

Addressing diversity: An analysis of German curricula for history

SEBASTIAN BARSCH* 

Department of History, University of Cologne, Triforum, Innere Kanalstraße 15,
50823 Cologne, Germany

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the extent to which German history curricula address aspects of diversity. The curricula are analysed in terms of whether they include diagnostic phases to identify students' individual interests. It also examines whether the historical experiences of minorities and the agency of subaltern groups are addressed. The extent to which the curricula abandon a Eurocentric perspective and integrate global historical aspects will also be considered. Methodologically, the curricula of two main school types in all German states were analysed by means of a qualitative content analysis. The focus was on curricula for lower and upper secondary schools. The results show that diversity is usually addressed only from the perspective of established narratives. A national and Eurocentric history continues to dominate the curricula. Only a few curricula explicitly address the diagnosis of students' performance and ideas. Finally, the paper discusses the evolving nature of curricula, influenced by societal needs and growing sensitivity to social diversity. It highlights the need for future research on diversity in teacher education and the practicality of implementing complex concepts such as postcolonial thought in the classroom. More empirical research is needed on current curricula and the teaching of history in different regions and types of school.

KEYWORDS

history education, diversity, national curricula, Germany

* Corresponding author. E-mail: s.barsch@uni-koeln.de

INTRODUCTION

The discourse surrounding history education in German-speaking countries, and internationally as well, is dominated by the belief that there cannot be a fixed canon of historical knowledge that serves as a guideline for teaching history. The argument is that such a canon would be difficult to negotiate and could run the risk of promoting politically motivated master narratives. It might also make student-centred historical learning more difficult because fixed content requirements could stand in the way of individual interests and competencies (Alavi & Barsch, 2018; Chapman, 2020). In recent years, there has been a growing awareness in history education that historical learning occurs in societies shaped by diversity. However, this diversity is not reflected in history teaching, which aims to convey uniform concepts of identity. The argument, therefore, is that history lessons should no longer *convey* the ‘big’ stories, they should instead *enable* the reconstruction of the many *small* stories of the learners (Lücke, 2017).

Looking at the revised versions of various curricula in Germany from recent years, it is apparent that content requirements have given way to more thematically open approaches. The updated curricula often give teachers a higher degree of autonomy in designing their history lessons. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that curricula are normative specifications governed by political interests (Tribukait & Macgilchrist, 2020). It therefore stands to reason that the openness of the curricula might still be limited, and the approaches found within them could define a framework that results in collective rather than diverse concepts of identity in history teaching. Even if concrete lesson planning is often based on textbooks, curricula have the dual function of administrative regulations and planning instruments, and thus provide indications of how societies define the relevance of history (Thünemann, 2014). It should also be noted that curricular guidelines often influence the design of textbooks.

This article investigates the extent to which current history curricula in Germany enable historical thinking in a diverse society while taking subjective perspectives on history into account. It thus also explores the question of which normative narrative and learning concepts and requirements are specified in the curricula. A content analysis was carried out on the curricula to determine whether they a) enable student-centred historical narratives in the sense of one’s ‘own’ stories, and b) offer potential for deconstructing historical narratives from the perspective of a majority society.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Although research in history education has become increasingly international, the respective framework conditions for structuring history lessons are still nationally and even regionally anchored (Köster, Thünemann, & Zülsdorf-Kersting, 2014). The following theoretical considerations are therefore based primarily on German-language history education with its specific terms and theoretical approaches (Körber, 2016).

Curricula between openness and requirements

Curricula have a dual orientation. On the one hand, they reflect “what school and teaching are supposed to convey to the upcoming generation, according to the will of the state and society, in terms of knowledge and skills, capabilities and proficiencies, attitudes and judgments” (Schönemann, 2014, p. 54).



Ideally, they are based on scientific insights and follow the respective disciplinary discourse. On the other hand, they are an aspect of both political opinion-making and dominant epistemological convictions, which are often the product of Western scientific culture (Paraskeva, 2016; Paraskeva & Macedo, 2011).

Most curricula in Germany no longer specify a detailed, mandatory canon of content (or they at least allow certain sections to be structured autonomously by teachers themselves), but they instead aim to establish and promote ways of thinking and working that are specific to the discipline: “Competencies are the core of the discipline [...]. They can be acquired in *all* groups of topics.” (Pandel, 2005, p. 82) But the fact that certain topics and content are still mandatory is the result of a social process of negotiation: “The selection of topics remains an important area for tapping into the historically shaped present day of the pupils, collective memory or whatever you want to call this area.” (ibid.) From an international perspective, it is important to keep in mind that different developments are taking place simultaneously. For example, in some countries there is a focus on more student-oriented activities or more open forms of historical thinking in terms of content, while in others there is a clear shift toward substantive historical knowledge from a national perspective (Haydn, 2023, p. 211).

