

BACKGROUNDS TO THE TEACHING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY IN CHILE: THE SITUATION IN ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Antecedentes de la enseñanza de la historia a nivel secundario en Chile: La situación de Inglaterra y Estados Unidos

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Abstract

The present study is a literature review about the teaching of history for secondary schools in England and in the United States of America during the twentieth century. Developments in both countries have influenced the development of history teaching for secondary schools in Chile. England and the development of the “new history” approach to teaching history has promoted a paradigm shift from teaching history as the reproduction of content knowledge to active learning practices, which include the premise of ‘acting like a historian’ in Chilean history classrooms. The teaching of history in the United States of America has influenced the structure of the Chilean curriculum framework for history, replicating the social studies structure. As a consequence, different disciplines integrate the history curriculum, such as economics, geography, civics, sociology, amongst others. It is expected that the present review will allow for a better understanding of the structure and main features of the current curriculum framework for secondary school history in Chile.

Key words: History teaching, curriculum, secondary school education, England, USA

Resumen

El presente estudio es una revisión de la literatura relativa a la enseñanza de la historia a nivel secundario en Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos durante el siglo XX. Ambos países han contribuido al desarrollo de la enseñanza de la historia en Chile, contribuciones que se han hecho presentes en diferentes marcos curriculares implementados a nivel nacional. En el caso de Inglaterra, el desarrollo de la corriente denominada “nueva historia” influyó la forma de concebir la enseñanza de la historia desde un rol pasivo del estudiante hacia la emulación del “oficio del historiador”. La situación en Estados Unidos con relación a la integración del currículum de Historia dentro de las Ciencias Sociales, sentó las bases de la configuración del currículum nacional. De este modo, se incorporaron temáticas relativas a la Economía, Geografía, Sociología, Educación Cívica, entre otros, dentro del currículum de Historia. Es de esperar que el presente estudio permita comprender de mejor manera las características y configuración del actual currículum de Historia, Geografía y Ciencias Sociales en Chile.

Palabras claves: Enseñanza de la historia, Currículum, Educación Secundaria, Inglaterra, Estados Unidos.

INTRODUCTION

History as a school subject has been taught in Chilean schools for over 150 years. An understanding of its broad developments can be enhanced by an appreciation of the international context within which it was located. Two countries in particular have strongly influenced the development of the teaching of history in Chile. First, developments in the teaching of history as a school subject throughout the twentieth century in England and Wales, especially in the late 1960s, and the response of teachers, academics, and the government in Chile, have been significant. Developments in the teaching of social studies in the United States of America over the last 50 years also had an influence in various ways on the entire American continent, including Chile. This review describes the background to each of these influences. The analysis presented does not attempt to be exhaustive. Rather, it is provided as a general context for understanding the contemporary situation regarding the teaching of secondary school history in Chile.

HISTORY TEACHING IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Through the 19th century and up until the last decades of the 20th century, there was no national curriculum in Britain (Haus 922). Primary and secondary schools were, in the early decades, controlled mainly by private institutions and the Christian churches (Phillips 15; Wilschut 695). During the 20th century, the national government published guidelines on the content of the curriculum for elementary and secondary schools, which were regularly revised. These guidelines were suggestions that gave teachers a great amount of freedom to tailor their work for different school situations (Haus 923). This changed dramatically with the introduction of a national curriculum in 1988 by the Education Reform Act, promoted by Margaret Thatcher's government.

The introduction of the national curriculum meant that the British educational system became centralised with regard to educational process (Haus 923; Wilschut 698). The national curriculum has been revised periodically and the current one gives teachers more initiative and autonomy than they initially had (The Historical Association 51). As with the educational system as a whole, the teaching of history as a school subject has also changed in England and Wales over time. This change will now be considered under a number of separate headings.

THE 'GREAT TRADITION'

The teaching of history as a school subject in England and Wales was promoted by the creation of 'schools' of history in British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, in the 1870s (Wilschut 697). Even though they were not involved at the time in preparing teachers, the universities contributed to outlining objectives for the teaching of history at the school level. These objectives were to serve national-political aims and to promote morality and responsibility among students (Wilschut 697).

