



## History education in post-conflict societies

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**ABSTRACT:** This article studies the reconciliatory potential of history education in post-conflict societies. History education today is understood through post-colonial, multiperspectival studies, which in a post-conflict society contribute to reconciliation by fostering critical thinking, being inclusive in regard to different social groups, and recognising the local, vernacular history culture. The article compares three cases of post-conflict history education, derived from Finland, Bosnia-Herzegovina and South Africa. It concludes by considering the nature of feasible teaching processes and the role of different educational actors.

**KEYWORDS:** History Education, Post-Conflict Societies, Reconciliation, Multiperspectivity, Finland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Africa.

### History –History education – Post-conflict history education

By *history* I mean a broad social phenomenon, comprising different representations of the past, produced by scholars, administrators, cultural entrepreneurs and vernacular storytellers. Apart from academic publications, history appears as public memory, including museums, monuments and commemoration rituals, and local social memory. This broad definition of history is supported by post-modernist and post-colonial views of the nature of historical knowledge. Recognising the linguistic turn, Hayden White in 1971 maintained that history consists of literary artefacts, most of which do not obey the positivistic rules of knowledge acquisition. Frank Ankersmit, not going as far as White towards epistemological relativism, differentiated between evidence-based factual statements and epistemologically relative narrative substances. According to Ankersmit (2001), a professional or lay historian, as soon as he or she attributes a meaning to a historical fact, produces a narrative that can be challenged by another historian attributing a different meaning to the fact.

Narratives, because of being loaded with meaning, tend to have a moral dimension. As history deals with human action, the sense of which depends on the actor or actors' intentions, a moral component is naturally involved. Moreover, among the receivers of the narratives, one of the main questions asked concerns the moral responsibility of actors. The moral questions may be the most common motive among ordinary people to be interested in history.

*Post-conflict history* consists of the contradicting narratives of the conflict held by the different parties. The stories are loaded with morality, and use the moral themes of guilt and victimhood to construct a plot. The makers and the mediators of the stories often resort to internationally travelling arch myths to bolster the moral content. 'Arch myths' are literary tools comparable to White's 'narrative tropes', albeit being more substantive and as such apt to generate compelling 'narrative truths' of the past. George Schöpflin, when analysing the most common myths used as moulds for moral post-conflict narratives, found that many of them were retrieved from the Old Testament, originally mediated by religious texts but

adopted widely within and even beyond the sphere of influence of Christianity. Within a particular conflict, according to Schöpflin, the mythical moulds tend to be symmetrically utilised by opposite parties. The most common myths of historical moral guilt and justification are the following:

- A God-chosen people. The divine election justifies war and expansion.
- A promised land. The territory belongs to the community due to divine promises.
- God-ordained redemption. After endured suffering, redemption comes either as military victory, liberation or revolution.
- Military valour. Military valour justifies the harsh treatment of the defeated and helps to denounce any compromises.
- Old foe. Enmity has ruled for generations, even for centuries, between two communities.

(Schöpflin 1997, 28–34)

In addition, the stories of atrocities committed by the parties of a conflict are often moulded by myths, many of which originated in the Old Testament. Narrators have borrowed images from the tradition of tormentor and old foe stories. For example, in Finland during the civil war of 1918 the numerous stories of tortured priests were borrowed from the folklore of ancient war-related ordeals, and the imagery could be further traced to the Old Testament (Peltonen, 1996). A more modern myth was constituted by holocaust. The Jewish Holocaust became acknowledged and memorialised in post-1945 Europe, and eventually communities around the world adopted the term when referring to experiences of mass murder, making Holocaust into an arch myth.

The arch myths of promised land, chosen people, military valour, old foe, atrocities and holocaust serve narrators in the accentuation of the moral burden of a conflict. Especially, after the inter-community violence and mutual betrayals of a civil war, people tend to go on fighting a history war.

*History education* is today a critical craft, at least in western democracies. While history teachers in earlier times were expected to mediate national grand narratives, after the bankruptcy of nationalism in the Second World War the teachers were expected to present the past from a new, critical angle. As source criticism and analytical explanation substituted identity narratives, history lessons of the new kind could be characterised as positivistic (see e.g. Herbst, 1977).

