

Recommendation

“Including migration in history teaching will help end ‘us’ and ‘them’ syndrome”

How can migration be integrated into the history school curricula? How should this topic be taught in the class room? What can we learn from past perspectives on migration to create a better future? To address these issues, EUROCLIO, The Europaeum and ISHA embarked on an 18-month project *Connecting Europe through History – Experiences and Perceptions of Migrations in Europe*, offering a series of nine conferences and workshops in a range of European member States. Debates during these events created and reinforced connections between academics, teachers, students and parents– a special blend of civil society organisations –putting schools and education at the heart of society. The key aim was to find ways to overcome the cultural differences that divide societies, caused in part by movements of people within and between national territories.

Challenges

During this conference series, a review committee of experts on Teaching of Migration in History Education was set up during the closing event in Vienna, on 20 November 2010, and it identified the following six challenges facing history educators when teaching migration in European classrooms:

1. We notice that where migration history is taught, the **focus is set on negative concepts**, for instance wars, persecutions, economic and social deprivation. This often entails a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’.
2. We observe that students and pupils from migrant backgrounds continue to be mainly **labeled as immigrants**, even when they have been living in the respective countries for more than one generation.
3. We observe that across Europe, existing European and national recommendations concerning multi-perspective approaches, innovative curricula, **evaluations and examinations have not been implemented**;
4. We consider that History Education is very much **influenced by the dominant political climate**, which can leave controversial issues untouched.
5. We observe that **curricula and textbook designs are often overloaded, and often prescribed within narrow national perspectives**,
6. We recognize that many history educators tend to be ‘**colour/culture-blind**’ in **inter-cultural classrooms**; and have difficulties in implementing the necessary approaches of historical thinking.

Recommendations

To address these challenges, our committee of experts then went on to make the following six recommendations:

1. History educators, curriculum developers and policymakers should ***consider migration as an intrinsic part of human history*** and every-day life. To overcome the negative connotations surrounding migration, new narratives that are grounded, clear, and inclusive of migrant and non-migrant histories, have to be developed and integrated into school curricula.
2. The understanding of migration histories should be broadened through the ***inclusion of internal migration and mobility history*** into the discourse.
3. It is necessary for ***migrant students to present their own personal histories in the classroom***, as all students are interested in their own history. An approach like this reflects an inclusive approach of teaching history.
4. Policy-makers and decision-takers should implement existing European and national recommendations, to ***support interdisciplinary approaches in education*** and to adjust curricula evaluation in accordance with the required changes/recommendations.
5. ***The development of flexible curricula*** has to be supported, giving history education professionals and practitioners the required pedagogical freedom.
6. It is highly necessary ***to develop pre-service training focusing on the pedagogical content of courses*** so teachers can learn to be creative and flexible. This involves developing wider approaches within national topics so that connections between local, regional, national, European and global levels, can be developed.

In conclusion, the Project team commends these recommendations for further discussion, research, and implementation.¹

¹ Published in "Connecting Europe Through History: Experiences and Perceptions of Migrations in Europe", July, 2011