

of the ruling party, however, its presentation of the essential realities of the ANC's Democratic rule, is lacking in objectivity and impartiality. Moe left many things unsaid in this book, however it is well written and a necessary contribution to the struggle era.

The teaching of one's country: International experiences in a comparative perspective

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With the resurgence of identity-based populist politics which has intensified over the past decade, the question around the purpose of national history in the school curriculum has once again begun to occupy centre stage. This debate is multifaceted in the sense that on the one side of the spectrum, there are obvious echoes of the 19th century republican nationalist history, evident in Victor Orban's "illiberal turn" towards promoting a "new patriotic education" which legitimises Hungarian nationalism over the past decade (Toomey, 2018). The recent "History Wars" in Great Britain, which has seen politicians and historians on both sides; the left and the right, call for the renewed emphasis on national history, is another example of the popularisation and politicisation of the school curriculum. On the other side of the spectrum, however, there is a discernible shift towards a values-based approach to school History, in which the act of "learning lessons" from the past will produce a socially conscious and morally just generation of active citizens. Both of these interpretations of the purpose of teaching national History at school level, pose urgent intellectual challenges to us all, they provoke reflection on the most essential of historical questions, namely; what is school history for?

A well-organised society, in the words of the late historian Tony Judt, *is the one in which we know the truth about ourselves collectively, not the one in which we tell pleasant lies about ourselves.* Since the emergence

of the 19th century European Liberal Nation-State Education, history education has been, and invariably will continue to be instrumentalised to realise particular political ends. Whether promoted as a means to inculcate Durkheimian social solidarity in young people, or used to legitimatise the oppression of one group over another, the school history curriculum has long been an ideal conduit through which the romanticised mythologies of an imagined past can be transposed upon a contemporary socio-political landscape. The subject, as highlighted by a number of articles in *The teaching of the History of one's own country: international experiences in Comparative Perspective*, is frequently taught through a range of historical prisms, rendering it particularly vulnerable to the alluring trap of pernicious presentism or amoral amnesia. With the resurgence of political narratives which rupture the illusion of transnational unity and co-operation at the seams, this book could not be published at a more opportune time.

Despite its discernible European orientation, the themes which emerge through the articles in *The teaching of the History of one's own country: international experiences in Comparative Perspective*, are applicable to classrooms worldwide. Contributions to the collection include studies on countries whose histories have been characterised by internecine violent conflict, ethnic and religious sectarianism, linguistic divisions, impenetrable regional identities, cultural exceptionalism, as well as settler silence. In the introduction to the book, the editors explain the decision behind choosing “country”, as opposed to “nation”, as its title. They argue that the term “country”, evokes a geographical space which defies the political boundaries of the nation-state and is therefore more intimately aligned with Benedict Anderson’s notion of the Imagined Community”. “The authors further explain that the people”, give shape to a country and has an influence on the reign, economy and culture. A closer reading of the articles may suggest otherwise. The nation-state – or indeed the “absence” of one, holds an ubiquitous presence throughout the text, even in cases where a national narrative appears to be submerged under regional curricular autonomy, such as in Belgium and New Zealand.

A limitation of the book for the Anglophone reader is that, only five of the articles, including the introductory chapter that are published in English, while the remaining are written French or German¹. The majority of the articles focus on Europe and the developed world, with studies on Switzerland (the collection is funded by the Swiss government), Belgium,

¹ For the purposes of this review, the focus will be on the English articles included in the collection.

New Zealand, Israel, Japan and South Korea appearing alongside articles on History education in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Cameroon. Of particular interest and value in the collection, is the thematic focus in a number of the pieces on the classroom environment itself. Ethnographies, drawing on interviews with teachers and classroom observations, offer a welcome departure from the structural focus on aspects of intended curricula which commonly prevail in studies on the relationship between history education and the state.

The chapters in the book go far beyond merely stating the obvious, namely that teachers' personal and professional identities influence their praxis or the fact that the curriculum cannot be read at face value. Indeed, reflection on the teachers' own sense of purpose and identity in the classroom, as well as their understanding of the purpose of school history, allows for a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of curricular enactment. This is of particular significance when teachers are faced with teaching a national history characterised by present or past civil conflict. One of the teachers in a Belgian case study, for example, actively avoids debates about identity in the classroom, fearing that they may give rise to politically charged debates surrounding Flemish nationalism (p. 78). This sentiment would no doubt be echoed by a number of teachers in post-conflict or politically tense climates, who are often subjected to critique for towing a moderate line or avoiding contentious issues entirely. We often tend to forget that even teachers need jobs.

Although the book's emphasis is on the *teaching* of history, this does not preclude an engagement with the nature of the relationship between classroom, curriculum and citizenship. For example, in the chapter entitled *Building, ignoring or deconstructing students' identities?*, Karel van Nieuwenhuysse argues that it is the absence of the appeal to national identity in the regionally autonomous history curricula in Belgium, which unites the otherwise disparate cultural, political and linguistic disparate identities of Wallonia and Flanders. The politically convenient marginalisation of a national perspective does not result in the sublimation of a "civics discourse" in Belgian history classrooms. The author argues that the respective Western-orientated curricula, elevate the relationship between civilian and state to a supranational level of valuing Enlightenment principles of citizenship, freedom and democracy, thus embedding a national past into a European identity framework. This international trend towards "human rights" or values-based approaches to the teaching of History is not without

its limitations, in spite of its ostensible commitment to the cultivation of social cohesion and civic education. As Halse and Harris (cited in Parkes, 2007) claim, seemingly benign citizenship education can “be seen as an effort to extol a particular vision of nationalism” (Halse and Harris, 2004: 20, cited in Parkes, 2007). Indeed, it does not necessarily follow that the rhetoric of integration and inclusion does not hold equal, if not more, potential to exclude.