Students and social diversity

This tension between social expectations manifests itself not only in the curricula themselves, but also in the history classroom. Inasmuch as the narrative paradigm of historical learning and the focus on competencies (Körber, 2014) has led to increased awareness of learner diversity, taking this ‘variety’ into account has an impact on two levels:

1. As regards individual learning conditions, capabilities, proficiencies and interests, diversity can be considered a constituent element of history teaching.
2. Social diversity influences collective memory and, ultimately, the political dimension of historical culture, which, in turn, plays a part in determining curricular content.

Learner diversity can be addressed with what is known as ‘subject orientation’ in the German-speaking countries, a didactic principle for planning and designing history lessons which focuses on pupils themselves as unique subjects who learn. With a subject-oriented approach, individual learning conditions, interests, motivations and ideas are both the starting point and goal of lesson planning (Kühberger, 2015). Subject-oriented (in this article now called student-centred) history teaching therefore ideally offers a certain degree of openness, which provides “space for different interests, different learning paths, individual questions and subjective learning needs” (Barsch, 2020, p. 39).

Social diversity prompts the question of which (hi)stories should be focussed on in the classroom. Should lessons deal mainly with the history of the majority society, or is it necessary in a multi-ethnic society to address many histories and historical interests instead (Barsch, Degner, Kühberger, & Lücke, 2020)? To put it another way, if a society’s historical culture (e.g. memory culture) influences the development of school curricula, is it not necessary in a multi-ethnic society to consider whether this is actually shaped more by “multi-(memory-)culturality”, since (new) immigrants bring their own view of the past with them and add new perspectives to established memory cultures (Erl, 2017, p. 4)?



Diversity and history teaching

Against this backdrop of competencies, one can ask whether teaching scenarios in the context of diversity-aware history lessons enable attention to shift to ‘small’ stories outside the majority society or the stories of ‘powerless’ groups. Is agency attributed to marginalized groups, or is history viewed only from the majority perspective? Looking at post-colonial history, for example, the question is whether history lessons reveal the scope for action of subaltern groups, or at least offer opportunities to reflect on this (Brett & Guyver, 2021; Hinz & Meyer-Hamme, 2016). A post-colonial viewpoint additionally enables a “critique of Eurocentric narratives and discussion of a global historical perspectivization of (colonial) history”, as well as prompting “reflection on one’s own presuppositions and stereotypes” and permitting a critique of Eurocentric terms “such as ‘nation’ or ‘tribe’” (Bernhard, 2016, p. 114). The process of reflecting on stereotypes can also be applied to other markers of difference which exist in a diverse society but which, on account of their marginalization, are often markers of discrimination: non-binary gender identities, deviations from heteronormativity, ethnic background, skin colour/whiteness, socioeconomic class, disability, age, religion. These categories of difference, too, should be explored in the curricula to determine whether they are classified as deviations from the norm, thus marking groups as being ‘other’ and powerless, or whether agency should be attributed to the respective actors. The call to look at such histories without making comparisons to majorities and their norms can also be viewed positively from a diversity-aware perspective, because this approach implicitly highlights the everyday nature of such histories. For example, the historical dimension of intersexuality can be discussed independent of the question of whether it is considered a deviation from the norm (even though this was often the case in the past), so that more of an everyday narrative would be addressed (Sanz, 2017).

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The theoretical considerations outlined here can be summarised by saying that diversity-aware history teaching is student-centred and thus enables learners to appropriate history in a self-willed way (Kühberger & Schneider-Reisinger, 2020). Diagnostic elements are necessary for this purpose. This approach enables the exploration of the potential for action of groups outside the majority society and the deconstruction of dominant narratives. This leads to the following key questions for analysing the curricula:

- Do the curricula allow the reconstruction of student-centred historical narratives?
- Do they offer learning opportunities for addressing the agency of subaltern groups?
- Do they provide space for deconstructing historical narratives that largely reflect the perspective of a majority society?

