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## **Narrative and the Teaching of History: Identities and Human Behaviour**

*SUMMARY: In this paper, I aim to define the position narrative currently holds as one of the main methods of organizing and completing the teaching of history in General Education (Primary and Secondary levels). I will also make a brief reference to its connection to the teaching of history, from the very moment history was added as a subject to the education curriculum (approximately the mid-19th century in Greece, and other countries). I will track the influences of historiography of that period on the ways in which the subject was presented, as the narrative nature of history was, from the very beginning, considered one of its basic manifestations. To this day, this has essentially neither been questioned nor refuted, not even by the newer and contemporary approaches of historical research and history instruction. Taking this into consideration, I think it is indisputable that the documentation of history is inherently narrative, and any proposals that sporadically surfaced to discard narrative from teaching were based on the complete image that had evolved, rather like a label attached to what was known as “traditional – old” history. I shall, however, refer to certain refutations of the basic principles and practices of traditional history and to the dialogue that ensued between historians, which also influenced history instruction, in relation to the positive proposals of the so-called “new history”. While the latter enthusiastically, and with some degree of passion, attempted to discard certain principles and practices of “old history”, which included narrative, this approach was actually, at the same time, essentially being disproved by the very historians involved. What may perhaps not have been sufficiently emphasized is the need to constantly renew and adjust narrative to whatever the new educational and pedagogical objectives of history and of the teaching of history may be. A critical approach to the old – traditional narrative history is*

*one of the objectives of this paper. Our concern will be to understand the reasons that lead to the retreat of the rejectionist position, paying particular attention to understanding the importance of this constant renewal for the instructional act. We shall also attempt to demonstrate the importance of narrative discourse in a context combining classroom research and the teaching of history; an experiential teaching where narrative discourse, by seeking to essentially interpret and thoroughly analyze events, would be able to compose relevant written and oral discourse, by containing axiological judgments and essential reconstructions of the past. In particular, narrative discourse involves efforts to develop critical historical thinking on a level that will indicate that teachers and students possess the skills to interpret the singular position that contemporary humankind, in fact, occupies in the world today. It should be emphasized that the skills that reveal the identity of the narrative discourse of historians, history teachers and students, more or less present and demonstrate their personal identity and behaviour in the contemporary world. This is something which apparently occurs constantly, since every single approach to history is the function of its scientific and methodological principles and, to a large extent, the values, beliefs, and convictions of individuals while they are alive and active.*

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** History, historiography, narrative, teaching of history, history didactics, identities, human behaviour, historical sources

## Introduction

My aim in this paper is to demonstrate the current position that narrative holds as one of the main means of historiographical approach, and its place at the structure of the teaching of the history lesson in General Education, both Primary and Secondary. A succinct reference will be made to narrative's connection with the teaching of the history lesson, ever since the latter was introduced to the education curriculum (around the mid 19<sup>th</sup>c. in Greece, and other countries). The impact of that period's historiography had on the ways the history lesson was conducted will also be investigated, since the narrative character of both historiography and history didactics was, from the very beginning, considered one of their basic manifestations. In essence, to this day, this narrative character of history has neither being questioned nor refuted, not even by innovative contemporary approaches to historical research. Taking this into consideration, it is indisputable that narrative was, and still remains, the natural method of historical reference. Whatever proposals were on occasion put forward to discard it from

the history lesson were based on the overall negative image that developed based on more recent and contemporary academic, educational, and instructional data associated with so-called “traditional” historiography (a narrative, descriptive presentation depicting people and historical events). It should be noted that the nature of the “history-narrative”, that has been reassessed and mostly rejected, corresponded to the principles, the theory, the practices, and the methodology of “traditional” historiography (Leontsinis 2006, p. 15ff).

The rationale of my approach will take into consideration a common demand young children make as they repeatedly ask their parents, “Mommy, daddy, tell me a story, tell me a fairytale”, as well as the great joy these very same children feel when their teachers read out to them or narrate to them stories and fairytales. The English National Curriculum (1999, p. 39) stresses that, for the first key stage of teaching history, history, by its very nature, provides an authentic and fascinating evocation of the past; consequently, as story-tellers, both grandfathers and grandmothers succeed through their stories in providing children with opportunities to develop a sense of time and of generations, especially if their tale begins, for example, thus: “When I was six years old, like you...”.

