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### 13. HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES AND GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN FINNISH SCHOOLS AND TEACHER EDUCATION

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights the main characteristics of the humanities, or school subjects having a humanistic orientation, from the point of view of geography, history and social studies in comprehensive schools. The educational objectives for these three subjects in the present National Core Curriculum for Basic Education are focused on the development of students' thinking skills and understanding of the nature of historical, societal or geographical knowledge, and skills of using, for example, historical sources. This emphasis on learning, thinking, and skills implies that activating teaching methods are used in lessons, and the assessment of learning outcomes is expected to follow the skills-based strand of humanities education. Future challenges are also in focus, for example, intercultural education, which is becoming more and more crucial to history, social science and geography.

**Keywords:** assessment, cross-disciplinary themes, geography, history, social studies, subject didactics

#### INTRODUCTION

The composition of school curricula and the status and traditions of specific school subjects can be very different between countries. This is obvious in the case of the humanities, where subject constructions can be numerous. In Finland, the humanities as such are not an established entity, and the list of school subjects having a humanistic orientation that basically could belong to this family includes a number of subjects which are independent subjects in compulsory schools such as: history, social studies, religion, and geography. Unlike, for instance, the subject cluster of social studies in American schools, history and social studies are independent subjects. Geography is also an independent subject, is counted in the science subjects, and is taught by the same teachers who teach biology. In the Finnish educational system, and in the present chapter, social studies refers to the subject including elements of civic education, economy, sociology and law.

In this chapter the focus is on geography, history and social studies, on their aims and contents in the present National Core Curriculum for Basic Education

(for comprehensive schools) and on their main features as school subjects (Finnish National Board of Education, 2004). Moreover, we will also describe the education of teachers of these subjects. What is common to these three subjects is that each of them describes and examines human beings and their activities in their regional, social and cultural environments. The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014) as well as the one for Upper Secondary Schools (2003) emphasise basically similar values, such as human rights, equality, democracy, respect for the diversity of nature and sustainable development and acceptance of cultural diversity, all of which are significant in the teaching of the humanities, both for their subject-specific aims and contents. These subjects are, however, rather different from each other from the point of view of their aims, contents and nature of knowledge.

For decades, history and social studies had formed a kind of subject coalition and had a common curriculum although the contents of each subject were kept apart. In the 2003–2004 curricular reform, they were finally separated into two subjects, in which student achievement was assessed independently. However, both subjects are still usually taught in the secondary level by history teachers who took social sciences as a minor subject in their degrees, while in primary school they are taught as a rule by class teachers, as are most subjects. A major reason for the separation was the different nature of these subjects, each relying on a fundamentally different academic discipline. The decision to separate history and social studies into two independent subjects can be seen as an attempt to improve the status of social studies education, as the politicians have been worried about young people's political disinterest and disengagement, and thus they were willing to encourage citizenship education.

As for geography, this chapter will predominately look at cultural geography (one of the branches of geography), but the point of view of physical geography can't be ignored in the Finnish school system, because it is an important part of the geography curriculum in schools. In Finland geography has long been taught as an independent subject. In the first school years, geography is connected to biology and other natural sciences like chemistry, physics and health education, forming a subject group called environmental studies. From the point of view of humanistic geography, it is noteworthy that the social environment was not included in the first school years' textbooks until after the 2004 curricular reform. The reason why geography has been connected to the natural sciences but not to the humanities or social studies in Finland is because the roots of geography lie in physical geography (see the chapter by Lavonen & Juuti). There is a strong possibility that its connection to natural sciences, even at universities, gives geography a stronger stature as a school subject than is the case in some other European countries where geography is connected to the humanities. Also in Finland, knowledge of cultural geography, especially human geography, has become more essential nowadays, and because of this there are several geographical themes which are closely connected to the humanities or social studies in Finnish school education, such as the diversity of human life, cultural

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identity and global citizenship. These are the reasons why geography is included in the subject group of the humanities in this book.

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The humanities are minor school subjects, compared, for instance, with mathematics, first language and foreign languages, especially in the lower grades of comprehensive school. The amount of teaching time allocated to these subjects is shown in [Table 1](#).

History teaching does not usually begin in comprehensive school until grade 5, when the pupils are 11 years old, although some themes may occasionally be addressed within some other subjects, such as mother tongue, geography and religious education. The present **history** syllabus for basic education (2014) is divided into two parts: history for grades 4 to 6 (ages 10 to 12), and history for grades 7 to 9 (ages 13 to 15). For grades 4–6, the minimum number of history lessons has been 3 per week. The new curriculum brought social studies into the lower grades (minimum 2 lesson hours altogether). In the three higher grades of the comprehensive school, history is normally taught in grades 7 and 8 (2 hours per week) and social studies in grade 9 (3 hours per week).

