

Strategies for Inclusion: Making High Quality History and Citizenship Education More Inclusive and Accessible

Policy Recommendations

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Introduction

Inclusive education is increasingly recognized by educational policy makers, civil society, teachers, and parents as an integral element of high quality teaching and learning¹. Teachers, as the primary actors in the implementation of educational policies, should be able to influence educational policy in order to focus them on practical realities of education. The first-hand experience of subject teachers is essential to inclusive and accessible education, because the major part of time spent by students at school is spent in subject classes.

This document describes what can be done to make education in history and citizenship more inclusive and accessible, and to better involve subject teachers in the decision making process on how to achieve such a goal. It is one of the outputs of the EUROCLIO-led project *Strategies for Inclusion*², directed at anyone who can influence teaching citizenship and history in all contexts and at all levels: educational policymakers, teacher trainers, curriculum experts, school administrators, textbook authors, assessment specialists, teacher associations, and teachers.

Throughout the document, inclusion in education is understood as removing barriers to learning, and inclusion in history and citizenship education as removing barriers specific to teaching these subjects.

To be able to define steps that can be taken towards more inclusive citizenship and history education, this document first describes essential characteristics of high quality history and citizenship education (2), then identifies essential elements of learning these school subjects and individual learners' needs (3). Subsequently, it specifies evidence-based steps that may be taken to remove the barriers, and future directions for education (4). Finally, the implications for policy makers are presented (5).

2 Characteristics of high quality history and citizenship education

History - The school subject of history should provide citizens of democratic states with broad backgrounds of today's reality and human existence, a multi-perspective view and critical ways of

¹ UNESCO (2009); European Union (2018a); European Union (2018b).

² 'Strategies for Inclusion – making high quality history and citizenship education more inclusive and accessible' is a project led by EUROCLIO in partnership with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, CIVITAS, ZGN-Ljubljana, NTNU, and AEMoV. Information about the project can be retrieved from <https://euroclio.eu/projects/strategies-for-inclusion/>

thinking about facts and interpretations. Such aspects are now commonly specified as goals of modern history teaching in many countries.

One of the most obvious dimensions of history is *imagining worlds that are no longer there*. This implies special epistemological problems in establishing historical truth, e.g. the critical scrutiny of historical evidence in order to distinguish facts from fiction. It also puts high demands on imaginative powers, because one has to move away from the self-evident reality of one's own world to enter a completely different one. To be able to do this effectively, one should on the one hand *feel connected to 'humans like us'* in the past, but on the other hand be cautious *not to disregard the fundamental differences* between past and present, which implies also a feeling of 'historical distance'. These efforts should be focused on *creating meaning*: images of the past are not just there to be learnt and memorized, but to answer questions of people from the present. History teaching should show students how to make knowledge of the past meaningful.

These characteristics of history support responsible citizenship in several ways. First, history helps to understand why present social and political realities are what they are by explaining their origins and development. Second, it shows that the development towards the present has to a certain extent been coincidental, because developments in the past might have taken a different course. This illustrates the fact that humans have possibilities to influence the course of events in diverse ways: the future is not fixed. Third, humans of all times had to cope with similar problems as we do today, such as finding food, shelter and jobs, making sense of the world in terms of beliefs and culture, coping with political conflicts and dealing with war and peace. History shows how similar problems can be dealt with in diverse ways. Fourth, the study of history makes us aware of the fact that truths about social realities cannot be easily established and should always be a matter of consideration from multiple perspectives.

Citizenship - A 'citizen' may be defined as the opposite of a 'subject'. Subjects are inhabitants of societies in which people are 'subjected' to authorities not chosen by themselves. This implies that subjects are not supposed to be playing an active role in the politics of their countries, but to obey an authority which is imposed on them. Citizens on the other hand are the active constituents of their societies in which authority is derived from their consent. The opportunity to play an active role in decision making, public debate and in 'keeping up' society in general is therefore essential to citizenship. This involves not only rights, but also duties, and the acquisition of abilities to be able to exercise these. Because such abilities are not given to humans by nature, people have to be educated to be citizens: 'Democrats are made, not born'³. This underlines the importance of making education accessible to all, especially education in the subjects of citizenship and history.