Fernand Braudel asked himself what purpose the struggle between traditional and new history served, because, according to him, when teaching history, the objective is to teach the history lesson rather than academic theory. He noted that any discussion on this matter should focus on the methods of the teaching of history, and that it was these methods that required changes. Regarding narrative’s place in the history lesson, he pointed out that for young children he always suggested simple narrative along with pictures, television series, and movies; traditional history, that is, but improved (Braudel 2001, p. 38). According to Braudel, for example, children, of 10-12 years old, are an extremely charming audience, which finds everything fascinating and absorb history like an enchanted fairytale. At the end of his discussion on the role of narrative in the teaching history and in the subsequent stages of school education, he points out that even this simple narrative should turn into pictures, landscapes, large panoramic views; and everything as simple as possible. Children should know the most important dates, be able to situate in time the most important individuals (whether because they were magnificent or horrifying), and to put things in place (Braudel, 2001, p. 39).

As children demonstrate an innate curiosity about the past, we adults apparently understand this as an inherent component of our culture and interests. The lives and achievements of the heroes and heroines of the comic books and fairytales we read out to them or they read themselves, spark their imagination

and actively draw their attention. The goal that history sets, however, is to prepare young people for the world they live in and, since they inhabit a socially complex and, from a cultural viewpoint, diverse society in a constantly changing environment, they need to prepare to become familiar with history and to deal with it. Their life as successful citizens depends on the abilities they acquire to detect characters, to evaluate human behaviour, to engage into the complexity of the world they live in. At the same time, they should be trained to become potential readers of history and composed narrators of a historiographical text (Leontsinis 2007, p. 105ff).

Children's early interest in the past, both mythical-unreal and real, can be objectively reinforced by history. Older people are characterized by a tendency to seek information regarding the lives of people in the past, especially when this is vividly presented and accompanied by valuable assessments as to past and present events; one could take advantage of this tendency when instructing older pupils as well. Older pupils, via the development of specific abilities, need to be encouraged to describe to their interlocutors difficulties of life and the views of other past people. This ability, incorporated into the narrative section of the history lesson, serves as a decisive indication of the gradual improvement of the pupil's historical comprehension exhibited through the originality of their own narratives. Noteworthy research findings have shown history is better understood through narrations, theatre plays, miscellaneous observations, and empirical activities. It has also been demonstrated that narration and storytelling are methods that need to be implemented during the teaching of the history lesson, since they provide linguistic development, chronological sense, and environmental understanding.

In the following section of this paper, I will be referring to the refutation of the basic principles and practices of traditional historiography, as well as to the debate historians and other academics embarked upon, which drastically influenced educational history, as regards the newer and contemporary-current proposals of so-called "new history". Whilst the supporters of "new history" enthusiastically and passionately sought to discard certain principles and practices of "past" historiography and history didactics, this rejection included, through the use of mainly persuasive arguments, that of narrative. Gradually, the advocates of "new history" – along with other historians of modernizing principles and opinions – defined with greater accuracy its importance to historical speech. It is my belief that – as the "narrative" storytelling structure of the study and research material produced by traditional historiography until the 1960s and 1970s was being rejected – the debate did not fully focused on its negative

structural elements but was mainly concerned with the scientific dimension of historiography. But, the modern historians' main reaction focused on the ineffectiveness of traditional narrative in monologue form, on the insistence on communal values, and on the elevation of rhetoric that attempted to embellish the past; in some cases they suggested the school lesson be completely stripped of narrative, recommending the teaching process only use historical sources, as if a critical approach to sources and an analytical presentation of their content could not result in a historiographical text with a narrative structure. However, it is not clear how it would be possible – under the above educational practice that was intended to be an instructional tool – to structure the chronological basis on the narrative text, based on the historical reality under examination and the referenced sources (Leontsinis 2009, p. 157ff).

My aim in this paper is to refer to various forms of narrative, primarily emphasizing the structural features recommended to enhance them and rebuffing the static character, which the narrative of historians, academics, teachers, and students has developed over the years and, accordingly, more or less preserved and continues to preserve to some degree to this day (positivist approaches to the historical process – individual-centred and event-centred narrative). In my view, what has not been adequately emphasized was the need to constantly renew, harmonize, and adjust narrative to new forms of approach, to more up-to-date scientific, educational, and pedagogical objectives for both history and the history lesson respectively. One of the objectives of this paper is a critical approach with practical implementations, based on past traditional narrative history texts, in relation to the goals of contemporary narrative. Students may deal with simple information and static historiographical narrative reproduction models, as well as with routines to imprint in their conscience a static ideological framework. One concern, therefore, will be to understand the reasons that led to the retreat of this rejectionist position, demonstrating the need to understand the importance of its constant renewal during the teaching process. In particular, we show the importance of narrative discourse, in a context combining both school research and the school history lesson, an interpretation and in-depth analysis of events, examined through the abilities to compose a written and oral discourse, which includes, in its critical approach, evaluative verdicts regarding the past and the historical dimension of its content (Leontsinis 2003, p. 65ff).

