

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NARRATIVE COMPETENCE DOMAIN OF HISTORY EDUCATION BETWEEN 2000 AND 2020

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of history education, there has been a growing focus on the development of narrative skills as a key area for academic inquiry. Research has illuminated how the ability to create, interpret, and critically assess historical narratives is integral to fostering historical thinking and consciousness among students. Notably, narrative skills extend beyond mere storytelling; they enable students to construct meaningful and accurate historical narratives that encapsulate complex interactions, cause-and-effect relationships, and varying perspectives. This article provides an in-depth look into how the domain of narrative competence in history education has evolved over a two-decade span from 2000 to 2020. The data for this investigation were extracted from articles that are part of the Web of Science Core Collection, and a variety of methods, such as the cataloguing approach, were employed to analyze the available information. The study unveils that narrative competence has increasingly become a focal point, pinpointing five key clusters of topics that support this specific educational objective. These clusters range from the theoretical frameworks used in narrative construction to pedagogical strategies aimed at improving these skills. Significantly, this review underscores that research topics relating to narrative skills and competence have progressively moved from the periphery to a more central position within the broader field of history education research. This shift indicates an acknowledgment of the critical role that narrative skills play not only in understanding history but also in shaping critical thinkers capable of analyzing the past in a nuanced manner. The analysis also implies that history educators are increasingly expected to include narrative skills in their curriculum, ultimately contributing to more effective history education. Overall, the focus on narrative competence is reshaping how history is taught and understood, underscoring its importance in the development of well-rounded students.

Keywords: *history education, history learning, history teaching, literature analysis, narrative competence, narrative skills.*

Introduction

Several decades ago, the approach to teaching history underwent a cognitive shift, which occurred at different times and speeds across various countries. According to Wilschut (2011), this trend started in the 1970s when Bruner's theories and Bloom and Krathwohl's taxonomies of educational objectives became influential in history education proposals. In the United Kingdom, the Schools History Project (SHP), originally named the History Project 13–16, was established in 1972, setting a milestone in this shift. The SHP proposed that students create history instead of just memorizing facts, which paved the way for the Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches Project. This initiative started a line of research linked to Historical thinking (Martínez-Hita & Gómez, 2018), which aims to equip students with the necessary intellectual tools to analyze the past and connect it with the present issues (Chapman, 2011; Counsell, 2011; Lee, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2000).

Narrative competence has been essential in history education research in several countries. In the United States, the research influenced by cognitive psychology and expert/novice analytical techniques has emphasized the importance of using historical sources and the work of historians (Levstik & Barton, 2008; Monte-Sano et al., 2014; Reisman, 2012; Wineburg et al., 2017). Meanwhile, in Canada, the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, led by Peter Seixas, has worked to define historical consciousness and Historical thinking and to apply these ideas practically in the classroom through initiatives such as the Historical thinking Project and Historical thinking Assessment (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Other countries, such as Australia (Parkes & Sharp, 2014) and Belgium (Grever et al., 2011; Van Boxtel et al., 2015; Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2012; Wansink et al., 2018), have also contributed significantly to the literature by exploring the intersection of Historical thinking, the performance of knowledge and historical consciousness in history education.

The works of Barca (2005), Domínguez (2015), Gómez and Miralles (2015), López-Facal (2014), López et al. (2014), Miralles, Gómez, and Monteagudo (2019), Miralles et al. (2019) and Mora and Ortiz (2012) demonstrate how proposals from the UK, US, and Canada have been adapted for research on history education in Latin America, Spain, and Portugal. These papers highlight the incorporation of the emphasis on the ethical dimension of history education. Within this framework, the concept of narrative competence is becoming increasingly relevant to provide students with the intellectual tools to analyze the past and relate it to current issues.