Most theories of citizenship agree on four dimensions: identity, sociality, morality and politicality. *Identity* plays a role because in order to be able to support and keep up a community, one should define oneself in some way or another as a member of that community. *The social dimension* is important because one needs to be able to discern and understand social phenomena and processes in order to think about them, have an opinion about them and actively help shaping them. *Morality* is involved because living together in a society implies balancing the interests of different groups of people and dealing with diverse values. One should be able to think about good and evil from points of view beyond one's own narrow self-interest, i.e. to display 'civic virtues'. *The political dimension* is involved because citizens are supposed to actively take part in decision making and the exercise of power in their community.

³ White (1999), p. 5.

High quality history and citizenship teaching - The school subjects of history and citizenship aim at making people fit for life in a democratic society. Therefore students are trained to actively take part in decision making, realizing that authority in democratic societies is not just there, but derives from themselves. Consequently, they are educated to take responsibility. They are aware of the fact that they need to be well informed about the world, which they see and experience as *their* world and not as something alien with which they feel no connections. They acquire the necessary skills to take responsibility and to get actively involved: language skills, thinking and reasoning skills, perspective taking skills, skills in building up arguments, empathy with others, abilities to analyse and compare social realities, and critical thinking skills about facts and fiction. These competences are not only relevant for students' life at school, but essential to ensure their full participation in society and democracy.

3 Enabling all learners to succeed in history and citizenship education

Learning history and citizenship in the way described above can prove challenging for students. Teachers, researchers, and educators participating in this project have identified the following elements as essential for students to succeed.

1 Motivation - Motivation is an important key to learning. It takes special effort to be motivated for subjects like citizenship and history, because their practicality may appear limited to students and it is not always easy for them to apply school contents to daily life outside school.

2 Connectedness - For effective learning to take place, students should feel that the subject matter they are confronted with is relevant to them and connected to their lives outside school. School subject matter for history and citizenship can seem distant and abstract to students.

3 Past and present - Studying the past is not an aim in itself. The past is an image of what has happened in bygone days created by people in the present in order to understand their world and human reality. Students may have difficulty in seeing history as a current representation of the past and instead see it as the past itself.

4 Imagining the past – Learning history requires imagining worlds that are no longer there and take these realities as seriously as the present. It is difficult to develop that attitude towards something that no longer exists.

5 Perspective taking – Learners must be able to see that there are different perspectives and that their own perspective is only one option to look at things. They should also recognize that their identity is one among many, not the only one.

6 Historical distance - The past should be seen and interpreted as fundamentally different from the present. Respecting the distance requires caution in expressing views and judgments all too easily using norms and values from the present.

7 Unbiased and unprejudiced thinking – Students should develop intentions to be as unbiased and objective as is humanly possible. This is all the more important because these school subjects are by their nature fraught with perspectives, values and interpretations of human behaviour.

8 Critical thinking about facts and fiction – Students should be careful in handling evidence and develop an awareness that facts need to be substantiated according to certain rules and must be carefully distinguished from fiction.

9 Comparison and judgment - A deeper understanding of social realities in the past and in the present may result from comparing different situations and trying to distinguish differences and similarities. Judgments about what humans do or can do may result from such careful comparisons, realizing that values and standards may vary according to different contexts or periods.

10 Language skills - Social realities are usually invisible and therefore expressed in abstract terms. This is a fundamental difference between the social sciences and the natural sciences, which describe the visible reality. An extra complication is that the concepts of the social sciences are not so sharply defined as concepts of other subject areas and that their meaning may vary according to different contexts or periods. Because concepts are often used in association with values and interpretations, the acquisition of adequate and easily applicable conceptual frameworks is a demanding activity.

