

A Key to Europe – The new Turkish history and civics teaching materials (*Innovative History Education – Exemplary Activities*)

External Review

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Turkish history is a very complicated one. Of course which country's history is not? But history in Turkey – including both history writing and history teaching – inadvertently has to suffer to some degree from the close intertwinement of history and nation as well as nation and state. The state and its institutions, as well as its sustaining elites, all have their own, deeply entrenched, versions of Turkish history, which converge on many points. New interpretations of Turkish history are often perceived as direct challenges and threats to nation and state. In many ways this entangled relationship can be traced back to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's own historiographical endeavours, most notably perhaps his thirty-six hour *Great Speech* (the *Nutuk*) in 1927 in which he more or less put forward his own historiography of the early republic. But, also looking beyond the person of Atatürk – if that is at all possible in the Turkish context – the “rebirth of the nation” (as Atatürk biographer Patrick Kinross put it) in the 20th century in Anatolia, out of the crumbling edifice of the Ottoman Empire in over a decade of war, itself framed both history and the nation in very essentialist and exceedingly emotional terms.

As long as history is perceived in such emotional and essentialist terms, it will always be put in relation to what it means for nation and state – more so than in other liberal democracies of our time. And to further complicate “history in Turkey” many difficult historical topics still haunt the republic and many are still “unresolved” today. History education has to aid the students here; it has to enable them to cope with a world full of unresolved, yet supercharged historical issues, which demand of young citizens that they make up their mind themselves and have the capacity to deal with difficult historical and ideological issues. Especially given the new political developments in Turkey and the world, as well as Turkey's renewed quest to have its place in Europe; also given the fast pace with which domestic and international historiography advances.

Turkey's path to Europe was firmly set by Atatürk and in many ways the current Turkish history curriculum strongly reaffirms this path by opening up many possibilities for history educators to venture ahead on this path through innovative teaching and by forming critical citizens. However, the current Turkish history textbooks still tell a very straightforward story and offer few vantage points for multiple views or a critical reading of history. Almost all of their text corpus consists of authors' texts, with illustrations and source material – if there is any – only to underline the points made in the main text. These books present clear “facts”, even where there are none and even if history as a discipline is still divided over many topics. Similarly, parts of the information, approaches and theories have become outdated by current research as well as by historical tendencies of researching and of teaching history.

The new history workbook *Innovative History Education – Exemplary Activities*, often referred to as *A Key to Europe*, tries to use these new possibilities and extend a helping hand to Turkish educators on their path towards a new kind of history teaching. It attempts to tackle more than just one current problem of Turkish history teaching: It also sets out to offer new didactic approaches and solutions to difficult topics; more generally, to convey new ways of teaching, interpreting and “reading” history; to enable the integration of new topics and new research into the Turkish classrooms without re-writing the existing textbooks; and thus to make Turkey “ready” for “Europe”. And given the curriculum and the project's scope, this includes not only history but also civics education. A tall order for such a project and such a set of additional materials. And given the importance of history for the nation, the establishment and much of the elites in Turkey, this courageous endeavour needs not only our fullest attention but at the outset already deserves praise for its ambitious scope.

This report attempts to analyse some key aspects of the workbook, while stressing throughout that it is a remarkable achievement and represents an important step in an on-going reform of history education in Turkey. In doing so I will discuss the key features of the book and relate my statements to some key units. Given the breadth of the topics and the multitude of units, a selection was made here in order for a more compelling picture to emerge. (Some of the units exemplarily discussed here are also available in an English translation on the project's online webpage; however, for this analysis the original Turkish text was used.).

The materials

The presented materials consist of 34 work units, organised in four sections, totalling almost 400 pages. This high quality product includes many colour reproductions of source materials, including, of course, pictures. Each unit begins with a cover page, which includes a brief introductory text outlining matter as well as method and which indicates the grade level. Then the envisaged learning outcomes are summarized in a threefold fashion: First, what all pupils should take away from the lesson; second, what some pupils might learn; and third, what a few pupils might grasp. The threefold summary suggests that the teacher should not expect too much from all his students,

but also suggests that in an optimal execution some of the more abstract notions should be conveyed to at least some in the target group.

