

Mapping – Bridging Diversity. Foundation of a European Discourse on History Education. Part 2

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Elisabeth Erdmann, Wolfgang Hasberg (Eds.)

Pieter Warnich

School for Humanities, Faculty of Education

North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus)

pieter.warnich@nwu.ac.za

Facing – Mapping – Bridging Diversity, Part 2 is the follow-up edition of a European discourse on history education. This book consists of the contributions of 13 different history didactics authors of the European Union who describe the scientific discourse on history education in their respective countries. In this issue, the contributions of countries such as Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are acknowledged. The contributions of Bulgaria and Luxemburg are unfortunately lacking.

The respective authors followed a particular framework based on the German discourse of history didactics. With the writing of this book, the scientific point of departure was that history didactics amounts to much more than the mere history lesson and its concomitant teaching and learning methodologies. For this reason, the scope is much wider and the didactic research focuses on the contributions of the historical culture and historical consciousness of particular societies as well. The provided framework serves an important purpose in the sense that it provides important parameters

for readers to be able to distinguish both similarities and differences in the approaches of the different countries. At the same time, it serves as an important platform to encourage a European dialogue on Didactics of History in an effort to bridge the revealed diversity. Where there is agreement, it will provide opportunities for future international scientific discourses that will enhance further developments in the field of the didactics of history. This framework does not merely provide a systematic approach to every article, but also provides the required structure in that it places the respective articles in an interrelationship. This is undoubtedly a clear and strong point of the book.

At the end of the book, the editors give the reader a striking synopsis of the most important challenges facing the didactics of history in the countries referred to above. In Italy, for instance, state officials in charge are criticised for their mindset that the didactics of history ought not to be given marked preference in the country. At the same time, there is an appeal in the Netherlands too for more to be done in training teachers in the didactics of history. Teachers in the Netherlands and in Poland also were not of the opinion that they needed to gain any theoretical knowledge regarding history didactics, since they believed that they had acquired adequate practical knowledge through the years and that this would suffice. In the Netherlands, there is a perception that history education can do more to reinforce social solidarity for the creation of a distinctive national identity. In the Slovak Republic, there is a challenge to integrate Slovak national history with history education. Apparently, this is not an easy task, since they shared their history for some time with the now Czech Republic. In the United Kingdom, conservative politicians would like to see a return to the way in which history was presented in the past when learners were confronted with a multitude of important events, dates and personalities of the British past. In Malta and Slovenia there is a threat of history losing its status as an independent subject to simply form part of a combination of subjects.

In conclusion, this book, together with Part 1, is a welcome and comprehensive addition to the historiography and literature on the didactics of history in the member states of the European Union. It will be of use especially to students, lecturers, educationalists and curriculum planners who would like to broaden their theoretical horizons with regard to this topic. However, whether this book will have any practical value for history teachers in the classroom by way of contributing to the improvement of their teaching and learning methodologies is, to a large extent, to be called into question.

