the activity, the teacher can make use of the extensive repertoire of digital resources available in *HistoryLab*, and in particular can use the following sources.

- https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2251:   a   European Commission document showing people's perceptions, attitudes and opinions of discrimination based on ethnic origin, skin colour, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, religion or beliefs.
- https://www.cde.ual.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/KJ0121401ENN.en_ .pdf: a European Commission document showing people's attitudes and opinions of values and identities (religion, culture, sexual orientation, etc.)
- http://www.nicolodegiorgis.com/hidden-islam-2014/: a Photograph of a moment of prayer in a makeshift mosque in Italy
- https://www.mcba.ch/collection/le-massacre-de-la-saint-barthelemy-vers-1572-1584/: the painting which depicts the famous massacre of the Huguenots which took place on the Night of Saint Bartholomew.
- https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights: the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- https://www.elysee.fr/en/french-presidency/the-declaration-of-the-rights-of-man-and-of-the-citizen: the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789
- https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/195831: The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child

- https://www.worldhistory.org/image/14972/religions-in-europe-in-the-16th-century/: a map illustrating the dominant religious divisions in Europe in the 16th century.
- https://fra.europa.eu/en: the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (article 10)
- https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/29/east-west-divide-within-the-eu-on-issues-including-minorities-gay-marriage-and-national-identity/: a report by the Pew Research Center showing that in the European Union, there is an East-West divide over religious minorities, gay marriage, national identity.

Conclusion

The didactic activities briefly described have been chosen by the research team in keeping with both the spirit that drives the implementation of the *HistoryLab* platform, and with the desire to offer teachers and learners opportunities for growth that foster historical thinking, in the sense clarified in the theoretical introduction to this paper. We will dwell on this further on, but it is worth anticipating how the present author's national point of observation (Italy) leads us to believe that the dissemination of such activities is more necessary and urgent than ever, given the problems of learning history, coupled with an increasingly widespread and difficult relationship with the discipline, which often spills over into rejection on the part of students: solid evidence of this comes daily to the attention of those who teach history at university degree courses not intended for historical specialisation.

The reasons for this have long been known and investigated, but they remain without adequate answers and cannot be countered by the goodwill of individual teachers. Despite the efforts of deserving national experiences – among the many, we cite by way of example those promoted by the associations CLIO 92 and Historia Ludens, by the digital magazine Novecento.org of the Ferruccio Parri National Institute and the International History Festival of the University of Bologna – the reasons for the difficult relationship between students and history can be traced back to the persistence of a teaching and learning model "that emphasises the memorisation of a standardised and linear discourse from the past" (Sánchez Ibáñez et al., 2020, p. 190). A model which gives rise – not without concern for a country like Italy that has little or no memory of its own past – to the risk of living in an indistinct, unconscious and fluctuating present time unable to build a future (in this regard, it is sufficient to refer to the lessons of Bauman, Bloch and Le Goff cited in the introduction).

As already mentioned, the two proposals emerge from the in-depth study of the thematic paths, of a transversal and long-term nature, assigned to the Italian research group within *HistoryLab*: Travels and travellers: economic, social and cultural connections and Churches and Religion. The planning of activities on the specific contents of pilgrimage, as a representation of a religious, cultural, social and economic expression, and the phenomenon of religious discrimination implied addressing the three questions on which to base a history curriculum (Grazioli, 2012, pp. 66–70): identifying the basic problems of the present, growing or urgent, from which to start to question the past; connecting to the trends that come from the updated historiographical debate; investigating the needs of boys and girls and consequently identifying the skills to be developed: this last issue calls into question, more than the others, the ability or willingness of the teacher to attune with his or her class group, in order to design a didactic plan able to provide space for the active and participatory learning of historical knowledge.

With regard to the first question, there is little need to dwell upon the worrying spread of phenomena of religious intolerance, discrimination on the basis of faith and hate speech – amplified by the web – towards religious and/or ethnic minorities and, in general, towards the "other". Concerning the theme of the new historiographic trends, we refer specifically to the opportunity offered by the two proposed paths to be able to practise the conception of time in history by declining it in its various durations (permanence, long duration, cycles and the short times of events) by anchoring it to geographical spaces that are not predetermined and fixed, but consistent with the themes: in other words, it is a matter of experimenting with spatialisation and periodisation in order to consciously learn the meaning of historical time, with respect to which chronology shows obvious methodological flaws (Brusa & Cecalupo, 2000). In Italy, it is still very difficult to overcome the anchoring of history learning to the "time line": therefore, there is no hiding the risks of implementing activities that could be based on mere chronology.

In addition to the above, other strengths of the educational paths can be identified, which will, of course, have greater or lesser emphasis depending on the educational models and their curricula.

Interdisciplinarity in an "intercultural" vision. In both areas, pedagogical and didactic research is highly developed, but it is worth mentioning Morin (2000) and his earnest insistence on redressing the fruitless and inadequate separation between knowledge, pigeon-holed into disciplines, and "increasingly polydisciplinary, transversal, multidimensional, transnational, global, planetary realities or issues", through the integration and connection of themes and the solidarity of disciplines. The social, economic and political events of the last

few decades have, if possible, accentuated the profile of interdependence and complexity in human phenomena, calling into question the school's ability, as a primary educational agency, to make this context intelligible through an interdisciplinary approach and to make it also become a testing-ground for an action of skills development to define the future. In this sense, the proposed paths can be the venue in which interdisciplinarity (between history, geography, ancient and modern languages, art history, music, technologies…) is practised with an intercultural approach, capable of taking on an "other" look at one's own discipline, through the choice of contents and socially mediated teaching methods, such as cooperative learning and peer tutoring (Caon & Brichese, 2020; Caon et al., 2020).