The cover page then also lists in a succinct fashion the target grade level, the projected duration of the unit in the classroom, and what the teacher needs to do in order to prepare the lesson (most of the time merely pointing out that he/she needs to copy the exercise sheets). Furthermore the summary includes the unit's key question, as for example in unit 1 on the Greco-Turkish population exchange: "How did forced migration effect the people?" Then it (again) briefly outlines the unit's primary goal. In the mentioned unit, it states that the Greco-Turkish exchange shall serve as an example to understand the effects of forced migration. In addition, the cover page then points out secondary learning outcomes. Here these concern the meaning of Turkish foreign policy in relation to the Lausanne Treaty.

Typically the next page of a unit, following the cover page, provides an overview of the teaching process in the unit's lesson. In the case of the already discussed unit, the lesson is to begin with a question as to what the students would take with them from their homes if they had the chance to return to them once more before they had to leave forever. The unit timeline (flow-chart) allocates a mere five minutes of the overall eighty minutes to this part of the lesson. In the following teaching subunits – for each a suggested duration is indicated – the class is to be partitioned into work groups, which have to read the various sources in their groups and to carry out various assignments. In the unit in question the last exercise goes well beyond the source material itself as the pupils are asked to write a letter the authorities implementing the population exchange. They are asked to draw attention to the human suffering resulting from the population exchange.

The following pages (after the cover page and the detailed lesson overview) include sources, often ranging from the more general to the more detailed ones. In the exemplary unit this section begins with a lengthy excerpt from the secondary literature on the topic outlining the topic (see below for a remark on the source citation). The next source is also of broader character: an excerpt from the Protocol to the Lausanne Treaty detailing the agreement on the population exchange (in seven articles here). This source, in this example unit, is complemented by a "note of information", which again is an excerpt from the secondary literature detailing the implementation of the protocol. As already mentioned following the sources of broader scope are then usually more detailed or focussed source materials. In the unit on the Greco-Turkish population exchange these are mainly accounts of emigrants, thus oral history sources. In other units these are UN Declarations (for example in unit 2), "ordinary" archival sources such as bureaucratic, official letters (unit 3), wartime paintings (units 6 and 7), extracts from novels (for example from Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, unit 6), from poems (for example units 6 and 7), news agency dispatches (unit 7), travel writings (unit 13), propaganda posters (for example unit 7), caricatures (for example unit 8), (rock) songs (unit 29) as well as historical and contemporary newspaper articles (in many, if not most units). Oral history sources feature not only in the unit on the Greco-Turkish population exchange but there is even a whole unit dedicated to the concept of oral history (unit 5).

These source sections are framed with work and exercises sheets. The workbook further comes with a CD-ROM with additional materials, including video clips, which are referenced throughout the book and are integral parts of some of the work assignments. Furthermore the whole booklet as well as the companion source materials are available to everybody, free of charge, for downloading, online at the project's webpage.

Themes

Given the diverse nature of the coursework prescribed by the curricula for the classes 9 to 12, but perhaps more importantly, given the scope of the project itself, the themes covered range from ancient history to contemporary (civics) topics such as children's rights, or from the Ottomans as a seafaring empire to (international 20th century) wartime art. It is not the scope of this book to cover a certain period of time exhaustively, but rather to introduce certain didactic methods through some key topics as well as to look at certain topics anew, such as for example what it means to "be a woman" (unit 20) or to "be a refugee" (unit 21). As such the book does not "prescribe itself" unto any class, unit or topic, but rather offers a very broad variety of connection points to the various curricular aspects as well as to the inclinations of teachers and students. Given the density of the curricula and the number of units, many of which require up to 80 minutes of lesson time to implement, this workbook was conceived as a "unit pool", from which one can pick and choose.

