5

Historical Competence as a Key to Promote Democracy

Cecilia Braslavsky, Carla Borges, Marcelo Souto Simão and Nhung Truong[1]

> "If sharks were men," Mr. Keuner was asked by his landlady's little girl, "would they be nicer to the little fishes?" "Certainly," he said. "If sharks were men, they would build enormous boxes in the ocean for the little fish, with all kinds of food inside, both vegetable and animal. There would, of course, also be schools in the big boxes. […] The principal subject would, of course, be the moral education of the little fish. They would be taught that it would be the best and most beautiful thing in the world if a little fish sacrificed itself cheerfully and that they all had to believe the sharks, especially when the latter said they were providing for a beautiful future. The little fish would be taught that this future is assured only if they learned obedience." (Wenn die Haifische Menschen wären, Brecht 1971: 55-56)

The twentieth century was a century of remarkable contradictions. Never before could humanity educate so many individuals for such long periods of time. However, never before has humanity been able to kill so many of its members. In fact, during the twentieth century, more than 180 million people were killed by the deliberate action of other human beings. Two world wars and hundreds of civil and interethnic wars took place, initiated and conducted in a great majority of cases by highly educated leaders (Braslavsky 2003a).

The dawn of the twenty-first century then arose, bringing with it significant paradoxes of globalization.[2] One of these paradoxes is:

> […] the proliferation and deepening of national democracies and the strength of supra-national institutions and government mechanisms. Since 1980, eighty-one countries have taken significant steps towards

> democracy and thirty-three military regimes have been replaced by
> civilian governments. […] But voices are increasingly raised regarding
> the difficulties or even weaknesses of many national governments to
> withstand the weight of supra-national mechanisms and bodies (Stiglitz
> 2002). […] Terrorism has again harassed the world, now on an
> international scale (IBE-UNESCO 2003: 17).

Ironically, these paradoxes were recognized by Ministers of Education worldwide at
the forty-sixth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), held in
Geneva on 5-8 September 2001, just days before the 11 September attack on the twin
towers in New York, creating a shock wave that was felt the globe over. Since then, the
world has been witness to continued violence and threats to our collective sense of
secure social order. How can humanity learn from the past in order to avoid ending the
twenty-first century in the same way that it began—or worse?

     We would suggest that the development of historical competence through
education could be a positive step in this direction. A person's or group of persons'
'historical competence' can be defined as the way in which their ability to act in history
as a present process is shaped, using history as a narration of what is currently
happening and influencing the processes to come. This paper explores the possible link
between the development of historical competence within schools, and the promotion
of democracy, itself a lever for development, peace and the guarantee of fundamental
human rights.

     First, we will look at the link between democracy and education and how
democracy fits into and encompasses comprehensive education. Second, we will
discuss the notion of a new educational framework in the context of quality Education
for All and oriented towards the building of competencies. Thirdly, we explore the four
types of historical consciousness and make an argument for a genealogical con-
sciousness as the one most favorable for fostering historical competence. Next, we
present a tentative exploratory analysis of the subject of historical competence in the
curriculum as related to the level of democratic societies, using as a point of reference a
database on official intended instructional time worldwide that has been made available
through UNESCO's International Bureau of Education. Finally, in the conclusion we
propose some further possible venues for exploration.

Democracy and education

In 1835, de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* raised the alert of an irreversible,
long-term, global trend towards democracy, an idea later revisited by some authors at
the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the emergence of several
authoritarian regimes contributed to a skeptical appraisal of his predictions. Similarly,
the unprecedented levels of violence witnessed in the last century—involving
democratic regimes as much as authoritarian ones—seemed to lessen the expectations
on the promised benefits of democracy (Diamond and Stepan 1978: 71). The scenario

in Latin America in the 1950s to the 1970s is elusive in this sense. As if in a chain reaction, democratic governments fell in Paraguay (1954), Brazil (1964), Peru (1968), Uruguay (1973), Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976).

Nevertheless, recent decades were marked by an expansion of democratic rule in many countries, related in particular to the decline of communist and military regimes. Francis Fukuyama (1992) interpreted this phenomenon as the 'end of history', characterized by the triumph of liberal democracy as the only legitimate political regime.