The purpose of history education in the new National Core Curriculum 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014) is to develop the students' historical consciousness and their knowledge of various cultures and to encourage them to become active and responsible citizens. There is also a very clear focus on the skills component and on students' historical thinking.

*Table 1. Allocation of instructional time for humanities subjects by grade in comprehensive school (lesson hours or 45 minutes/week/year)*

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Students' age	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Level (unofficial)	primary level						lower secondary level		
<i>The humanities</i>									
History and social studies	–	–	–	5 (Minimum 5 lesson hours/week at least 2 hours for social studies)			7 (Minimum 7 lesson hours/week at least 3 hours for social studies)		
Environmental studies (Geography + 4 other subjects)	Integrated environmental studies 4 lesson hours/week/year		Integrated environmental studies 10 lesson hours/week/year				Geography 1.2 lesson hours/week/year		

The history syllabus is structured chronologically, from prehistoric times to the present. History teaching in grades 4 to 6 aims at familiarising children with their own roots, with the nature and acquisition of historical knowledge, and with history's central concepts, such as time and change. Especially in the earlier grades, the pupils should get opportunities to experience historical empathy. The goals are related to the nature of history and historical thinking. The historical content consists of some central events and phenomena from prehistory, ancient times, the Middle Ages up to about the time of the French Revolution, and in the history of Finland, from prehistory to the end of the Swedish regime in Finland in the early 19th century. The syllabus of grades 7–9 aims at deepening the pupils' understanding of historical knowledge. The pupils should learn to find and use historical information from various sources, be able to formulate an opinion, understand different interpretations, explain human activity and also predict future alternatives on the basis of their knowledge of historical changes. In general, grades 7 and 8 deal with 19th and 20th century history, respectively. A typical feature of the Finnish history syllabus is an emphasis on modern history and on recent history in particular. In the syllabus of grade 8, this implies a strong focus on the political turmoil of the 20th century, in which the key events of Finnish history (achievement of independence, the Civil War, the Second World War) get a prominent role. It has to be emphasized that the history of Finland is dovetailed with European and world history, and the teaching content is not limited to the history of Finland.

*Social studies* can be seen as a key subject in citizenship education, the channel for dealing systematically with the contents of citizenship education. It is also the subject that aims to give students the necessary knowledge base and tools for thinking and participating in society. However, its status in the Finnish school system has not been very strong because it has been taught as late as the final year of comprehensive school; however the recent curricular reforms have improved its standing. The number of lessons had been increased already in 2004, and the subject began to be introduced at the primary level. The content of social studies in both the primary and lower secondary levels is divided into four key thematic areas: everyday life and management of one's life; democratic society; active citizenship and participation; and economic activity. In the primary grades, social studies deal with issues that are close to the children, such as practising decision-making, discussing human rights and equity, using and earning money, saving and sustainable consumption. In the secondary level, generally in grade 9, the focus is more on the institutions and functions of society, and the structures of decision-making. The key themes include individuals as members of a community, the welfare of the individual, exerting influence and decision-making (political systems, administration, media), citizens' security, managing one's own finances, economics and economic policy.

*Geography* is taught through basic education (Table 1) from grades 1 to 9 (ages 7–15) and also in the optional upper secondary school (ages 16–18). It is introduced for the pupils of grades 1–6 as a part of environmental studies (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). In environmental studies both human and natural scientific

approaches are combined. This means that geography is integrated with the subjects of biology, physics, chemistry and health education in grades 1–6 and is taught by classroom teachers. In grades 7–9, subject teachers take the responsibility. The basis in grades 1–6 is to learn to appreciate nature and live a valuable life in appreciation of human rights. An important aim of geography is that the pupils in grades 1–6 should adopt a positive relation with nature and the environment and they should also learn to understand the importance of the interaction between the individual and the environment, as well as practicing living according to sustainable development. Building a geographical world image in a changing world starts in the early years in basic education. The core content concerns the home region and the world of the human living environment in grades 1–2. In grades 3–6 the various regions of the world come under examination. The students also begin to develop an idea of what is involved in being a Finnish citizen and part of European culture. Geography lessons give the pupils the opportunity to understand phenomena associated with the activity of human beings and the natural world. The geographical areas studied expand from Finland to Europe and to the rest of the world using various types of maps and other geomedial; in regional geography the focus has been systemic. In grades 7–9 geography is taught as an independent subject and a more detailed description of natural, built and social environments is introduced both at the local and global levels. Thus geography is a humanistically oriented science subject, which connects knowledge from several other disciplines. Geography education is based on the pupils' world of experiences.