11 Debating skills - It is essential that learners be able to exchange views with others in orderly and disciplined ways. It implies being able to understand other people's arguments, critically assess them and pursue issues brought forward by others in greater depth.

The above mentioned features are essential for all learners, but each learner has his or her individual needs. We can distinguish general, physical, and cognitive educational needs. Practitioners' guidelines related to general and physical educational needs can be found in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL)⁴ principles. Meanwhile, cognitive needs identified as most impacting the teaching and learning of history and citizenship, require a specific focus. We mention some of these cognitive needs as cited from Lintner and Kumpiene⁵:

1. Students experience deficits in updating and monitoring working memory processes, inhibition of responses, shifting between tasks or mental sets⁶; planning, organizing, prioritizing, shifting strategies, and self-monitoring⁷.
2. Students demonstrate limited knowledge of concepts⁸.
3. Students possess difficulties with both short-term and long-term memory⁹ and struggle with developing and using strategies to store and retrieve information and solve problems¹⁰.
4. Students struggle with maintaining on-task behaviors, planning and directing goal-directed actions, following instructions, completing assignments, and organizing tasks¹¹.
5. Students exhibit difficulties with decoding, text comprehension and composition, writing mechanics¹².

⁴ UDL principles:

http://udlguidelines.cast.org/?utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=none&utm_source=udlcenter&utm_content=site-banner.

⁵ Lintner & Kumpiene (2017), p. 304.

⁶ Danielsson, Henry, Messer, & Ronnberg (2012); Kaufman (2010).

⁷ Meltzer (2007); Meltzer & Krishnan (2007).

⁸ Prater (2007).

⁹ Carter, Prater, & Dyches (2008); Van der Molen, Van Luit, Jongmans, & Van der Molen (2007, 2009).

¹⁰ Prater (2007).

¹¹ Carter, et al. (2008); Harris, Reidy, & Graham (2004); Kaufman (2010); Prater (2007).

¹² Gajria, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks (2007); Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001); Jitendra, Hoppes, & Xin (2000); Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant (2004); Stagliano & Boon (2009); Williams (2005).

6. Students struggle with building and maintaining social relationships, understanding and applying social rules, solving problems, problems with self-competence (i.e., self-knowledge, self-evaluation, sense of personal control)¹³. Such issues are often manifest through low motivation, decreased engagement with school, and increased retention and drop-out rates¹⁴.

4 Evidence-based strategies

We have not been able to identify evidence based measures that specifically address our eleven elements of high quality history and citizenship teaching identified above. There is, however a rather extensive literature reporting about evidence based steps that could be helpful, especially for language and debating skills. All of the strategies mentioned in this section are evidence based, which means that experiments have proven that students using a strategy perform significantly better than those who do not use it. We can only present a limited overview of possible steps here. For further orientation, Urban's dissertation¹⁵ provides an excellent introduction to the wealth of options to promote inclusivity in history and citizenship (social studies) classrooms.

(1) A relatively extensive proportion of the literature concentrates on *mnemonic strategies* that may be employed to support memorizing facts and concepts for those students who experience difficulty in storing factual information in their memories. The fact that these strategies are mentioned frequently in the literature on inclusive social studies teaching¹⁶ indicates that history and social studies are considered school subjects concentrating on memorizing facts that have to be reproduced at high stakes tests. This is not what we have identified as 'high quality history and citizenship teaching'. Nevertheless, mnemonic strategies might also be helpful in mastering abstract concepts. Fontana, et al., for example, experimented with the use of words acoustically similar to an abstract concept that are concrete and easy to associate with, even if they have nothing to do with what a concept stands for, for example the word 'ant' for an anarchist.¹⁷ They illustrated the concept of anarchist with the picture of an ant overthrowing a government building like the US Capitol in Washington DC, thus indicating that anarchists are against all forms of government (Fig. 1). Similarly, they shortened 'balance of trade' to 'balance', illustrating it with a picture of a pair of scales. Exercising with these pictures helped students to a significant degree to remember the concepts better than students without these aids. Similarly, Clarke, et al., report about a successful experiment

¹³ Carter, et al. (2008); Jones (2000); Stein & Krishnan (2007).