Almost at the same time, where some authors[3] had already stressed the possible wave-pattern that seemed to characterize democratic expansion, Huntington (1991) proposed that three waves of democratization had actually occurred in the modern world. The first and longest wave took place from 1828 to 1926, the second from 1943 to 1962 and the last one started in 1974—the year of Portugal's Carnation Revolution. Huntington notes, however, that the first two waves of democratization were followed by reverse waves in which countries moved back to non-democratic regimes and he warns of the possibility of further rebounds in countries due to problems of consolidation. He further organizes the obstacles and opportunities for consolidation of democracy around three major axes: politics, culture and economics (Huntington 1991). It is here that we would propose that education has a most important role to play.

Democracy can be implemented through the introduction of legal measures, such as regular elections and universal suffrage. However, if such institutions are not founded on a democratic culture deeply rooted in people's minds and if this culture does not find the material means to translate this into effective behaviors, it is unlikely that democracy will be sustained over time.

Education has historically played an important role in the promotion of principles and values that contributed to social cohesion through the construction of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991). In the nineteenth century, much of these imagined communities were built upon the idea of the 'nation-state worth dying for' (Hobsbawn 1962). In such a context, the purpose of education was mainly "'to transmit the culture of adult generations to younger generations' and promote social cohesion through the promotion of cultural homogeneity and the embedding of socio-economic and political stratification" (Braslavsky 2003b: 3).

It could be defended that this model of education certainly contributed to the consolidation of the state as the prevailing form of social organization in the twentieth century. However, one could also question its transformative role in the light of the emergence of countless armed conflicts, the spread of deadly diseases and the deepening of social and economic inequalities that have marked the twenty-first century. In an era when famine, pandemics, gender disparities, discrimination and other kinds of social injustice have been highlighted on the global agenda, notably through initiatives such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, it follows that we may ask what could and should be expected from education.

We would propose that meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century requires building a new educational framework, one that is based on the promotion of quality education for all, through the adoption of an approach based on competencies.

Such an educational framework would not aim for the simple transmission of information from older to younger generations, but would strive towards the full development of each individual's potential and the construction of knowledge as an enterprise of the whole society. It rejects the idea of exclusive nationalism in favor of a broader notion of inter-ethnicity and multiculturalism. It encompasses concerns of peace, human rights, diversity and equity. It is based on the right to quality education for all individuals, not so as to achieve the standardization of educational modalities, but to promote equitable educational opportunities for everyone throughout every stage of life. Most importantly, this model of education is inextricably related to democracy, both as a method and a goal.

With awareness of its many limitations, we assert that democracy is presently the form that best suits the requisites for promoting individual freedom, collective security and sustainable development. The importance of democracy, however, goes beyond its instrumental nature. On the one hand, it fulfils basic human needs regarding political freedoms, civil liberties and social participation; on the other, democracy is constructively relevant as it contributes, particularly through the promotion of open debate, to the better understanding of social reality, uncovering different aspects of that reality (Sen 2000).

We see the relation between democracy and education as bi-directional, although not necessarily self-reinforcing. On one side, democracy should enhance educational opportunities and contribute to improved educational quality. However, education should, at the same time, foster the development of fully capable responsible citizens. This should, in theory, create the conditions for a virtuous cycle. Nevertheless, current indicators might point to a situation that is much more complex. For example, if one were to make a study of countries of the world based on the democracy index as calculated by the Freedom House Institute and compare it with the EFA Development Index provided by the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005), the results may not be so evident. For instance, while it might not be surprising to find cases of countries with higher levels of democracy with proportionately high indicators of educational access and performance, it is not uncommon to observe countries with low levels of democracy presenting very satisfactory indicators for education. More sophisticated methods, including, for instance, indicators for learning achievement or societal levels of discrimination or violence, might therefore be more revealing in this regard.

Furthermore, we would suggest that one key element in the construction of that virtuous cycle is historical consciousness and historical competence, as we will discuss in the following section. Understanding historical consciousness and exploring how it can be transformed into historical competence through educational mechanisms is the central concern of the present essay.