By the beginning of the 20th century, history was already a school subject with a stable position in the school curriculum (Aldrich 65; Wilschut 698). The main ideas to be taught were outlined in a series of national Board of Education publications (Dickinson 92), which gave pre-eminence to the 'great tradition'. This was a fact-based paedagogical approach to the teaching of history as a school subject and was extensively accepted in British schools over the first six decades of the 20th century (Dickinson 92; Husbands, Kitson y Pendry 36; Sylvester 11).

The main characteristics of the fact-based approach are explained thoroughly by Sylvester (12). He commences by detailing the role of teachers and students. Teachers are expected to play an active role in both transmitting historical facts to their students and ensuring the learning of them through short tests. Students, on the other hand, are expected to have a rather passive role, learning history as a received subject (Sylvester 13). To put it another way, teachers, it is held, should interpret past events and explain them to students in an understandable manner (Husbands et al. 37). Usually, they should give oral descriptions of the main events of the past and write notes on a board (Sylvester 13). Then, students should copy and repeat the factual knowledge written by their teachers. Also, they should assimilate, organise, and reproduce their teachers' interpretations. As Husbands (48) indicates, only in exceptional occasions would students get to reinterpret the explanation given by teachers.

In the 'great tradition', knowledge is seen as consisting mainly of political facts, with only a minor emphasis on economic and social events (Sylvester 14). According to Taylor (845), one of the main features of the approach is the primacy of factual knowledge. Content is organised on a chronological frame whose main components are British political events. In this regard, Wilschut indicates that in its implementation in England and Wales, "attention was almost completely limited to British, or rather English history, and Scotland

and Wales remained out of sight most of the time” (698). Also, the expectation was that a pivotal role would be given to the use of textbooks (Booth, History 25). In summary, the ‘great tradition’ of school history teaching can be defined as a chronological enumeration of historical events, where political facts and the names of great actors are the main content taught. Within this context, an important concern is the selection of events that can justify the political organisation established by the dominant political culture (Phillips 14; Taylor 846).

For much of the early half of the 20th century, British school history teaching was mainly based on academic historical study and practical classroom experience, leaving little room for the influence of general education theory, or for engaging in specific educational research (Aldrich 66). What was prescribed was mainly British constitutional history which was non-controversial and widely accepted (Phillips 15). The governments in power found no reason to interfere with this situation (Phillips 16).

THE ‘NEW HISTORY’

The ‘great tradition’ became of concern for several groups of people in the British educational system in the 1960s and 1970s (Crawford 442). First, teachers and scholars were concerned about the teaching of history as an act of repetition, with excessive emphasis on factual knowledge. Also, little attention, they argued, was paid to making the teaching of history interesting for students (Dickinson 95). Furthermore, an increasing number of graduate history teachers questioned the monocultural emphasis within the subject, especially given Britain’s increasingly multicultural society (Husbands et al. 42).

During this period, the study of academic history was influenced by such new methodologies as those of oral history, sociology and anthropology, and by interest in the experiences of such unknown actors as the dispossessed,

the oppressed, and women (Burke 85). This led to a change in thinking on the conceptual bases of knowledge taught by new teachers. For them, the content covered by the history curriculum contrasted with the invigorating curriculum they had experienced at university (Husbands et al. 45).

Generations of school students were also critics of the emphasis on facts, especially political facts (Taylor 846). All of these concerns were outlined in works published by Price (342) and Booth (History 32). Making a severe diagnosis of the teaching that developed based on the great tradition in England and Wales, Price considered that history as a school subject was 'in danger' of disappearing and becoming an 'ingredient' of social studies, or civics (Price 342). As Booth (History 30) highlights, Price also considered that the teaching of history in many schools was dull and of little significance for students.

While Price's thesis was based on experience rather than research, her words were strong enough to promote reflection among teachers and scholars. Booth went further, producing results from research in different schools, from which he concluded that in order to safeguard the existence of school history, as it was known, it was necessary to change not only the syllabus content, but also the teaching methods (Booth 31). He argued that if changes were produced only in content, students would still not have the possibility to develop "creative, divergent thought" (Booth 31).