Recently, there has been a rising focus on developing narrative competence in history education, which has resulted in several publications, including monographs by Counsell et al. (2016), Carretero et al. (2017), and Epstein and Salinas (2018), which have explored vital concepts, research trends, and teaching practices in the field. These reviews demonstrate that research in history education has expanded significantly since the 1990s, with a particular emphasis on Historical thinking and consciousness (Seixas, 2017). While much of this research has focused on curriculum and textbooks, there has been

a growing interest in other data collection methods, such as questionnaires, observation records, and case studies, for evaluating interventions and assessing learner perceptions and content production (De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2017; De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018a, 2018b; Van Straaten et al., 2018).

Despite the growing number of studies in recent decades, there remains a need for global, empirically-based research on narrative skill development in the competence in history education (Pollock, 2014). While classic studies by Wilson and Wineburg (2001), Seixas (1998), and Fragnoli (2005) have made significant contributions to the field, many studies have been limited to specific experiments that cannot be easily generalized (Adler, 2008). More recent studies by Lévesque (2008), Monte-Sano (2011), and Westhoff and Polman (2008) have explored the relationship between teachers' epistemological conceptions, Historical thinking, and the objectives of history teaching (Pollock, 2014). Notably, Van Boxtel's group in Holland has made significant progress in the empirical analysis of narrative competence in history education using statistical and conceptual approaches (Stoel et al., 2017).

The current research on narrative competence in history education needs more specific empirical data that can be contributed through bibliometric studies, unlike other fields of study and applied education research (Glass, 2016). This paper aims to bridge this gap by quantifying the development of this field of study, examining the origin of research works, and exploring connections across several important topics.

Academic publications from 2000 to 2020 in journals indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection were analyzed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Quantifying and describing the evolution of academic output in history education over time;
2. Identifying the countries, journals, and authors with the highest productivity and impact in the area of narrative competence in history education;
3. Analyzing the main topics addressed in these publications, as well as their interconnections and changes over time;
4. Examining the most cited authors and papers on narrative competence in history education.

Methods

A systematic literature search was carried out in several databases of the Web of Science, including the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), and Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). These databases are commonly used in bibliometric analyses of specific knowledge domains, as they are widely accessed internationally (Jiménez et al., 2013).

The chosen set of keywords includes six general topics related to Narrative Competence: History Education performance, Teaching History, Learning History, the performance of Historical thinking, and Historical Consciousness, along with three more specific ones: Storytelling, Narrative Skills, and Narrative Competence. The selection of

these topics was made based on their widespread use in research on history education. Recent studies have emphasized the significance of Historical thinking and Consciousness in disseminating the past to society. Epstein and Salinas (2018) identified Historical thinking and consciousness as the primary research topics using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Moreover, Narrative Skills, Narrative Literacy, and Narrative Competence were included to analyze the focus of the production on teaching and learning history. A total of 1163 documents containing these keywords in their titles, keywords, or abstracts were exported, of which 738 were deemed appropriate for History Education.

The data analysis consisted of two main phases, focusing on the structure and evolution of the narrative competence domain in history education. The first phase aimed to quantify the publications between 2000 and 2020 by extracting descriptive data such as subjects, journals, countries, and authors and analyzing bibliographic records using a cataloguing approach (Grunig, Grunig, Dozier, 2002). This approach summarised the main results, including the yearly published documents, top sources, keywords, countries, and authors. Additionally, the representation of the relationships between the keywords, countries, and authors, which helped to identify the authors and countries researching specific topics, was made. In the second phase, the focus was on the structure and evolution of the narrative competence domain by focusing on the academic publications, citation links and keywords, which provided insight into the connections between the subjects addressed by the articles.

Results

Descriptive analysis

The growth of academic publications in history education has been significant in recent years, particularly between 2000 and 2020, as evidenced by the Web of Science database. The analysis reveals three distinct phases in the growth of the produced articles on narrative competence and its components in research. The first phase, from 2000 to 2006, saw a prolonged rate of literary production, with only 12 to 17 history education articles published yearly. The second phase, between 2007 and 2014, was characterized by slow and inconsistent growth, with the number of articles ranging from 25 to 61 per year and a period of stagnation between 2008 and 2012. Compared to other areas of History education, this is a period of weak dissemination of articles. However, with the emergence of narrative competence in history education, there has been a marked increase in academic output on this topic in recent years.