An exploratory framework for encompassing democracy

Among the extensive literature in the political sciences on the concept and the essentials of democracy, Robert Dahl's model may be one of the most popularly disseminated. In *Polyarchy* (Dahl 1971) he argues that fully capable citizens must be assured of three kinds of opportunities: (i) the full opportunity of formulating their preferences; (ii) the opportunity of fully expressing their preferences to the other citizens and also to the government through collective and individual action; and (iii) the opportunity to have their preferences equally considered by the government, without any discrimination concerning the content or the origin of those preferences. The author argues that these conditions are necessary for democracy, although probably not sufficient. We would like to explore this aspect further.

Dahl's model certainly covers many of the essential elements of democracy. However, we hold that two other fundamental components of democracy are left out of Dahl's approach: (iv) the creation of public spaces that offer the possibility and encourage the promotion of dialogue and debate; and (v) the possibility of developing historical competence at the individual level.

Dialogue and debate are possibly implicit in Dahl's democratic framework. Public debate lies not only in the very heart of the Greek Republic, which inspired modern democracy, but is also an essential element in fostering individual and collective perceptions of social reality. Dialogue is, moreover, one important step towards an empathic comprehension of different individual and collective preferences, contributing to the further development of values much needed in most recent democratic conceptions, such as tolerance and diversity.[4]

The second element we would propose to include in such a framework is the introduction of a historic perspective and the fostering of historical competence. The absence of a historical perspective, while drawing on a person's list of preferences, might damage their ability to compare realities and identify similar challenges and, potentially, similar solutions. It also hinders people from realizing the evolution of the democratic concept itself, narrowing the margins of improvement in terms of freedom. Moreover, it could do harm to the construction of a collective memory that might contribute to the reproduction of successful experiences and to the avoidance of failures throughout history.

A broader concept of democracy that includes both public debate and a historical perspective would, in essence, create an environment for the development of historical competence. By taking historical processes as a reference for their present actions, analyzing potential and effective causes and consequences, evaluating the results, converting and adapting successful experiences into their realities and finally exposing their conclusions to the evaluation of others, individuals can start to be conscious of their role as agents of history in a constantly and intensively changing world, thus, stimulating more intense and responsible participation.

This new concept also gives rise to the proliferation of a human rights culture. The understanding of the political and historical processes that lead to the emergence

and consecration of human rights would necessarily foster the recognition of their importance and call attention to the urgent need for making them a reality to the whole world. Consequently, education is then not only seen as a tool that can serve in the establishment of personal preferences, but also as a fundamental right in itself. It is understood not as an instrument, but as an entitlement. This shift completely changes the approach to education since quality Education for All, besides being an instrument for democracy, is now also one of its fundamental elements.

Additionally, people who have historical competence are more aware of the new challenges and trends posed by the twenty-first century on education, since they are able, at the same time, to quickly realize the changes and to act on and within them, either by accelerating or inverting their sense. Provided with a historical perspective, possibilities and probabilities can be more easily identified and measured, allowing for long-term planning. Likewise, from a broader standpoint, it is more likely to identify stakeholders and to visualize joint strategies for fighting together similar risks and pursuing complementary goals. In a deeply interconnected and interdependent world, such abilities might make a difference when it comes to conciliating wills and beliefs of different cultures.

There is a growing recognition of the need for the construction of a new paradigm of education that can tackle the main risks arising from the globalization process. We believe that a more historically conscious actor is better prepared to perceive this need and therefore to deal with such changes.

Education for All and a new educational framework

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are paradoxes of globalization that pose new challenges to education at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Growing global interdependencies, exponential scientific developments, multiplying channels of communication and information flow, and increasing awareness about the legitimacy of individual freedoms all contrast with a widening gap between the rich and the poor. This gap is aggravated by a new knowledge distribution, an increase in religious and inter-ethnic conflicts and other forms of social exclusion (Braslavsky 2003b).

In order to meet such challenges, a new framework for education is needed (Tedesco 1997). This model should replace the hermetic idea of the nation-state with a concept of 'topopolygamic'[5] appurtenances; it would reject the hypotheses of cultural homogeneity and knowledge stability in favor of cultural pluralism and the recognition of 'cumulative feedback loops'[6] between innovations and the uses of innovations. Such a framework would not contribute to the reification of political, social or economic stratification, but, alternatively, would promote equitable opportunities, facilitating individual choice and allowing for mobility.

