

Facing – Mapping – Bridging Diversity. Foundation of a European Discourse on History Education. Part 1.

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Facing – Mapping – Bridging Diversity is a compilation of articles from 35 different authors, all of which share the theme of didactics of history as a scientific discipline. The main purpose of the book is to set out the discourse on history education in various European countries and lay the basis for a European discourse on the topic.

Each of the 24 articles explores history education in countries such as Austria, Cyprus, Estonia and Hungary, among others. A notable exclusion from the book is Switzerland, as it is not part of the European Union. The motivation for the book is derived from the belief, according to Erdmann and Hasberg, that none of the previous investigations into History education in Europe included the didactics of history. The editors postulate that the teaching of history in Europe follow three distinct routes, firstly that of the German model which focuses on historical consciousness in society, secondly, the idea in other European countries where History Didactics are part of the educational sciences, and lastly the French model that looks at History education as part of social studies and where the focus is on the transmission

of historical knowledge. By presenting the findings of 35 authors in this publication, the editors envisage to demonstrate the similarities concerning History didactics between the different European Union member states and to create a starting point for closer cooperation between the countries.

The aspirations of the authors as set out above, therefore define the audience at which the publication is aimed. Those in tertiary education institutions where History education forms part of an education degree may benefit from reading these case studies, especially if issues such as diversity and unity are to be addressed through the use of a multi-perspective approach to history education. In this sense, history educators in South Africa may also find some articles useful as the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) emphasises the concept of multi-perspective approach to the interpretation and analysis of historical events.¹ The only chapter that deals specifically with unity and diversity is Karl Filser's "*Unity and Diversity of our European identity*" *Recommendations of the European Council on History Learning and Teaching*, which is enlightening regarding the European context and the emphasis on the use of the multi-perspective method, a method which also significantly influenced CAPS. The remainder of the book is a collection of case studies on History education from various Europe countries. While these articles are interesting and informative, the relevance for South African educators is doubtful, as each chapter will have to be scrutinised in order to assess the extent to which European case studies may apply to the South African context. While the European Union countries and South Africa have a lot in common regarding unity and diversity, there are also unique aspects to the different countries. It is unlikely that many school educators will want to wade through an academic text such as this unless they are sure that it may offer information that will be useful in their classrooms.

The technical aspects of the publication require improvement. The book contains no index, which hampers its usefulness to researchers. It is also evident that the chapters have been translated into English by a non-native English translator. The impact of this is that the meaning of many sentences is obscured by academic language. In short, the publication may contribute towards an expansion of the pedagogical horizons of those involved in curriculum planning and design as well as the theoretical foundations of History education; however, for the school educators the book may be of limited value.

¹ Department: Basic Education, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement; p. 12. (Available at: <http://www.education.gov.za>), as accessed on 19 January 2012.