¹⁴ Biederman, et al. (2004); Carter, et al. (2008); Reschly & Christenson (2006).

¹⁵ Urban (2013).

¹⁶ E.g. Connor & Lagares (2007); Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri (2007); Marshak, Mastropieri, & Scruggs (2011); Wood, Browder, & Flynn (2015).

¹⁷ Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri (2007).

with students having to select an appropriate picture card instead of raising their hands to answer the teacher's questions during a classroom discussion¹⁸.

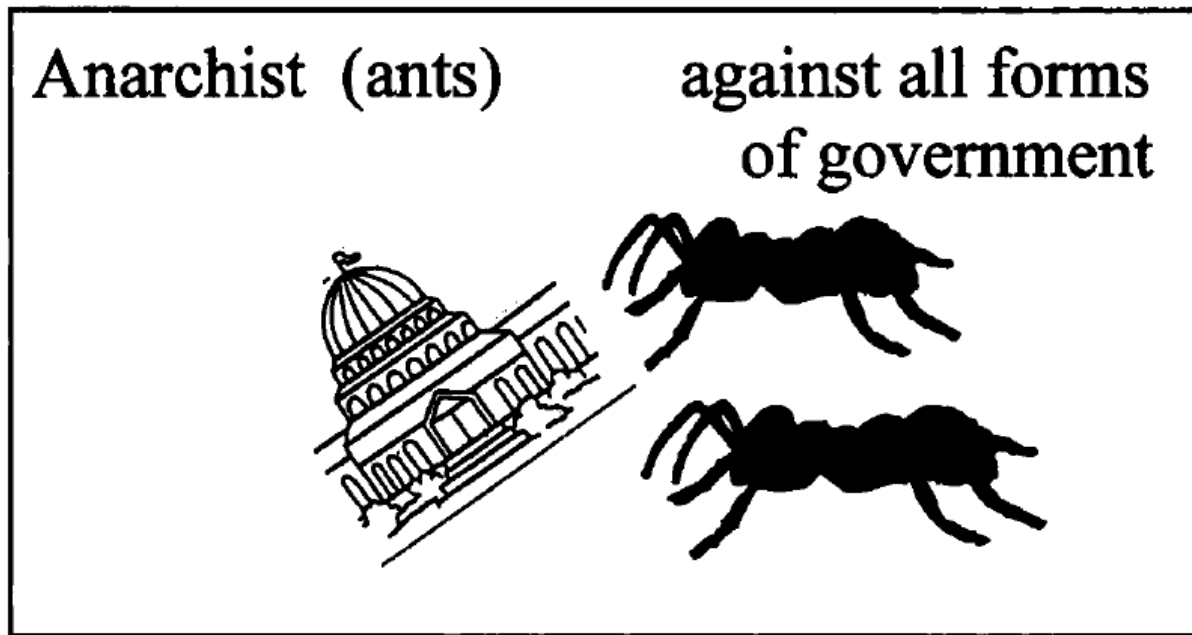


Fig. 1 Mnemonic strategy for the concept of 'anarchist'. Source: Fontana et al. (2007), pg. 348.