In April 2000 at the World Education Forum, the 'Dakar Framework for Action' was adopted. This framework established six educational objectives to be reached globally by the year 2015 (UNESCO 2000). The document summarizes these objectives in the expression: 'Education for All' (EFA). However, considering that this

plan's sixth objective also states the ideal of achieving quality in education, the slogan that would best represent the intentions and—above all—the efforts of international governing bodies with regard to education for the twenty-first century would be '*quality* Education for All'.

From a humanistic perspective, quality Education for All ensures that every person is granted educational experiences that allow for the development of their competencies and for personal, communitarian, national and international progress by 2015 (Braslavsky 2004b). In fact, the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand) identified quality as 'a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity [while] it was recognized that expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully to the development of the individual and society' (UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2004: 29).

Current indicators of quality education (i.e. retention rates, pupil/teacher ratios, achievement scores, learning materials) can provide important information, however the level of quality education goes beyond empirically measurable data. The ambition for quality Education for All refers to the need for everyone to have access to educational experiences enabling them to develop competencies to act successfully in multiple, heterogeneous areas. Preparing children for life has always been one of the main roles of education. Nevertheless, this is still not an easy task, nor does it command consensus, particularly when taking into account the enormous, constant transformations at the beginning of this century (IBE-UNESCO 2005a).

Among these transformations, it has already become commonplace to refer to the increasing advances in knowledge and the very significant changes in the way this knowledge is structured, interrelated and used. Parallel to this, curricular structures also change; however, not at the same pace. Time management for instruction is made more flexible, options are extended, some hours or subjects are added or removed but, in general, the core curriculum, consisting predominantly of subjects reflecting the structure of knowledge of the early twentieth century, continues to prevail in most countries worldwide (Braslavsky 2003b).

In fact, there are currently political-educational and pedagogical movements of some significance that propose new models and styles of curricular development. They maintain that education should increasingly be orientated towards the development of 'skills' or 'competencies' and not the mere transmission of information. These are not facilities that one either acquires or does not acquire (inherently or learned), but rather capacities that can be developed to varying degrees and levels enabling an individual to reach their potential as an individual and participate actively and proficiently in society.

Curricular development directed at building 'competencies'

The debate on 'competence-oriented education' does not sound as novel today as it did when the issue started to become one of the highest priorities on the agenda of educational institutions worldwide. Nevertheless, doubts and difficulties still remain,

ranging from the definition of the key concepts to agreement on which pedagogical methodologies could best take learning needs into account.

Studies undertaking a definition of the concept of competence are still very recent. After detailed study and consideration of the points of view of various scholars in this area, those responsible for the DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations) Project agreed that competence would be defined, in general terms, as the ability to respond successfully to specific requirements and to carry out a deliberately addressed activity or task (OECD 2002). Each competence would thus correspond to a combination of practical and cognitive skills, knowledge—conscious or implicit—motivation, values, ethics, views, emotions and other aspects of social behavior that combine to influence an individual's decisions and actions in his professional and personal life (Rychen and Tiana 2004).

Though they are often used indiscriminately, 'skills' and 'competencies' are not synonyms. Skills are rather a part of the complex universe of elements that together make up competencies. Having leadership skills, including knowing how to express one's ideas clearly and convincingly and having strategic vision and problem-solving abilities, does not necessarily mean that one becomes a leader. Beliefs and values also have to be considered; aspirations and personal and community preferences must be taken into account.

Competence cannot be equalled to consciousness either. Competence, compared to consciousness, is the ability to bring all views, values and impressions from the cognitive field to the real one. It implies the ability to match skills to different situations, adapt them and, furthermore, put them into practice, all the while bearing in mind past experience, present realities and projections for the future.

It is thus suggested that existing proposals for giving meaning to the curriculum would more likely be enriched if 'competence' rather than 'skills' development were adopted more consistently and universally and if educators encouraged their pupils not only to develop consciousness but especially to apply it systematically in their daily lives.