Based on the data of an anticipated new (as I call it) “dynamic” narrative, I will also note that the abilities demonstrating the identity of the narrative discourse of historians, history students, and history instructors promote more or less and project their personal identity and behaviours. Furthermore, it has been

established that this is a timeless constant, as each separate approach towards historical events and phenomena is a function of the epistemological and methodological principles of historiography, and undoubtedly of the values, beliefs, and convictions of the people living in each period. The narrative's structure reveals the ideology of the narrator and also demonstrates the composition of the whole personality of the individual through narrating, discussing, and, potentially, delivering a personal historical discourse.

This paper aims to show that instructors must acknowledge the dimension of the multivalent and complex past they are studying, in order to be able to train their students' thinking and judgment, directing them towards a narrative rooted in contemporary forms of historiographical analysis, interpretation, and instructional approach, devoid of the static elements of a quasi-historistic method. I shall also establish that the structural and functional elements of historical expression incorporated into the historical account, such as language (appropriate use of overall historical and social terminology) and aesthetics precisely expressed are considered prerequisites for the synthetic dimension of the text of the narrative. Additionally, this account needs to approach the object under scrutiny in a variety of ways, characterized by an integrated personal line of reasoning and thought, contemporary historical discourse, and the use of historical terms and concepts that reject perspectives that embellish the past, while revealing critical historical thinking, and demonstrating the person's identity, relation to society, and initiatives leading to social and collective action.

Since language is the main means of human communication, it is acknowledged as a basic intellectual instrument for historical expression. Students can express their thoughts and feelings only if they feel comfortable and free to express themselves, and as long as reproductive processes do not force them to use and adopt the language and vocabulary of others sometimes through prescribed, supposedly authentic passages found in school history textbooks. The vocabulary and mechanics of student language advance as they themselves define the concepts, terms and implications of the language people use during their era. The thoughts of people living in different time periods can be evaluated only if we can track changes in the essence of the concepts and their different utilization with their implied meaning. I therefore maintain, as I shall demonstrate below, using theoretical speculation and methodological practices, that narrative is an important tool for the history lesson that comes naturally and that could be utilized accordingly (Leontsinis 2009, p. 47ff).

Throughout the entire content of this paper, I will be presenting various teaching proposals geared towards student narratives that include elements that



evaluate the instructional process. The paper is organized into the following three sections: (i) Narrative, historical discourse, sources, source creators, and learning results via a critical approach to the teaching process, (ii) Dimension of the historical narrative of teachers and students; perspectives on using historical narrative to approach and induct students into understanding history and organizing their thought process through historical narrative – Educational proposals and narrative discourse application practices, (iii) Identity and human behaviour – evaluation of the instructional process, via the development of narrative abilities in historians, history teachers, and history students.

### **Narrative, Historical Discourse, Sources, Source Creators, and Learning Results via a Critical Approach to the Teaching Process**

How conscious are we of the fact that the narrative of historians, history teachers, and their students is an interrelation of the historical sources from which the content of their approach is derived from? Are these historical sources related to the oral and written discourse (oral or written narrative), the decisions, and the choices of the “protagonists” of history? Or are these historical sources related to the decisions and choices of the people and collective groups of everyday life? Is, for example, Thucydides’ historical discourse, or that of his other, contemporary or subsequent historians, truly an “unimpeachable” historical source? Given that their historiographical narrative is largely constructed by reproducing their era’s political code and contemporary social and political events, as well as the general conditions of the period that generate their historical account. Is Thucydides a concrete example of a historian-narrator whose methodological approach we should carefully study, since, as a rule, his discourse is based on contemporary narratives regarding contemporary problems (political, social, and cultural issues and events in Athens during the 5th c. BC – Peloponnesian War)? If so, why was he not a direct influence on the early activities of modern historiography, i.e. 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography?

In any case, we need to accept that every narrative text that someone else produces is viewed as a historical source and is utilized accordingly. These sources may be historiographical texts or narratives from each period, folk-everyday eyewitness accounts, narratives of individuals who played a leading role in historical events, all other types of narrative texts, such as literary or other sources, chronicles, diaries, memoirs, eyewitness reports, autobiographies or biographies, public and private correspondence, political orations, documented speeches, legal documents and briefs, wills, and other notary documents. When

teaching, it makes sense to take advantage of such sources. It is a function of the goals set, for example, by teacher and student during the lesson process and of an ongoing historical research and investigation in school. An analysis of a single photograph or group of photographs and depictions of a historical site is a good opportunity to develop narrative discourse. Images and direct contact with historical sites strengthen and enrich narrative's historiographical discourse, interposing in a way that makes us aware of the need to avoid the prospect of simply reproducing information. Additionally, researchers must be familiar with the provenance of a historical source, the historical background of the atmosphere surrounding the events and the era referred to by the source creator's narrative (Leontsinis & Repoussi 2001, p. 41ff).