METHOD

All of the curricula that were analysed claim to be competency oriented and therefore attribute some significance to subject orientation, at least theoretically. The German school system is still very heterogeneous across the individual federal states. Some places have a multi-tiered school



system. But two main types of schools have largely established themselves alongside other school structures: the *Gesamtschule* or comprehensive school, and the *Gymnasium* or academic secondary school. For pragmatic reasons, the analysis was carried out on documents developed for the more ‘homogeneous’ group of learners at the *Gymnasium* and also on those for the more ‘heterogeneous’ learners at the *Gesamtschule*. Despite marginal differences, the curricula for the states of Berlin and Brandenburg were viewed as a single curriculum. For the federal states of Bavaria and Hesse, the analysis was conducted on the curricula for upper secondary schools as well as more practically oriented secondary schools (*Realschulen*), because there are not many comprehensive schools in these states. For upper secondary level education, only the curricula for the upper levels of the *Gymnasiums* were analysed. Some comprehensive schools have their own requirements at this level, but they are closely aligned with those of the *Gymnasium* (in the state of Baden-Württemberg, for example). This means that 30 curricula for the lower secondary level (*Sekundarstufe I, Gymnasium and Gesamtschule*) and 15 curricula for the upper secondary level (*Sekundarstufe II, only Gymnasium*) were analysed and thus all curricula of all German states for the above-mentioned school types ($N = 45$).

The analysis only covered those parts of the curricula that provided explicit guidance for structuring history lessons, meaning that any preambles, general pedagogical sections and globally formulated competency goals were ignored. Admittedly, such sections do sometimes include teaching recommendations, such as performing diagnostics, abandoning Eurocentric perspectives and prioritising student-centred learning. Most curricula also call for teachers to discuss not only national perspectives in the classroom, but also global historical perspectives and aspects such as cultural encounters (Ministry of Education, Science and Cultural Affairs Thuringia, 2016). In terms of content, however, such topics often remain anchored in a Eurocentric point of view (‘Imperialism and Colonialism in the 19th century’; ‘Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Middle Ages’). The curricula were evaluated by means of a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014).

All categories were deductively identified based on the theoretical perspectives outlined above and then coded in multiple runs. For categories dealing with the question of a student-centred approach to history, the focus is less on aspects such as individualization and differentiation, and more on the issue of whether learner interests have an influence on lesson design to enable narratives outside of normative specifications in terms of both topics and content.

The curricula were examined not only with regard to their focus on students’ interests, but also in terms of their potential to deconstruct established historical narratives and/or broaden perspectives. In summary, the analysis illuminates both the opportunities for reconstruction (of various ‘small’ stories), given a focus on subject orientation and individual learning conditions, as well as the opportunities for deconstruction (of stories about diversity or based on features of diversity), or looking at ‘other’ histories in the classroom.

It is important to mention that it is not easy to determine what scope for action teachers actually have in using these curricula. The documents are usually formulated in such a way that only overarching topics are specified. Suggested themes such as ‘Migration as an Opportunity and Necessity’ offer the potential to discuss the agency of migrants, but they can also be taught without this perspectivization (Ministry of Education, Science, Further Education and Cultural Affairs Rheinland-Pfalz, 2015).

The following overview (Table 1) shows the main and subcategories derived from the theoretical deliberations, with anchor examples:



Table 1. Categories and anchor examples

Student centering

Self-will: The lessons enable a 'self-willed' and even marginalised appropriation of history (topics and content are not specified)	'The heterogeneity of the pupils, in terms of their personal, social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as different ways of life, is an important starting point for planning the lessons.' (<i>Rahmenlehrplan Berlin/Brandenburg, Teil C, Geschichte Jahrgangsstufen 7–10</i> [Framework Curriculum for Berlin/Brandenburg, Part C, History, Academic Years 7–10]. 2015, p. 22.)
Diagnostics: A diagnostic assessment of historical thinking is explicitly demanded and considered relevant to the subsequent design of the lessons.	'Internal differentiation takes into account what has already been learned, aims at individual support, develops, supports independent learning and involves the learners in the design of the teaching processes.' (<i>Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium—gymnasiale Oberstufe Niedersachsen</i> [Core Curriculum for Upper-Level Gymnasium in Lower Saxony]. 2017, p. 14.)
Experience: Does the curriculum enable the deconstruction/critical analysis of historical narratives about social diversity (migration, sexuality, etc.) based on the pupils' own experiences/attitudes?	'Identity in the familial and local environment (e.g. origin, place, region, regional language).' (<i>Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium Schuljahrgänge 5–10 Niedersachsen</i> [Core Curriculum for the Gymnasium, Academic Years 5–10 in Lower Saxony]. 2015, p. 20.)
Agency	
Subaltern groups: The curricula encourage an examination of subaltern/colonised/formerly colonised groups in terms of their ability to act. They are not viewed merely as 'victims'.	'Resistance of the dominated (e.g. Herero Rebellion in German South West Africa, Sepoy Rebellion in India, Abd el-Kader in Algeria, Boxer Rebellion in China).' (<i>Kerncurriculum gymnasiale Oberstufe Hessen</i> [Core Curriculum for Upper-Level Gymnasium in Hesse]. 2016, p. 31.)
Migration: The self-determination of migrants is emphasised.	'In history teaching, migration is viewed as a central feature of human societies in the past and present. Various factors characterise migratory movements.' (<i>Rahmenlehrplan Berlin/Brandenburg, Teil C, Geschichte Jahrgangsstufen 7–10</i> [Framework Curriculum for Berlin/Brandenburg, Part C, History, Academic Years 7–10]. 2015, p. 29.)
Sexual diversity: The scope for action of people with non-heteronormative gender identities/sexualities is explored.	'Egalitarian and indivisible human rights in the 21st century? (e.g. inclusion, sexual identities)' (<i>Fachanforderungen Geschichte Schleswig-Holstein</i> [Subject Requirements for History in Schleswig-Holstein]. 2016, p. 30.)
Other marginalised groups: The agency of other marginalised groups is emphasised.	'Fight for equal rights and equal opportunities for minorities (e.g. Sorbs, religious groups, homosexuals and people with disabilities)' (<i>Rahmenlehrplan Berlin/Brandenburg, Teil C, Geschichte Jahrgangsstufen 7–10</i> [Framework Curriculum for Berlin/Brandenburg, Part C, History, Academic Years 7–10]. 2015, p. 37.)