Once the notion of competence has been defined, another challenge is to establish the main competencies a child should learn in order to be able to participate actively in the many contexts of social life. Among the various proposals, a growing concern can be seen in the areas of learning to be and learning to live together (Delors et al. 1996), mastering new technologies of knowledge management and, equally, with developing decision-making and problem-solving strategies (Sinclair 2004). The DeSeCo project suggests three pivots on which to base the teaching of competencies: 'acting autonomously, using tools interactively and functioning in heterogeneous social groups' (Rychen and Tiana 2004: 20).

Historical consciousness

We would define historical consciousness as the 'internal software' that permits us to process data based on reality in the past and in the present and allows us to make

comparisons. According to the German teacher, Jörn Rüsen, individuals and societies can have four pure types of historical consciousness: traditional, exemplary, critical and genealogical (Rüsen et al. 1991).

Those with *traditional* historical consciousness tend to act as people have always acted, without questioning the origin or context, or the relevance or consequences of that way of acting. A national society or group where a traditional historical consciousness prevails tends to reproduce the economic, social and political institutions and practices just as they knew them in their own childhood and as they were related to them. For them, 'every previous period was better' and the best thing is to try to preserve it or restore it if it has been changed.

The bearers of *exemplary* historical consciousness tend to do things in the same way as others whom they consider to be an 'example' of good economic, political and social performance. This is the case of those who admire another country and wish to construct its institutions in their own, without taking into account the processes that enabled these institutions to come into being, the crises they may be experiencing or their future prospects.

Those who have a *critical* historical consciousness tend to reject existing models, but without recognizing the need to construct a different alternative, or at least the operational aspects of constructing such a different alternative.

Finally, those with a *genealogical* historical consciousness use traditions, examples and criticisms along with interpretation and creativity, to perceive, understand and transform their realities. Before taking any decision, they adopt a historical perspective, drawing an overview of the available choices—now and then—estimating the respective risks but, most of all, carefully taking into account the new priorities of their frequently changing world. They are at the same time custodians of memory and creators of meanings. According to their particular personality, they may be doers or thinkers. The former construct the institutional dimension of a future reality and the latter their conceptual bases.

The genealogical historical consciousness provides its bearers with instruments that can make them move forward in the direction already achieved by their predecessors, thinking toward 'Utopia' (Tyack and Cuban 1995). In the case of national societies, it can be said that they manage to 'advance' towards another society, generally more democratic and with higher human development levels, because at the start of the twenty-first century democracy and human development are dimensions of a utopia that tend toward a higher degree of consensus, rhetorical games of political correctness, and chances of a better quality of life for broader groups in national societies (Braslavsky 2004b).

In other words, by thinking in a rigorous, conscious, constructive and critical manner (Sinclair 2004), taking historical processes as a reference for their present acts, the holders of this competence are provided with more tools to stand for their rights and to respond to their duties. The genealogical historical consciousness would, thus, represent a constructive balance among all the previous types of historical con-

sciousness and an apparently suitable answer to the needs for construction of solid pillars of democracy in this beginning of a century.

From consciousness to historical competence

It is curious to note that none of the three pivots suggested by the DeSeCo project seems to fully encompass the concept of historical consciousness. Although historical contents and skills, like discursive and logical thinking, may be elements of the competencies defended by DeSeCo, we believe the contribution of education to raising historical *consciousness*—particularly of the genealogical type—and forming citizens who are fully aware of their role as historical agents can be best addressed through the development of what we call historical *competence*.

We suggest that historical competence is a complex fabric of skills, knowledge and attitudes that makes it possible for individuals: (i) to believe in the importance of human action; (ii) to distinguish the different groups that act in different periods and geographic and social levels; (iii) to 'discover' the intentions and motivations behind each and every one of them; (iv) to construct their own story of how they have arrived at the situation they are in; (v) to define their own direction of where they want to be in the future; (vi) to put themselves in the place of each individual in each period and place; and (vii) to define an effective course of action to arrive there, while taking others into account.

Obviously, this can be done in a relationship of mutual gain or in a relationship damaging to others. Generally speaking, it would seem that human beings are not 'naturally' altruistic, supportive and co-operative and consequently the possibility of genealogical historical consciousness being in the service of 'living together' or of 'sustainable human development' or of 'globalization with a human face' depends on a balance of powers in action that would also be associated with something like a balanced presence of genealogical historical awareness necessary for the construction of democracy and human development.