The distribution of lesson hours determined by the government specifies the minimum number of contact hours in geography just like in all subjects. A minimum of 0.8 lesson hours per week of geography is taught in the 3rd to 6th grades in Finland, if geography and biology are taught to the same extent, as they are in most of the schools.

#### ON THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF SPECIFIC SUBJECTS

##### *History and History Education*

The challenges, goals and expectations for school history are versatile and they change over time. Finding a balance between questions dealing with what and how, or contents and skills, has been a topic of discussion for several decades in Finnish history education. A related distinction is the triangle between values, facts and skills. These are, of course, not dichotomous distinctions, and contents and skills are intertwined. Nevertheless, various approaches to teaching history can be categorized on the basis of their emphases, and they are basically reflecting 'different orientations toward historical pedagogy and epistemology' (Seixas, 2000). The classical way of teaching history was focused on values, transmitting in the Finnish case, nationalistic values and supporting the master narrative of a nation fighting for its independence. This ethos was especially strong in the earlier half

of the 20th century. It was followed by an objectivistic trend, pursuing a neutral transmission of facts and contents, trying to be pure in values and attitudes. The objectivistic mode of teaching has been very strong (Castrén, 1992; Arola, 2002). It is a cognitively and pedagogically easy orientation, and it can be a safe solution, if teachers want to avoid dealing with conflicting information or controversial and sensitive issues and only mediate facts. Today, however, at least according to the school curricula and pedagogical literature, the common trend of history teaching in Western societies, including Finland, is to emphasise students' thinking skills, and skills of acquiring knowledge, and as well as understanding the multiple perspectives of history (van der Leeuw-Roord, 2003). This is very obvious in the present Finnish history curriculum for Basic Education, where there is a clear emphasis on constructivist and socio-cultural notions of learning. History in principle can also be seen through critical lenses, as conflicting stories and multiple truths, as multiple windows to the same historical events. Consequently today, there is a strong focus on the multi-perspective approach to teaching history, seeing it as a discourse of various interpretations (Stradling, 2003). However, we have very little evidence about the actual processes of history teaching in the classrooms. The principles of multi-perspectivity are not perhaps fulfilled very often, but, for instance, training students to examine historical sources and make conclusions based on evidence has certainly become a fairly common method.

The National Core Curricula for Basic Education underlines the nature of the academic domain as the foundation of the school subject; it aims at fostering critical thinking skills, and to acknowledge the multi-perspectivity of history, and the concepts of time, causation, change and continuity (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). A key concept in the present history curricula is historical consciousness, which involves seeing the continuum between past, present and future. History is also seen as related to citizenship education, supporting the construction of students' identities and their development into active citizens.

#### *Social Studies and Social Science Education*

Social studies can be characterised as a cross-disciplinary school subject, because its content is based on different branches of social sciences – political science, economics, social policy, sociology and law (Elio, 1993; Löfström, 2001). The role of these sciences can be seen not only as related to actual contents, but perhaps more as a way of thinking and basic concepts. As Löfström, Virta and van den Berg (2010) remark, it may be difficult to fully pay attention to the nature of the social sciences in the subject of social studies because the subject is based on various branches of the social sciences. The actual content drawn from social sciences is, however, rather thin, particularly in the comprehensive school curriculum.

Instead, the social studies curriculum contains a lot of descriptive instruction about organizations, institutions and structures in society (for instance parliament, the government, voting, saving, and municipal services). In the practice of teaching,

attention is also given to society at the micro-level, and on how adolescents, for instance, encounter social decision-making and economical issues in their everyday lives. An important side of this school subject is socialisation: one of the main goals of the social studies education is to educate students to citizenship, foster their skills in active participation in society, and furthermore to train them to use and evaluate critically information about society (Ochoa-Becher, 2007). This diversity of content is very clearly reflected in the goals of the social studies curriculum.

Value-based principles are emphasised in the objectives of social studies, and they are included in the criteria for assessment, for instance, the training ethical consideration, but such goals are not directly used in assessment. This is explained by the difficulties related to assessing the goals that deal with values (Löfström et al., 2010). In fact, many of the goals of social studies, such as becoming an active citizen, will only be fully observable in the future when the students are adults, and what really can be counted as the result of social science lessons will be highly uncertain.