(continued)



Table 1. Continued

Deconstruction	
Critique of eurocentrism/national narratives	‘evaluate the appropriateness of historical cultural memories of colonisation processes even in digital programmes’ (<i>Kernlehrplan Sekundarstufe I Gymnasium Nordrhein-Westfalen</i> [Core Curriculum for Lower Secondary Level <i>Gymnasium</i> in North Rhine-Westphalia]. 2019, p. 29.)
Critique of Eurocentric terms	‘Forging identity between assimilation, integration, exclusion and differentiation (e.g. controversy about the term <i>Heimat</i>)’ (<i>Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium— gymnasiale Oberstufe Niedersachsen</i> [Core Curriculum for Upper-Level <i>Gymnasium</i> in Lower Saxony]. 2017, p. 46.)
Reflection on one’s own presuppositions/stereotypes	‘discuss fears and prejudices of locals and foreigners in the past and today’ (<i>Kerncurriculum Geschichte für die Oberschule Schuljahrgänge 5–10 Niedersachsen</i> [Core Curriculum for History for Secondary School Academic Years 5–10 in Lower Saxony]. 2013, p. 33.)
Everyday narratives	
Everyday narratives about marginalised groups are made possible.	‘This aspect centres on everyday life circumstances in their social and cultural dimensions as well as the self-understanding and actions of individuals and social groups. Life circumstances are visible, for example, in diet, clothing, work and leisure, in the course of lives from birth to death, and in gender relations and affiliation with a social stratum.’ (<i>Kerncurriculum gymnasiale Oberstufe Hessen</i> [Core Curriculum for Upper-Level <i>Gymnasium</i> in Hesse]. 2016, p. 15.)

In addition to the categorical evaluation, lexical searches were used to identify certain terms, such as ‘diagnostics’.

RESULTS

The results presented here are not meant to be a ranking but instead reveal the extent to which aspects of diversity awareness appear in the requirements of various curricula. This is also why no comparisons are made between the curricula of the individual federal states. Excerpts from the curricula are mentioned only as examples. Overall, though, the results tend to illustrate the current state of affairs in Germany as a whole, insofar as all of the above-mentioned curricula were used for the evaluation and interpretation.

Evidence for the theoretically derived categories can be found in nearly all of the curricula. However, the findings also show that aspects of diversity awareness make up only a very small part of all curricula and are found almost exclusively in relation to content dealing with migration and colonialism. These topics, in turn, are almost always addressed in connection with



discoveries, colonialism and imperialism, or migration mainly in the context of escape and expulsion (labour migration to a lesser extent).

Individual schools are usually granted responsibility for the specific design of their own curricula. However, some lesson plans include very concrete suggestions for implementation. The set topics and content mean that both the more open-ended curricular requirements and the suggestions are dominated by a chronological, national and Eurocentric approach to history teaching, even in the upper secondary level, with very few exceptions (such as the state of Schleswig-Holstein). No reasoning is generally given for this fairly national perspective. One exception is the secondary school curriculum for Saxony, which states:

In view of the current and future importance of European integration to the pupils' lives, the roots and perspectives of European history are foregrounded in the history classroom and associated with selected content from world, national and regional history. (State Ministry of Culture Saxony, 2019, p. 2)

The curricula rarely call for a concrete, affirmative attitude towards regional and national identities. One exception is the curriculum for academic secondary schools in Saxony-Anhalt, where the focus of the third mandatory practical history project is to “Promote Saxony-Anhalt with history”, which leaves little room for a critical examination of the region (Ministry of Education Saxony-Anhalt, 2019, p. 27). In terms of specific suggested content, the curricula are also dominated by content dealing with the history of conflict, while everyday and cultural history tend to be marginalised.