The features of the subject's personal identity and the perspectives through which she develops her narrative text become apparent via the narrative. As I shall demonstrate below, in order to provide students with pertinent training it is necessary for the history lesson to be structured in such a way as to assign them topics to process that initially require simple narrative presentation types of historiographical discourse. Teachers may, by the use of appropriate questions, elicit written or oral narrative discourse from their students, which might include, for example, presenting events in chronological order or tables containing different statistical data – a methodology more or less characteristic of traditional narrative history; or maybe describing a person they came across, got to know, and whose actions they studied, either during the lesson and through the written account in their school history textbooks and other readings, or even using data produced in the course of their own research, based on instructional and research methodologies and onsite school research. A necessary prerequisite for the development of narrative structure is incorporating events and chronological periods into it; this can be facilitated by productive instructor questions that are based on issues arising from the students' research into their particular subject (Leontsinis 2006, p. 115ff).

The issue is, however, how good and how credible are the narratives found in "indirect" sources (texts, historiographies, etc). These may vary from Thucydides, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, Spyridon Zambelios, Yannis Kordatos, and Spyros Markezinis, to Winston Churchill (*The Second World War, 1948–1953*), and, of course, to other texts from the modern or contemporary period. Could these be used in teaching in such a way that would allow both students and teachers to develop their own critical approach, and to compose, in relation to them, their own historiographical, narrative text? It is, therefore, a function of developing the abilities to recognize and define the level of the subjective



dimension of the source and narrative texts we study and possibly, as the case may be, classify as a “direct” or an “indirect” source. Another question is how proficient we are becoming in distinguishing essential traits and differences from narrative to narrative (e.g. a rhetorical narrative from another narrative driven by a critical and multifaceted approach to events). Furthermore, on the level of self-knowledge, can we recognize the degree of our subjectivity and knowledge of our autonomy, our ability to critically examine events? Can we distinguish the extent of yet another long-winded and unoriginal expression or a narrative characterized by the lack of sufficient historical documentation or even deliberate misinformation, which seeks to promote and assert our own arbitrary personal choices?

Moreover, since each historiographical approach is a function of the epistemological and methodological principles of the discipline of history, combined with a determination of the values, beliefs, and convictions of people living and acting in any given period, it is natural to expect narrative to appear as the narrator’s dynamic, synthetic creation, the result of the investigative process and his own independent approach. We expect it, namely, to reflect the quality of the narrator’s discourse and the abilities she acquired so as to produce a historical discourse displaying critical insight and her efforts to substantively approach the historical events and issues she is researching and studying. In each case, the methodology of the instructor and her students is influenced, in every time period by the methodology and practices of the historian-researcher. To the degree that this is nowadays understood by teacher and students, the interplay between researcher-historian and the teaching of history may be considered a natural consequence.

This prerequisite creates a narrative text that results from the sense of the need for critical investigation of the essential facts of reality, which the narrator has studied and elected to present. This narrative discourse, which results from a historical approach and is supported by accurate information and independent references to the subject under investigation, also indicates that the person narrating possesses a corresponding historical education. Ivo Mattozzi in his book *Formare lettori di storia* notes that historical knowledge will result only if the information regarding the past has been buttressed with appropriate cognitive processes, reconstructed as interpretive concepts and organized in a proper language structure (Mattozzi 2006, p. 20).

**Length of the Historical Narrative of both Teacher and Pupil; Perspectives on Using Historical Narrative to Approach and Induct Students into Understanding History and Organizing Their Thought Process through Historical Narrative – Educational Proposals and Narrative Discourse Application Practices**

Developing the ability to move away from traditional forms of historical narrative towards alternative, contemporary, appropriately selected forms of narrative discourse, demonstrates the potential for historical thought and for a critical approach. The narrative texts, teachers select for classroom use, should be evaluated. This will detect any superficial historical approaches to narrative texts or extensive narratives, primarily those possessing rhetorical flourishes, references centered on individuals and pompous descriptions, those mired in static collective references. This is necessary because new contemporary approaches to the act of teaching promote a narrative, which stems from a methodology enhanced through dialogue, constructive questions, and an unfettered personal approach to sources and historical narratives, working hypotheses, multiple sources, and instructional and research activities. Choosing to teach through the use of historical narratives characterized by marked differences (e.g. narratives that, as the case may be, reveal a traditional-static narrative, or a dynamic-contemporary narrative), makes it possible to demonstrate the difference and direct students towards recognizing and locating the factors that promote historical evolution and construct the essential content of the historical juncture the historical narrative refers to. Therefore, the comparative example may prove essential to the teaching process, since it develops the abilities to locate and identify the inadequacy of a narrative, which simply reproduces information and statically repeated historical references.