In the recent international study of adolescents' civic knowledge, attitudes and participation, International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2009 (ICCS), the Finnish teachers and principals had in the questionnaire an item where they had to rank the goals of civic education. Their highest priority was "promoting students' critical and independent thinking", and the second dealt with caring and valuing the environment. Most of the other high-ranking goals dealt with knowing and understanding society and political institutions. Such goals as participating in the local community or preparing pupils for future political participation were very lowly ranked. Only 4% of teachers and 1% of principals thought they were important goals. Very few of the respondents thought that an important goal was to develop strategies for resisting racism or xenophobia (Suoninen, Kupari, & Törmäkangas, 2010). These results suggest that there is an obvious risk that the socio-ethical purposes of social studies are overshadowed by the emphasis on cognitive purposes. The ethical and participatory dimensions of social science education leave no doubt that there is a challenge for future development of the curriculum.

The assessment methods in general have recently become more versatile, more material based (using written documents, statistics and graphics), thus emphasising the development of skills. However, in thinking about the functioning of society, one may ask what the main role of social studies instruction is. Is it educating citizens who know about democracy – or citizens who can act in the society? These goals are not mutually exclusive, and it would, of course, be worse to have citizens who do not know but act anyway.

Contents related to society are included in many other schools subjects as well, such as history, geography, religious education, first language education, ethics, science, health studies and home economics. Furthermore, citizenship education can be seen as the general overall purpose of schooling. In ICCS 2009, most Finnish teachers and principals expressed the opinion that civic education is the responsibility of the whole school and all the teachers, irrespective of subject specialization (Suoninen et al., 2010). However, one distinction can be

made: citizenship education in a broad sense, with its purposes that are related to socialisation, is common to the whole school – but social science is a subject which aims to examine society systematically.

### *Geography and Geography Education*

Traditionally *geography* in Finland is divided into the two main branches of general and regional geography. General geography focuses on things and phenomena which are based on the physical environment and are connected to man made things (the human environment) and their effects, whereas regional geography studies the world's regions, their specific unique characteristics which are related to their nature and culture. Accordingly, general geography is divided into physical and cultural geography. The humanistic branch of cultural geography studies, among other things, the identity of the place of humans, regional images and interpretations of landscapes, and it highlights one's personal relationship with the environment (Haarni et al., 1997; Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974; Jones & Olwig, 2008). The relation between humans and their environment has become an even more important study goal in physical geography, too. There are several other branches of geography, but all their research topics are connected to concepts like area, region (local, global), space and time. Therefore today's geography is a diversified science, which connects the natural sciences, the humanities and social sciences, and nowadays it highlights similarities between the studied matters instead of differences (Kwan & Weber, 2004). In Finland geography in universities is taught in faculties of mathematics and the natural sciences.

Geography in Finland is a school subject that operates as a bridge between natural-science and social-science thinking and is connected partly to social sciences, too (Finnish National Board of Education, 2004, 2014), and it answers questions concerned with: "what (kind of), where and why?" It is important that pupils learn how to acquire geographical knowledge and how to think geographically. As a school subject, geography helps pupils to outline the connections between human-made things and the physical environment and its constructs or phenomena, thus supporting the pupils in their efforts to perceive the global entirety. This is most clearly shown during the lessons when the physical and human aspects of the geographical theme are present and the studied matters are smoothly bound together, for example in the issue of creating a sustainable environment. The main aim of geography is expressed in the following sentence of the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary School (2003): "Geography examines the structures and functions of living and lifeless nature and human-made systems". The idea is that the students should become aware of the interdependencies between nature and human activity and to study the world as a changing and culturally diversified living environment. This highlights again the importance of geography as an integrating subject between the study themes of the natural sciences and the humanities.



## LITERACY OF HUMANITIES (PISA, TIMMS, ICCS)

There are several studies in which the knowledge, skills and attitudes of pupils have been tested nationally and also internationally. In the earlier studies mostly the knowledge of the pupils has been tested, whereas the present tests measure more abilities and thinking skills. Firstly, some Finnish national examinations are presented here. There is an optional examination to measure the pupils' knowledge and skills in biology and geography at the beginning of Grade 7. There is another voluntary geography test that can be chosen by the schools or teachers as a final test at the end of the compulsory basic school (grade 9). Not all schools have taken part in these tests, so there are no nationwide results available.

Finland has participated in several international studies of learning results. In The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (Kupari et al., 1999) the Finnish pupils (7th grade) were well disposed towards geography and biology among sciences. The mean of the marks of the Finnish pupils was significantly above the international average in their abilities to acquire the scientific information by researching. This study also measured the students' knowledge of the environmental and natural resources where the Finns had similar results.

