

# Uses of History in History Education

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**Abstract**

This compilation thesis contains an introductory chapter and four original articles. The studies comprising this thesis all concern aspects of how historical culture is constituted in historical media and history teachers' narratives and teaching. It is argued that the teaching of history is a complex matter due to an internal tension resulting from the fact that history is both a product and a process at the same time. While historical facts, and knowledge thereof, are an important aspect of history, history is also a product of careful interpretation and reconstruction. This study analyses and discusses how history is constituted in history textbooks and popular history magazines, i.e. two common historical media, and in teachers' narratives and teaching of history.

The study finds that the historical media studied generally tend to present history as void of perspective, interpretation and representation, suggesting this to be the culturally warranted form of historical exposition. Moreover, the teachers studied also tend to approach history as if it were not contingent on interpretation and reconstruction. These results indicate that the history disseminated in historical media and history classrooms presents history in a factual way and disregards the procedural aspects of history.

Applying the history didactical concepts of historical consciousness, historical culture and uses of history, this thesis argues that an essential aspect of historical understanding is an appreciation of the contextual contingency that characterises history. All history is conceived within a particular context that is pertinent to why and how a certain version of history is constructed. Furthermore, all history is also received within a particular context by people with particular preconceptions of history that are contextually contingent, in the sense that they are situated in a certain historical culture. Readers of historical media are members of societies and are thus affected by how history is perceived and discussed in these contexts. This thesis argues that an awareness of these aspects of history is an important factor for furthering a complex understanding of history that encompasses the tension highlighted above.

**Keywords**

Uses of history, historical culture, historical consciousness, history education, history didactics, educational media, teachers, narrative

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