Even though the claims made by these two scholars about history being in "danger" were well received by politicians and teachers, it was not clear what the psychological or epistemological foundations needed to generate the requested changes in the curriculum should be. One source of answers was found in the work of Jerome Bruner (34) and Benjamin Bloom (66), both well-known American academics who presented new understandings of the teaching and learning process. In general, their work provided a framework that would be suitable for any school subject. In *The Process of Education*

(34), Bruner claimed that any subject could be taught effectively to most students if its defining structures were well known and made explicit. He emphasised two features. First, teachers should know the principles of the structure of any given discipline. Second, any discipline can be learnt by young students as long as it is taught according to its structure (Booth, History 42; Taylor 849; Zajda y Whitehouse 958). Bruner's contribution provided guidance for the teaching of history as a school subject at a time when it was thought that young students were cognitively incapable of understanding complex and abstract historical knowledge.

Nevertheless, several influential historians still considered the transmission of dates and facts to be the only purpose of school history. For example, the well-known British historian, Geoffrey Elton, in *What Sort of History Should we Teach?* (222), claimed that serious work in history could only be undertaken in universities. In his view, history is the study of the past world made by adults and because of its complexity and abstraction, it cannot be understood by young people. However, Bruner's ideas were drawn upon to confront this argument, especially through his notion of the 'spiral curriculum' (Bruner 36), which proposed that concepts within disciplines should be taught from the beginning of the educational process in their simplest form and then in more complex ways with each passing year. This notion also emphasised that work in school subjects, including history, could be undertaken by students through deduction and inference. Also, the learning process should be viewed as a progression, not as an aggregation of historical facts. Topics should be presented as units, each constructed in the foundations of the other (Cooper, History 3-11 26).

The notion of a spiral curriculum allowed teachers to justify the introduction of what were conceived as adult activities in school subjects, including history. Equally significant was the influence of the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (66) created by Bloom and his associates, who

believed that at the school level too much attention was being paid to the development of such low-level cognitive activities as recall and memorisation. Concurrently, the promotion of such high-level cognitive skills as analysis and synthesis, and the affective attitudes outlined as objectives in syllabi, were being neglected (Booth, History 40). The taxonomy presented hierarchical frameworks of cognitive and affective objectives. It was deemed to be applicable to all school subjects and provided a common language for educators, teachers and students (Booth, History 41). This was a major contribution because it provided the world of education with a set of universally accepted principles that could also contribute to the construction of school syllabi. Also, it promoted teachers' capacity to structure the knowledge and skills to be developed in the classroom and allowed students to understand better the classroom activities (Taylor 850). Although it lacked disciplinary specificity and implied a linear development of cognitive and affective skills in all subjects, the taxonomy influenced the use and treatment of historical sources in classrooms. For example, in using the cognitive domain it became possible to classify questions according to their complexity (Zajda y Whitehouse 959).

Even though the contributions of Bloom and Bruner were not specific to the teaching and learning of school history, they caused some to realise the urgency of developing a systematic approach to the teaching of the subject which would confront the 'great tradition'. During the last 50 years, this confronting in England and Wales was also influenced by what is called the 'new history' (Booth History 45; Taylor 851; Zajda & Whitehouse 960), or the 'alternative tradition' (Husbands et al. 64). This approach became an alternative to the 'great tradition' (Sylvester 22). It emphasises a constructivist model of learning through real engagement with the past (Carretero 25) by encouraging students to conceive of history, not as a compilation of historical facts, but as a form of knowledge. Students have to develop the thinking process of being aware that history represents a

continuous investigation which leads to multiple historical truths (Zajda y Whitehouse 962). What is sought is that students create a 'method of inquiry' based on their independent use of historical evidence. As Wilschut indicates, it is "expected that students could build their own image and interpretation of the past" (717).