With the coming of post-colonialism after the 1960s, the grand narratives lost the last remains of their credibility (Iggers, 1997). Societies acknowledged their social and cultural diversity. The previously oppressed groups acquired a voice and expected their stories of the past to be recognised in history education. Multiperspectivity became a pedagogical requirement. Textbooks were expected to present a variety of evidence to enable the construction of different histories, and the students were expected to learn to ask of any statement, whether it is a fact or an interpretation (see e.g. Shemilt, 1983).

While multiperspectivity and exercises with contradictory evidence were introduced into history classrooms by British ‘new history’ didactics in the 70s, a more synthetic historical thinking was advocated at the same time by German history didacticians (see e.g. Kuhn, 1974). Apart from critical skills, the students were supposed to develop their historical consciousness, that is an understanding of the interdependence of the past and the future and, moreover, a recognition of one’s personal historical agency (for an international discussion on historical consciousness, see Seixas, 2004). This goal brought micro-history, that is studies of

ordinary people and everyday life, into the curriculum. Micro-history would help a student to regard herself or himself as participant in historical change.

Despite the reforms, history lessons are continuously a politically sensitive domain of education. In authoritarian societies history education is submitted to state control, which often implies requests of teaching unifying hegemonic narratives. In Europe, the political potential of history education has been obvious after the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Rampant nation-building started in the seceded countries. Political leaders have appealed to history educators for support in bolstering group identity. In many post-Soviet or post-Yugoslav countries, history educators today are torn apart by their professional identity as critical historians and, on the other hand, by the wishes of politicians.

*Post-conflict history education* is today a serious concern to the international community of history educators. After a conflict, history is customarily used by the parties to justify their respective causes and to claim symbolic recognition of their sufferings. History wars are fought in political rhetoric, history culture and in history education. Enemy images tend to dwell in textbooks, and perpetuate the divisions of social memory. History education is therefore a field in need of mental disarmament (Ahonen, 2012).

To materialise the potential of analytical and post-colonial history education in using history for reconciliation, the following practices can be deduced from the nature of history and history education. First, a *de-mythicalisation* of history is required. The critical skills of dealing with evidence and analysing causes and effects enable the deconstruction of myths. For the purpose, a sufficient supply of source material is required in textbooks. In addition, extracts from history books with controversial interpretations of sensitive topics are essential to wean students from the trust to 'one final truth'. Robert Parkes stresses this requirement by including historiography in the essentials of history education. He regards an acquaintance with a variety of historians necessary for an awareness of the multiperspectival nature of historical knowledge (Parkes, 2009, 118–132). Following this approach, a viable way of opening a topic in a history class is for the teacher to suggest: "Historian A says x, while historian B says y. Let us study the foundations of their arguments."

Second, *social inclusiveness* is necessary for history to prompt reconciliation. History is used for building social identity, even if in a post-colonial situation this does not mean sharing one uniform identity. Members of a community may identify with ethnicity, social class, profession and a variety of interest groups. History lessons should provide identity elements for all groups. History lessons are at their best open arenas of dialogue for groups with different experiences and orientations. To be inclusive, history lessons need to incorporate idiosyncratic histories of many groups.

To prompt every student to articulate her or his often silenced past, a practice of deliberation in a classroom is necessary. Deliberation means conversation instead of debate, listening besides talking, and understanding rather than aiming at an agreement of 'truth'. Instead, such an approach aims at recognition of different legitimate points of view.

*Connectedness to local history culture* is a precondition for sustainable history lessons. Local commemoration rituals, vernacular stories and historical fiction have a strong impact on young minds because of being emotionally appealing. Public history culture needs to be recognised in school, not only to be critically scrutinised, but to have its rhetorical power combined to the rationality of formal education.

A discrepancy between locally mediated stories and school lessons lowers the credibility and sustainability of the latter. History teachers today no longer take their students to war memorials to celebrate a straightforward patriotic cause, but, instead, reflect on the different meanings attributed by people to the memorial. In a heated post-conflict atmosphere, the

emotional momentum of cultural products needs to be followed up by informed judgment in a classroom.