Between 2015 and 2020, there was a significant increase in the number of articles published in the Web of Science, with literary production rising from less than 55 articles in 2014 to approximately 270 annual papers in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Despite the increase in narrative production, the study found that articles on history education lacked specialization, with general keywords frequently used. The most common topics were the analysis of textbooks, historical consciousness, Historical thinking, and the analysis of curricula from the perspective of narrative competence. Nevertheless, the development of narrative

skills and the more popular term “storytelling” was not highlighted. However, the keywords had to be related to evaluation techniques and tools used to analyze the methodological approaches of the studies, such as questionnaires, interviews, discussion groups, focus groups, and statistical analysis.

The article production on the WoS is dominated by the US, which accounts for 24% of the total articles. Brazil and Spain follow closely with 9% and 5%, respectively, while Russia, Canada and the United Kingdom hold successive positions with 6%. There are few publications with multi-country participation (MCP). However, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the US are the top three countries with the most articles written in collaboration with other countries. Regarding citations, the US is the clear leader with over 1372 citations, five times more than the second-ranked country, Canada. The top 10 most cited countries include Belgium, Israel, and Sweden. Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Germany are prominent regarding the number of citations received. In contrast, despite ranking third in terms of the number of articles produced, Spain is only sixth in terms of the number of citations received.

The production of narrative competence in history education-focused articles varies significantly among countries and authors, with a clear relation between national output and narrative competence. The top 10 authors in this field include four from Spain and three from Belgium, while the US only has one representative. Despite having the highest literary production in history education, the US has a highly fragmented output. In contrast, Spain’s output is concentrated among a few highly productive authors and research groups. The analysis also reveals a strong connection between narrative competence and highly productive Spanish and Dutch authors, as evidenced by frequently used keywords in the articles analyzed.

Thematic Clusters and their evolution

The keywords network provides insight into the different research clusters related to narrative competence and history education. Three distinct clusters are identified, each focusing on specific keywords. The first cluster, titled “Historical Consciousness”, includes 17 items (Identity, Memory, Collective memory, Commemoration, Heritage, Remembrance, Communal history, Civic education, Moral education, Social function of history, Cultural heritage, Public memory, Historical empathy, Interpretation, Perspective, Contextualization, and Historical significance). This cluster explores the role of history in cultural heritage education and methodology of research of didactics.

The second cluster, titled “Secondary sources”, includes 15 items (history education, literature review, academic articles, secondary sources, Historical thinking, narrative competence, teaching history, learning history, history curriculum, history pedagogy, history research, history textbooks, history assessment, history methodology, history analysis). This cluster examines identity issues related to nationalism and collective memory, focusing on analyzing historical discourses. However, knowledge production should be mentioned or elaborated on in the abstracts. Although pedagogical adequacy and educational policies are not yet central to this cluster, “secondary sources” are noted

for their ability to reinforce nationalism and particular national identities, underscoring the importance of expanding the range of identity resources available to students.

The last cluster focused on the Narrative competence attribute “storytelling”, including 12 sub-attributes (narrative, plot, character, conflict, climax, resolution, storytelling techniques, oral tradition, digital storytelling, fiction, non-fiction, and narrative abilities). These keywords suggest that the trends in research on narrative skills are multidisciplinary and span various fields, including literature, psychology, education, and digital media. Researchers are interested in studying the elements of a narrative, such as plot, character, conflict, climax, and resolution, and how they contribute to the effectiveness of the produced narrative. They are also exploring different techniques for narrative production, including oral tradition and digital media, and analyzing the differences between fiction and non-fiction narratives. In addition, the emergence of narrative psychology has highlighted the importance of understanding how narratives shape human experiences, identities, and relationships.