In the early 1970s, two British educators, Coltham and Fines, followed the ideas of Fenton, Bruner and Bloom in their *Educational Objectives for the Study of History: A Suggested Framework* (Coltham y Fines 5). They used Bruner's ideas of structure and the distinctive nature of each discipline, along with Bloom's taxonomies, to set defined, measurable and obtainable objectives for school history. Objectives were divided into four categories; attitudes, nature of history, skills and abilities, and educational outcomes. The framework, however, was severely questioned, especially by Gard and Lee (22). They did recognise beneficial contributions of the framework for teachers because of its potential to stimulate arguments and debates for future teachers at university to help them define their perspectives about the teaching of history, and for those committed to the revitalisation of history in schools through contesting the traditional approach. Then, however, they proceeded to argue that the work's "rather vague analysis results in a number of contradictions" (Gard y Lee 23). Finally, they suggested that the analysis of what is involved in historical understanding should be undertaken more carefully. Also, they claimed that more empirical research was necessary to discover both students' capacity in the area and what teaching practices would promote historical understanding.

Notwithstanding critiques like those of Gard and Lee (25), the framework was very influential. The strongest promoter of this new history teaching approach was the Schools Council through the Schools Council History Project: 13-16 (SCHP 12). Its mission was to develop a history curriculum for students from 13 to 16 years of age. It aimed to clarify the disciplinary

aspects of history for students so that they would engage with the purposes, methods, and content of history. By doing that, it was held, they would become capable of developing historical thinking (Zajda y Whitehouse 961). In this process, the use and interpretation of evidence was very relevant. The project was also underpinned by the ideas of Bruner and Bloom, which were presented in documents providing the definition and clarification of the structural aspects of history to teachers and students. In particular, the implementation of the historical method of inquiry, the use of precise assessments objectives, and the outline of affective and cognitive skills, were emphasised (Booth, History 48).

The project offered several justifications for the teaching of history as a school subject. Among them was the argument that history can help one to acquire and develop cognitive skill, analyse the contemporary world and the students' place in it, promote self-knowledge and awareness through the study of the past, and understand social change and evolution (Dickinson 105). The justifications varied widely from those offered for the 'great tradition'.

The SCHP had a great influence as almost every school history department in England and Wales was in some way inspired by its philosophy (Booth 49; Taylor 850). According to Wineburg (58), although its original task was to reconsider the nature of history and its value as a school subject, the project also offered a model of the psychology of the subject matter. Nevertheless, the project was not free from contestation. Hallam (162), for example, presented the results of his research which aimed at discovering children's capacity to develop historical thinking. Following Piaget's stages of development, he concluded that only adolescents aged above 16.5 years of age are capable of operating at the stage of formal operations in the subject. In his conclusion, he argued that implementing a curriculum with a strong emphasis on working with evidence is of no use since young students are

unable to perform the complex task of historical inquiry and interpretation (Booth, *History* 49; Zajda y Whitehouse 962). However, Booth (*Ages and concepts* 24), who followed Bruner's ideas about the possibility of teaching young students any discipline as long as its structure is made clear, took a different stance in an article in which he critiqued the validity of the questions posed by Hallam in his study, and argued that he failed to define historical thinking in a proper way.

Shemilt (44) was in charge of the evaluation of the SCHP. His research supported Booth's conclusions, showing that adolescents are able to understand the complexity of the historical method and are capable of developing historical thinking (Booth, *History* 48; Shemilt 46; Zajda y Whitehouse 963). Later, Cooper (*Historical thinking* 110), reported research that supported these findings. Both researchers were pivotal in promoting the implementation of the new approach to the teaching of history. However, Crawford (440) stated that over the 1970s and early 1980s, the impact of the approach was reduced as the number of teachers implementing it was itself reduced.

It would be remiss to leave this section without mentioning the argument of Aldrich, who has stated that the 'new history' "does not appear to be new at all" (161). Students' active role in classes, the use of historical sources, and methods of historical inquiry, he holds, have existed in the tradition of teaching history in England and Wales throughout the 20th century. He does concede, however, that its impact was limited (Aldrich 162). What is significant is that its growth since the latter half of the century meant that the chronologically-ordered political British-facts approach to teaching was no longer preminent. This, in turn, expanded the variety of possible topics for students to learn (Wilschut 710).