### **Three different cases of post-conflict history education**

I chose my examples of post-conflict history education on pragmatic grounds: as a Finnish history educator I was familiar with the developments after the Finnish civil war of 1918. I acquired an acquaintance with the aftermath of Bosnian war of 1992–1995 in Bosnia-Herzegovina by teaching history in the town of Mostar (2006–2008). With regard to the South African apartheid conflict (1961–1994), I gathered information and developed an insight over years by means of public media and professional contacts, and complemented them by a study tour in 2011.

I will restrict my focus on the first post-conflict generation in each country. As a rule, during the first post-conflict generation a transition from silence and denial to open dialogue takes place. If not, the whole generation is lost to social disharmony. In the case of Finland, my restriction of focus excludes the eventual reconciliation after the Second World War. Bosnia-Herzegovina and South-Africa provide diagonally different patterns of post-conflict educational politics, one serving separatism and the other integration

Acknowledging the risks of comparing historically different societies from one restricted viewpoint, I refer to the fundamental differences in the kind of conflict in the three cases: the Finnish civil war was a class conflict, where proletarian Reds fought bourgeois Whites, while the Bosnian War was an ethnic conflict between Muslims, Croats and Serbs, and the struggle for and against apartheid in South Africa was a racial conflict, the main adversaries being the White Afrikaners, and the Black Xhosas and Zulus. Moreover, the conflicts differed from each other with regard to the degree to which they were in touch with their respective epoch. In the case of Finland, class conflict was in accordance with the prevailing epoch where an ideological confrontation prevailed between communist Russia and the rest of Europe. The Bosnian War was in line with the secession wars of the 1990s caused by the break-ups of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In contrast to these two cases, the racial oppression in South Africa, lasting up to the 1990s, was an anachronism as the world already had turned post-colonial.

#### ***Finland***

In Finland, the civil war left the country socially split. The victory by the White army was crushing and was followed by a harsh punishment of the defeated Reds. Red troops were ‘shot on the spot’, executed on the decision of military courts, or imprisoned in lethal concentration camps. The Red victims of terror grossly outnumbered the White victims of Red terror.

The war aims, the kinds of atrocities and the number of the victims, were heavily mythicalised in the representations of the war. The Whites adopted the term ‘freedom war’ to indicate a mission of nation-building. To them, the war prompted by a Red uprising was an incomprehensible betrayal of the young nation-state. The Whites applied the myth of ‘God-chosen people’ to themselves and identified the Reds with ‘the old foe’, the Russians. The Reds interpreted the war as the historically inevitable revolution of the proletariat. The mythically powered memories severely hindered any post-conflict efforts at reconciliation (Ahonen, 2012).

After the three months long war, public memory and school education were dedicated to the legitimisation of the White cause. Public memory was adorned with memorials of the White heroes and books about their military valour and sacrifices. The defeated Reds were

excluded from churchyards and public commemoration rituals. The silenced Red history was left to Red homes and workers' unions to foster. There the memory of 'the revolution' was celebrated in rhetoric, drama and songs (Peltonen, 1996).

In school, the White ethos of righteous nation-building was maintained throughout the first post-conflict generation. In the mother tongue lessons, stories of freedom fighters and other texts with nationally elevating rhetoric constituted the bulk of the learning materials in the 1920s and 1930s. History books mediated the grand narrative of the Finnish nation-state from prehistoric times up to the God-promised national independence in 1917. The civil war itself was dealt with in terms of silence. The few sentences dedicated to it in textbooks used the term 'freedom war' and explained the Red uprising as an unforgivable crime and renounced the barbaric atrocities committed by Red guards (Ahonen, 2012). However, on the top level of school administration signs of a will towards social integration appeared. An authoritative school committee in 1933 suggested:

[the textbooks] should promote a sense of patriotic and social coherence and . . . the will to act *according to one's conviction* [sic] and altruistically work for the best of society." (Oppikoulukomitean mietintö, 1933, p. 11)

The liberal view of a person's right to her or his conviction was expressed by two prominent members of the National Board of Education, Oskari Mantere and Gunnar Sarva, who wanted to prevent the political Right from totally determining the ethos of history textbooks. They succeeded only partially, as the teachers themselves at the time supported unanimously the political Right (Rantala, 1997). In the leading pedagogical journal not a single article focused on the prevailing enmity between the Reds and the Whites. Reconciliation was urged only in abstract terms and for the sake of national unity, through which "we can build a new flourishing Finland from the ashes of the civil war" (Rosenquist, 1931, pp. 129–136).