It has often been said, and rightly so, that in the 'modern education systems' that functioned well until very recently, some were taught to think and others to act. One of the intriguing problems of the Latin American education systems could have been that, precisely, they attempted to teach everyone to think, but thinking is impoverished when not deployed in the context of economies with growth potential (Filmus 2001).

Allied with varied cognitive and practical skills, such as logical thinking, narrative argumentation, empathy, critical screening, negotiation, conflict resolution, social interaction, with values like pluralism, tolerance, as well as attitudes and motivations related to curiosity, pro-activity and respect for others' rights, historical *consciousness* can be translated into historical *competence*, enabling individuals not only to think, but, most importantly, to intervene in the context in which they find themselves.

For those reasons, we hold that the development of historical competence is one fruitful way of meeting comprehensive and critical thought with responsible action. As

such, historical competence should be considered as a basic foundation of global citizenship and a crucial component of education for democracy.

Fostering historical competence through the curriculum

Discussions on learning competencies for life fall in most cases into a methodological discussion focused on the 'apparent' dichotomy between traditional disciplines and cross-cutting education. However, not only are these strategies not mutually exclusive, they are rather complementary (Perrenoud 1999). Indeed, the importance of inter-disciplinary teaching and synergy between subjects should be taken into account, both in the development of study programs for teaching competencies for life and in the possible setting up of specific departments for doing so.

Sinclair (2004) analyzed in detail several cases of competence-oriented education, with the aim of inferring possible causes of success and failure in various innovative experiences and drawing some lessons for the future. She compares three different approaches that had been previously systematized by Gillespie (2002): (i) 'integration/diffusion' alone; (ii) the 'carrier subject' approach; and (iii) the 'separate subject' approach (quoted in Sinclair 2004: 132). After carrying out ten cases studies and comparing the results, she concludes in favor of:

> The ideal is […] a 'separate subject' timetabled period for which suitable teachers can be selected and trained to facilitate experiential work. It may seem that the 'separate subject' approach (or a properly organized carrier-subject approach) with extensive training of specially identified teachers is a high-cost model. However, this approach can be cost-effective (Sinclair 2004: 134).

Based on the study by Sinclair (2004) on curricular approaches to competence-oriented education and also a unique and innovative case of competence-oriented education in Switzerland,[7] we would suggest approaching competencies effectively through the following three framework axes:

- *A formative axis*: specific subjects of the curriculum are responsible for teaching the desired competence. These subjects can be either traditional subjects, such as history, social studies and biology, or separate subjects, exclusively designed for a specific competence. It is desirable that teachers be specially trained for teaching the competence, in addition to having good knowledge of the content involved.
- *A cross-cutting axis*: all disciplines of the curriculum touch on aspects related to the competencies to be taught, for instance, through the introduction of cross-cutting themes, reinforcing the values, skills and behaviors learnt in the specific subjects.
- *An environmental axis*: the school, the community and the society environments are taken into consideration and 'brought' into the classes, promoting the dialogue

of students with the reality outside the classroom and enabling students to practice learnt competencies in wider contexts, revealing the relevance to their lives. The existence of a supportive or, alternatively, a hostile environment, in regard to the competencies taught has direct implications on the effective learning.

It is important to stress that the above framework does not aim to provide an ever-valid formula of the kind 'one-size-fits-all'. Indeed, other studies have already stressed that there are various curricular structures that make similar developments possible and, on the contrary, that there are similar developments with various curricular structures. On the other hand, if we consider that framework as a possible alternative, among others, it may help us in imagining how historical competence might eventually be approached by the curriculum.

Given the importance of the contents traditionally taught in disciplines such as history, geography and social studies to the development of historical competence, it would seem reasonable to expect that one of those subjects, or even all of them, would compose the formative axis of the historical competence curriculum in a 'carrier subject' approach. Alternatively, a 'separate subject' approach could possibly be associated with the presence of subjects like 'democracy education', 'civic studies', 'education for citizenship' or similar labels.