In summary, these theoretically derived categories can be found in the curricula. Quantitatively, however, in all of the curricula that were analysed, these categories lag far behind the requirements for regional-national or Eurocentric approaches history, which are designed for pupils to acquire declarative knowledge primarily of political and economic history.

The frequencies of occurrence presented in the following mainly provide information about how the various categories analysed here can be quantitatively placed in relation to each other in the curricula.

Student centred learning

Aspects of student centred learning are mentioned in some curricula as a factor to consider when planning history lessons (Table 2).

The category of diagnostics is found in the curricula of eight or nine (Berlin and Brandenburg) states (the proportions in comprehensive schools and academic secondary schools are almost equal). In three federal states, this category also appears in upper secondary level education. References to the use of diagnostics are embedded only in the specifications for general lesson planning and are not mentioned again in connection with suggested content or framing.

Table 2. Subcategories focusing on student-centered learning across all curricula and their frequency of appearance in different segments

Subcode	Frequency
Diagnostics	14
Self-will	14
Experience	5



However, the curriculum for Berlin-Brandenburg includes very clearly positioned references to diagnostics along with a systematic scale of levels, meaning that greater significance can be attributed to this area. Diagnostics are also mentioned in the context of evaluating performance for assigning grades. These references do not influence the analysis at hand because they do not directly call for lessons to be adapted to the pupils' starting points for learning.

The category of self-will is (with one exception) found only in the initial tuition for lower secondary level education. A clear focus is placed on looking at the students' own life and family history. However, this close personal environment is ultimately a content specification. Only the curricula for Hesse and Berlin-Brandenburg indicate that the interests of learners could have a direct influence on the choice of content (though this is found in the remarks on the principles of general lesson design). Specific content suggestions for the class levels go no farther than these biographical entry points.

The same applies to the category of experience. Some personal migration experiences are addressed here, though not always from a historical perspective, but also from a political perspective in classes for combined subjects ([Berlin-Brandenburg State Institute for School and Media, 2006](#)). The curricula of five federal states include a direct reference to integrating learner experiences into history lessons.

Agency

Unlike the category of student centred learning, the facets of agency are found almost exclusively in the concrete content specifications and recommendations ([Table 3](#)). As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to look at the sometimes very vaguely formulated specifications and determine the extent to which the agency of certain groups can be explicitly addressed in the classroom. All the same, this openness does enable such an approach. For example, discussing the topic of 'Indian' high culture can reveal agency even without transnational perspectives ([Lower Saxony Ministry of Culture, 2013](#)).

The opportunities for action of subaltern groups are addressed almost exclusively in the context of European 'voyages of discovery' since the early modern period or colonisation/decolonisation since the 19th century. This means that these groups are always looked at from the perspective of European history. Cultures that had no form of economic or political exchange with Europe/Germany (or sometimes only with the USA) do not appear in the curricula. The same applies to the category of migration. In this case, various curricula offer opportunities to explore the agency and self-determination of migrants in history, but the focus is always on migration to Germany, to a specific federal state or to Europe. The curricula also address emigration (the emigration of German citizens to America in the 19th century) as a topic for history lessons. Other 'marginalised' groups, too, are a topic for history teaching when a connection can be made

Table 3. Subcategories for agency, frequency of appearance in segments

Subcode	Frequency
Subaltern groups	41
Migration	24
Other marginalized groups	20
Sexual diversity	11



between them and one's 'own' history. It is notable that aspects of economic history in particular appear to play a role here. For example, China is a topic in the curricula of nine federal states, especially when the focus is on economic and cultural relations with Europe. Germany's economic relations with the Ottoman Empire and then Turkey are another example. 'Marginalized groups' is not entirely accurate as a category here, because agency is attributed to these historical actors in light of their economic prosperity. But they function as 'others' all the same.

Sexual diversity is mentioned primarily in the context of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals or in terms of 'the role of the woman'. Such aspects were not considered here because agency is not attributed to these groups, and the focus is more on the traditional gender polarity. This is not to minimize the relevance of these topics at all, but the analysis at hand was driven by other research interests. Very few curricula explore opportunities for action and are open to (hi) stories that include sexual diversity. In the curricula for Rhineland-Palatinate, Lower Saxony, Hesse, Berlin-Brandenburg and Schleswig-Holstein, 'gender identities' are a concrete historical learning opportunity.

Deconstruction

The parts of the curricula subsumed under this category are mainly found in *Anforderungsbereich III* (Requirements Area III, the highest performance level for tasks in German secondary education). They particularly address the factual and value judgement levels (Table 4).

