“Learning the past… can change the future”: the history that is taught from the voice of elementary school students

Alfredo Gomes Dias

Introduction

When it comes to studies on the teaching and learning of History in primary education (10-12 years), it is particularly relevant to research teaching practices in the classroom. Beyond being a fundamental aspect, it is also a challenge to any didactic research field: it is the critical analysis of the teaching practice implemented that permits processes of change to be triggered. It is important to recognize, however, that this is a very difficult task to accomplish.

Research carried out between 2016 and 2019, focusing on the teaching of History as part of initial teacher training at the Superior School of Education of Lisboa (ESELx), allowed for the analysis of the roles of the different educational agents that intervene in defining practices for teachers of History and Geography of Portugal (HGP) in the Second Cycle of Basic Education (2nd CBE): these are students and teachers from the initial training courses at ESELx and students and teachers of HGP from the 2nd CBE. From this research, we highlight a study carried out with 5th and 6th grade classes in Portuguese schools, involving 542 students between the ages of 10 and 12, focusing on their conceptions of History.

These students who, as a last analytical resource, are the essence of any work on education, have been too silent a voice in previously carried out research. Contrary to basic pedagogical and didactic principles, we tend to ignore the centrality of students in the teaching and learning processes, despite the evidence of the importance of integrating their conceptions in the research processes developed (Hurtado & Prieto, 2014; Prats, 2014).

In the same way that we consider that teacher’s conceptions of History influence the way they manage the curriculum and the methodological options that guide their practice, student’s conceptions of “what History is” also help us to analyze and infer just what History is being taught to them (Andelique, 2012; Dias, 2019).

Throughout this article, therefore, I propose to present and analyze the conceptions of History as taken from a group of students from the 2nd CBE and, from this analysis, to infer just “what History is taught” and “what History should be taught” at this stage of education.

1. Teaching and Learning History in the Second Cycle of Basic Education

In terms of the curriculum, the teaching and learning of History in the 2nd CBE takes the form of History and Geography of Portugal taught to 5th and 6th graders.

Between 2017 and 2020, the curriculum guidelines underwent a process of change, this despite the fact that, to a large extent, it was a continuation of the original programme created in 1991 and revoked in 2021, with its contents following the same traditional chronological order of national History. This curricular document that serves as a guide for teachers is entitled Essential Learning, approved by Orders no. 6944/A/2018, of July 18, 8476-A/2018, of August 31, 7414/2020, of July 17, and 7415/2020, of July 17.

Methodologically, these curricular guidelines emphasize the purpose of promoting the development of competencies, which, in essence, were already foreseen in the 1991 programme. Thus, a set of competencies transversal to the entire programme is identified and defined, specific to be developed in each thematic unit.

Despite proposing a new approach to the teaching of History, one that emphasized the logic of developing competencies, the conceptions and teaching of History behind the approach were not renewed. The preservation of the contents foreseen in the program, in force between 1991 and 2021, is proof of the inability to rethink the teaching of History, integrating the changes that have occurred in in the last 30 years in Europe and the World over, and the advances historiographical production has registered. This confirms the argument defended by Joan Pagès (2012, p. 14) who states: “changes in the contents of history are not easy to assume not by politicians, who prepare the curricula, not by teachers, nor by experts in the didactics of history”.

Taking this point of view into consideration, it should be considered that the contents of History that compose the 2nd CBE in Portugal are in line with what generally happens in other countries: “think about the contents of history to form good citizens, to ‘root’ them in their countries and through carefully selected patriotic facts” (Pagès, 2007, p. 22).

We are dealing with a school history that, in relation to basic education in Portugal, focuses on a perspective marked out by national borders, and which, at the same time, privileges a practice that
values heroic facts and characters, anchored in the uniqueness of chronology. “The memory-heritage-commemoration trilogy comes to replace a progressive vision of the past (...) This historiography attempts to reinvent an affective (romantic) relationship to the nation weakened by globalization” (De Clock & Picard, 2009, p. 9). We thus welcome the echo of the new times in which we try to reinvent the nation, using History as a resource. The narrative of school history, influenced by that vision of the «national romance», is still dominant in classrooms (De Clock & Picard, 2009). It is this approach, centered on the nation, that is still heir to the times of the French Revolution and the historiography that brought the light of day with it, the light found in the way History is taught in school today, built on the pillars of chronological sequence and a temporal march, valuing historical continuities and fabricating a narrative that offers coherence to the past, albeit artificially: “the narrative is then not too far from the fictional” (De Clock & Picard, 2009, p. 8).