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed a series of critiques about the broader educational system in England and Wales. These came particularly from politicians. They alleged that the system in general was mediocre, being characterised by under-achievement and declining standards (Crawford 433). Within this context, the nature of history as a school subject and its content became a topic of national debate which revealed ideological tensions and conflicts. As Crawford (433) indicates, “the focus was not upon whether history should be taught, but what should constitute the history curriculum, how it should be taught and, crucially, why it should be taught”. The debates were particularly promoted by Prime Minister Thatcher, “who increasingly trained the education system in her sights, as part of her agenda to reform the economy and society of Great Britain” (Allen 28).

Thatcher relied on the Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, to supervise the creation of a national curriculum for history. It could be argued that it represented right-wing ideologies. In Dickinson’s (88) words, it was a new history curriculum with “more emphasis upon chronology, British history, historical knowledge and its assessment” than what had gone before. The interest of the Government lay in the opportunity provided by history to accomplish cultural transmission and to attack the ‘new history approach’ on the grounds that it was influenced by left-wing ideologies (Crawford 435).

Baker realised that to get the support of the electorate, the new curriculum content would have to be expressed in a traditional way so that it could be easily understood by the British people (Crawford 436). Also, he was in charge of selecting the proposals for the new History National Curriculum 5-16, developed by the History Working Group (Booth, History 51). One important feature that this new history curriculum was expected to include was the reinforcement of the dominant cultural hegemony (Crawford 437;

Wilschut 712). This provoked heated confrontation between stakeholder groups (Ball 117; Hayden, Arthur y Hunt 68).

Every stage of the debate was accompanied by incisive comments in the press (Wilschut 713). Right-wing ideologies were promoted through newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and reports. The argument in them was that the content knowledge of the history taught in British schools should focus on the achievements of the British nation and its cultural heritage (Wilschut 713). Concurrently, they attacked the 'new history' approach, pointing to its emphasis on Developing Third World cultures, which, in their view neglected the teaching of British history. Also, they claimed that politically motivated teachers used this approach as a tool to damage traditional social values and institutions (Crawford 438). The contest ended with the creation of the national curriculum in 1988 (Aldrich, 2005).

The national curriculum for history was highly influenced by the 'great tradition' of history teaching (Husbands et al. 66). Thatcher's (595) view was that "history is an account of what happened in the past. Learning history, therefore, requires knowledge of events". Content prescriptions were specified in detail through a sequence of programmes of study arranged chronologically, with a common core of British history and optional units on European and world history. Historical thinking skills and concepts were prescribed and specified according to three attainment targets, which defined the organisation of content (Wilschut, 712).

In 1995, 1999, and 2007, the national curriculum was revised. Content and skills' prescriptions were removed, allowing teachers to plan more creatively and flexibly. Also, the attainment targets were modified (Husbands et al. 67; QCA, 4). Nichols (60) indicates that these revisions were promoted by the decreasing importance of history as a school subject. This was reflected in the low priority given to it in school development plans (Nichols 60). Also, the great amount of curriculum time given to British history meant that the

teaching of world history, local history, and black or multi-ethnic history, was neglected. This was accompanied by neglect in opportunities to teach historical interpretations (Nichols 61). Eventually, it was considered that some reform was necessary.

The current national curriculum for history presents less prescribed content than the previous versions and comes much closer to the 'new history' pedagogical approach. A new 'Importance Statement' was created with the objective of clearly enunciating why it is important for students to learn history (The Historical Association 51). Content knowledge about personal, family, and local history now have more curricular time than previously and movement between topics is advocated in order to promote a sense of chronology. Also, the concepts and processes of historical inquiry and the use of ICT have an increased emphasis in the curriculum (QCA 5). According to Husbands, Kitson and Pendry (68) and Dickinson (102), the national curriculum by the beginning of the 21st century allowed for the coexistence of both major approaches to the teaching of history, namely, the 'great tradition' and the 'new history'.

HISTORY TEACHING IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The teaching of history in the United States of America is characterised by two key features. First, in contrast to the national curriculum in England and Wales, the subject content and methodology varies from state to state and from one school district to another. Also, debates on the teaching of history are usually related to content and not methodology (Taylor 843). Secondly, the history curriculum is part of a broader curriculum called social studies. The core disciplines of the social studies curriculum for secondary schools are geography, history, economics, anthropology, political sciences and civics, and psychology (Stockard 18). In this context, national debate about

curriculum includes all the mentioned disciplines. This, as a result, and in contrast to England and Wales, dilutes the political influence of history as a school subject (Taylor 844).

THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

There has, for some time, been a widespread consensus about the origins of the contemporary social studies curriculum for secondary schools in the United States of America (USA) (Marker y Mehlinger 831; Patrick y White 1238; Ross 18). The term 'social studies' began to be used extensively after the appearance of the 1916 report, *The Social Studies in Secondary School Education* (8), which was produced by the 'Committee on the Social Studies of the Commission on the Reorganization of the Secondary Education of the National Education Association' (NEA). The Committee defined social studies as "those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society and to a man as a member of groups" (Committee on Social Studies of the National Education Association 9).

The report made recommendations about the scope and sequence of the social studies curriculum. The Committee recommended a two-cycle program of social studies from Years 7-9 and Years 10-12. The first cycle should give students a basic understanding of social studies and the second one should give students the mastery to undertake undergraduate studies in the field. This ordering proposed by the Committee remains today (Marker y Mehlinger 832, Ross 19). Thus, it can be considered to be one of the most influential reports in the history of social studies education (Patrick y White 1239) in the country. It gave the term 'social studies' its legitimacy and concurrency (Patrick y White 1240). Also, it emphasized the development of values related to thoughtful citizenship and social efficiency (Patrick y White 1240; Ross 20).

History retained its integrity as a distinctive discipline in the social studies curriculum, while becoming a tool to achieve the goals of the social studies (Patrick y White 1242). People immersed in the school system were concerned about the huge number of immigrants arriving in the country at the time and considered it necessary to “socialize them into American customs” (Marker y Mehlinger 833). Social studies teachers emphasized the relationships between historical events. The interest of students was stimulated by applying historical knowledge to understand current social concerns (Marker y Mehlinger 834). Overall, however, in history teaching, education for citizenship seemed to be considered more urgent than preparation for undergraduate studies.

THE NEW SOCIAL STUDIES MOVEMENT

Since its creation, the social studies curriculum has been the subject of debate, commissions and panel studies (Ross 21). These have been related to the nature, purpose, and organisation of the curriculum. For example, over the 20th century, progressive educators promoted reform ideas aimed at implementing a student-centered and issues-centered social studies curriculum (Caron, *The impact* 4), thus reflecting an orientation that also had its origins in the 1916 report (Caron, *The impact* 5). One of the most influential reform movements was that called the ‘new social studies’, which originated with social studies academics during the 1960s.

According to Fenton (*Reflections* 84), the new social studies movement intended to change the teaching style and curriculum content for social studies in both primary and secondary school education in the USA. Specifically, it focused on two main goals, namely, helping students in learning “the inquiry techniques used by scholars and identifying a structure of disciplines that could be taught to students in the schools in an attempt to catch up with the Russians” (Fenton, *Reflections* 84). The movement was

developed in the early 1960s by university scholars who were funded by grants from private institutions and the US government.

The new social studies movement also was an answer to the problem posed by the idea of an on-going changing modern world where history, as a school subject, was losing its former perceived relevance. The argument was that, to regain its influence, history should become one of the social sciences (Wilschut 725). Within this context, the learning of inquiry methods to understand social reality was considered more important than reproducing fact-based knowledge (Wilschut 715). Fenton, who was a leading actor in the movement, wrote *The New Social Studies* (Fenton, *The new* 12). In this work, he argued that the teaching of social studies, as well as the teaching of history, should have an enquiry-based emphasis. This, he held, would promote the development of students' understanding of historical facts and historical concepts (Taylor 852).

Fenton (*The new* 150) fostered a change in the tradition of teaching social studies by claiming that the teaching of methods of interpretation was pivotal. In his words, "students must learn the rules by which historians collect evidence and use and interpret the past if they are to read or write history intelligently [...] Unless students are taught to interpret they are not taught history at all". This approach to teaching encouraged students to develop skills which are characteristic of the social sciences, as well as to learn the specific knowledge and associated values. His thoughts gave strength to the importance of history as a school subject.