Opportunities to reflect on and examine one's own prejudices and stereotypes are found in the curricula of all types of schools analysed in all federal states. They relate to the topics of migration, colonialism, the treatment of foreigners and general cultural diversity. Suggested themes such as 'Africa—trouble spot or underappreciated continent?' also link questions about the consequences of colonialism to the self-determination of modern African countries (Ministry of School and Vocational Training of the State of Schleswig-Holstein, 2016). Some curricula additionally enable a critical examination of one's own attitudes in the context of discussing appropriate forms of memory and historical culture (Saarland Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). Exploring historical culture in particular provides the most obvious opportunity to critique Eurocentric narratives by, for example, encouraging learners to evaluate "the historical representation and interpretation of colonisation by contemporary Europeans" (Lower Saxony Ministry of Culture, 2013, p. 23). The suggestions identified in the curricula of five federal states are found exclusively in connection with colonial history; for example, learners are expected to explain "the use of the terms 'Indians' and 'indigenous peoples'" (Ibid.).

Regarding the main category of deconstruction, it can generally be said that many of the analysed curricula provide space for a critical examination of historical culture, and that aspects of diversity awareness—even if they are not explicitly mentioned—can come into play through implicit allusion depending on how the history lessons are specifically designed.

Table 4. Subcategories for deconstruction, frequency of appearance in segments

Subcode	Frequency
Reflection	45
Critique of Eurocentrism	21
Critique of terms	12



Everyday narratives

There are very few indications that everyday narratives could be addressed without making any reference to European history and/or victim discourse. Such indications can be found in the curricula of five federal states in a total of eight segments primarily for lower secondary level education. These range from “Other cultures, e.g. Persian Empire, Imperial China, Central African and Central American empires” for the field of “Ancient cultures in the Mediterranean region” (as an in-depth module, Rheinland-Pfalz [Ministry of Education, Science, Further Education and Cultural Affairs, 2015](#), p. 94) to “The lives of children in various eras” ([Saarland Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014](#), p. 19). But there are no indications that everyday narratives about the historical situation of people with disabilities or sexual identities that deviate from the norm, for example, could be the focus of history lessons.

SUMMARY

The analysis of the curricula shows that examining and reflecting on diversity is certainly intended to be an aspect of teaching. But diversity is addressed primarily as a category of difference for what tends to be national, regional or European historiography, in which colonialism and migration to the European region (or from this area by Europeans) are foundational. Most curricula still follow a clearly Eurocentric and chronological structure. Therefore, although the curricula are open enough to allow schools to design their own lesson plans, it would be difficult to bring in any perspectives that fundamentally differ from this.

When the categories found here are viewed in relation to the overall content specifications in the curricula, it becomes clear that very little space is given to student centred learning or subject orientation, or to agency concepts and the deconstruction of Eurocentric narratives on the level of the content. The curricula for academic secondary schools and comprehensive schools vary very little in this regard. Only the combined subjects at comprehensive schools might attribute greater significance to economic and political approaches as well as historical ones.

But there are at least three limiting aspects to bear in mind when considering the results presented here. First, it is still not clear just how much the curricula actually guide day-to-day history teaching ([Von Borries, Fischer, & Meyer-Hamme, 2005](#)). It is also important to note that while the curricula are now open enough to give teachers great freedom in designing their lessons, the extent to which teachers make use of this freedom is not known. Their scope for action is probably influenced much more heavily by history textbooks, which may still be the dominant medium for teaching history ([Bernhard, 2018](#); [Van Nieuwenhuysse, Roose, Wils, Depaepe, & Verschaffel, 2017](#)). After all, textbooks offer concrete content that is easy for teachers to access.

DISCUSSION

Curricula and guidelines are not only normative specifications shaped by scientific insights, they are also based on the respective needs of a society—and these needs can change. At the same time, sensitivity to dealing with social diversity has grown in recent years and is now also expressed in the science, which has begun to embrace agency concepts ([Johnson, 2003](#)) and explore the question of how diversity affects teacher training ([Ivanova, 2019](#)). Another issue



relevant to the design and use of history curricula is the extent to which they actually enable competency-oriented and subject-oriented teaching. But it is also worth asking whether extremely cognitively challenging approaches such as post-colonial thought and, indeed, agency concepts can be put into practice in the classroom in the first place. Perhaps it is not even possible for people who are part of a group or a nation to readily extend their historical thinking beyond these mental boundaries. One could then pragmatically say that “German colonial history is a genuine part of German (national) history and not primarily ‘the history of the colonized’” and should therefore be treated as such (Bernhard, 2016, p. 107). But it is not that simple, because some of the pupils sitting in classrooms probably identify more with the ‘colonised’ people themselves. There is no getting around the fact that the aspects outlined in this article will need to be empirically examined in further detail. Such an investigation could be driven by four main questions:

1. What influence do curricula have on the actual teaching of history today?
2. What learning opportunities do diversity-aware and subject-oriented approaches offer for the historical thinking of learners in a diverse society?
3. Which criteria should be used to design textbooks that will encourage diversity-aware historical learning in combination with curricula?
4. How can teachers be educated and trained to use curricula with a high degree of autonomy?