There are of course many themes drawn from Ottoman history, but these are far from standard and discuss aspects ignored in most history textbooks: for example the Ottomans and the Oceans (unit 11), the guilds in the Ottoman Empire (unit 15) or Ottoman and Spanish perspectives on Ottoman rule in North Africa (unit 27). But there is, of course, also a fresh look at more "conventional Ottoman topics" such as the outbreak of World War I and the Ottoman Empire (unit 18), the Ottoman Tulip Era (unit 24), the Ottoman bazaar as perceived by European travellers (unit 13), the nature of the 1908 revolution (unit 8), or justice in the Ottoman Empire (unit 3). There are of course also some units focussing on Turkish republican history such as that on the Greco-Turkish population exchange (unit 1), Turkish aid to Greece during World War II (unit 29) or the Great Fire of Izmir (unit 9). And then there are a series of units dealing with other aspects of world history such as, for example, the Spanish Civil War (unit 7) and the post-Yugoslav wars of succession (unit 26). Other units deal with different approaches to history and to learning in general (oral history, the history of concepts, SQ4R, etc.). And finally, one unit presents an overview of the troubled 20th century by way of a (complete) list of Nobel Peace Laureates and of the backgrounds of the respective award decisions (unit 22).

New approaches to teaching history

The key didactic approach championed by the book is multiperspectivity. This concept rests on the one hand on the abstract notion that there are many different ways of perceiving, interpreting and teaching historical events, circumstances, developments,

entities, and actors. What is often perceived to be a “historical truth” is scrutinized through a multiperspective treatment that allows students to re-think certain historical aspects for him-/herself. On the other hand, it rests (if not depends) upon the critical abilities of both teachers and students. Through a multiperspectival treatment of history the student should be able to come to an own understanding regarding a given aspect of history. Not only will she/he be made aware of the fact that there are different ways of interpreting or perceiving historical aspects, but ideally will work himself/herself with source materials and/or expert texts presenting different viewpoints on the matter at hand. This of course requires a well-trained teacher, who can guide his students through such a process. It, however, also requires that the teacher has ample material at hand to teach topics in such a fashion.

The workbook offers a plenitude of multiperspectival treatments of a variety of subjects. The range of subjects, as already discussed, is very broad. But the authors also did their best to broaden the different approaches to (and of) multiperspectivity in history teaching through a varied use of source materials and diverse exercise assignments. For example the unit on the Fire of Izmir – a very controversial issue which is still not entirely resolved today – offers a variety of contradicting source materials in a successive fashion. At first there are sources claiming that “the Turks” were responsible for the fire, then there are sources blaming “the Armenians”, and then “Armenians and Greeks” are together named as the perpetrators. The final source excerpt of this unit then is from a 1924 London court ruling, which dealt with the Great Fire in terms of insurance claims: The court’s findings as to who was responsible were inconclusive.

Some units work with more “manageable” perspectives, i.e. mainly two opposing perspectives. In the unit on the treaty following the ancient battle of Kadesh, the students are confronted with sources from both sides claiming that they had in fact won the battle. Similarly “bipolar” are the sources in the unit on Ottoman Tunisia according to Spanish and Ottoman perspectives. The workbook details and suggests a variety of assignments and exercises for each unit. The group work assignments take different forms: in some units the pupils have to read the same sources in groups, sometimes they have to read different sources according to the groups they are in and sometimes there are even “expert groups”, which take on different roles vis-à-vis the other groups altogether (for example unit 4).

