



DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE DELL'EDUCAZIONE "G. M. BERTIN"
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DELLA STORIA E DEL PATRIMONIO

Why we need a Manifesto on the Didactics of History

by

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The International congress "Horizons of the didactics of History" was held on 6-7 November 2019 in the Stabat Mater hall of the Archiginnasio Library in Bologna. The event was organized by the International Centre of Didactic of History and Patrimony - DiPaSt of the Department of Education of the University of Bologna within the context of the XVI edition of the "International Festival of History" under the title of "Long live living history". The motivation behind the organizing of the Congress is based on the necessity for making a detailed comparison of the 'status quaestionis' of the Didactics of History in Italy with that of various European counterparts (Spain, Portugal, Germany, France & Great Britain) as well as further afield (Brazil and Argentina). The comparison was made to balance and delineate a new perspective after eleven years of activities conducted by the DiPaSt Research centre and after thirty years of various initiatives, undertaken firstly, within the Department of Historical sciences of Bologna University. This was done through the setting up of the Didactic Laboratory (LAD) and then, with the Multidiscipline Laboratory of Historical Research (LRMS) involving hundreds of teachers and thousands of students in activities of research, learning and spreading knowledge of history.

Following this path of renewed interest in Didactics of History as can be seen in the recent increase in the numbers of meetings and assemblies, often of a national nature, the appointment in Bologna was an occasion to promote the Manifesto. This initiative subsequently aimed at identifying and sharing the importance of formative and social values in learning history to acquire a knowledgeable and active form of citizenship as well as cultivating an awareness of the end-purpose and methodologies that favour the introduction of Historical Didactics in an efficient manner capable of responding to new requisites and formation. Starting with the obvious meaningful gap, between the expressed final objectives in terms of competence, between national and European legislators to the ordinary general methods used for teaching history the DiPaSt Centre, in the Manifesto, it illustrates the methods and essential phases that every path of Historical Didactics needs to follow. Furthermore, it epitomizes starting with a strong approach aimed at motivating and being of interest in order to learn about the

arguments to be tackled. And, it is this phase where it is necessary to take care in maximizing the availability on the part of those involved of the required prerequisites needed to follow the path. Additionally, each plan has to include the following: firstly, adopting a laboratory method to involve and stimulate students with the use of group sources and research; secondly, the opportunity to check everything “in itinere” where the same students are involved in learning to evaluate and eventually correct what they learn; thirdly, showing the results achieved through the employment of a variety of tools and possible demonstrations; and finally, verifying the knowledge learned and the new opportunities they bring. Effectively, it is not sufficient to lay out alternative traditional didactic paths because they have to respond to motivations, objectives and the methods laid down in the Manifesto to create therefore a common shared foundation on which to build eventual new methodologies. The Manifesto is in “movement” and available to everyone and aims at constituting a common bond between the various groups that operate within Historical Didactics (Formative Agencies, Institutes, Associations, Research Centres) including both qualified teachers and those training to be teachers. What is needed is a program network that enhances the varied heterogeneity of experimental didactic practices in the history sector; a program that can have an impact globally on the still too many shortcomings in the Italian context, by giving incentives to research in the didactic field. This kind of research is still little applied compared to other European instances and it must try to compensate for the lack of university courses and doctorates along with a general underestimation of the formative roll in learning history.

Premise

The need to know how to discover which direction to go in to be able to choose and conscientiously decide which cultures and human generations have to be covered has been amplified nowadays by a new previously unprecedented acceleration in changes in the scale of values, individual and collective behavior patterns and environmental contexts. What is indispensable for the conquest and continuous regeneration of an effective form of freedom of choice is an adequate cultural formation to forge beyond that knowledge all those skills that allow them to grow in an autonomous manner. Although constantly threatened by distortions and manipulation, the historical aspect comprises a fundamental component of culture that is essential for orientation and acquiring knowledge, awareness and responsibility. This helps us to be free and autonomous in making current and future choices and to favour peaceful coexistence while respecting diversity and developing the necessary critical capacities to practice dialogue and confrontation. Therefore, taking into consideration the continuous and rapid transformations taking place it is essential to carry out research into those didactic strategies that are most suited to rendering the teaching of history at all scholastic levels more efficacious while making comparisons at national and international levels. The aim of this

manifesto is to raise awareness and share the necessity of responding to new formative requisites and to qualify further the education on offer through activating functional didactic methodologies and through stimulating students to acquire those essential mental faculties that are diverse but concord. It is also necessary to activate a competent mode of attention towards the whole world and to develop in them a sense of belonging to their homeland by learning about its roots, culture and history in order to build up a fervid and responsible participation in the life of their own community and territory from a sustainable point of view.