In PISA 2006, the main attention was on natural sciences (including geography) for the first time. The knowledge and skills of the Finnish pupils (age 15) were best in all domains of the natural sciences. The top-rated domains were using scientific evidence, identifying scientific issues and explaining phenomena scientifically. These results also indicated that pupils can solve geographical issues but the domain of human geography was not studied. In PISA 2009, the corresponding domains were examined – both the cognitive and affective aspects of students' competencies in science – as in 2006, the Finnish pupils were the best.

During the past two decades, a number of studies have been published in Finland about adolescents' historical thinking, but we know actually very little about what really happens in the classrooms. Sirkka Ahonen (1998) has studied adolescents' historical consciousness and identity, and their conceptions of some key phenomena in national history. This study is a continuation of the Finnish contribution to the international Youth and History study (Angvik & von Borries, 1997). Ahonen presents part of its national results and also reports on interviews of one hundred 16- and 17-year-old upper secondary school students. One of the main findings was that the national narrative was still quite strong; and the adolescents considered that the wars in 1939–1944 were the most significant events in national history. The author presumes that patriotism may be based more on the general historical culture in Finland, not directly on history teaching, which still seems in part to be following the objectivistic traditions of teaching. The study deals with upper secondary students but younger students perhaps do not differ very much. The actual Youth and History data from Finland, concerning 15–16 year old students, indicates that they are more patriotic than equivalent students from other Nordic

countries. Their nation was very important to 65% of the Finnish respondents, and their own country to 74% of them.

Another study is Juha Vääntinen's (2009) doctoral dissertation, which was based on an ambitious teaching project with 13- and 14-year olds in a multicultural school. The author was teaching his classes and using very systematic documents, and testing how his students can interpret and draw conclusions from the material. According to the results, the source-based teaching methods were suitable for lower secondary classes. This is actually encouraging, and corresponds very well with the aims of the present history curriculum. However, it is challenging for the history teachers and requires profound expertise in both subject matter and teaching methods.

As for civic education, two large scale international evaluations (CIVED, 1999; ICCS, 2009), which assessed adolescents' knowledge, participation and attitudes related to society, indicate that Finnish adolescents (14-year olds) have a very good knowledge of society, but they have very weak interest in this field. Altogether 3300 14-year-old Finnish adolescents participated in this study from 176 schools. Finnish adolescents obtained 576 points, the same number as the best nation, the Danes, while the international average was 500. Girls performed significantly better than boys, but the differences between schools were very small. There were also significantly more top-level performers in the Finnish sample than in any other country, and the least percentage of poor performers. Although the results were very good already in 1999, they had now slightly improved. What makes these results even more special is that the target group in the international studies CIVED and ICCS were 14-year-olds who had not yet received systematic civic education. However, their knowledge in both studies was at the top level, second place in both studies, which indicates that critical thinking skills and also a good deal of information about society is filtered through effectively, for instance, from history and geography instruction, and from school life in general. The excellent results in knowledge items are certainly due to a large extent to the schools, and in the attention given to the contents of citizenship education in general, although the achievement level is also related to their family background and their parents' interest in political and social issues (Suoninen et al., 2010; cf. Suutarinen, 2002).

Where Finnish adolescents do not perform well, are their attitudes toward political and social issues. They, together with Swedish, Norwegian and Belgian pupils, have a very low interest in political issues, and especially in political parties. Nevertheless, there are areas that are experienced as more important, mainly environmental issues. The majority of these adolescents also think that they are going to vote in the future, but very few consider that they would join a party or be a candidate in election. They trust in the institutions of the Finnish society more than adolescents in the other participating countries on average, support equality of gender more than the international average (although males have more conservative attitudes). These adolescents in general and the girls more than boys had tolerant attitudes toward the rights of ethnic minorities.

These results can be compared and partly contrasted with those of the national evaluation 2012, which was conducted by the Finnish National Board of Education for the first time in the history of the subjects of history and social studies (Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012; Ouakrim-Soivio, 2013). The participants (ca 4700) were grade 9 students, 15 years of age, from 109 schools. Test items were designed on the basis of the assessment criteria in the NCCBE 2004, focussing on skills relevant for these subjects, for instance, historical empathy, time concept, critical interpretation of sources, statistics, graphs and messages from media and explaining societal issues. Grade 9 students performed fairly well in history, for instance, in items dealing with concepts of time, but they had difficulties with items related to various skills, such as interpreting sources and understanding causality. The average performance was about 50 per cent of maximum credits, but there was broad variance among participants. The average performance was slightly better in social studies (percentage of credits was 64). The results were best in items requiring skills of argumentation about societal issues, but there were obvious difficulties in critical interpretation of media, statistics and graphs, as well as items considering the alternatives of political decision making.