While, of course, the main approach championed by the workbook is the multiperspective approach, the book goes much further. It also introduces different agents of historical change and of historical record. The unit on the population exchange between Turkey and Greece, as agreed in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, confronts the students with oral history and with rather “normal” people who had been subject to this forced exchange. Again, in its quest to stimulate the critical capacities of the students, the book presents a series of opinions, in direct speech. The people speaking here are very frank: They did not want to leave their homes, even if they at the time happened not to live in what were their freshly stipulated national homelands. And they tell of their problems adjusting, even learning the language of their new motherland. The way the sources are edited and presented as well as the way the work assignments are structured, it is clearly conveyed here that these were not so much “Greeks” and “Turks”, but first and foremost “people” – people, who had

lost their houses, their neighbourhoods, their home. The workbook does not give away who is speaking: all biographical ethnic information is “whitened” out, so that the students have to make an educated guess as to whether the person speaking is Greek or Turkish. This is a brilliant introduction not only to oral history, but also to “historical empathy” – perceiving the subjects and objects of history as people in their own right, in their own conditions and through their own values, dreams, motivations and circumstances. After all: “empathy” is one of the many “slogans” of “innovative history education” featured on the cover of the book. But this unit also attempts to deconstruct a central tenet of nationalism, i.e. that those “exchange” people were Turks and Greeks first and foremost, regardless where they were from and how they felt about that.

Concurrently, another featured approach is the deconstruction of the nation as prime mover of history or as a personified entity. This is implicit in many units, but the unit dealing with Greco-Turkish friendship (unit 4) addresses this point directly: The introductory text on the cover page stresses that especially in history textbooks (!) the nation is all too often personified. This, the authors emphasize, leads to a mono-dimensional and dogmatic reading of history. By contrast, the text urges, “innovative” history teaching should look at all the dimensions of nation and state in bilateral relations. And here the example of Turkish aid to Greece during World War II is supposed to convey this to the students (i.e. that there are many facets, motivations and (institutional) actors in the relations between states and nations).

But the authors of the workbook set out to introduce other approaches as well. There is, for example, also a unit focusing on the history of concepts (unit 28). It focuses on the different meanings of “walls”. Then in a unit on the Hittites the students have to slip into the role of archaeologists and cultural/anthropological historians. By way of paintings and reliefs on artefacts they are supposed to reconstruct how the Hittites lived. Furthermore it needs to be stressed that the exercises in the workbook are not limited to “conventional” group work, but also involve games, role play as well as asymmetrical group work. Students are asked to take on very different roles and to emphasize with a variety of perspective. They have to write very different kinds of texts and have to work within the whole range of aspects of what it means to “be a historian”.

Goals and achievements

The workbook, as already stated, aims to achieve a great many things, and it is necessary to list what it clearly does achieve. It is:

- * *easily accessible* – on many levels: a) the texts are well written and the units well structured; b) the overall book is also well structured and its parts easy to access; c) the book is available online, in full and for free;
- * *ambitious*: it does not limit itself by a hesitant/conservative/negative perception of teachers and pupils in Turkey. It assumes that they all will be able to handle the newest trends, controversial topics and the uncertainties that the multiperspective approach may have in store for them;

- * *a well balanced, yet all-round presentation of different multiperspective approaches* (it is not merely repeating one “standard multiperspective approach” ad infinitum with differing topics);
- * it presents *different methodological approaches* not only to history teaching, but also to *history as a discipline* (oral history, the history of concepts, different agents of history, etc.);
- * it is *structured in an open fashion*, i.e. neither does the book presuppose one truth and presents it to the reader, nor does it prescribe itself unto an individual teacher’s plan (by providing a very broad variety of subjects).

The classroom and the workbook – Challenges as well as possible future refinements and developments

Of course, the real test for the workbook will be its continual use in the classrooms of Turkey. The units, if implemented, assure that the current unidirectional, if not confrontational teaching style is opened up. It will make for a very lively classroom; a classroom in which the teacher has to take on a new role. He will become more of a moderator, arbitrator and facilitator. Given the current style of teaching this will also enable the teacher to hear the voice of students who might otherwise not participate as often and she/he will probably also be confronted with hitherto “untapped” critical, abstract and creative skills of his/her students.