When history teachers in 1935 convened for their first national conference, the problem of one-sided history lessons was not brought up. Nationalist historiography was a self-evident guideline for history teaching, equal with the teachers' membership of local right-wing Civil Guards.

In the 'White' atmosphere of the society and its schools, the working class children felt themselves as second-class citizens. Their parents were called "rebels" in textbooks, and the victimhood stories they heard in home and workers' union youth clubs had no place in history lessons. They could only express their views of history through the petty classroom mischief of not singing along when the song was 'White' or blotting the pictures of White heroes in their textbooks (Peltonen, 1996).

The textbook authors, mostly young scholars, loyal to the State, perpetuated the grand national narrative. They referred to the civil war as a political confrontation between the defenders of the nation-state and socialist rebels. The most popular textbook was written by two members of the National Board of Education, who, despite adhering to a liberal political party, demonstrated alignment with the policy of silence.

Neither did civil society stage any protests regarding the one-sided history lessons. Civil society was not actively interested in school. The right-wing Civil Guards regarded the school sufficiently loyal to their beliefs and concentrated on extra-curricular youth activities. Teachers had assumed a calling as nation-builders. Neither were the workers' union youth clubs active in denouncing school lessons about 1918. None of the potential actors of reconciliation managed to break the silence or the hegemony of the White story of the past.

The first post-civil-war generation was lost to a history war. It took a whole generation and a change in political atmosphere caused by the Second World War, before the Red narrative of the past became recognised. A reconciliatory agenda was introduced by civil society and reinforced by novelists, playwrights and musicians. Gradually, since the 1960s, schoolbook authors assumed a bi-perspectival approach to the difficult past.

To conclude, an over-all look at the *processes* and *actors* of the post-conflict educational developments reveals a long stagnation in the political ethos of schools. Stagnation prevailed in the absence of any state intervention in history teaching. Teachers aligned with the White public memory and ignored the Red social memory. The State as an actor of possible reconciliation failed.

### ***Bosnia-Herzegovina***

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, none of the parties was the definitive winner of the war of 1992–1995. The peace was imposed on the feuding parties by the international community. The peace settlement, agreed in Dayton, USA, in 1995, was based on an idea of providing Croats, Muslims and Serbs opportunity to have a fair share of political power within the umbrella state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serb Republic and the ten cantons of the Muslim-Croat Federation were let free to tackle with the spoils of the war by means of ethnically motivated structural adjustments. According to the constitution, the state was multicultural, but in practice the institutions, including the schools, were as the main rule segregated.

Nation-building that had been fostered by war propaganda was continued after the war in the culture and education of history. Arch-myths of God-chosen people and genocidal atrocities were used to legitimate antagonisms. Croats referred to the centuries of defending the church as *antemurale christianitatis*, and Serbs to the medieval legend of the martyr-hero Prince Lazar. The guilt and victimhood histories of the Second World War, which during Yugoslavia had been silenced in the name of the Titoist slogan “brotherhood and unity”, were now revived and memorialised. All parties claimed to be victims of genocide and holocaust (Kolstø, 2005).

After the war, History textbooks were dedicated to the building of the three ethnic nations. In the books, Bosnia-Herzegovina hardly appeared as a historical entity. Instead, the books mediated grand national narratives of Croats, Muslims and Serbs, and bolstered respective national identities by referring to the historical guilt of the others (Torsti, 2003; Karge, 2008). The segregated historical narratives with their morally loaded language made a severe obstacle to post-war reconciliation.