Keith Jenkins (2009) makes a clear distinction between the past and historiography, in part, with the aim of solving the problem of using the word History which, in Portuguese, serves those two different meanings: the has passed and writing about what took place in the past (historiography). This distinction between the past and historiography is particularly relevant when we are attentive to the invisibilities of History.

En este punto podríais deteneros por un momento a pensar cuántos otros grupos, pueblos o clases han sido o son eliminados de la historia y por qué; y cuáles podrían ser las consecuencias si dichos «grupos» excluidos fueron los protagonistas de los relatos históricos y si los colectivos que ahora son hegemónicos quedaran marginados (Jenkins, 2009, p. 10).

Ultimately, it is a matter of critically reflecting on historical knowledge and on the knowledge of historical knowledge as well, the latter having to “appear as a primordial need that would serve as preparation to face permanent risks of error and illusion that never cease to parasitize the human mind” (Morin, 2011, p. 20). If the professional profile of a history teacher stems from their historical training, however, this is not a sufficient condition, as previously pointed out.

In this sense, one can follow the proposals of Fontana (2013, p. 261) for whom History, which has always tended to legitimize the established order, should assume another social function: that of “a tool for the task of social change”. Starting from the explanation of this purpose of History, the importance of its teaching is recognized by this author,
tanto por su voluntad totalizadora (única en su intento de abarcar globalmente, y en sus interacciones, todos los elementos que se integran en la dinámica de una sociedad), como porque puede ser, empleada adecuadamente, una herramienta valiosísima para la formación de una conciencia crítica (Fontana, 2013, p. 248).

This purpose is based on the advances that have been registered in historiography, with studies that include the most diverse human groups that traditionally remained invisible (Laurentin, 2010; Villalón & Pagès, 2013).

Because history and its teaching have a social function, political power has never stopped thinking about the purposes of school history, taking into account the citizen model it wants to form. With this being the case, this is a requirement placed on History teachers who cannot ignore the role that History plays in the citizenship education of students. It is about reconfiguring the traditional idea of citizenship and approaching a concept of critical citizenship, based on the ability to read and interpret social problems and on the development of competencies for the exercise of democratic participation. (Villalón, 2021, p. 92). In summary, the stake is thus directed towards constructing a “school History that allows bringing students closer to the experience of democracy from the analysis of the past” (Villalón, 2021, p. 93).

Reflecting on the History that is learned and the History that is taught, we are led to analyze what History should be taught. From this point of view, the teaching of History, as an area of human knowledge, must integrate three essential dimensions – problematization, totality and interdisciplinarity – resulting from the fundamental axes that guide the construction of historical knowledge today (Dias, 2019).

Problematization implies the ability to read the immediate reality, its contemporaneity, testing an interpretative analysis based on a temporal perspective, identifying the continuities and ruptures that come from the past and that can best explain the present, what Rüsen (2001, p. 57) calls “practical human life”. It is about developing the art of questioning reality and posing problems, with the aim of creating a better understanding having the past as a recourse. The intent is to critically read reality in a way “that it correctly explains the reasons for poverty, hunger and unemployment, and that helps us fight against the degradation of nature, militarism, atomic threat, racism and many other dangers” (Fontana, 2013, p. 262). Going even further: “Fundamental human problems can become an
alternative to the positivist and Eurocentric conception of historical school knowledge. They make historical school knowledge significant by relating it to the problems of present life and to the problems of men and women” (Pages, 2007, pp. 26-27). In short, the history that is taught today must fulfill its function of educating for the problematization of today’s world (Heimberg, 2009).

The totality refers to the analysis of social reality as a global and multi-scale phenomenon, in space and time, recognizing, on the one hand, the mutual influences between the local, the national and the global and, on the other hand, the different temporal contexts that, when intersecting among each other at different time scales, contribute to a better understanding of the historical process (Cachinho, 2019). The issue of hunger in many countries is an example of this as also advanced by Fontana (2013, p. 255): “widening gaps between rich and poor countries on a global scale; differences between rich social sectors and poor social sectors, at the scale of each country, be them developed or not. This is what’s upon the horizon of our future in the short and medium term”.