#### *Activating Teaching Methods*

None of the present school curricula for history, social studies or geography articulate explicitly what teaching and learning methods should be used per se, but, instead, teachers are free to choose their teaching methods. However, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education emphasises in general that teachers are expected to use methods that support the development of the skills of learning, thinking, argumentation and problem solving, as well as participation, social and collaborative skills and using digital media (Finnish National Board of Education, 2004). The present school curricula are based on an active and dynamic conception of knowledge and learning. This refers to the constructionist notion of learning as a mental activity, and the individual and social-constructivist conceptions of the formation of knowledge.

Another, related challenge is that the humanities should be taught, not as an accumulation of separate pieces of information, but as a specific way of thinking and understanding, and the task of the teacher should be to nourish the students' higher order thinking. This is one of the main challenges of teacher education: to prepare the prospective teachers to teach thinking and understanding, not only mediating information. These are challenges for Finnish schools, although teachers of history, social studies and geography already today use student-centred teaching methods fairly frequently.

As for history, the goals of curriculum have underlined skills-based teaching. Students should learn to use and interpret historical evidence, interpret conflicting sources, detect bias and understand multiple perspectives to historical questions.

This approach to history education is based mainly on the British tradition of history teaching. All in all, using this method, students should learn to understand the basic of historical epistemology, the construction of knowledge on the basis of critical scrutiny, and hopefully, this critical literacy would have a transfer effect for managing the continuous flood of information in everyday life. This requires systematic and continuous practice, not only occasional episodes. Although history still is a subject based strongly on reading texts and expressing what you can through writing, reading history actually implies multiple-forms of literacies – in addition to words, there is more and more about visual texts, electronic and digital media.

A good example of this working with historical documents was the teaching experiment that Juha Vääntinen (2009) constructed as the basis for his doctoral thesis. He selected sets of sources and designed tasks based on them, beginning in grade 7 with fairly easy documents, proceeding to more difficult ones in grade 8. He used, for instance, letters written by imaginary Finnish migrants from North America, and the pupils had to figure out their individual motives for migration and understand historical changes. For instance, with documents about Germany under Hitler's regime, pupils were challenged to compare contradictory sources and be sensitive to bias in the texts. In general, visual, graphic and statistical sources have become important in the practice of history teaching, which is certainly common to the humanities in general.

In geography, learning through "graphics", in other words using "geomedia" and media coverage (topical and current documents of the whole world), plays and has played an important role in teaching and learning in basic education. The "geomedia" include maps, photos, drawings, diagrams, videos, etc., but nowadays more and more use is made of computer based graphics and geographical information systems (GIS). GIS processes place information and supports especially the reading and control of the location information. Geographical information systems make it especially possible to collect information and handle materials. They also provide tools that support analysis and illustrating. They contain, in addition to location, information about property data, which determines the target and describes the properties of the target. So the place information consists of a wholeness formed by the location information, property data and contact information. The versatile use of maps also includes the presenting of the topics, which can be learnt in human geography with the map. There is a GIS program for schools ([www.paikkaoppi.fi](http://www.paikkaoppi.fi)), which all the teachers in Finland can use. The versatile use of maps by GIS programs also makes it possible to present topics that can be taught in human geography with the maps and it develops the students' spatial skills.

In learning environments like [www.paikkaoppi.fi](http://www.paikkaoppi.fi) spatial understanding, map skills, knowledge of the place and values are foci of learning. The following are examples of the use of the system. The city environment is usually structured by pupils via places and the meaning of the places. However, they seem not to have a personal relationship to their surroundings. To practice not to be blasé about their

environment and to become sensitised to its issues, the pupils are asked to take photos in a place they feel is important or they like in the environment. They are also asked to write about why it is valuable for them and to link their images to the information in the “PaikkaOppi” map program. They are asked to place these photos and essays on the right place on the map using geographical coordinates and information available in the system. At the end of the practice the pupils have to tell other pupils about their chosen important place, and its connection to information available in the map program or elsewhere. This type of practice can easily be connected to historical and biological knowledge of the place and it also provides an opportunity to practice computer skills and taking photos.