Exclusion is a theme which emerges in Michael Harcourt’s fascinating chapter on “setter silence” in New Zealand’s history curriculum. Although New Zealand shares similar regional curricular autonomy to its neighbouring island, Australia’s “history wars” seem not to have spread further south. The influence of revisionism and social theory on Australia’s 1992 curriculum, denigrated and later dismissed by Michael Howard’s conservative government in the late 1990s, as “black armband history” (Warhaft, 1993, cited in Parkes, 2007), resulted in the marginalised indigenous voices (Parkes, 2007). Although this approach was later replaced by a short-lived 1998 curriculum, which emphasised national identity and citizenship, a thinly veiled return to a triumphalist “master narrative” (Parkes, 2007), is worth highlighting because of its counter-position to the content selection exercised by teachers and regional authorities in New Zealand in Harcourt’s piece. This practice of autonomy has led to greater pedagogical comfort in teaching a sanitised version of national history, perpetuating “settler myths” and cleansing the national narrative of its difficult histories. Although “Wait, there was a war in the Waikato?: settler colonialism, White ignorance and the New Zealand History Curriculum” denotes a departure from the main theme of the book, given that its emphasis is arguably more on teachers’ selection of the intended and not enacted curriculum, it remains a valuable contribution to the debate.

The debate of whether one can consider the birth of Israel to be an example of a “settler” nation-state whose actions embody those of an imperial power falls beyond the scope of this review. What can be said without question, however, is that Israeli national identity is deeply politicised and inevitably linked to the context of the protracted conflict with Palestine. The more robust and rich narrative of Bob Mark’s chapter, “Undermining national narratives with family stories: An Oral History Project in a Palestinian-Jewish School” differs from the linguistic style and approach of other chapters, thus it stands out as a more robust and textured read. His

conclusions emphasise the possibility of adopting discursive resistance (Ashcroft, 2001, cited in Parkes, 2007) through critical pedagogy as a means with which history teachers in Israel would be able to reimagine and re-inscribe the rhetorical representations of the “master narrative”. Mark argues that it is the moral responsibility of teachers to explore these strategies in the classroom (p. 272) such that diverse voices are heard within the prescriptive and state-mandated material space of textbooks and curriculum.

National identity and cultural pluralism in traditionally ethnically homogenous societies forms the focus of Soo Joo Kang’s chapter on South Korea, entitled “National, Mono-cultural vs Global, Plural and the Pursuit of Wisdom”. It is argued that, unlike the case of most countries in the world – including many which are included in this collection, the imagination of the Korean nation-state is inextricably tied to a sense of unique socio-cultural and ethnic exceptionalism. It is therefore not surprising that the “myth” of homogeneity was imported by the Korean intellectuals who were heavily influenced by the ethnocentric historical nationalism of the late 19th century German state, which would have been strengthened in response to Japanese occupation during the first half of the 20th century. Increasingly, however, the monocultural façade of South Korean society, which has long been perpetuated by largely nationalist history in school history curricula, is at odds with 21st century globalism and this has led to political debate governments across the political spectrum. By using the teacher and student interviews as a methodology, this chapter highlights the way in which teachers have exercised, or did not exercise, modes of discursive resistance to previously nationalist history. Frequent curriculum revisions, without adequate teacher training, no doubt have an impact on teachers’ interpretations of content in the classroom – indeed, South Africa is a case in point. Insecurity about new content, a belief that Korean history, rather than world history, is “easy History” for students and the influence of decades of nationalist school history has resulted in a large number of teachers struggling to transcend the “master narrative” of Korean exceptionalism. This study thus offers insight into causes of the chasm between the intended and the enacted curriculum in South Korea, highlighting the need for teacher co-operation in order for pedagogical transformation to materialise.

While some argue that History as a subject occupies - or should occupy - a central position in furthering the values of democratic citizenship and

promoting social cohesion, others contend that adopting such an approach results in an over-simplified and a historical conception of the national past. History can contribute to violent conflict by reinforcing negative stereotypes of the “other”, by essentialising sectarian identities and also by normalising the superiority of one group over another (Paulson, 2015). On the other hand, History education is also often positioned within a broader framework of peacebuilding and national reconciliation in post-conflict (or post-agreement) societies, and thus becomes embedded within a broader discourse of democracy, national healing and the forging of collective memory. Despite the potential linguistic challenges posed by the trilingual “The teaching of one’s own country” to the monolingual English speaker, the variety of subjects which collectively relate to the under-researched subject of pedagogical practice and national histories, render it an informative and interesting read. Some of the chapters may perhaps have benefitted from greater theorisation on historiographic representation in national curricula, but this is arguably more pertinent in a study on national history and curriculum itself. Viewed largely from the perspective of history teachers, the book adds a refreshing angle to the implicit and explicit “history wars” which have, and will no doubt continue to occupy a central position in the politics of the now-established wave of “new Right” proto-nationalism.

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