The curricular material produced by the movement, which was usually organised in the form of "packages" (Thornton 25), was published by commercial companies and reached the general public very rapidly. However, by the late 1970s, the movement declined, largely because 'typical' teachers were unable to implement associated curricula (Fenton, *Reflections* 85). Nevertheless, some of its ideas can still be found in the current social

studies curriculum in parts of the USA. Also, it had a major impact on the international literature on the teaching of social studies and history (Wilschut 716).

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES

The current teaching of secondary school history in the USA has been described by Whelan (40). He indicates that, in general, students are “expected to consume” (41) history taught in classrooms, reproducing conclusions made by others without producing answers, or knowledge, that could be meaningful for them. Caron (The impact 4) describes the critiques of social studies in a similar way, specifying that they represent a view that the content taught is “fragmented and expository”, being organised in a curriculum which privileges memorisation over the promotion of in-depth analysis which would allow students to understand the subject. Whelan (38) also claims that, most commonly, history lessons are teacher-centered, characterised by the use of textbooks and guided discussions. Unfortunately, this kind of lesson usually fails to promote the development of higher-order cognitive skills.

Social studies teachers in the USA often rely on textbooks to organise their course structure and teaching methods (Caron, The impact 6). Textbooks usually present extensive content knowledge, with few opportunities to study problems in-depth. As a result, the study of controversial, or debatable, issues is not regularly practiced by students (Caron, The impact 6). Also, discussions on assessment tasks given by teachers demand the reproduction of textbook content.

This teacher-centered approach in social studies has been stimulated by the current influence of the standards and testing movement, which is intended to improve students’ achievements. The movement has characterised the American educational system since the 1980s (Cuban 793). In an attempt to

cover all content included in standardised tests, which is often an overwhelming amount of information, teachers of history within the social studies learning area focus their attention mostly on teaching events, facts, and dates (Caron, *The impact* 7), neglecting issues related to historical understanding, or historical methods of inquiry. Overall, the fact-based approach to the teaching of history seems to be a common practice within American classrooms.

Considering the general situation, Caron (*What leads to* 52) argues it is understandable that students in the USA often rate social studies as one of the least preferred subjects among school disciplines. Secondary school students also affirm that social studies lessons give them fewer opportunities to learn new knowledge than do other school subjects (*What leads to* 53). This is consistent with the results presented in a review by the Thomas Fordham Institute, in 2011, of States' standards assessments (Stern y Stern 1). According to this review as it relates to USA history standards, "the majority of States' standards are mediocre-to-awful". In other words, the standardised tests' results indicate that American students in the USA do not know much about their own nation's history.

THE SOCIAL STUDIES BATTLEFIELD

The history of the social studies' curriculum in the USA, from its beginnings until today, has been surrounded by constant arguments, discussion, and conflicts between competing movements. In fact, social studies' academics refer to this as the 'social studies war' (Evans 1; Evans y Passe 251), or the 'social studies battleground' (Ross 17). According to Evans (1), these conflicts are intended to "either retain the control of social studies, or influence its direction". Every associated pedagogical movement has proposed its own social studies curriculum, which has been inspired by particular leaders, a special philosophy, and a certain pedagogical approach (Evans y Passe, 252).

These movements include the progressive education movement, the life adjustment movement, social reconstructionism, and the nationalist history movement (Ross 18).

The constant debate about the social studies' curriculum can be explained by the complexity involved in defining its boundaries (Ross 18). To put it another way, issues arise because the social studies' curriculum must include several different disciplines in one school subject. Thus, defining its nature, purpose, and content implies making decisions about the most relevant knowledge, skills, and values that can be acquired by students. This is not an easy task in a multi-cultural and democratic society (Ross 19).

The 1980s was one decade when the national debate on the social studies curriculum increased. Criticism and concern over the secondary school curriculum in general, and over the social studies' curriculum in particular, were aired in the public arena (Patrick y White 1244). It was pointed out that there was a lack of agreement about subject content priorities, low expectations regarding students achievement, inappropriate coverage of relevant content knowledge in history, geography, civics, and economic, and lack of integration of the different disciplines within school years and between them (Patrick y White 1244). Reformers claimed that student under-achievement and the fragmentation of the curriculum were consequences of these failures. They reached consensus by demanding a common curriculum that all students should be taught across the nation. Also, they agreed that the goal of social studies education should be the promotion of citizenship in a constitutional democracy (Patrick y White 1244). However, educators and teachers did not participate much in these debates and there were critics who did not agree on the content that should be included in the curriculum (Wilschut 717). The teaching of history as a school subject, within this context, was viewed from a political and ideological standpoint.