History is a combination of events that have already taken place (*res gestae*); that means events and changes that have occurred since the appearance of the human race; its field of study is therefore a multidisciplinary one since it includes all aspects of human matters and the natural phenomena that condition them. Knowledge about it is in continuous growth because it is the result of research and reconstructions that historians carry out through interpreting sources, those traces and testimonies that have reached us and have been recognized and investigated. Nonetheless, these happenings, phenomena and developments are for mostly ignored because the sources that allow us to learn about them are always fewer and fewer the more we go back into the past. Even with these limits, the density and width of the contents of known history make it necessary at the start to clarify which motivations, finalities, methods and contents have to characterize its teaching and which role it has to play in both scholastic and permanent formation. This is because there is always the risk lurking to present it in a nationalistic and transmitted mode that employs methods which have always made it a subject that a large number of students have found unappealing and have led some teachers and many parents to regard it as of little use in the formative educational context. The world is changing rapidly making all those involved and all communities face a profound change in history where each choice is destined to have repercussions on the quality of life both past and present and the risk is one of irreversibility. As a result of these continuous and rapid transformations it is essential that in the curriculum path of formation, learning about history has an important role in finalizing better possibilities of orientation, plus a well-based awareness of the origins and premises of reality and today's dynamics. It also needs an effective capacity for perception, criticism and impact leading towards those evolving processes in progress with the consequent opportunities of planning one's own and collective future in a more knowledgeable manner. Therefore, nowadays, the teaching of history cannot be limited to just following a sterile notional degree of knowledge of past events but it must be directed above all, at understanding the present and assuming knowledge and responsibility with the capacity to be deeply involved in a motivated fashion for matters concerning the present. Questions like the always more present one of climate change; those involving limits and imbalances of economic development and the consequent migration flows; that of cohabiting both at local and international level; that of legality based on constitutional rules and regulations which have been extended to national and international level. In sum, it is necessary to abandon the traditional

viewpoint about the past where the aim was to acquire notions in a prevalently mnemonic and bookish manner. We have to adopt instead a more systematic kind of circular return route which, by taking into consideration the current situation of eliciting motivations, arguments and curiosity pushes us towards finding precedents and developments in history and then return to the present more informed and knowledgeable and certainly freer.

Identities and communications

What motivates that study and learning of history based on current situations and developments is always the incumbent risk of a flattening of horizons, interests and cultures into an amalgam that appears to be lacking in distinctions and solid backgrounds. This is the result of that millennium process of the forging together of human destinies into a single planetarium panorama which we conventionally call "globalization". While those who derive most benefits are always almost exclusively the big economic monopolies and in waiting for all humanity to enjoy similar advantages and benefits, one of the most justifiable fears is that it raises, is that of cancelling out all diversities in a generic and indistinct scenario into a conforming culture and dominant interests. This involves an epochal change where the first profoundly significant symptoms are already emerging ever more clearly. Supporting this and making it more efficacious are the most formidable methods of diffusion and propaganda ever given to the human race; these include radio and television, information and telephone networks in which unstoppable processes of concentration are selecting ways of spreading information and culture with concrete results which are easily visible in conditioning behavior and manipulating conscience. Being aware of this is essential for us to take up all the opportunities offered by IT tools which can be used to our advantage by revaluing and comparing different voices, cultures, knowledge and opinions.

In this perspective, communication assumes a fundamental role. It is thus necessary to acquire those operative skills that are congruent with today's "information society"; safeguarding all those narrative aspects that have always characterized the diffusion of history; taking full advantage of the extraordinary opportunities introduced by new technologies but with due care and caution because of the ease of manipulation and distortion of information.