Even though the Dayton Agreement did not include any clauses about school education, the international community felt urged to tackle it. The first reconciliatory measure by the Task Force summoned in 1999 by the European Union was to remove the hate language from school textbooks. Success was a precondition for the membership of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Council of Europe. A hasty cosmetic cleansing of offensive expressions took place. However, often just a warning, stamped on a page in a book, was considered sufficient: “The following passage contains material of which the truth has not yet been established: the material is currently being reviewed” (quoted in Torsti, 2003, p. 157).

Several international institutions became involved in the reform of history education: the Council of Europe, the Organisation for security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), UNESCO, the World Bank, the George Soros Fund, the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, and EUROCLIO (the European Association of History Educators). To bolster their local credibility, the international actors recruited local administrators, experts and teachers as co-workers (Pingel, 2009).

Since 2002, the OSCE coordinated the educational reform work. Surveys of textbooks and stakeholder attitudes were conducted, and seminars for history teachers and textbook authors organised. The seminars became an invaluable arena for Croat, Serb and Muslim teachers to conduct a dialogue about history education. EUROCLIO, together with local educators, produced teaching material that sought inter-ethnic understanding by focusing on the history of everyday life (*Obični ljudi u neobičnoj Zemlji. Svakodnevni život u Bosni i Hercegovini, Hrvatskoj is SRBiji 1945–1990*, 2007). The purpose was to present Bosnia-Herzegovina as one historical community with a shared ordeal and outlook.

The use of the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a reference point in history teaching proved difficult to local educators. Croats and Serbs leaned on the neighbouring nation-states of Croatia and Serbia in writing history curricula and picking up textbooks. As a result, despite internationally agreed guidelines for textbook writers, only one textbook was promptly written in ethnically neutral terms (Karge, 2008). According to a survey, nearly half of all history teachers regarded an ethnically partial textbook appropriate (Diegoli, 2007).

Thomas Diegoli's research in 2007 into the collective memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina included interviews with teachers from the three ethnic groups. "There is no need to offer multiple perspectives because we are all Croats here", claimed a teacher from a Croat-majority town. Another teacher was sceptical about the prospect of reconciliation: "Some things cannot be reconciled at all" (Diegoli, 2007, pp.102–111). My own experience of teaching history to young adults of mixed ethnicity in 2006–2008 indicates that a commonly sharable story of Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly of the war of 1990s, was a vain dream. An open dialogue between the three ethnic groups proved nevertheless feasible. My students eventually learned to listen to the viewpoints of each other.

The inclusion of the recent war in the syllabi proved to be the ultimate stumbling block of the reform. Memories of the war became more and more mythicalised in the public and collective memory, and teachers regarded a multiperspectival approach to the war inappropriate, and the topic as a whole too controversial to teach. Suggestions of including the war in teaching only arose on rare occasions. "Despite of the existence of three truths, the post-1992 events must not be left untaught," stated the councillor for textbook production in the Federal Ministry of Education in 2007 (*Dnevni Avaz*, March 10, 2007). According to Diegoli's interviews, teachers put their trust in the future emergence of the real "truth" about the war, and in the meantime rather omitted the theme in their teaching (Diegoli, 2007). Even the international actors succumbed to the ethos of the teachers and the big public, and did not directly require the teaching of the war in the textbook guidelines of 2007 (Paragraph 4.15 of the Guidelines, quoted in Karge & Batarilo, 2009, p. 327).

In conclusion, a failure to achieve reconciliation in the history war of Bosnia-Herzegovina has to be admitted. Stakeholders stayed committed to ethnic nation-building projects and embraced the ethnically idiosyncratic narratives of the past. The ethnic segregation of schools hindered dialogue. As a teacher quoted above reckoned, a need of multiperspectivity was not recognised in mono-ethnic schools. In contrary, historical recognition of victimhood was sought as a symbolic reparation for the past suffering. International intervention was necessary to provide arenas for educational dialogue.