(2) For the comprehension of texts, the use of *graphic organizers* is a strategy that has frequently been researched and proven successful in the context of language teaching and teaching of social studies. Ewoldt and Morgan for example, explored the effects of colouring specific sentences in text fragments, using colour codes for 'topic', 'detail', 'explanation' and 'conclusion'¹⁹. Something similar was used by Praveen and Premalatha to identify the intentions of authors (inform, entertain or persuade), the structure of texts (main ideas and supporting details), or the way a comparison is made by means of identifying differences and similarities (Fig. 2)²⁰. Ilter has proven the effects of graphic organizers on students' vocabulary development as well as on their motivation to learn social studies²¹. The power of graphic organizers for social studies is also apparent when the organizers focus on the structure of phenomena and events in social reality instead of just concentrating on the text structure, e.g. causes and consequences, specifics and examples of a general phenomenon, structures of political systems, elements of opposing views, etcetera. Britt's dissertation²² provides a useful overview of the available literature as well as good insight into steps that can be taken to develop graphic organizers. Grünke, et al., combined graphic organizers with peer learning, another strategy that we will come back to below²³. Mendelson describes a concrete example of how such teaching can be designed, using the strategy of *collaborative mind mapping*²⁴. The strategy of

¹⁸ Clarke, Haydon, Bauer & Epperly (2016)

¹⁹ Ewoldt & Morgan (2017).

²⁰ Praveen & Premalatha (2013)

²¹ Ilter (2016).

²² Britt (2015).

²³ Grünke, Wilbert, Tsiriotakis & Agirregoikoa (2017).

²⁴ Mendelson (2016).

concept mapping or mind mapping is variant on the ways in which the structure of abstract content may be made visible, and has also proven to be helpful in learning social studies²⁵.

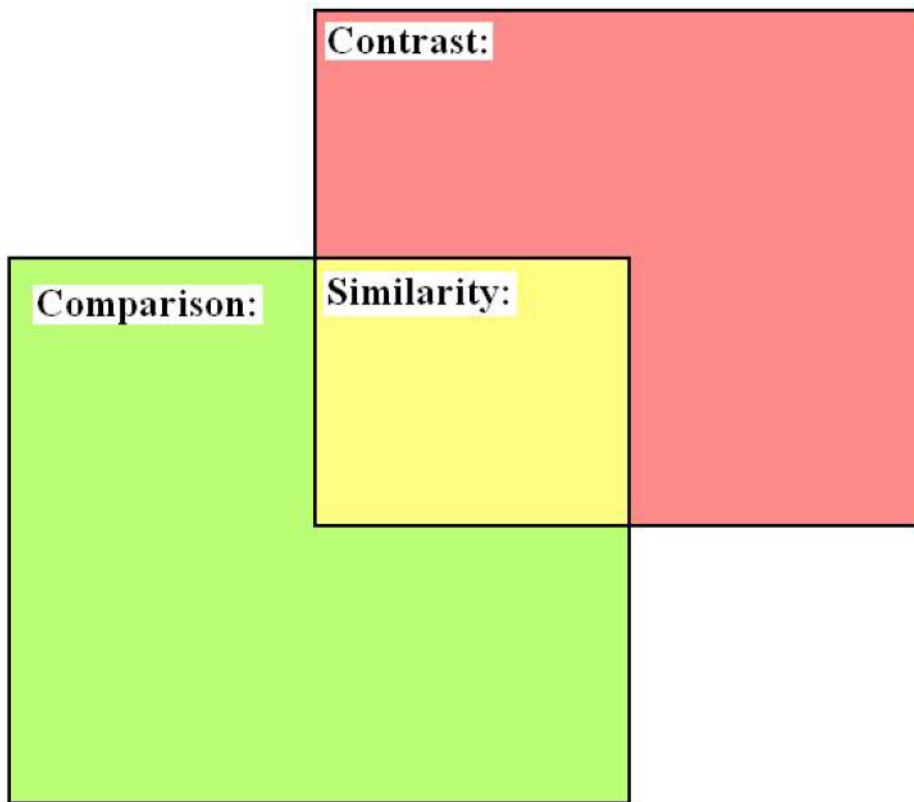


Fig. 2 Example of a graphic organizer from Praveen and Premalatha (2013), pag. 159.