Themes linked to collective memory, cultural diversity, discrimination, and so on could be introduced in literature or language classes. Formal and informal fallacies, distribution problems and representation applied to content relevant examples, could be covered by mathematics and philosophy teachers. Ethics, evolution, scientific methodology (and its embedding principles of transparency, replicability and refutability) may be linked to natural sciences. However, more than addressing such issues, it is important that those subjects contribute to reinforcing the competencies learnt by reinforcing values, such as equity, openness and fairness, encouraging skills like participation, advocacy and conciliation, promoting such attitudes as active listening and assertiveness, and motivations like solidarity and justice.

Covering those two first axes, however, may not be sufficient. As Cox points out, "curricula face the challenge of educating about democracy and the moral values implicit in it, in unstable and problematic contexts" (Cox 2002: 126). Particularly in countries where fundamental democratic institutions are not yet firmly consolidated, but even in countries with longer democratic traditions, it is often the case that students are confronted outside classrooms with events that call into question the knowledge, values and behaviors taught in the schools. This is particularly relevant when dealing with historical competence. Such contrasts should offer the possibility of comparing different interpretations of reality, understanding the underlying processes and elaborating strategies of responsible intervention. It is also important that students develop the notion of different spaces of intervention, being able to understand a particular ethos and norms, how they influence behavior and how they can evolve through the different levels during which historical competence is being acquired.

Much more could be said and, indeed, every innovative experience of education for historical competence would surely provide a series of interesting lessons that could shed more light into this still little-explored area. Our objective is not in providing answers but in raising some issues that could inspire deeper research. In the next section, we try to bring more questions into debate, based on a brief and exploratory analysis of some new empirical data.

An exploratory look into some empirical data

How, in practice, can schools contribute to the individual development of genealogical historical competence? Several hypotheses can be raised to answer such a question, focusing on the methods employed by teachers in classrooms, the contents taught, and the behavior demanded from pupils and educators, among others. The focus of the present section is on time allocated to three subjects that we would presumably expect to be more closely related to the development of genealogical historical competence, namely history, social studies and civics.

The International Bureau of Education (IBE), the UNESCO institute in Geneva specialized in educational contents and methods, has dedicated itself to collecting and systematizing data on education systems and curricular contents from all countries in the world. This has resulted in the IBE having primary sources on official documents related to educational contents, often provided directly by Ministries of Education. More recently, a new dataset on subject allocation in timetables from more than 100 countries has been constructed (IBE-UNESCO 2005a). Such a rich database provides opportunities for the conduct of cross-national analyses on curricular structure defined in terms of time allocated to subjects. The analysis carried out in this study is a preliminary effort to exploit the rich data that is now available, and to raise some possible questions for future research agendas.

To this end, we selected a sample of countries from the databank of official timetables that the IBE has recently been constructing. In this study, we selected data from the most recent period (2000). Only countries for which there were full data available on the percentage of time allocated to each school subject in the intended curricula were included, adding up to 99 countries from different regions and levels of development.

The countries were organized according to their levels of democracy. Using the two measures of 'civil liberties' and 'political freedoms' provided by the Freedom House for 2000 in its Freedom in the World Report (Freedom House 2004), we created a democracy variable that divided countries into three groups of approximately equal sizes on a scale of the level of democracy: most democratic (thirty-five countries), partly democratic (thirty-five) and least democratic (twenty-nine).

It is important to note that, although the indicators used by Freedom House are extremely useful for identifying some major elements of democratic regimes, they do not account for the great complexity and subtleties that are inherent to most political regimes. Moreover, if we accept our conception of an ever-evolving democracy with

increasing levels of freedom, it would be extremely difficult to label a certain country accurately with its true level of democracy. As Sen (2000) points out, although freedom has an intrinsic dimension, it also has a relational one and, in this regard, inside the same state imbalances and contrasts could be so impressive that it would seem inadequate to call that country a democracy, even given its deeply rooted democratic institutions.

This being said, we looked at the hours allocated for three specific subjects, ones that we believe to be related to the development of historical competence: history, social studies and civics. We added up the total annual hours allocated for each subject by each group and calculated the simple average, based on the total number of countries inside each group. In order also to give a preliminary idea of whether those subjects were more or less disseminated inside each group, we calculated the proportion of countries teaching each subject for each group. Table 5.1 presents these preliminary results.