### ***South Africa***

In South Africa, the transition from apartheid to democratic majority rule in 1994 succeeded without violence. The schools were subsequently integrated without delay. However, the history war was not solvable by vote. The main parties of the racial conflict, the Africans and the Afrikaners, cherished mythically bolstered stories of the victimhood of 'us' and the guilt

of 'them'. The Black historians emphasised the role of the African people as true actors of history, and re-interpreted the history of the African 19<sup>th</sup> century kings and warriors in terms of pride. Many leaned on international anti-colonial authors, above all Franz Fanon, for the justification of violence as a way of redemption.

The Afrikaners, for their part, cherished the pioneer narrative of 'Boers' as God-chosen people who had cultivated South Africa as their promised land. The 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers were portrayed as hero-victims who fought the barbaric Blacks. The culmination of the victimhood narrative was 'the Anglo-Boer war' of 1899–1902, where the Boers were the victim of imperialist Britain. Afrikaner nationalists regarded the instalment of apartheid after the election victory of 1948 a God-promised redemption.

After the transition, the leaders of 'The New South Africa' established in 1995 a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), with the task of rewriting the history of South Africa in terms of mutual recognition of guilt and victimhood. The sessions of the commission were open to the public, and both victims and perpetrators were invited to speak up in their own right. The aim was to facilitate social reconstruction.

The TRC pursued 'a history from below', that is, a history of ordinary people. In the public culture of history, the pursuit was reified as community museums, where the inhabitants of Black neighbourhoods memorialised their everyday life and resistance struggle. The community museums functioned as meeting places of local activists, connecting the experience of the past to the work for a better future. History worked in community museums for social emancipation (Coombes, 2003; Ahonen, 2012).

In the first years after 1994, new leaders were sceptical about the necessity of history in school, as history lessons during apartheid had been used to deprive Africans of their historical identity rather than to boost it (Chernis, 1990). New educational administrators wanted, therefore, to substitute history with social sciences in order to approach society through timeless concepts of dispossession, oppression and emancipation. The only historical contents ordained by the curriculum launched in 1995 were slavery and apartheid (Siebörger, 2006).

However, history was defended by historians and history educators, who advocated the necessity of historical consciousness for active citizenship. In 2001, the Secretary of Education Kader Asmal stated: "The effective citizen is someone who knows his or her country's history, arts and literature, and not just mathematics, science and technology" (Asmal & Wilmott, 2001, p. 195)

History as an identity-oriented subject was re-introduced to the curriculum in 2003. Chronological continuity was restored to provide the long story of African ancestry to be identified with. However, neither public history culture nor school textbooks were straightforwardly iconoclastic. By the inclusion of the essentials of the Afrikaner identity narrative, educators materialised the rhetoric of a 'rainbow nation'. The periodisation of history was no longer stipulated as a dichotomy of colonialism and emancipation but organised in a way that gave a place to Afrikaner pioneers and thus recognised the identity needs of the Afrikaners.

The textbooks of the integrated schools were uni-ethnic, printed in English for the African majority and in *Afrikaans* for the Afrikaners. The author teams represented the 'rainbow nation'. According to the Secretary of Education, history education had a reconciliatory potential: "More than any discipline, good history put to good use taught by imaginative teachers can promote reconciliation . . . It has the role of raising the awareness of learners to the issue of their own identity and the way they interact with the multiple identities of South Africans around them" (quoted in van Eeden, 2010, p. 43).



The new democratic culture of history was adopted in schools. Like the local community museums, school classes were expected to work as bases for 'history from below'. Students were encouraged and instructed by textbooks to interview local people and process the memories gathered in the classroom. Surveys of the effect of the use of oral history in the classroom proved that students developed an awareness of being personally part of South African history (Mackey, 2007).

South Africa seemed to achieve what failed in Bosnia-Herzegovina: making history classes dialogical. The achievement depended on two assets: pedagogical tradition and political will. Already during the last decade of apartheid, educators had struggled to reform the obsolete apartheid history lessons. The Black consciousness movement had, since the 70s, urged critical emancipatory history, and liberal White educationists had adopted analytical classroom methods from the British 'new history' project. In 1994, the progressive ideas were already available for the education reform. The reform was facilitated by a unified political will to integrate education and enhance its relevance.