From an interdisciplinarity standpoint, integrating History into the field of Social Sciences builds bridges with other disciplines, with Sociology, Anthropology and, above all, Geography. On the one hand, this requirement stems from the complexity of today’s world, recognizing that each subject area, by itself, is not enough to encompass reality as a social totality. The complementarity between History and Geography has been valued in historical and geographical thinking since the mid-19th century (Grataloup, 2015). On the other hand, the HGP in the 2nd CBE in Portugal calls for the curricular integration of these two areas of knowledge, leading to seven historical-geographical competencies having been worked on, in turn, guiding, in an integrated way, the training in History and Geography in ESELx courses (Hortas & Dias, 2017).

Together, these three dimensions, understood to be one whole, will allow the teaching of History that will stimulate critical thinking, that will develop historical awareness and promotes social intervention. To Pagès (2007, p. 29), the teaching methodology must seek to explicitly link the present with the past in order to return to the present, and project itself into the future. The development of historical awareness is essential for the creation of political and civic awareness. Historical consciousness for Rüsen represents the past by explicitly interrelating it with the present, guided by concepts of temporal change and emphasizing the unequivocal temporality of the past as a condition for its relevance to the present. Historical consciousness is a mediate relationship between the past and the present that opens to the future.

Integrating these dimensions into teaching and learning allows for a more explicit implementation of
the type of history that should be taught today, taking into account the political, economic, social and cultural reality that poses new challenges to European society(ies).

2. Methodological Lines

In this study, answers to the question “what history should be taught” are tested, relying on the voice of 2nd CBE students. Giving the floor to students was done in a simple yet adequate manner in order to fulfill the objectives of this study. In different HGP classrooms in the 2nd CBE, all in schools located in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, each student was asked to complete the sentence: “History is ...”. The question made it possible to go directly to the heart of the research issue, at the same time, giving students to have the maximum freedom to build their conceptions of “History”.

A total of 542 students responded, 296 of which were 5th graders (10-11 years old), 246 of which were 6th graders (11-12 years old). The question was laid out before the students without any guidance or prior preparation. The only instruction that served as an introduction was limited to the indication “Complete this sentence in the way that you think is most correct”.

The 542 definitions of History were then subject to content analysis, identifying every word (name, verb, adjective, etc...) that gave shape to each student's answer. In this way, a database was created that, in its initial version, gathered 217 different words, in a total of 2429 references. The words were then grouped into categories and disaggregated into subcategories, organized in a way that permitted and simplified analysis. Words that could not be included in any of the defined categories and subcategories, and that had a frequency equal to or less than seven, were removed. Such words appeared no more than once or twice.

In summary, the method of collecting the information corresponded to carrying out a survey using a directly administrated questionnaire, possessing an open question with an aimed at getting a restricted answer. This was proceeded by the analysis of content, with categories defined in advance. The 542 2nd CBE student participants were also students in the schools where the students of initial teacher training at the Superior School of Education of Lisboa. The research instrument was applied to students in the second semester of the 2017/2018 academic year.

3. History: what were the student’s conceptions?

The 2429 references considered for the content analysis, based on student answers, gave rise to six categories: object of study, temporality, cognition, scientificity, spatiality and sources (Table 1).
Table 1. 2nd CBE student’s conceptions of history: categories of analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study object</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporality</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientificity</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaciality</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2429</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dias, 2019.

*Study object.* This is the category with the highest number of references (821/34%), gathering all the indications provided by the students about the contents they associate with History. As a general rule, they refer to the contents they were studying at the time of responding to the question. It is from these contents that examples emerge, associating them with their discourses on what they consider to be “History”. Taking their ages into account, it is important to emphasize the need for them to express their ideas, using concrete examples. It is also important to be aware that the difficulty in coming up with an explicit definition of a given concept tends to be facilitated by coming up with “an example” that helps to formulate the definition being asked for.

Despite the explanatory framework for the high number of responses that address the specific contents to which the study of History is dedicated, it is important to analyze more closely the type of examples given by students, for, through these examples, we can better recognize the ideas they hold in relation to the objects of historical knowledge all the while, also infer teaching content tendencies explored in the classrooms.