In a society that is always more composite and allows speedy access to coded knowledge, learning about history must always be directed at promoting a cultural formation based on an understanding of diversities with the conviction that each single identity evolves continuously, and that any presumption about its immobility is unfounded in justifying a refusal to accept new contributions and pertinent changes.

Another motivation that can be added to the list, which is particularly relevant for a country like Italy being heir to a historical-artistic patrimony of great value, is an interest in, and sensibility for, themes

on the safeguarding and protection of its environmental and cultural heritage - especially ones that depend to a large extent on the threshold and quality of the whole of society's historical knowledge. From this point of view, academic and scholastic institutions can play a role in promoting the necessary sensitization by promoting in collaboration with museums, archives and libraries a much wider knowledge regarding the patrimony of their territory.

University teaching of history

Regarding teaching at university level it may be opportune to point out that there are two environments where we should follow and create an efficient and knowledgeable form of History Didactics.

Teaching history to those university students who generally seem to be afflicted by old easily transmitted preconceptions that are both notional and of little value. This teaching rarely takes into consideration motivational aspects and offers preparatory themes that are at best limited to the introduction of terminological and methodological features relative to the definition of basic elements such as the distinction between history itself, the writing of history, describing historical periods and the classification of sources.

Even more rarely are these strategies aimed at stimulating learning and encouraging students to do their own research through contacts and visits to archives and museums as well as archeological digs and sites of historical interest.

Furthermore, many university history teachers still seem to be anchored to the presumption that they are carrying out a didactic function that is already inherent in its very formation and presentation. They are hereby retracing, knowingly or unknowingly, the spiritualistic and idealistic vision of Giovanni Gentile who argued that knowledge of the contents of a subject automatically leads to the skill of teaching it. According to this vision there is no form of knowledge that teaches "the art of school teaching" and doesn't teach how to teach because the spiritual wealth of the teacher is already sufficient to make him a "maestro". In practice therefore, there is no method of teaching: the method is the teacher himself.

Teaching students that follow courses of formation to become teachers to plan and follow those paths of History Didactics that they can make use of during their teaching careers.

This aspect, which should be essential for bestowing teachers with the competencies and strategies needed to teach history to their students remains for the most part ignored in university courses that favour content aspects. Over long periods of time, they were taught at post-university level, courses included first of all, SSIS (Schools for Specialization in teaching at Secondary level), then TFA (Active Internship Formation) and finally PAS (Specialist Paths to qualification); these all attempted to fill in the difficult task of repairing the damage caused by the many different university pathways.

However, in spite of the positive results achieved by some of these initiatives we are still dealing the negative effects of an overall insistence on using transmitting and one directional methods of teaching.

An attempt to find a solution to this deficiency of university courses was carried out for many years in university laboratories that have now been unfortunately abolished. It was in this context that it might have been possible to activate students in motivated and methodologically correct research often leading to rewarding results.

History and historiography

With regards to frequent misunderstandings about the meaning of history within the educational field it is opportune to arrive as soon as possible at the distinction which is often ignored between the objectivity of historical facts and the subjectivity and relativity of all forms of investigations and the transmission of this knowledge which is part of historiography. It is also relevant in the perspective of promoting respect based on multi-cultures, opinions and points of view and as indispensable motive for playing an active role in learning. Accessible and efficacious experiences can, in this way come from early childhood helping us to note the difference between the uniqueness of living experiences together with the plurality of impressions and stories therein contained. Under the same name of history, we can also design the scholastic subjects that we use to promote learning but which together with aforementioned belongs to the field of historiography. The difference between history and recounting history is preliminary to understanding those essential elements needed for successive acquisitions like the difference in using periods of history and cultural dating.

Motivating, stimulating and activating

Following the argument that the transmission method of teaching gives disappointing results, little interest, fleeting and mnemonic knowledge and low formative capacity, there comes the need to follow formation paths which aim at involvement and experimentation, arousing curiosity and creativity and active acceptance in order to render each individual subject the protagonist of their own formation. Through constructive methods of research/action which avail themselves of the right sources, it is possible to promote an active form of learning which aims at not only acquiring knowledge but also mastering skills and abilities which allow for increasing and renovating them hence encouraging autonomy of thought and planning capacities.