In conclusion, the reform of history education succeeded due to the firm grip of State. However, the reality of the post-conflict society did not enable a full reconciliation over night. In social memory, dark memories were fostered and used to accentuate the prevailing grievances. Therefore, healing dialogue in history classes was invaluable.

### **Conclusion: The essential processes and actors of reconciliation about history**

The Finnish experience of a long history war shows that time, as such, does not reconcile memories. The lapse of one generation does not suffice to level down post-conflict antagonisms. Active reconciliatory politics are necessary to calm a history war. I will conclude by pointing out the most obvious differences in the *processes* and *agency* of post-conflict educational reconciliation in the cases of Finland, Bosnia-Herzegovina and South Africa. Doing that, I acknowledge the epochal change in historiography between the Finnish case and the other two. The requirements of dialogue and multiperspectivity in history were assumed only in the post-ideological and post-colonial era, long after the Finnish civil war. In retrospect, the historiographical rules of de-mythicalisation and social inclusiveness were not valid in post-civil-war Finland. Neither was social memory recognised by historians. The Finnish case thus constitutes an argument in support for the historiographical turn in the 70s: for history to be a socially viable craft, the post-colonial, multiperspectival and 'history from below' approach was then long overdue.

#### ***Processes***

A comparative look at the processes of history education reveal a decisive differences between Finland and Bosnia-Herzegovina on one hand and South Africa on the other hand. The differences concern state intervention, textbook production and teachers' professional action.

*In Finland*, the leaders of the young nation-state urged an imposition of a uniform national grand narrative on all people. Supported by the White part of the civil society, the State managed to make the White narrative hegemonic both in history culture, textbook production and educational administration. Embryonic germs of a will for reconciliation were repressed by the steep hierarchy and rigid conservatism of the institutions.

*Bosnia-Herzegovina* after 1995 resembles Finland with regard to the State administration's dedication to nation-building. However, the State was not capable of imposing a unifying history curriculum on all Bosnia-Herzegovinan schools, but, instead, submitted education to

ethnic divisions. Attempts at reconciliation depended on the processes prompted by international intervention. The European Union started the intervention through a textbook revision, removing hate language from the books. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) eventually took a prominent role in the education reform and, in cooperation with local administrators, set up guidelines for the authoring of curricula and textbooks. However, it proved hard to persuade the authors to use the multicultural Bosnia-Herzegovinan state as a common reference point of history. Most textbooks remained ethnically idiosyncratic. Curriculum reform stumbled on the teaching of the difficult history of the 1990s.

To intensify the effort of making classrooms into hearths of reconciliation, the OSCE organised a series of in-service training seminars for history teachers in different parts of the country. The seminars provided a vital opportunity for Croat, Muslim and Serb teachers to conduct a dialogue about historical divisions.

*In South Africa*, the State assumed a firm grip on the education system, which, after the transition to majority rule, was effectively integrated. However, writing a national history curriculum proved problematic. The academic community and civil society were, before the transition, already engaged in a determined process of transforming history education into a critical and multiperspectival craft. Nevertheless, in the first post-1994 curriculum, history as a school subject was all but debunked. Apartheid and resistance struggle were expected to be taught as social science invariables, without historical agency and time contingency. Eventually, the history educators managed to convince the politicians of the value of history as an identity resource for the 'rainbow nation', and history was restored as a school subject, now bolstered by the post-colonial approach and 'history from below' elements.

The textbook production accompanied the State project of the 'rainbow nation'. The author teams were multiracial, the contents included the previous blank spots around the decades of apartheid and resistance, and, moreover, textbooks facilitated an interaction between a school and a community by asking students to collect local memories. Even though direct encounters between the Blacks and the Whites were in many communities hindered by socio-economic structural divisions, school history served a dialogue about the past.

Among the processes of using history for post-conflict reconciliation, the acts by the State seem crucial. Even an intensive intervention by the international community is ineffectual, if the State cannot mobilise the domestic forces of reform. A community split by a conflict seems to have required coordinated measures to facilitate dialogue and shared historical consciousness.