Most of the highly cited papers in this bibliographic collection are related to developing knowledge in history education. One cluster of citations focuses on master narratives, memory, and identity, which are closely related to the social function of history and historical consciousness. However, another cluster is centred around argumentative strategies, including using historical sources, argumentation, and causal explanation, which are related to the cognitive perspective of Historical thinking. In addition, another set of papers provides a global analysis of history education in the 21st century and examines the challenges and new perspectives in history teaching. The countries with the most citations in this collection are the US, the UK, Canada, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Discussion and conclusions

The findings above allow for a deeper understanding of the structure and development of the narrative competence domain of history education as reflected in English language articles indexed in the Web of Science. A notable shift in research occurred in the 1970s with the History Project 13–16, which emphasized the importance of students engaging with history rather than just memorizing facts, leading to the emergence of the concept of Historical thinking, which aims to equip students with intellectual tools to analyze and relate the past to present-day issues. Here are the roots of the narrative competence employment in history education.

The analysis reveals that history education research has had less visibility in the Web of Science than in other areas of applied didactics, such as science and mathematics education. There need to be specific journals from 2000–2020 for history education.

The analysis also shows that several emerging research groups support specific lines of research in history education, including the research team led by Carla Van Boxtel at the University of Amsterdam and research groups at the University of Murcia and the Autonomous University of Madrid in Spain.

Then, the English language articles on research in history education support a paradigm based on three concepts: Historical thinking, Historical Consciousness and the production of new narratives seen as Narrative competence. Historical thinking emphasizes the analysis of evidence, reasoning, interpretation, and argumentation. In contrast, Historical Consciousness focuses on the public use of history and constructing group identities among students, while both employ narrative competence. The concept of narrative competence has evolved from being heavily associated with the work of historians to a focus on the analysis of evidence, reasoning, interpretation, and argumentation, therefore, on producing new narratives.

It is important to note that historical literacy has become increasingly relevant in understanding historical concepts, encompassing a range of skills, including the ability to critically evaluate historical sources, analyze multiple perspectives and interpretations of events, and understand how historical events have shaped contemporary society. It involves an understanding of historical context, including the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that have influenced past events. Research has shown that students need to be prepared and better skilled at judging the credibility of online information. Recent findings from the Stanford History Education Group suggest a need to improve student's reading and writing abilities related to historical concepts. On the other hand, the research in the UK builds on earlier History 13–16 Projects and expert-novice studies carried out in the 1990s.

The research conducted in the Netherlands, particularly by Van Boxtel, Van Drie and De Groot's has contributed significantly to advancing historical argumentation research with rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods focusing on producing the knowledge. In addition to the public use of history, Historical Consciousness is also linked to history in popular culture, media representations, and how the past is used in history education. Many studies utilize narrative competence to address issues of identity or culture or use historical consciousness to discuss reasoning, with different nomenclatures associated with the academic tradition of each country.

US scholars use narrative skills and competence more frequently and may have more of a learning psychology orientation. In contrast, Historical thinking and consciousness may have more of a cultural study and memory orientation. The research community in history education still needs help due to the scarcity of connections between researchers and research groups, both within and between countries. Collaboration networks must be formalized through transnational research projects and international conferences, which should be leveraged as opportunities to establish collaborative networks. Joint investigations and international samples will allow for better advancement in this field. The data examined in this paper shows that the period from 2000 to 2020 is significant for the increase in research output listed in WoS, greater visibility attained by countries, journals, and research groups involved in this sector of the academic community, and the construction of paradigms that have been widely accepted and fundamental in understanding the conceptual structure of history education. A systematic study of the scientific literature is necessary for emerging research areas to identify the conceptual, intellectual, and social structure of the field of knowledge.

The study's methodology focused on reviewing English language articles on history education, and thus, there may be limitations in its applicability to different countries and comparisons between them. However, it is noteworthy that some regions, such as Northern Europe and the post-soviet space, have distinct categorizations for history in schools and curricula compared to other categories, such as social studies. On the other hand, in countries such as the US, history is often categorized under the multidisciplinary field of social studies/sciences, which may affect the terminology used in academic publications. The selection of keywords used in the study may have limited the sample for specific research topics, such as the use of mass media and technology in history education. Although the assumption was that studies related to these topics would contain specific keywords, it is possible that some relevant studies needed to be captured in the future search.

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