It can thus be argued that motivation impulses have to be followed regarding methods and contents throughout the entire formative path with continuity and at different periods thereby building consistency in the disciplinary curriculum of history through the employment of activities that are

capable of stimulating the involvement and participation of students.

Among these motivating activities to be employed continuously and for correlating school ages we can include:

stimulate the involvement and participation in learning history through repeated assertions that "History is Us", that is to say that everyone is the subject and possible protagonist and that those personal and collective events of which one is part of do not begin at all from the life we are living now but from much earlier. The emotions felt on discovering that we are the heirs of and protagonists in history are thus added to all those repeated discoveries of which we are promoters binding inexorably the activities of learning and didactic research together.

- identify poles of interest through the observation of the present and the search for connections with historical themes and periods that have to be confronted now or have already been confronted (the development of topics covering a wide spectrum of subjects: climate, resources, pollution, global inequalities, migration, disputes and living in harmony);
- use laboratory findings and methods together with cooperative learnings - when we talk about laboratories we refer not so much to the laboratory itself as a physical environment but more as a behavioral and methodological one. Every acquisition of knowledge is seen as the result of both individual and collective effort divided between planning and the carrying out of research and of verifying, achieving and showing the results;
- develop a form of didactics which is attentive to its kind and makes good use of, in an incisive manner, recent accounts of history findings regarding women following experiential paths that overcome the persistent silent stereotype vision of their presence in history. Attention to the different types of female and male subjects in all their multiple identities is essential regarding History Didactics that strives at educating active democratic citizenship, given that the theme of gender identity is very important in the formation of every individual. Therefore, the matter has to be addressed in every sphere of learning, in particular, the historical one, by a coherent commitment to reconsider historical interpretations through the effective plurality of historical subjects;
- produce and demonstrate to the community writings and material derived from research in order to strengthen and diffuse the results and to give other rewarding objectives to the protagonists;
- investigate the surrounding reality and current situation to derive ongoing distinctive and identifiable features and changes in order to have a positive effect using active and effective citizenship.

History & the present

The objective aims and methodologies shown are based on the unbreakable bonds between history and the present on the assumption that it is necessary to investigate in order to learn and that that knowledge is indispensable for selecting and making suggestions wisely. With this objective in mind, it is opportune to activate from childhood true and real “observers” of the outside world obviously combined with the perceptive capacities of different age groups, but which are nevertheless useful in stimulating interest and curiosity and are aided by the possibilities of opening up as offered by new technologies. The individual arguments put forward can be both introductory and correlated to the knowledge of national and international norms concerning human rights and the experimentation of forms of participation and delegation that reproduce the functions of public entities.

To attain each level of competency and every learning objective through research/action it is therefore necessary to program methodological paths that identify in the first instance the necessary prerequisites in an inclusive manner with an updating of the equal opportunities. This should be followed by illustrating the methods and tools adopted together with final choices made and lastly the checks to be made both along the way and at the end.

With the joint participation of the students through self-evaluation these verifications can also be adopted in a metacognitive key.

Heritage & active citizenship

The unwinding of history creates its own patrimony that is heterogeneous and multifarious, a combination of legacies and resources wherein flow and lie all its features, wealth, values, environmental knowledge, historical-artistic and scientific ideals all collected together and divided by human communities in their different territorial surroundings. In order to respect and value this it is necessary to get to know it through ways that are more appropriate to appreciate it: ways that activate its adoption and protect it by introducing responsibility and active participating citizenship.

The attention to past knowledge brought to us from the past is not focused only on the formative environment but also has to be seen as necessary for perceiving and valuing it as a resource.