Through student voices, history classes are portrayed as a space associated with the knowledge of facts and characters, related to “ancestry” (Figure 1). This is the first sign of an existing continuity of a school history that is still very dependent on traditional historiography, for whom History is the
study of the past, centered on facts and characters (Villalón & Pagès, 2013; Villalón, 2021). The past, facts and characters, together adding up to 56% of the references, represent the contents that are worked in the 2nd CBE classrooms. These last two subcategories, however, have a similar presence to “economic life” (114/821) and “human beings and society” (85/821). We can consider the hypothesis that a marked positivist perspective of History may be experiencing a process of change, contextualized by the study of social and economic relations, by valuing the idea of human beings as a social being, as defined by the relationships established within the society in which we live.

**Figure 1.** “Study object” (subcategories).

![Graph showing the distribution of subcategories](image)

Source: Dias, 2019.

Going in the same direction we find all the references associate with an outlook of History that focuses on the daily life of human life, mobilizing perspectives in this direction, in addition to “economic life”, as previously mentioned, “social life” (35/821), “cultural life” (28/821) and “political life” (11/821). Together, these four subcategories represent around 22% of the total references gathered in this category.

Lastly, the students made references to General History (53/821) and the History of Portugal (29/821). Although they contain only 10% of the references, what is particularly relevant is the fact
that they made more references to General History, such as the “French Revolution”, the “World Wars”, existence of “Roman numerals”, among others, more so than to the History of Portugal (this mainly due to the course subject being History and Geography of Portugal) which the refer to such events as the ‘maritime expansion’, ‘the colonization of Brazil’, ‘the First Republic’, among others.

**Temporality.** The second defined category, according to the student’s discourses, associated the concept of History with its temporal dimension (564/23%). Once the concept is implemented based on the identification of contents and topics, in a general sense, as related to the issue being studied, students recognize in the concept of time (directly and indirectly) the centrality that, in the final analysis, best defines the concept of History itself. In a direct manner, we find the words “time” or “times”, terms that give rise to one of the subcategories integrated into this second dimension – “time(s)” (49/564), which represent 9% of references (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** “Temporality” (subcategories).

![Graph showing the distribution of references to temporality subcategories](image)

Source: Dias, 2019.

However, there are other words and ideas that the students put forward, which serve to translate the relevance of temporality in the concept of History and that subsequently permit advancing to other subcategories.

The first is the ‘past’ (321/564) representing 57% of the references in this category. In addition to the words “past” or “pasts”, to this subcategory we have added others such as “old”, “formerly” and
“before”.

The second subcategory ‘units of time’ brings together the words that, on the whole, refer to the association of History with chronology. The student’s references to “year”, “century”, “date”... reveal the weight that chronology assumes in their thinking upon being invited to think about the meaning of the word “History”.

The first two subcategories, representing about 76% of the references, thus allow us to deduce how much the student’s conceptions of History is clearly associated with the idea of a past that is defined chronologically. Taking into account the ages of students at this level of education, we cannot go without recognizing the importance of two key ideas – past and chronology – two fundamental and necessary elements for the construction of historical time.

Although these two elements are necessary conditions, they are still not sufficient. The appreciation of this aspect of temporality associated with the past and with chronology should allow students to develop, in a clearer way, the ability to relate the past to the present and – why not? – with the future, and to develop the notion of change and evolution as well (Escribano, 2021). At this juncture we thus arrive at the subcategories that deserved less attention from students: ‘present’ (44/564); ‘change’ (25/564); ‘future’ (16/564), which together represent only 15% of the total number of references in this category.

**Cognition.** In the answers provided by the students, we found the use of verbs (550/22%) that can also be associated with historical thinking (Figures 3, 4 and 5).

We considered three cognitive levels – elementary (465/550 - 84.5%), medium (46/550 - 8.4%) and high (39/550 – 7.1%) – for the distribution of words used by students (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Fives & DiDonato-Barnes, 2013).

As expected, children in this age group favor elementary cognitive levels, accounting for 84.5%, this to the detriment of medium and high levels, which together total 14.5%.

Among the ‘elementary level cognitive operations’ are terms such as “knowing/recognizing”; “telling”, “narrating”, “describing” and “remembering”. At this level, we find two dominant lines of thinking in student’s conception: on the one hand, an approach to History organized around a narrative structure, on the other, the need to memorize.
Figure 3. “Cognition”: elementary level (subcategories).

Source: Dias, 2019.

Figure 4. “Cognition”: medium level (subcategories).

Source: Dias, 2019.
Figure 5. “Cognition”: high-level (subcategories).

Source: Dias, 2019.