However, a successful implementation of the workbook units will certainly require well trained teachers: As stressed above points, the workbook relies heavily on the teachers’ ability to handle difficult and highly controversial issues and the resulting debates. Especially some of the more controversial units offer a bit too little guidance as to how to structure difficult discussions or what to do when confronted with certain classroom situations. For example: How will one resolve the question as to who now really burned down Izmir? These and similar questions the book leaves open. They might be resolved with good libraries and resources as well as by very able teachers who are trained to deal with “multiperspective situations” in the classroom (which can get out of hand and which can leave the class “unsatisfied” and confused).

Thus, there are a series of moments in which the workbook leaves the teacher a bit alone: For example when the unit on the Greco-Turkish population exchange lists the learning outcomes, it says nothing about the possible ramifications such a lesson and the contained sources might have on the way the pupils think about the nation. While it is a remarkable and utterly positive feature of this unit that the topic and the sources are not framed by a(ny) nationalist perspective, its repercussions on the theme and the concept of nationalism are more than just implicit; they are rather obvious. In all honesty the cover page could warn the teacher that he/she needs to think a bit about how he/she is to reconcile what is said in the sources and what is taught by means of historical empathy with what it means to be a part of a nation in the modern world (and in Turkey). The way the unit is structured it seems almost

inconceivable that such points are not raised or that this will not be an outcome for the targeted pupils.

Similarly, for example, the unit on Greco-Turkish friendship and the aid sent to Greece from Turkey during World War II omits a very important background: Greco-Turkish rapprochement under Atatürk. The events described in this chapter are fairly inconceivable had it not been for Atatürk's early, strong and very successful attempts of bringing Greece and Turkey together and working for peaceful coexistence. Are we to assume that both teachers and students are well informed about Greco-Turkish rapprochement and cooperation in the later interwar years.

In other units as well there is sometimes very little background information, especially when it comes to the instruments provided for students and teachers before they are supposed to begin their work with the sources. For example the unit on the so-called "1908 Young Turk Revolution" asks whether this really was a revolution or rather a coup d'état. The exercises begin with the students being asked to brainstorm definitions of "revolution" and "coup d'état". While this is a very nice introduction to the topic and encourages both participation and critical-creative thinking, this needs then to be resolved by the teacher with not only "correct" but meaningful definitions of both terms in the sense that the class can work with them in order to complete the unit. These definitions also need to address the possible points that may come up in the brainstorming exercise. However, the workbook offers rather insufficient definitions. While both are indeed "correct", they are inconclusive in so far as they both work, theoretically, as two complementary aspects of the same thing, are not at all exclusive vis-à-vis the other. The one for "revolution" focuses on the order established after power has been assumed and the one on "coup d'état" focuses on the change of power. Both are inconclusive and not mutually exclusive here, mainly because they do not address the question of agency at all. Furthermore, there is no suggestion, not even a hint, that a delineation of both concepts may be problematic per se. This must lead to many complications and frustration in the execution of this unit.

Furthermore, the success of this unit will depend on and thus vary greatly according to the background information both teachers and pupils have on the Hamidian era, the goals and protagonists of the Young Turk movement as well as on the broader domestic and international developments at the time. While some background information will be conveyed by way of the sources, if this is not heavily supported by more/existent background information as well as framed by more solid definitions of these concepts, the answers will be rather simplistic, if not rather arbitrary.

Similarly, one could mention the unit which introduces working with pictures as historical sources, here centring on the Crusades. As described for other units, this one comes with a cover page, a lesson progression plan as well as a (excessively) short background information note and a short chronology. Then, following a one-page worksheet, sixteen paintings about the Crusades are reprinted with no information other than the names of the painters and the paintings. It seems to be a very difficult unit, as no further guidance is provided to pupils and teachers as to how to understand, classify and contextualise (or even date) these pictures – beyond guesswork. There is thus a problem relating to the scarcity of framing information,

which might result in overtly simplistic “learning outcomes” of some units in some classrooms. In these cases the role and abilities as well as the information provided by the teacher will be crucial to the success of a lesson. There are more examples where this applies to as well (for example the unit on the post-Yugoslav wars provides exceedingly little contextual information).