### ***Actors***

The role of *State* differed between the three cases.

In South Africa, the grip of the State on history culture and education was strongest. In comparison, the Finnish State was stuck on the idea of an ideologically uniform nation-state, embraced by the post-conflict generation, and the Bosnia-Herzegovinan State was too decentralised to handle the multiethnic society with its neo-nationalist divisions. In South Africa, the structures of the State enabled the reconstruction of the society.

New South African leaders had gathered the political will and agenda for a change during the decades of resistance struggle. They were prepared to take drastic measures to transform institutions like the education. The integration of schools and the updating of the history lessons in terms of majority culture were materialised without a delay. A strong intervention by the State secured the tenets of the 'rainbow nation' by educating multicultural popular identity.

In contrast, in Bosnia–Herzegovina the state was crippled by the weaknesses of the Dayton peace settlement. The decentralised structure made the State vulnerable to the ethnic rivalries of Croats, Muslims and Serbs and hindered cultural reform. Cultural reconciliation was left dependent on international actors, who assumed responsibility for disarming history classes in school. The OSCE, the Council of Europe and a number of other international organisations did their best to involve the State administration in the reform efforts, which, however, were hindered by the slack grip of the State on local developments. Even though small steps were taken towards the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a common historical entity in teaching, a history war was still on when the first post-war generation come of age.

Equally, the role of *history educators* differed between the three cases.

*In Finland* after 1918, historians mostly worked for the political project of nation-building. In the prevailing ideologically tuned historiography, historians were expected to serve the big public and not deconstruct popular myths. Teachers, according to the evidence from memories and popular literature, joined the hegemonic White nation-building project, and the teacher unions omitted any discussions about the ethos of history education (Rantala, 2003). The socially divisive history lessons were substituted by a socially reconstructive approach only after the nation-building project gave way to a welfare state after the Second World War.

*In South Africa* after 1994, the activists of the Black history movement within the ANC did not hesitate to share the results of their post-colonial interpretation of the past with the public at large. By the 1980s, Black and White historians had started a dialogue about the past, with a sharp focus on school education. A revision of the curricula and textbooks took place without a delay after the political transition. The leaders of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission explicitly wanted the hearings of the commission sessions to result in a re-writing of South-African history. As oral history, the stories of the witnesses were spread all over the country by television and universally shared as vernacular history. In school, the ‘history from below’ approach was adopted by incorporating oral history in school work. By collecting local memories, students connected school lessons to local memories.

South African educators constituted a vital agency in making history education into a critical and democratic craft. In the early 1990s liberal educators connected themselves to the Black History movement and started the reform of history education. By the time of the political transition in 1994, the guiding principles were thus already thought out and available for actors.

*In Bosnia-Herzegovina* historians were at the time of the Dayton peace agreement deeply divided about the use of history in public. Progressive historians sought international contacts and willingly took part in the reform initiatives of the international actors, while on the other side, conservative historians were committed to the separate ethnic nation-building projects of Muslims, Croats and Serbs. The task of the progressive historians in materialising the reconciliatory potential of history was difficult as teachers and local people tended to resort to the myths of guilt and victimhood. International interventionists were left as the main agents of reconciliatory reform.

The comparison of the potential actors of reconciliation of the past in Finland, South Africa and Bosnia-Herzegovina indicates the necessity of having a resourceful State. Nevertheless, the role of academia is essential in facilitating deliberative reflection on the nature of historical knowledge and the relationship between history culture and history education. In this article, South Africa provided an example of both the State and academia contributing to post-conflict reconciliation, while Bosnia-Herzegovina seemed to repeat the old Finnish example of letting a whole generation be lost to a history war. As there seems to be no end to inter-community history wars in today’s world, further studies into the reconciliatory potential of history education are in demand.

My suggestions for the criteria of historiographically and educationally valid history education, namely de-mythicalisation, social inclusiveness and connectedness to local history culture, deserve to be empirically tested. As historical consciousness is an all-human faculty, a post-conflict generation needs the school as an arena to deal with the burden of the past and connect the achieved understanding to aspirations for the future.

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