With regard to middle-level cognitive operations, these include more elaborate thought actions, such as “understanding”, “explaining” and “recreating”; while the high-level operations made references to “discovering” and “investigating”.

Scientificity. In this category, gathered references referred to the disciplinary or scientific character of History (245/10%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6. “Scientificity” (subcategories).

Source: Dias, 2019.
Students directly associate History with “discipline/school” (175/245 – 71%), in other words, school history, the form of history that is closest to them. The recognition of History as “science” is residual, accounting for only 6% of the references (4/245), as is the subcategory of History as “knowledge” (29/245 – 12%). A final subcategory is that of “legend/imagination” (26/245 – 11%) which results from their appropriation of History through children’s literature, giving value to the creative and imaginative nature of the construction of legends and tales.

**Spatiality.** The fifth category most mentioned by students (208/9%) refers to the spatial dimension of historical phenomena and processes. Here the defined subcategories once again appeal to influences drawn from the work student’s carry out within the discipline of History and Geography of Portugal when it comes to constructing their conceptions about what they consider to be History (Figure 7).

**Figure 7.** “Spatiality” (subcategories).

![Spatiality Chart](image)

Source: Dias, 2019.

Evident, therefore, is the first two subcategories – “Portugal/Portuguese” (93/208) and “country” (56/208) – which, together, account for around 72% of the total of references in this category. This national perspective of History is reinforced at the expense of more global – “world/planet/earth” (43/208 – 21%) – and a local – “places” (16/208 – 8%) perspectives.

Given that this approach to the teaching of History is privileged in the 1st CBE curriculum (6-10
years), the transition to the 2nd CBE aims to expand the scale of teaching and learning History to a national scale. Despite the curricular guidelines, a greater spatial dimension is undervalued at this level of education. Approaches of a more global scale only occur when necessary, to contextualize historical phenomena and processes of national history, such as the Portuguese maritime expansion. It is here key to underline that the competencies of History teaching focus on three dimensions: contextualization, temporality and spatiality (Dias, 2019, p. 99).

To this analysis, a final note can be added, one that points out a particularly relevant absence: the lack of references to the Iberian Peninsula. The History of Portugal comes with a multitude of broad periods of time that are frequently addressed in the Iberian context. Out of the 2,408 references, however, we only six in reference to this space were counted.

**Sources.** The last category of analysis considered relates to the roll that sources when it comes to student conceptions of History. With only 41 references (2%), we here see just how small a roll this aspect possesses in the construction of historical knowledge and thinking in relation to children who attend the 2nd CBE children (Figure 8).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8.** “Sources” (subcategories).

Does this reduced presence of the idea of sources in the student’s conceptions of History represent the absence of this resource in the construction of class teaching? This is a question worth asking in
the face of such a reduced presence of resource.

With regard to the subcategories found, there are three types of sources mentioned by the students: primary “written sources”, though mostly secondary (18/41); 'material and monumental sources' (15/41) that tend to be introduced into the classroom through images in manuals or via the use of audiovisual materials, and, thirdly, through the (few) study visits they carry out outside school; “historical sources/vestiges” (8/41) that may refer to references to unnamed / unconcreted historical remnants or traces.

A factual and backward-looking form of school history corresponds to student discourses that are limited to elementary cognitive levels, between “knowing” and “learning”, moving away from more complex operations. As we know, though it is important to remember, the complexity of cognitive levels in learning does not depend on the age of the students, though it does require that they be adjusted to it (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Fives & DiDonato-Barnes, 2013).

In terms of spatiality, within the discipline of HGP, it is made clear that the national territory is the conceived unit of measure that mobilizes contents associated to a definition of a “country” and “countries”. As previously noted, the almost complete absence of references to the “Iberian Peninsula” illustrates what is important to underline: the inclusion of a spatial dimension within an historiographical operation should be recognized as being unavoidable. It is not just a matter of simply stating the location of events to be considered in the phase of historical understanding and explanation. A proposal goes much further, recognizing the way in which the territory influences the daily life and the evolution of human communities, and how such communities change the landscape through their actions. This dialogue, established between man and territory, can be approached in different ways in the teaching and learning processes of History, mobilizing different methods and techniques, according to the scales adapted (Dias & Hortas, 2015; Dias, 2017).