(3) Several strategies are advised to *enhance students' literacy*, which is a vital competence to be successful in social studies. Jacobowitz and Sudol argue that social studies teachers must expand their literacy strategies in order to teach for democracy²⁶. Grounding their research in democratic theory as well as constructivism, the authors offer criteria and suggestions for content area literacy. For example, students could construct meaning from text and develop understanding by using background knowledge, employing collaborative problem solving and creative and imaginative thinking, as well as evaluating their ideas, decisions, and solutions in terms of their consequences and impacts on others. Berkeley, et al., come up with the more concrete idea of a self-questioning strategy to enhance literacy, including the steps of: (a) turn headings and subheadings into questions, (b) read the section, (c) stop! and (d) try to answer your question. Additional 'fix up' strategies included (a) re-read that section (in case you missed something important), (b) check your understanding of vocabulary, (c) look for other text structures (maps, graphs, pictures) that can help you, and (d) write down questions to ask your teacher²⁷. Jitendra, et al., investigated the effects of a similar idea with summarization and self-monitoring. In their experiment, students used these questions: Does the paragraph tell (a) what or who the subject is? (single or group), (b) what the action is? (category), (c) why something happened?, (d) where something is or happened?, (e) when something happened?, and (f) how something looks or is done?²⁸

²⁵ Campbell (2016); Dexter (2012).

²⁶ Jacobowitz & Sudol (2010).

²⁷ Berkeley, Marshak, Mastropieri & Scruggs (2011)

²⁸ Jitendra, Hoppes, & Xin (2000).

(4) A fourth category of strategies to make teaching school subjects like history and citizenship more inclusive is the use of diverse forms of *collaborative learning*. These strategies serve a double purpose. Not only do they facilitate the learning of difficult abstract content, but they also advance social cohesion among students with diverse backgrounds. Especially in the context of social studies, democratic attitudes should be promoted. The literature suggesting collaborative practices therefore suggests that more and less able students should work together, thus enhancing the feeling of inclusion for all. However, Garrote warns that students with disabilities may appear to be unpopular to their fellow students at first, which implies that teachers should pay explicit attention to group processes²⁹. Nevertheless, the formation of communities of learners can play an important role for the inclusion of all students, especially in the context of social studies³⁰. Like in other communities around the world, students can work together to create a common vision of norms and acceptable behavior. All of these dimensions can be experienced firsthand in a laboratory-like setting in a classroom community. A variant of collaborative learning is *peer tutoring*, a situation in which pairs or triads of students study together, e.g. by rehearsing each other's studying of content using cards with questions and responses³¹. The use of this strategy has proven to be effective, especially for students with learning disabilities.

(5) Concerning the curriculum of history and citizenship, it seems advisable to *organize content around cultural human universals*: domains of human experience that have existed in all cultures, past and present³². They include activities related to meeting basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, as well as family structures, government, communication, transportation, money or other forms of economic exchange, religion, occupations, recreation, etcetera. Using cultural universals instead of concentrating on the specific details of each separate case has several advantages. First, they connect to the experience that most students have themselves, irrespective of their background, because cultural universals account for a considerable proportion of everyday living and are the focus of much of human social organization and communal activity. Second, because the content associated with cultural universals is inherently about humans taking action to meet their basic needs and wants, it lends itself well to presentation within narrative formats. Third, narratives focused on humans engaged in goal-oriented behavior provide frequent opportunities to introduce basic disciplinary concepts and principles, to explore causal relationships, and to make explicit some of the social intentions and economic or political processes that children usually do not recognize or appreciate. And fourth, organizing the curriculum in this way provides opportunities for making comparisons, which is a good way to stimulate deeper thinking about social phenomena instead of just memorizing them. In this context, using *metaphors* in classroom dialogue may be a useful tool that should be explored by social studies teachers³³.

(6) Turning to the 'supply side' of history and citizenship education, it is obvious that written texts play an important role. Several of the categories of recommended steps described above explicitly deal with this textual aspect of social education. Instead of, or next to supporting students in mastering these texts, one could also try to *provide alternatives, or adapt the texts* in such ways that they become more accessible. Lintner and Kumpiene for example, point out that teachers could

²⁹ Garrote (2017).