Politicians from both sides in the USA, both traditionalist and progressive, felt compelled to participate in the national debate about the content that should be included in the social studies curriculum, especially in relation to history (Wilschut 717). Conservative-traditionalist groups felt that the teaching of history as a school subject was not giving the attention needed to such traditional content as the 'War of Independence', the 'Framing of the Constitution', the 'Civil War', and the 'Emancipation of the Slaves' (Allen 33). They considered that traditional content represented the American nation's struggle for liberty. It was important, they argued, to preserve this content in the social studies curriculum (Allen 34). Accordingly, Yoder (1994) indicated the concern of the Reagan Administration for the subject's welfare in schools.

The Bradley Commission on the Teaching of History in American Schools (Bradley Commission on History in the Schools 2) was one of the outcomes of such concern. The Commission proposed that the States' social studies curriculum for grades 7 to 12 should contain at least four years of compulsory history. It also recommended that all students in secondary schools be required to study American history, world history and the history of Western civilisation. However, because of the differences between curriculum boards in the USA, the proposals were implemented to varying degrees. Also, the Bradley Commission was not the only body proposing answers to the national debate about what history should be taught at school level; several other commissions on this matter were also active and new curriculum frameworks were generated in the late 1980s and the 1990s (Taylor 853).

One set of answers was offered by The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), which developed standards that provide guidelines for teaching social studies (Ediger 240). These standards help teachers to improve the quality of their teaching through making good decision on curricular issues within their classroom (Ediger 241). While they are not

mandatory, they have been well accepted all around the country and have become a foundation for the teaching of the subject.

The standards created by the NCSS are a consequence of a more widespread standards' movement aimed at promoting curriculum centralisation for all school subjects. Related efforts have succeeded in modifying the formal curriculum in all curricular areas, social studies included. (Ross 20). Every state produces its own curriculum frameworks and creates associated standardised tests to supervise students, teachers, and school achievement. Even though such frameworks are not often mandatory, they have a strong influence in defining what should be taught in classrooms (Ross 21). Also, standardised tests are used to force teachers to align their practices with a State's framework. The standard and testing culture radically increased its influence with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind Act 5), which associates Federal funding with test results in reading and mathematics. As the social studies are not included in this Federal law, the curricular importance of the teaching of social studies has been minimised at the school level (Ediger 242).

National debate in the USA on creating a centralised national education system with common goals and content has intensified over the last few years (Ross, 2006). There is associated debate on the decision-making process regarding what content should be taught in social studies' classrooms. This debate is likely to continue over the next decade in a democratic society that has to take into account the views of large minorities in order to try to reach consensus.

CONCLUSIONS

This review presented an outline of the history of the teaching of history as a school subject in countries two (England and Wales and the USA) that have strongly influenced the current situation in Chile. First, the teaching of

secondary school history in England and Wales was presented. In a brief historical review, its origins and early developments were described. Then, three main developments in the teaching of history - 'the great tradition', 'the new history' and the national curriculum - were considered in chronological order. History teachers, educators and policy makers around the world, including Chile, have taken cognisance of the British developments.

Secondly, an overview of the history of the teaching of history and social studies in the United States of America was presented. The origins of social studies for secondary schools, the new social studies movement, and the development of the teaching of history within the social studies curriculum, were considered. Attention was given to the constant conflicts and debates about the social studies curriculum. The influence of the standards-and-testing movement was described. Because history in the USA has been included in the social studies curriculum since its beginnings, its purpose has been strongly aligned with the social studies objectives, particularly the promotion of citizenship and democracy. Associated reform movements, especially the new social studies, have influenced the development of social studies curricula worldwide, including those adopted by Chilean policy makers. The considerations of this review help to contextualise the present situation regarding the teaching of secondary school history in Chile.

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