In order to answer these questions, extensive empirical research would be necessary not only on the present curricula, but also on history teaching in different federal states and in different types of schools.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sebastian Barsch is a professor of history education at the University of Cologne. His focus is on inclusive historical learning and the professionalisation of history teachers. He also works on the history of disability from a cultural studies perspective.

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APPENDIX

Analysed curricula

Baden-Württemberg

- Sek 1: Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg. (2016). *Gemeinsamer Bildungsplan der Sekundarstufe I. Geschichte*.
- Gym: Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg. (2016). *Bildungsplan des Gymnasiums. Geschichte*.

Bayern (The state of Bavaria has published one document per grade level. These are listed here, but are considered as one document for the respective school types)

- Sek 1 Real: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). *Fachlehrpläne. Realschule: Geschichte 6*.



- Sek 1 Real: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 7.
- Sek 1 Real: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Realschule: Geschichte 8.
- Sek 1 Real: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Realschule: Geschichte 9.
- Sek 1 Real: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Realschule: Geschichte 10.
- Sek 1 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 6 – Von den ersten Menschen bis zu Karl dem Großen.
- Sek 1 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 7 – Vom Mittelalter bis zum Absolutismus.
- Sek 1 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 8 – Das lange 19. Jahrhundert.
- Sek 1 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 9 – Das kurze 20. Jahrhundert.
- Sek 2 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 10 – Deutschland, Europa und die Welt bis zur Gegenwart.
- Sek 2 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 11.
- Sek 2 Gym: Staatinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München. (2017). Fachlehrpläne. Gymnasium: Geschichte 12.

Berlin/Brandenburg

- Gym Sek I: Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Berlin. Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg. (2017). Rahmenlehrplan. Teil C Geschichte. Jahrgangsstufen 7 – 10.
- Ges Sek I: Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Berlin. Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg. (2017). Rahmenlehrplan. Teil C Gesellschaftswissenschaften. Jahrgangsstufen 5/6.
- Sek 2 Gym: Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Berlin. Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg. (2006). Rahmenlehrplan für die gymnasiale Oberstufe. Gymnasien Gesamtschulen mit gymnasialer Oberstufe Berufliche Gymnasien Kollegs Abendgymnasien. Geschichte.

Bremen

- Sek 1: Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft. (2010). Gesellschaft und Politik. Geografie, Geschichte, Politik. Bildungsplan für die Oberschule.
- Sek 1 Gym: Der Senator für Bildung und Wissenschaft. (2006). Welt-Umweltkunde, Geschichte, Geografie, Politik. Bildungsplan für das Gymnasium Jahrgangsstufe 5 – 10.
- Sek 2 Gym: Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft. (2008). Geschichte. Bildungsplan für die gymnasiale Oberstufe.



Hamburg

- Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg. Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung. (2014). Bildungsplan Stadtteilschule. Jahrgangsstufen 7–11. Geschichte.
- Gym Sek 1: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg. Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung. (2014). Bildungsplan Gymnasium Sekundarstufe I. Geschichte.
- Gym Sek II: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg. Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung. (2009). Bildungsplan gymnasiale Oberstufe. Geschichte.

Hessen

- Real Sek 1: Hessisches Kultusministerium. (2011). Bildungsstandards und Inhaltsfelder. Das neue Kerncurriculum für Hessen Sekundarstufe I – Realschule. Geschichte.
- Gym Sek 1: Hessisches Kultusministerium. (2011). Bildungsstandards und Inhaltsfelder. Das neue Kerncurriculum für Hessen Sekundarstufe I – Gymnasium. Geschichte.
- Gym Sek 2: Hessisches Kultusministerium. (2014). Kerncurriculum gymnasiale Oberstufe. Geschichte.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

- Sek I Ges: Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. (2002). Rahmenplan Regionale Schule Verbundene Haupt- und Realschule Hauptschule Realschule Integrierte Gesamtschule Jahrgangsstufen 7–10.
- Sek I Gym: Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. (2002). Rahmenplan Gymnasium Integrierte Gesamtschule Jahrgangsstufen 7–10.
- Sek II Gym: Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. (2019). Rahmenplan für die Qualifikationsphase der gymnasialen Oberstufe. Geschichte und Politische Bildung.