Table 5.1: Average total annual hours and percentage of countries teaching history, social studies and civics in 2000, by democracy group

	Most democratic		Partly democratic		Least democratic	
	Average total annual hours	% countries teaching subject	Average total annual hours	% countries teaching subject	Average total annual hours	% countries teaching subject
History	172	69	136	69	161	76
Social studies	244	77	263	66	136	62
Civics	45	40	103	51	74	55

What do these figures tell us about the manner in which historical competence is addressed by curricula in the world? We believe they give rise to some interesting questions that could be further explored through more careful research. Some questions that might be addressed in this context could be:

- Which of the three subjects would seem to be more closely related to the level of democracy indulged by a certain group?
- Is there a relation between these findings and the proposed 'three-axes framework'?
- Would an apparently prevalence of social studies over civics favor a 'carrier-subject approach' instead of a 'separate subject' approach?
- In what way might the school, community and society environment influence these figures?
- What impact do curricular reforms have on the subject time allocations observed?
- Are the groups sufficiently homogeneous to be treated as such? What kind of reflections do heterogeneity and homogeneity pose to the curriculum-making process?

- Is it valid to assume that democratic countries teach genealogical historical competence more effectively?
- Based on the current figures, could any inferences be made with regard to the political stability of certain countries in the near future?

Final remarks

Many other and more inspiring questions could be put forward, the answers to them lying not only in the careful analysis of the databank (which is just about to be published by IBE), but also in the study of curricular documents, the teaching methods and materials, the hidden curricula, the school environment, educational policies and so forth. The objective of this essay is less to provide answers than to bring into the debate the importance of education in promoting and sustaining democracy over time.

We suggested that the relation between democracy and education is bi-directional and that, through the development of a genealogical historical consciousness and its corresponding competence, this relationship can be organized into a self-reinforcing virtuous cycle, leading to a more comprehensive democracy and to better quality education for all citizens.

We presented some hints on how historical competence could be tentatively introduced in the curriculum and what major concerns should surround this decision. Finally, we made a tentative exploration of this question using a new databank on intended instructional time in curricula worldwide, opening some points for further and more in-depth analysis in the future.

Cristophe Carré, in his book *Sortir des conflits avec les autres* (2003), issued the following invitation:

> In 1956, the social psychologist Solomon Asch set in motion a series of experiments that showed in a surprising manner that most of the time we choose to follow the majority rather than to trust in our own senses. Thus, we are so easily swayed because we do not have confidence in our own perceptions. Imagine […] (Carré 2003: 89)

The rule of majority is oftentimes also called the golden rule of democracy. This may be misleading. Democracy cannot be reduced to elections and preferences, just as education cannot be reduced to literacy or life-skills. At the dawn of the twenty-first century it is important to give democracy and education the meaning they deserve—a historical meaning. This meaning can neither be separated from open and informed debate, nor from respect for human rights. It is a meaning that may not reify inequity and violence. Otherwise, we would be giving up true democracy and accepting the realization of a risk Tocqueville would already warn us against: the tyranny of the majority.

_____

Notes

1. The authors would like to thank Gustavo Cosse, Aaron Benavot, Massimo Amadio and Didi Shammas for their special help and advice.
2. For a description of these paradoxes of globalization, see IBE-UNESCO 2003, Introduction.
3. See Dahl 1989; Rustow 1990; or even Huntington 1984.
4. One additional argument in favor of explicitly including the promotion of debate amongst the essential elements of democracy could be inspired by Sen's observations of the relational and the constructive dimensions of equality (Sen 2000).
5. See Beck 1993. The term 'topopolygamy' was developed by Beck in order to synthesize the idea of attachments to more than one culture or place, topoi being the Greek plural of place, and polygamy suggesting multiple marriages or attachments.
6. See Castells 1996. The use of innovative information technologies favors the development of further innovations, through 'cumulative feedback loops'. As a consequence, a new form of social and economic organization is developed around the capacity of generating and processing knowledge—giving rise to the so-called information society.
7. We refer to the case of the Swiss Canton of Geneva, where the suggested framework was used for teaching education for citizenship. More details can be found at UNESCO's International Bureau of Education website (www.ibe.unesco.org).