Therefore, cultural heritage appears in this manner to be a necessary base and integral background for an important and inclusive formative value capable of projecting those specific assets of local cultural wealth and to make good use of the latest tools of communication to wider horizons. In this perspective, the occasion arises to acquire and produce the knowledge needed to stimulate the learning of competencies for constructing knowledge through activating research. It demands a confrontation and an interdisciplinary combination through the flow of knowledge and the adoption of didactic methods and pathways which have already been experimented with in a variety of

subjects; it involves the systematic use of all communication tools and in particular telematics technologies and multimedia supports which can be used in every didactic and shared project. From what has been highlighted above, it appears evident that there is a significant connection between the concept of formation and that of “heritage education” for a common underlying tendency to develop integrated, recurrent and permanent processes of active learning. In particular, there are two aspects that specifically bind learning about “heritage” to formation. Firstly, the integration of multiple skills and knowledge derived from joint activities among schools and outside centres of learning in a multi-disciplinary educational scenario sharing a sense of knowledge and responsibility. Secondly, the adoption of constructive methods that motivate, co-involve and activate towards learning starting from the identification of those elements and seats of heritage moving on to the consequential deepening of knowledge and then onto laboratory activities for producing texts and drafts. All this goes on in a continuous search for interaction between the subjects that are concerned with knowledge processes and an evaluation of “heritage” as well as those environmental, aesthetic and historical-artistic aspects of the territory that permit and lead to conceptual exchanges, comparative practices and inter-cultural relations undertaken in all sectors of human relations under limitless horizons. Hence, the unfolding of active citizenship experiences can be seen as the crowning success of research on local cultural heritage and on an even wider one. We have already seen that a tight relationship exists between the different levels of historical knowledge that have generated such a form of patrimony and the respect it assumes.

Turning to methods of activation that are adopted to make use of the sources, the assets of museums, associates and local entities the employment of students in the investigations into the cultural treasures of their territory makes them the active protagonists of their discoveries and then their guardians. If we take into consideration that, for a collective group like a school, whose students have a more and more heterogeneous background, the common knowledge about places that they share today, can form the basis and the integrative background on which to construct a new sense of belonging that does not cancel out the diversities and differences of their origins. This can help them to work together to plan and make projects for the future, overcoming misunderstandings and hostilities.

Making use of digital resources for teaching and learning processes makes the understanding of relationships between historical knowledge and cultural heritage easier as well as the possibility of using multiple sources, knowledge of the territory and using texts and images for communicating history.

Therefore, knowledge of one’s cultural heritage, material and immaterial legacies and legible “signs” left on the territory is a fundamental introduction to projects that favor its safeguarding, recovery and valorization through the active participation of students.

Educating an active citizenship through its cultural patrimony cannot be separated from earlier

premises, origins and developments of national and international declarations about human rights that make up some of the principal living heredities of this patrimony.

Global history and local history

As well as accepting local and future realities, it is necessary for schools to offer a global vision of history that takes current situations as its starting point to teach the characteristics and results of great transformation processes and to allow for compromises between the marks left by peoples and cultures. There is room in this global picture for the main evolutionary phases of humanity: from populating our planet, from the agricultural revolution to the mingling of exchanges and relations, from the consolidation of large empires to the long periods of confrontation between nomads and settlers, from the shake-ups to ancient settlements to the building of new political-territorial systems. In this wide perspective, many other complex phenomena have an effect, such as the diffusion of religions, economic transformations, the formation of new nation states, colonization, industrialization, social conflicts and revolutions, the rise of totalitarian regimes, world wars, liberation movements, the emergence of democracies, globalization processes and the effects of squandering resources that lead to poor populations having to migrate.

Proceeding along this learning pathway, we have recourse to a continuous association and progressive focalization that relate general evolutions against future ones. In fact, it is useful to match this global vision with constant attention at local level; so that when seen as a coherent form of development of preparatory experiences relating to personal and family history, it allows for a more efficient comparison between the present and the past, and a better perception of the identity characteristics of the community and its territory. In this context there is room for activities that are designed for valorizing the cultural patrimony taking in the knowledge and willingness to safeguard and value it through contributions and collaboration on the part of local museums, libraries and associations which work together with integrated school projects.

Within history, learning itineraries great importance is attached to the capacity of expressing, reproducing and organizing the knowledge acquired with oral, written and multimedia expositions that allow us to conceptualize and display them using the appropriate vocabulary.