Thus complementing confidence placed in the abilities of the teachers is the issue of (a frequent lack of) contextualising source materials and events. The latter is closely related to the role of the teachers but also goes beyond that. The sources introduced in the workbook are often only rudimentary “cited”, i.e. their citation of origin remains superficial. Thus for example in the already discussed unit on the Greco-Turkish population exchange some sources are merely referenced by giving a webpage, not even properly providing the name of the website – who actually was the author of the lengthy text reprinted here remains unclear (for example on p. 15, p. 56, p. 152, p. 171, p. 335). The “real” provenance of some source materials remains obscure, even if books are cited. It would probably help the student to have a bit more information on where the sources really come from, i.e. who interviewed whom, when and where, or in what context is the extracted source text to be found in the original (who wrote it, why, when, where, etc.). While the authors have a good grasp on what constitutes a source and make use of a large variety of sources, sometimes rather “obvious” sources are not marked as such, as in our exemplary unit, the protocol on the population exchange is not marked as a source (and neither is a lengthy excerpt from the secondary literature).

Sometimes the teacher might be able to answer such questions, as for example when in the unit on the Fire of Izmir Falih Rifki Atay is quoted twice (with contradictory points of view). Yet, while this close associate of Atatürk’s is well known, many other people speaking in the sources to the assembled classroom might not be. And especially the teachers would benefit from more background information – they will not (be able to) know of all the academic controversies surrounding a given topic, source or author. And for some of the topics covered here it will be difficult to acquire such information in the course of a preparation for a lesson.

In the same unit, one of the two texts by Falih Rifki Atay mentions Nureddin Pasha, but not who he was. However, he is quite a crucial figure in the debate this unit claims to focus on: He was the commander in chief of Izmir at the time of the Great Fire. His position and his role could have been introduced properly and discussed as well. In the same vein it is a bit strange that the quote from Atay’s text stops just before Atay, in the memoirs cited here, names Nureddin Pasha very explicitly as responsible for the Great Fire. The text could also have mentioned that Nureddin Pasha explicitly sanctioned (and instigated) the lynching of the Greek archbishop at the beginning of his tenure as provisional commander of Izmir.

In sum, the main difficulties possibly faced when implementing the workbook units centre on the teachers and their ability to handle the topics, sources and their students. Thus while it is remarkable and very laudable aspect of this workbook that the authors trust in the abilities of Turkish teachers, conversely they could have supported the teachers a bit more. It is interesting in this context that on the various cover pages of the units new approaches are usually introduced by prefacing them

with “innovative history teachers are aware...” or “innovative history teachers do...”. Given that the teachers reading these texts are rather “aspiring innovative teachers” and will encounter difficulties in the course of some of these units this phrasing might in fact be a bit offensive, insensitive and counterproductive. It is advised to get feedback as to how this phrasing made the teachers feel and to think about rephrasing this in a second edition.

Conclusion

Despite all the mentioned points for further improvement the workbook is a remarkable feat. Yet, paradoxically perhaps, its greatest strength entails also a potential weakness: The latter, as discussed above, is it being perhaps a bit too overconfident that the teachers can handle just about any of these difficult situations with little historical background information as well as little preparation regarding the possible pitfalls of the multiperspective approach. But this seems to stem from the great confidence the authors have in teachers and students alike, so often denied (at least implicitly) in other approaches to history teaching prevalent in Turkey, most prominently perhaps in the history textbooks. To quote the workbook itself: “[T]he students are more capable of understanding different points of view than they are given credit for.” (English version, p. 31). In its many units the workbook engages both teachers and students anew and in fascinating exercises, with new perspective on “old topics” and with an astonishing breadth of methodological approaches.

The workbook does more than just present new approaches, however. As the units discussed above show these approaches do not operate in a historical vacuum. And most of the historical narratives and topics are not set in distant countries or regions. This is a book about Turkey. As discussed the unit making use of oral history materials also makes distinct contributions to a different history of the Turkish national state. And other units do so as well. The most straightforward example would be perhaps the mentioned unit on Greco-Turkish friendship. And of course other units do so in a more indirect fashion such as the one on the Fire of Izmir, which also lists Atatürk’s as just one point of view amongst many others. In a way his eternal authority as Atatürk is questioned here as well, at least implicitly.