Education to empathy. The recourse to indifference (Mortari, 2000) as a response to the complexity of the phenomena in which we live an increasingly uncertain everyday life from an economic, social and institutional point of view (not to mention, most recently, the return of war to Europe's doorstep with the dramatic Russian–Ukrainian conflict, after the secessionist and civil wars that engulfed the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s), requires, on the other hand, a systemic and collective commitment to ensure that empathic reaction is constant and active. The absence of emotionality, the lack of understanding and emotional ties with the "other", the "loss of pathos and relational tension" lead, according to Pulcini (2001), to disaffection towards collective action, to withdrawal from the public and social sphere: a situation that is increasingly lamented and denounced. Education to empathy can find fruitful acceptance in the proposed didactic paths that, albeit with differences, hinge on the relationship between the human and the sacred that has always innervated all aspects and structures of human civilisation (even today, where atheism, agnosticism and new religiosity are the reverse of the same coin). The pilgrimage as a commitment to faith and, therefore, a physical and spiritual journey as well as a deepening of one's existence on a par with the very long, suffered and hindered journey to assert the right to change religion or to profess none or, again, to manifest it in practice without being harmed, offers numerous opportunities for education to empathy.

Heritage pedagogy, that is, an educational activity not only "to" but also "with", "for" and "through" heritage (Branchesi, 2018, p. 23). In the introduction to this paper, it has already been pointed out that cultural heritage can provide opportunities for historical knowledge and analysis, awareness for decision-making for the future and respect for the different cultural symbols of other societies. Here, therefore, we limit ourselves to two points of emphasis closely linked to the content of the proposed teaching activities. The first concerns the possibility of educating to multiculturalism and interculturalism through

historical-artistic heritage, as it allows one to develop "the awareness of one's own cultural identity and at the same time the habit and ability to recognise and respect diversity" (Branchesi, 2018, p. 26). The second relates to the pedagogical potential of historical places, where one can experience the real, the authenticity and historicity that sensorially and cognitively stimulate imagination, skills and questions of meaning, so that visitors are led to "dé-construire l'état actuel, de retracer l'évolution et de faire une re-construction (virtuelle) de l'état historique ainsi que de recontextualiser l'ensemble" (Pflüger, 2015, p. 22).

Active citizenship. In the framework of the European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027, approved in 2018, one of the objectives to be achieved is to "Encourage and equip young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity" (Council of the European Union, 2018). Consistent with this strategy, supporting young people to undertake active citizenship actions includes the products that will be produced at the end of the educational activities – i.e., the urban trekking guide that, on the basis of the ancient itineraries, will enhance places of local cultural and environmental heritage, and the proposal of initiatives to counter and overcome religious discrimination, which are the result of a bottom-up approach, because they are the outcome of analysis and research by male and female students; these products will be presented to local authorities, as they constitute political and governmental tools and interventions.

Reliability of digital resources. The proposed didactic activities, due to their constant recourse to learning through the use of primary sources and digital resources from the library specially created by *HistoryLab* (and thus validated), are also an opportunity to train boys and girls to assess the reliability of what (and it is an ocean of information) is retrievable on the web, for both historical and everyday use. For this purpose, reading and critical analysis skills are and remain fundamental but not sufficient, unless students are trained to operate in an environment, the digital one, that cannot be approached like the printed book page. One can then rely on tried-and-tested tests such as CRAAP, which stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose (which, however, has the defect of including formal aspects and being difficult for a student to complete), or one can activate the Civic online reasoning curriculum, aimed at teaching "lateral reading" strategies to assess the credibility of digital content (Wineburg et al., 2021).

We have, it is true, devoted considerable space to highlighting the advantages and opportunities offered by the two didactic paths to lead students to think historically, but we do not wish to conceal their limitations, which, especially in the Italian context, may reside in organisational and managerial difficulties and

in problems concerning the regulatory framework governing teacher training and curricula. With respect to the first issue, the teaching paths are planned for 15–18 hours, thus relatively contained but not derisory compared to the annual amount of hours traditionally assigned to the study of history. A solution could be in the sharing of the allotted hours with other teachers of disciplines that could hopefully be involved in the project, in order to give it that interdisciplinary depth in, as mentioned above, an intercultural key, but the willingness to collaborative planning of this kind – particularly in secondary schools – is not widespread: it is a hope that in reality is not sustained, which, in the high schools, is further conditioned by the long list of contents envisaged by the "National Indications", which for many teachers turn into the priority of "finishing the syllabus" to the detriment of new teaching and learning paths. Linked to this aspect is the absence, to date, of a stable initial training course for teachers that would prepare them solidly in professional skills, starting with the didactic and methodological disciplinary ones, which are particularly necessary for the teaching of history, that is all too often reduced to a transmission of knowledge, without students being able to access and experience the procedures of the historian's profession (Guarracino, 2012). It is not surprising, moreover, if compared to a couple of decades ago there are fewer and fewer university professors in Italy who devote their research to the teaching of history (and in general to disciplinary didactics) and also struggle to advance their careers, given the parameters for evaluating scientific activity calibrated on disciplinary research.

Awareness of the possible difficulties does not, however, cloud the satisfaction that comes from the awareness that the proposed paths give substance to the "Manifesto on High Quality History, Heritage and Citizenship Education: 15 principles for the recognition of the distinctive contribution of history to the development of young people" published in 2013 by EuroClio (European Association of History Educators) and to which the boys and girls, together with their teachers, who will participate, will actively contribute: preventing the misuses of the past; promoting an inclusive approach to the study of the past; advancing educational innovation.

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