Interdisciplinary subjects

Due to the sheer size of its field of competencies and knowledge, history is open to the use of methods, contents and borrowed tools taken from other subjects. In this manner, it is possible to identify and follow up multiple intertwining subjects through careful programming. In particular, as already revealed, what seems to be indispensable are those connections with geographic knowledge

that have to be put into context with those processes of transformation in the areas and environments where they have appeared. As a field of science whose objective is the study and description of the configuration of the Earth and the phenomena related to human society and animal and vegetable life, geography has in its formative path of acquisition, in its competencies and functional knowledge of autonomous judgement and the exercise of freedom, the task of connecting the time dimension to the space dimension. If we examine climatic, environmental, demographic, economic and anthropologic aspects in our present situation and recent evolutions and those in act it allows us to compare current results and perspectives with near and remote transformations that offer indispensable spatial references for understanding historical events and processes in the right context. In this scenario, we can clearly see the connections and intertwining which are opportune and necessary between learning history and learning geography that together favor one's capacity of orientation in time and space. This does not mean that the study only constitutes a form of support for learning history. Its knowledge can lead to a widening of horizons, an awareness of the changes taking place and the faculty to criticize and choose. For its learning, it is also opportune to move from the next and more perceptible realities to proceed to the discovery of ever- wider ones, without ever abandoning those ties and connections with reality.

By first exploring the surrounding environment and utilizing topographical and geographical maps, photographs and satellite images, students can access the coordinates of their own territory and compare them with much wider representations right up to global level. These connections are particularly useful for those dynamics and recent phenomena of particular impact such as the intensification of climatic change, planetary imbalances and immigration of which one of the consequences has been the increasing presence of students from distant countries with different cultures which must lead to intercultural exchanges and inclusion projects.

Attention focused on today's world is necessary for acquiring all the skills of active citizenship leading to the knowledge that we are the heirs and guardians of a patrimony that belongs to a territorial community. Moreover, one of the principal objectives, namely the study of the landscape seen as the current result of innumerable legacies of the past, must allow for the following: the acquisition of knowledge and understanding regarding important themes like sustainability, the safeguarding of our hydrogeological patrimony, the fight against pollution, the collection and recycling of refuse, the development of new production techniques for renewable energy, and the safeguarding of biodiversity. Education about the environment and development must make use of a large number of scientific and technical methods that introduce a sense of responsibility and involvement that has then to be converted into active citizenship projects and experiences. The capacity to orientate oneself in space and time therefore contributes to the formation of autonomous people who are able to assume responsible decisions in managing their territory and in protecting the environment with a knowledgeable glance towards the future.

The natural intertwining between history and geography leads to the concept of “geo-history” which takes into consideration spatial and temporal data that are inseparable and gives a fundamental function to local history to help grow a historical conscience. In fact, it is through geo-history that we can understand the specific contexts of local history as well as the ways by which general history is rooted in local realities and vice versa.

To summarize, the learning of history and geography must try to give students both a competent degree of attention towards the whole world as well as a sense of belonging to their own culture. One particular connection that renders the learning of history more polyhedral, much wider in appeal and open and more informative is the one that binds it to science and the opportunities on offer from technologies that often make innumerable sources knowledge more accessible. Furthermore, what are also useful and desirable are those approaches, and testimonies derived from art, literature, music, science, iconography and cinema. Developments in didactic skills in museums, archives and picture galleries have all gained more importance in these fields.

Museum didactics are inserted in a much wider and now richer field of meaningful experiences of “cultural heritage didactics”, that is to say in that formative sector which through the observation and activation of emotive sensibility brings us to consider all current realities as a patrimony to exploit and respect and one in which to live more wisely. For “museum didactics” we can interpret it as the combination of methodologies, actions and tools that are all activated by museum to render those testimonies that have been collected, conserved and exhibited more understandable and culturally formative. These strategies in general are used to recall or reconstruct environmental and socio-cultural contexts in which such testimonies have been produced and had a specific function. They are useful and essential for being of interest to and informing the public but they are also indispensable and functional for managing formative scholastic paths of learning that require the involvement of teachers and students even those outside schools and visiting hours.