But do these new points of view amount to a new narrative, or a new history of Turkey? Probably not. But they do insert themselves at many points where they in fact can at this point in time and from where new narratives of Turkish history just might develop. But of course this, as well as the other goals of this project, heavily depend on the ability of the given teacher to properly use these materials and to properly guide her/his pupils through a process of critique, reasoning and synthesis. When read together with the current history textbooks this workbook contrasts so heavily with the closed notion of historical truth that its impact might just be very great indeed. In all its 34 units it almost never accepts one general reading of history, but forces teachers and students to heavily engage with sources and opinions. Through its new methodological approaches and its careful and close work with sources, it forces the students to think more like a historian, rather than as a recipient of nationalist meta-narratives. In many ways the workbook at once affirms (the progressive notions in)

the current curriculum and calls into question current textbooks as well as established notions of national (and international) history.

There are broadly two sets of recommendations to be made for possible future improvements: First, given that the success of this workbook depends on well-trained teachers and given the complex nature of the approaches championed here, especially the multiperspective approach, a continued effort if not even a further programme of teacher training, especially pinpointing the abilities demanded and envisaged in the units of the workbook, would be extremely helpful and would ensure a sustainable long-term result in relation to the Key to Europe project. Secondly, it might be beneficial to think about including more background information into some units. Given the relative scarcity of background information, of contextualisation of sources and lack of an informative “conclusive” overview of the state of the state of research on a topic one wonders if not an additional content-related unit progression plan would have been helpful. Just as each unit details on the second page how the exercises should progress and be carried out, a similar progress plan could have been added detailing for the teacher what kind of content-related (and methodological) outcome should be reached at what step. Of course this is something every teacher will do for herself/himself in the course of preparing such a unit. But given the level of difficulty (conceptually and academically) as well as the controversial potential of some units (philosophically, politically and ideologically) the teachers could probably use a little bit more guidance. Especially so when multiperspectivity is a rather new concept, when working with sources in such an extensive fashion is new and when the domestic book market does not yet provide historical academic surveys for teachers, high school and university students (such as for example in Germany and the UK). The average teacher will probably not have the time and resources to acquire the latest research on the 1908 revolution and work through thousands of pages of academic treatises (he/she might have difficulty buying or borrowing in the first place) in order to prepare her/his lesson.

The open structure of the workbook might be its greatest asset in the classroom as well as in future endeavours to further improve it. Most teachers will probably chose those units that they feel most capable of handling, content-wise as well as methodologically, anyway. Thus many of the mentioned points of criticism may not be visible in actual implementation. However, this might then also mean that the more difficult and “innovative” units are not implemented as often across the country as the authors might have wished. Furthermore given its overall open structure and its (web-based) availability, it could be further expanded upon in the future as well as improved and supplemented by further units without necessarily having to go through many new print editions. Given that the project team had developed already many more units and had to cut many when it came to editing the actual workbook, it might also be advisable offering some of these units in an open forum, where teachers can experiment with these other units as well and offer feedback towards developing these ready for general use as well. One could also imagine that the existing units are further complemented with more units on other topics (by other authors as well), thus turning this project into a growing body of innovative units.

One can only wish the project and the authors’ team that their product is used by many teachers across the country and perhaps even gains some form of official

endorsement. Similarly one hopes that the authors have some energy (and support) left at this point in order to follow attentively the feedback they get from those using the workbooks so that they can further improve upon the great didactic foundations that they have laid here. The need for reform as well as the zest, creativity and inspiration of the project team seem to be too great to stop with the workbook now. And: this project should be closely watched by history educators across Europe as it might just have a lot to offer for them as well, depending on its future implementation, refinement und further development.

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