³⁰ Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy (2007); Urban (2013).

³¹ Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Marshak (2012).

³² Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy (2007); Foels (2009, 2013).

³³ Causarano (2015).

make their lessons more accessible by a more frequent use of films, videos, music, art, and plays³⁴. There are also a number of rules for making texts more comprehensible that have proven to be effective. These include³⁵:

- organize textbooks around broad organizational structures that show relationships among facts, concepts, and roles of actors.
- include instructional strategies that explicitly highlight these structures in the textbooks.
- use unifying principles that can serve as coat hooks on which to hang the relevant factual information.

Harniss, et al., tested these principles in the context of a US history classroom and found them to be beneficial for content acquisition and academic engagement of special education students³⁶. The use of the 'unifying principles' is much akin to the use of 'cultural universals' discussed above.

(7) A specific topic at the 'supply side' of education is how to deal with *specific restricted and repetitive interests* (RIs) of students, especially those with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Such interests may involve an excessive and exclusive interest in one phenomenon, such as 'only hurricanes', or an extreme and exclusive interest in only one specific person. Obviously, this may obstruct teaching about the broader world of social realities and therefore pose a special problem for social studies teachers. Gunn and Delafield-Butt reviewed the existing literature in regard of the question whether or not it is beneficial to honor these specific interests of students, or, alternatively, to try to force students to pay attention to issues different from their *RIs*.³⁷ They recommend that the *RIs* of children with ASD be incorporated into the mainstream curriculum where reasonable to do so, thus promoting intrinsic reward-based methods rather than extrinsic consequence-based methods.

To make social studies teachers better equipped for inclusive education, and to promote the implementation of evidence-based strategies as those described in the previous paragraphs, the following concrete training measures seem advisable:

- Enhance *linguistic competences* and methods of teaching textual information. Some of these competences could be 'borrowed' from language teaching, adapted for social studies contents.
- Develop a *conceptual approach* of learning contents, concentrating on generics and cultural universals. This requires the enhancement of teacher's abstract thinking and analytical skills in order to discern underlying universals and analogies in social studies contents.
- Develop competencies in organizing *cooperative learning*. Teachers need to develop their ability to construct assignments in which positive mutual interdependency of learners is being implemented.
- Enhance *pedagogical competences* for dealing with group processes and eccentric interests. Special attention should be paid to learners who run the risk of being expelled from peer groups because of their specific psychological or behavioral characteristics.
- Expand the repertoire of teaching methods with *materials other than texts*. Special attention should be paid to ways in which specific contents from texts can be presented in alternative, but equivalent ways.

³⁴ Lintner & Kumpiene (2017).

³⁵ Harniss, Hollenbeck, Crawford, & Carnine (1994).

³⁶ Harniss, Caros, & Gersten (2007).

³⁷ Gunn & Delafield-Butt (2016).

5 Implications for policymakers

The above mentioned barriers, strategies, and directions, have some immediate implications for educational policymakers. First and foremost they should promote the involvement of subject teachers in thinking about inclusive education and encourage cooperation between the field of history and citizenship education, and the field of inclusive and special needs education. In addition, they should ensure that:

1. Curricula, educational resources and assessment tools apply the UDL principles in the context of history and citizenship education.
2. The educational strategies and training measures listed above are followed by curriculum makers, textbook authors, and teacher trainers, for example in training programs revolving around cultural universals and cooperative learning.
3. Start up new research focusing on the identification of elements with which students might struggle in learning history and citizenship, and on the development of pedagogies that enable students to overcome such barriers.
4. Teachers associations and history and citizenship teachers share their practices and carry out action-based research to further understand which practices are effective in specific contexts.
5. Adequate funding is allocated to researching and developing new pedagogies to make history and citizenship education more inclusive and accessible, including the allocation of sufficient time to teachers to prepare inclusive lessons and materials.

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