Lastly, it is important that the number of student references, in relation to the use of “sources” when it comes to the learning of History, guaranteed the inclusion of these in their discourses. Ultimately, it is about teaching and learning history, making history, and recognizing that historical sources are the main raw material in the processes of knowledge construction and historical understanding (Montanares-Vargas & Llancavil-Llancavil, 2016). However, this approach to the teaching and learning of History implies reducing concerns about the amount of content “that students can be provided with, replacing that with the possibility of teaching them to think, teaching them to have doubts, not to accept the facts that history books contain as just data to be memorised” (Fontana, 2004, p. 23).
Still, the very low percentage suggests that there is still a long way to go in order to privilege what is one of the most relevant resources for teaching and learning of History. An understanding of how knowledge of the past is reached is required in order to be able to issue an explanation as to why events occurred in a certain way. All of that came before leads to the selection of certain strategies by a teacher, in order to develop understanding in the students (Montanares-Vargas & Llancavil-Llancavil, 2016, pp. 88-89).

In summary, the analysis of 2nd CBE student’s definitions of History helps us to infer that teacher practices are consistent with a conception of History inherited from the romantic positivism of the 19th century, consolidated by the works of Jules Michelet (1797-1874) and Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), and guided by a historiographical thought based on five centralities (Delacroix, Dosse & Garcia, 2007). At the central core is the role that archives, and documents have come to occupy in the process of collecting information, conferring knowledge and guaranteeing evidence (Moradiellos, 2013). Second lies the construction of the historiographical text, as the art of narrative capable of explaining the past, bringing knowledge closer to the status of historical science (Mattoso, 2019). Within this domain, a third centrality gains importance, that of the historian himself, now capable of constructing an explanatory discourse that gives meaning and significance to history (Barthes, 1987; Mattoso, 2019). A fourth centrality is found at the intersection of geography and history, giving privilege to the nation, its regions, and its peoples as objects of study, whose analysis is based on the complementarity of spatiotemporal vectors (Gaddis, 2002; Grataloup 2015). Lastly, the fifth and final centrality refers to the space occupied by social relations, as a structuring factor of the historical explanation, capable of reading social realities within different human communities (Burke, 2005).

**Conclusion**

Based on student’s discourses, we can here thus conclude that school history remains a prisoner of a conception of factual historical knowledge, centered on individual characters and based on national boundaries. Along with that however, there are also signs that indicate the centrality of human beings in History and the integration of humans into a social totality regulated by the political, economic, social and cultural relations of societies. It’s a matter attributing to History the role of associating human beings to the past and future, refocusing History on the issues of the present, with the purpose of building a better world. Within this double dimension, the value of an historical consciousness, that is equally a social consciousness, stands out, with History emerging as a method that enables human
beings to “ask questions about the past, allowing us to be stronger and workout out what is currently wrong in order to help provide a better future” (Laurentin, 2010, p. 124/Jacques le Goff).

Consistent with this factual view of History, we find the importance behind the idea of History’s association with the past and chronology. If, on the one hand, the appreciation of the concept of time in the learning of History stands out, on the other, the testimonies provided by the students suggest that this temporality is taught with an eye on the past and on chronology, dissociated from the present and social problems that could provide other meanings and add additional motivation to teaching.

It is here key to recall the central question of this study that focused on the teaching and learning of History within the 2nd CBE: what is the difference between the officially stipulated curricular proposals and the teaching practices maintained in the classroom?

The definitions of History for 2nd CBE students who attend 5th and 6th grade HGP point to a school history that, on the one hand, privileges the factual, chronological, and evaluative History of singular historical figures, while, on the other hand, recognizes the centrality of human beings in historical processes, frame worked in a singular fashion that integrates the different dimensions of analysis pertinent to the evolution of communities: political, economic, social and cultural.

Despite the changes that have occurred in historiographical thinking and in the field of Didactics of History and Social Sciences, it is important to recognize that teaching practices, as pertinent to teaching and learning within this discipline, do not integrate such changes, maintaining instead a close approach to a more traditional, event-driven concept of history.

Recently introduced changes to the HGP curriculum point towards a history teaching approach that comes from the perspective of developing competencies. That said however, teacher’s practices indicate that there is still a long way to go in order to guarantee a school history aimed at historical conscience learning that is also citizen conscience based, capable of reading, interpreting and acting in a critical manner, in the world we live in today.

References


Formação na Docência (pp. 285-293). Escola Superior de Educação de Bragança.