An example of a cross-disciplinary activity is a landscape history course arranged in one school in the spring of 2010. The course was planned jointly by the teachers of geography, history and landscape studies. The aim of the course was to study changes in landscape – how particular physical features or man-made structures have changed over time. PaikkaOppi’s map program was used to study original maps dating from the 18th century and compare them to the current maps and aerial photos. Data sets were overlaid in the map program and basic visual analyses were executed. Also, the map service was used to combine the teaching of geography and literature in a special course to enhance pupils’ knowledge of their own local environment’s cultural history. The pupils set out in the city of Turku to look for places that might have some cultural reference. After plotting these places on the map program, the pupils added excerpts from local literature – novels and poems that were related to these places.

### *Assessment*

Assessment in the humanities is based mainly on teacher-made school-based examinations, course work, assignments or portfolios. More and more often the exams also include tasks calling for students’ own thinking, problem solving, and understanding of wider contexts, concepts or documents. According to the new assessment culture, classroom assessment is expected to be supportive and individualised, based on the principles of authentic or performance assessment.

One of the major reforms in the 2004 comprehensive school curriculum was setting up criteria for the assessment of student achievement in all subjects, and these criteria were elaborated further in the new curriculum in 2014. The criteria for grade 9 were created as early as 1999, but in the 2004 curriculum criteria for “good knowledge of subject matter” were also set for turning-points in school, the transition for the individual student from being taught by class teachers over to being taught by subject-specific teachers. The assessment criteria only describe the standards for ‘good’ knowledge or skills in the subject, which practically means 8 on a scale from 4 to 10; there are no standards for satisfactory (5) or excellent (9, 10) achievement. There are differences in the criteria of subjects representing the humanities.

A special feature for the criteria in history is the emphasis on the skills of acquiring, understanding and using historical knowledge. The criteria are mainly formal, indicating nothing of the factual contents that the students should adopt. The reason for this lies in a relativist notion of the significance of historical events. The formal emphasis in the criteria, and also in the goals for history teaching, is clearly influenced by the British tradition of history education (cf. Husbands, 2003).

The criteria for social studies resemble those of history, focussing on the skills of dealing with information. Assessing learning outcomes in this subject is challenging, especially with reference to the role of social studies in citizenship education. The formative functions of assessment are most relevant, because of social studies' role of supporting individuals' development in citizenship. This is especially true for objectives that are related to social and moral values and attitudes, such as appreciation of human rights, equality and democracy. Furthermore, the most essential outcomes become visible long after the students' school years end and thus are not accessible for school assessment, while the easy targets of assessment may not be relevant for citizenship (Grant & Salinas, 2008).

In geography, the criteria for 'good' knowledge or skills are divided into several categories of which the most essential are skills in acquiring geographical information – like interpreting several kinds of maps, photographs and statistics and how to utilize news sources and information from data networks – analysing the world, Europe and Finland and the common environment. These national, equalising criteria of the final assessment have very often been transferred directly to local curricula.

#### THE EDUCATION OF HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES AND GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS

Today, the teacher education programme is normally sandwiched between subject studies, but a gateway to teacher studies in a few universities is also open to those who want to qualify as teachers after finishing their degrees. Subject studies are organised by the faculties of humanities, social sciences or science, and the teacher studies by the departments of teacher education. The teacher studies normally last only one year, which is a short time in the process of teachers' professional development. For the subject teachers in the humanities and other school subjects, the teacher studies include courses in general education, subject-specific teaching courses and a practicum. Subject didactics refers to the subject-specific component in teacher education. It can be seen as a bridge between the academic subject and education, and between the school subject and the learning individual. Thus, it is an approach combining the nature of the specific subject to the general theories of education. It is a subject focussed on pedagogical content knowledge.

The course structure and detailed contents of subject didactic can differ between departments of teacher education. The core content is, however, often made up of contents that introduce the prospective teachers to think about the nature of the school

subject and its form of knowledge, as well as the thinking and learning processes related to the subjects. They are also introduced to the school curricula and their development, teaching methods and materials and student assessment. As subject didactics is related to pre-service teacher education, the practical solutions, such as teaching methods, assessment, using visuals and ICT, belong to the core content, and are in general most highly appreciated by the teacher trainees. However, this is not sufficient, if we want to support the prospective teachers' growth as reflective professionals, and to develop subject didactics as an academic domain and as a field of research. The students learn also about research into learning and teaching and write a minor dissertation. Cross-disciplinary approaches (sustainable development, global and multicultural education, active citizenship, media literacy, future studies) also belong to the curriculum.

The didactics of social studies has so far been confined to history didactics, with the exception of Helsinki University, where there has been opportunity to differentiate these programmes partially. Some components are common to both subjects, but there are also specific themes (the nature of social studies as a school subject, students' attitudes and motivation, some practical issues related to teaching methods, relevant research). In principle, the didactics of history is more developed in Finland than that of the social sciences, and it is an urgent task for us educators to try to strengthen the preparation of teachers for teaching social studies.