Niedersachsen

- Sek 1: Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium. (2013). Kerncurriculum für die Oberschule. Schuljahrgänge 5–10.
- Sek 1 Gym: Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium. (2013). Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium. Schuljahrgänge 5–10.
- Sek 2 Gym: Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium. (2017). Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium – gymnasiale Oberstufe die Gesamtschule – gymnasiale Oberstufe das berufliche Gymnasium das Abendgymnasium das Kolleg. Geschichte

Nordrhein-Westfalen

- Sek I Ges: Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. (2011). Kernlehrplan für die Gesamtschule – Sekundarstufe I in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Gesellschaftslehre. Erdkunde, Geschichte, Politik.
- Sek I Gym: Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. (2019). Kernlehrplan für die Sekundarstufe I Gymnasium in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Geschichte.



- Sek II Gym: Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. (2014). Kernlehrplan für die Sekundarstufe II Gymnasium/Gesamtschule in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Geschichte.

Rheinland-Pfalz

- Sek I Ges: Ministerium für Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz. (2013). Rahmenlehrplan Gesellschaftslehre für die Integrierten Gesamtschulen und die Realschulen plus in Rheinland-Pfalz Klassenstufen 5 und 6.
- Sek I Ges: Ministerium für Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz. (2015). Rahmenlehrplan Gesellschaftslehre für die Integrierten Gesamtschulen und die Realschulen plus in Rheinland-Pfalz Klassenstufen 7 bis 10.
- Sek I Gym: Ministerium für Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz. (2021). Lehrplan für die Gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Fächer. Erdkunde, Geschichte, Sozialkunde.
- Sek II: Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur Rheinland-Pfalz. (2016). Lehrplan für die Gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Fächer Erdkunde, Geschichte, Sozialkunde
- Sek II: Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur Rheinland-Pfalz. (2011). Lehrplananpassung Gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Aufgabenfeld in den Jahrgangsstufen 11 bis 13 der gymnasialen Oberstufe (Mainzer Studienstufe).
- Sek II: Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur Rheinland-Pfalz. (2011). Hinweise zur Lehrplananpassung im Fach Geschichte.

Saarland

- Sek 1 Ges: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Gesellschaftswissenschaften. Gemeinschaftsschule.
- Sek 1 Ges: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gemeinschaftsschule Klassenstufen 5 und 6.
- Sek 1 Ges: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gemeinschaftsschule Klassenstufen 7 und 8
- Sek 1 Ges: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gemeinschaftsschule Klassenstufen 9 und 10.
- Sek 1 Ges: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2015). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gemeinschaftsschule Klassenstufen 9 und 10.
- Sek 1: Gym: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasium Klassenstufe 6.
- Sek 1: Gym: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasium Klassenstufe 7.
- Sek 1: Gym: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasium Klassenstufe 9.
- Sek 1: Gym: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2014). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasium. Fassung bilingualer Zug deutsch-englisch.
- Sek 2: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2016). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasium. Anhang.



- Sek 2: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2016). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasiale Oberstufe. Einführungsphase.
- Sek 2: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2016). Lehrplan Geschichte. Gymnasiale Oberstufe. Hauptphase.
- Sek 2: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2016). Lehrplan Geschichte. Einführungsphase der gymnasialen Oberstufe. Fassung bilingualer Zug deutsch-englisch.
- Sek 2: Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland. (2016). Lehrplan Geschichte. Einführungsphase der gymnasialen Oberstufe. Fassung bilingualer Zug deutsch-französisch.

Sachsen

- Sek 1: Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus. (2019). Lehrplan Oberschule. Geschichte.
- Sek 1 + 2 Gym: Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus. (2019). Lehrplan Gymnasium. Geschichte.

Sachsen-Anhalt

- Sek 1 Ges: Ministerium für Bildung Sachsen Anhalt. (2017). Fachlehrplan Sekundarschule. Geschichte
- Sek 1 + 2 Gym: Ministerium für Bildung Sachsen Anhalt. (2013). Fachlehrplan Gymnasium. Geschichte

Schleswig-Holstein

- Allgemein bildende Schulen (Sek 1 + 2): Ministerium für Schule und Berufsbildung Schleswig-Holstein. (2016). Fachanforderungen Geschichte. Allgemein bildende Schulen Sekundarstufe I Sekundarstufe II.
- Allgemein bildende Schulen (Sek 1): Ministerium für Schule und Berufsbildung Schleswig-Holstein. (2015). Fachanforderungen Weltkunde. Allgemein bildende Schulen Sekundarstufe I.

Thüringen

- Sek 1 Ges: Thüringer Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport. (2012). Lehrplan für den Erwerb des Hauptschul- und des Realschulabschlusses. Geschichte.
- Sek 1 + 2 Gym: Thüringer Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur. (2016). Lehrplan für den Erwerb der allgemeinen Hochschulreife. Geschichte.

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