



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
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Joint Project

Inclusive Living and Learning at School

Sectional Project

Historical Knowledge - Historical Competences

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HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE - HISTORICAL COMPETENCES: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE HISTORICAL LEARNING

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1. Problem and Current State of Research

The choice of teaching content in the subject of History is traditionally controversial. Demands of competence-oriented and inclusive history teaching make this challenge even more complex. On the one hand, the selection of content in inclusive settings of learning and teaching must face the increasing and more comprehensive heterogeneity of learners. Therefore, not only the consideration of different levels of achievement and sensual perception is required, but also the use of plural perspectives, orientation opportunities and approaches. On the other hand, the question remains of how knowledge acquisition should be weighed against the promotion of domain-specific competences. This is evidence of both the ongoing debate on material and formal learning objectives and of considerations about possibilities of differentiation in history teaching. Thus, the constructivist-narrativist paradigm, which underpins competence orientation, implies individual historical conceptions and a body of knowledge that depends on historical competencies, cultural perspectives, personal interests and other factors. Competence-oriented history teaching therefore rejects the imparting of compulsory historical knowledge, in support of the development of critical and reflexive historical awareness. Therefore, in addition to the selection of content, the interrelationship between the material selected and individual preferences for gaining knowledge, and the reliable acquisition and fair assessment of knowledge structures must be taken into account. At the same time, the requirements of working methods and ways of thinking in the field of history should not be abandoned, any more than the aim of inclusive education to enable the participation of all people in lessons and historical culture through common points of reference. The planning and implementation

of lessons, reflection on them and the diagnosis of learning outcomes thus requires in-depth insights into the interrelationships between knowledge and competences in the field of history. Previous attempts to clarify the relationship between historical competences and knowledge were based on theoretical assumptions or on studies of learners in non-inclusive schools, where findings were obtained regarding disparities in historical awareness (arising from differences in interests, cognitive abilities, perceptive capabilities and the availability of existing knowledge). On this basis, recommendations for inclusive history lessons were derived. The following measures were considered appropriate: removing barriers to sensual perception; addressing the history and perspectives of marginalized groups and different ways of life; individually adapting the level of difficulty of approaches applied in dealing with history. However, it remains empirically unresolved as to what extent assumptions made about the interests of people with different learning difficulties and educational needs are actually correct and what competence characteristics or knowledge structures can be expected from them. Moreover, content and topic proposals fail to take into account the level of cognitive requirements, which is a relevant concern in inclusive education. However, in relation to potential tasks with a low level of complexity, the specific requirements of the subject areas should be examined, in order to ensure that the subject matter and content build upon the historical thinking of other learners and of society. Both of these issues require equal consideration of the application and development of knowledge structures and competence attributes, as well as the relationship between them. This relationship will initially be structured in theoretical terms in the dissertation project. Understanding the relationship between knowledge and historical competence is particularly considered an aim of the debate on competence in the subject of History. This gap is due, not least, to the fact that both constructs have different empirical and theoretical levels of development. While modelling structures and processes of historical competencies have, until now, included considerations of history and theories of historical awareness, a disciplinary theory of historical knowledge is hardly detectable. Subject-specific knowledge has mostly been systematized by knowledge types based on psychological memory theory, but the boundaries between these and curricular concepts of knowledge are unclear. Consideration of epistemological principles relating to History takes place implicitly at best. As a consequence, empirical surveys of historical knowledge are oriented towards a one-sided fact-centered understanding of knowledge and are interpreted as an indicator of the success of school teaching

and individual learning, which are usually perceived as falling short of expectations. As a result, the testing of competences of historical thinking, which are theoretically defined at a high and complex level, is still at the beginning. Due to the asymmetry of empirical and theoretical preliminary work, there is a lack of foundation to precisely determine the relationship between two important factors of historical thinking. Insights into this interrelationship would, however, be of fundamental importance in the implementation of competence-oriented curricular guidelines and specialization in an increasingly heterogeneous, inclusive teaching environment.

2. Research Question and Objective

In order to meet heterogeneous learning requirements by means of specialized support and performance assessment, competences of historical thinking and historical knowledge should be considered from a multi-dimensional perspective and in relation to each other. This is intended to supplement the isolated assessment of different learning requirements and degrees of learning progress by the systematization of the relationship between knowledge and competence under appropriate consideration of extreme characteristics. For this purpose, the research addresses the following questions:

1. How can the quantity and quality of historical knowledge be structured within the area of history?
2. To what extent can knowledge structures be theoretically explained by historical competencies?
3. What opportunities to specialize are provided on the one hand, and what limitations of shared historical learning arise on the other hand, from a dimensional, competence-related theory of knowledge for inclusive history teaching?

The aim of the research project is to develop a subject-specific model of historical knowledge, which provides a basis for the description and specialized acquisition of historical knowledge that goes beyond the identification of content-related consistency with scientific statements. Furthermore, hypotheses will be formulated regarding the dimensions and interactions of knowledge with competences of historical thinking, in particular.

3. Methods

The intended synthesis of theories on competencies of historical thought and knowledge in the subject of History is based on the assumption that support of historical learning in highly heterogeneous groups benefits from the multidimensional and gradual modelling of the cognitions involved. To this end, knowledge in History that has so far at best only differed in terms of function is to be further defined and reflected on with regard to its place in models of historical competences. Based on a review of historical didactic literature that has been written since the debate on competences began in 2003, where the focus has been on the characteristics and functions attributed to historical knowledge as well as proposals for systematization, knowledge concepts and their relationship to Psychology and Historical Science as related disciplines of Historical Didactics will be explained. On this basis, a working definition of historical knowledge will be developed, which takes into account both psychological functional correlations as well as the epistemological and subject-specific requirements of knowledge. Using this definition, types of historical knowledge are differentiated in terms of their function and temporal position during processes of historical thinking and evaluated with regard to characteristic values such as modes of representation, transferability or validity claims. Regarding the conception of historical thinking processes and the competences involved, the project mainly refers to the competence structure model of the FUER Group. This competence model is acknowledged discursively in the discipline and has been proven in practical terms through its inclusion in curricula. In addition, it can be distinguished from other models of competence by its recommendations for graduating levels of historical competence. Furthermore, the model is based on the definition of competence according to Weinert, which has so far been formative in the German debate on competences. The concept of modular knowledge promoted by the “Karlsruher Ansatz für integrierte Wissensforschung” (Karlsruhe Approach for Promoting Integrated Knowledge Research) serves as the basis for a differentiating model of historical knowledge. Through identification of the structural and processual areas of overlap between the model of historical knowledge developed during the project and the competence structural model, intersections of the knowledge base described in clearly specialist terms and the competences become apparent. In these overlapping areas, the differentiation between phases

of knowledge and knowledge dimensions in the historical thinking process enables the formulation of hypotheses on the relationships between the qualities of knowledge and cha-

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