The nature of the geographical discipline and the contents of school geography are discussed in the didactics studies at the departments of teacher education at Finnish universities. The kinds of didactic courses available differ from university to university and on the sub-specialization of the didactics teachers, but certain basic things are taught to everybody like the importance of graphics and maps in learning geography (Cantell et al., 2007). Various applications of the theory to everyday life are introduced for both subject teacher students and class teacher students. The students do geographical internships in their studies and they also do practical training in the teacher training schools of the universities.

Academic geography is brought into the school level via subject-specific didactic studies. In these studies the theoretical content of science is brought to the school environment. Kaivola and Rikkinen (2007) have shown that geography teaching has been under continuous change in Finland in the last decades. According to them the innovations of the academic research and higher education have permeated the schools in several ways. It is noteworthy that the trend in Finnish curriculum development has given geography teachers more opportunities to design their educational settings (Kaivola & Rikkinen, 2007). At the same time, effective teaching and learning methods for geography have been introduced. There has also been better comprehension of how to make good use of commonplace geographical knowledge. In the didactics studies ways to transform the geographical content and its concepts so that pupils of different age groups can understand them are also reviewed. All these tendencies are widely presented in the set of didactics books of Rikkinen of which the newest volume came out in 2007 (Cantell et al., 2007).

Especially the thinking skills associated with learning geography are accentuated as well as studying geography in a socio-cultural learning context and in a social frame of reference (Cantell, 2001). Naturally geography teaching is dependent on trends in society and is seldom value free.

#### COMMON CHALLENGES

There are certain questions which all the humanities have very much in common, and in the future they will be challenged to cross subject borders, while cooperating and creating more coherent issue-centred structures to deal with the themes together. Many of the future challenges are also included in cross-disciplinary themes like acting to achieve sustainable environments and societies, globalisation and active citizenship. An example of active citizenship in geography is widening of one's regional identity to become an active global citizen (Cantell, 2005). In the study of Paakkunainen (2007) only about 30% of Finnish participants felt they were global citizens and a few more than 50% felt they were European citizens. All in all, "active citizenship" is a big challenge in Finnish school culture, not only because Finnish adolescents are not very interested in these matters according to the same research results (ICCS) but also because these issues are difficult to teach and learn and they are also age dependent.

Cultural diversity has created a new situation for many Finnish teachers, who have to design teaching methods and approaches that are meaningful in multicultural and multilingual student groups. The situation can, however, be very different in different parts of the country. All the teachers share some of these changes, while others are more directly subject-specific. The development of intercultural competence, or culturally relevant pedagogy, can be seen as vital for subject teachers, both in pre-service and in-service education. Firstly, it deals with the guiding of all students, including those with migrant backgrounds, in their learning; secondly it affects communication in classroom situations; and thirdly it affects value issues related to school and education in general and culture particularly.

Some changes brought by multiculturalism are related to the nature of subjects and to the functions that they have in society and for individuals. Key issues are whose history, or whose geography we teach, and whose social values are reflected in the ethos of civic education. The enlarging multiculturalism in Finnish society is raising the question of what kind of geography is important to teach. This will be a new task for didactics research and an important task for geography teachers in schools, too.

In culturally diverse classrooms, there are adolescents who come from different historical cultures, representing different interpretations of sensitive and controversial current issues and their backgrounds. The growing diversity of the population challenges the traditional uni-dimensional history education with requirements of multi-perspectivity. Although the Finnish history curriculum is not strongly focussed



on national history, more space should certainly be given to global history (Virta, 2008).

The social studies curriculum in most school systems has been based on the presentation of the institutions and structures in the self-same society, from a rather national point of view. It has been a channel of socialization into one society. This is still relevant but not sufficient, given the growth of international migration, globalization and more rapid communication (Virta, 2010). Basically, instead of citizenship education we perhaps should speak about intercultural citizenship education. It is not limited to integrating the children with migrant backgrounds into their new society but all pupils need the capacity to work and live in international contexts and multicultural societies.

In conclusion, many of the matters presented can be included in Future Education. The viewpoint of Future Education can be enforced in several subjects, subject groups and cross-curricular themes. In Future Education the mental pictures of a worldview (philosophy of life) are used in teaching and learning. The mental pictures represent the entity of personal knowledge, conceptions, assumptions and beliefs. These kinds of information can be collected from narratives, essays and drawings. To be connected to the humanities it is important to ask: “What is the direction in which the phenomenon is developing?”

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