Finally, in sharing the conviction that learning history must, first of all, confer a better sense of knowledge and responsibility towards the present and the future, what is desirable is, a movement towards associations and cultural entities which operate in the territory to active forms of collaboration that can lead to conferences, guided visits, exhibitions, public meetings and performances.

Competencies

Among the numerous documents drawn up by the European Union that are aimed at providing a basic model of pedagogical uniformity for the European school system is the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council dated 18 December 2006 which identifies eight key competencies for a lasting form of learning. Their objective is the acquisition of those skills required by each citizen

to successfully insert themselves into a social and working environment. The key competencies regard the "combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to deal with a particular situation" (cited from "Recommendation for key competencies"), which allow one to respond to the constant changes in society and which are listed as:

- Communication in one's native language
- Communication In a foreign language
- Mathematical, scientific & technological skills
- Digital skills
- Learning to learn
- Social & civic skills
- Initiative & entrepreneurial skills
- Cultural knowledge and experience

In relation to the above listed skills it is recommended that the planning of learning units and history labs are strongly orientated towards the formation of skills and knowledge within the perspective of competencies which regard in particular, digital skills, learning to learn, social and civic skills and knowledge and cultural expression. These competencies are considered essential for achieving and developing sound bases for long time learning and for personal development within the optic of active citizenship and social inclusion. These competencies on the one hand do not abandon the historical contents and on the other hand, focus attention on student behavior patterns as well as on their personal motivations and their critical thinking regarding all that surrounds them. These learnings will accompany them throughout their life cycle.

Old & new difficulties

In their continuous and necessary transition, the diversity of subjects involved in scholastic, cultural and scientific formation are going through a particularly difficult phase, since, faced with rapid and completely unprecedented transformations of the present they always manifest more evident forms of disorientation, inertia, contradictions and anachronisms on all sides. Those who suffer in particular are teachers at all levels and of all subjects who still only manage to suppress but sometimes also react positively to all these new challenges. However, they often feel alone in trying to find the right balance between contradictory restrictive internal rules and regulations and external expectations which have been amply overcome. From within this overall framework of difficulties what emerges even more clearly is an underestimation of the didactic aspects on the part of environmental academics in whom a damaging contradiction has been reinforced over a long period already. Against this general attitude regarding teaching requisites there is a persistent and similarly

widespread one regarding discrediting all we know about didactics and its diffusion.

Therefore, behind this screen of formulated proposals and pushing aside the necessary dialogue needed between the true protagonists and subjects of learning it is the environment itself, that was created to train and update teachers that shows itself to be unavailable and unprepared to carry out its main function.

On the contrary, in order to confront those increasing and alarming symptoms regarding the shortcomings of their courses, university teachers should incorporate these didactic matters not only towards fruitful training of their teachers but above all to reap the fruits of those experiences in the school environment. Such experiences fundamentally deal with very delicate problems regarding methods and contents as well the response to and efficacy of teaching different subjects.

With regards to history as well as other subjects, the attention given to teaching strategies is commiserate with the real difficulties that teachers encounter daily in their workplace must not be eclipsed by that given to subject contents.

Therefore, respective didactics must be confronted with no less attention and care compared to that given to the main basic subjects. This can be done by offering courses designed specifically for experimenting with paths and fundamental research and teaching tools within a framework of formative processes that enhance the methodological aspects but at the same time offer basic notions and contents for planning coherent efficacious didactic paths subjectively. In this perspective, it is also possible to find an efficacious equilibrium in contrast often exasperating among those who sustain the primary importance of contents and those who attach more relevance to methodologies.

For those who are involved in the actual teaching of history, it is somewhat urgent to adjust the motivations, contents and modalities of their didactic strategies to current matters in order not to risk an overall anachronistic and inefficient perception.

For a kind of didactic history that is not just aimed at transmitting notions and contents but one which tends to value knowledge of the past for a better understanding of the present the criteria of basic methodology is the search for the interconnection between research and teaching through an in depth reading of the present. Interpreting various current aspects as the results of evolutionary development lines spread throughout history means putting the environment, information, images and relationships that each student experience and lives on a daily basis in the centre. In this way, the past is no longer viewed as an outsider because we can trace the premises and origins of the present thereby stimulating our knowledge about a period of history where each one of us is a protagonist who participates in the collective role that ensues.

Important questions such as peace and living together in harmony, ecological equilibrium, respect for the environment, economic inequalities and equal gender opportunities and culture can be offered through involvement in concrete experiences and not just simple theoretical and conceptual formulation.

In order to assume knowledge and responsibility about important themes it is not enough demonstrate terms and expressions trusting the evidence given, it is necessary to solicit channels of knowledge that trigger off forms of activation that directly rouse the interest of students. Everything that concerns the current and very delicate theme of intercultural dialogue about which extra-scholastic stimuli and influences are not in accordance with at all. A large number of teachers are aware of this and are reverting to experiences of direct confrontation and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge through those aspects that belong to the sphere of common interest of all children: games, food and parties.

Despite the numerous obstacles that it has to overcome the patrimony of experiences and experimentation that is evolving in schools seems to be rich and varied, capable of offering ideas and stimuli, warnings and caution, motivation and verifications.

Therefore, it is necessary to give visibility and memory to this patrimony making it susceptible to favouring a form of learning that involves readers, one that is lasting and efficacious and rewards taking on a responsible and knowledgeable "active citizenship".

The common objective here is to find in history useful kinds of knowledge for living in the present and planning a harmonious future while respecting the diverse identities and immense patrimony inherited through full unanimity with all the components that make up the cultural, social and economic framework of one's own community.

Summary

In line with that laid out above the essential critical phases of each path of history didactics should include the following:

- The right approach by everyone can motivate and be of interest in learning those arguments to be faced and to take care of all the necessary perquisites needed to follow this path;
- The adoption of lab methods to involve and activate students through the correct use of sources and good research;
- The proposal to make checks along the way so that those who are learning can evaluate and if necessary, correct their learning acquisitions;
- Showing the results achieved using a variety of tools and exhibits;
- Final verification of knowledge learned and the new opportunities that it can lead to.

Conclusions

As may be recalled at the beginning of the article, the International Conference "Horizons of Didactic

History “ is one of the main events of the “International Festival of History” which is now in its sixteenth edition (October-november2019).

At the close of the presentation of the Manifesto, which can also be consulted online on the site of Centro DiPaSt (<https://centri.unibo.it/dipast/it/centro>), we believe that it is very important to return to the opening words of this year’s “Festa” programme under the title of “Viva la storia viva” (‘Long live living history’) because they further underline what is postulated in the shared document on the didactics of history.

History is alive because it has generated and shared current situations and events that can be seen as the transitory effects of a very long series of changes that have occurred over thousands of years leaving traces and remains that are still visible to a large degree in today’s context. Looking back and observing their repercussions on the present allows us not only to understand the historical depth but also to extract better opportunities of choice from that knowledge for the present and the future.

History is alive because there is no part of our body or mind that is not the result of the legacy of thousands of people who came before us so that we are at the same time the results and subjects of history; a history in which we have to feel that we are the participants and artisans.

History is alive, because the hereditary knowledge that it has bequeathed us leads to a sense of respect and responsibility towards our environmental and historical-artistic patrimony. It is not just by chance that our attention and involvement in the themes of safeguarding and protecting our cultural wealth are proportional to the degree and quality of historical knowledge.

History is alive because considering modern life as its partial result allows us to direct our objective towards an even more remote past by activating a permanent observatory from which near and far events appear like developments of a large collective representation where everyone is more or less aware of the role they play.

History is alive because in this key it reveals an effective disciplinary multiplicity and greater accessibility and solidity seen as a fertile field for comparing interrelations between phenomena of a different nature and local events, tendencies and transformations on a large scale.

History is alive because, beyond an aridness in the pages of books and sequences of dates and events to be remembered that frequently deprives them of their meaning, lie the lives of millions of people who have enjoyed, suffered and loved like us. Discovering them again and trying to understand them can help to make us more aware about the past and prepare us to become artisans of the future.