The breadth of historical narrative varies accordingly. The teaching process discards reproductive forms and types of narrative, which in the past were common in the classroom and followed the norms of a traditional historiographical approach. Henri Moniot noted, albeit broadly, that teaching school history, i.e., the history propagated in class, is considered necessary for one main reason. It takes place to reward, soothe, or alarm the adults who consider they know everything significant or memorable that occurred in the past and feel a duty and responsibility to pass it on fully defined and demarcated to the new generation, to their own children. And this, they believe they can achieve it through narrative (Moniot 2002).

A common position is shared amongst educators, historians and history teach-

ers, i.e. that the use of sources in the teaching process renders students active participants in the learning process, since this lays the foundations for the use of the discovery method in various educational and learning processes, as well as the ability to fully investigate the meaning of historical terms and concepts, personal independence and freedom. When students operate as historians, they develop critical thinking and produce personal historical discourse in narrative form, employing up-to-date, contemporary terminology that gives a clearer meaning of the past. It has been established that when students work to discover historical knowledge, they do so eagerly, feeling that they are producing creative work within the school environment (Leontsinis 2006, pp. 225–284). Their interest in the history lesson is sparked by their ability to recognize – depending on the historical event they are considering and analyzing – the mindsets, attitudes and behaviours, choices, reactions, and initiatives, as well as the external constraints of the persons creating the event. Narrative forms based on particular historical accounts found in school textbooks, on other reading material (historical novels, etc.), on their teachers' narratives, on selected narratives have direct visual representation in museums or archaeological sites, or on other visual narratives (televised or multimedia) may precede the study of sources. As a rule, these are longer and have a highly descriptive nature.

The quality of the above narratives is enhanced whenever the body of historical reference also contains research into pictorial or other sources and testimonies pertinent to the historical issues. Analyzing the example of a school history textbook narrative entitled *The Persecution of Christians*, Mattozi noted that the text succeeded in adhering to a standard way of simplifying complex historical knowledge by taking the form of a “story” aimed at fourth grade elementary school students. He pointed out that a characteristic feature of such a narrative is its ability to develop the subject in a few lines, which highlighted approximately twenty facts, while a sophisticated historical text would demand tens or hundreds of pages to develop the subject, accompanied by a far greater amount of information concerning dates, events, individuals, etc. Of the approximately thirty lines in the textbook, ten were devoted to an account of Nero and the burning of Rome. The textbook writers apparently considered the anecdotal method to be the most appropriate way to deliver the historical narrative at the children's comprehension level, even though it was an unfortunate “betrayal” of the character of the knowledge of the past we call “historiography” (Mattozi 2006, pp. 17-18). Additional advantages regarding this particular piece of school textbook historiography might be mentioned; however, a reader might evaluate it differently.

One or more, as the case may be, historical sources (a small number, as a

rule) might steer students towards short narratives, since they might demonstrate distinct aspects of the historical event. Training students in these skills becomes particularly valuable for the history lesson, since this is incredibly helpful to develop creative historical thinking and the capacity to critically analyze social and political events, as well as the ability to detect individual mindsets and behaviours. Narrative, combined with the simultaneous educational utilization of sources, contributes to the development of a personal view of the historical event under investigation. A teacher's brief, lucid, and inclusive narrative, whenever she chooses to carry it out – usually during the preliminary stage of a lesson or lessons on a subject – serves, as Marc Ferro noted, to pre-organize the knowledge that will result in conjunction with a creative utilization of sources (Ferro 2003a).

Training students to link narrative and the study of sources cultivates their historical thinking, reinforcing their ability to move beyond what is contained in someone else's narrative, which, for example, they read in a textbook or some other reading material. Particularly important sources offer students the opportunity to study short, brief narratives, supplementing thus their historical thinking in a broader subject field. These sources might be utilized by someone to render a would-be historical truth employing a personal voice. Primarily, however, they supplement student knowledge regarding the events of the objective reality they are contemplating and attempting to reconstruct through either written or oral discourse (Leontsinis 2009, p. 103ff).

When, for example, third grade secondary school students study issues concerning the social history of the Ionian Islands (Western European sovereignties in the Ionian islands – Democratic French Period, 1797-1799), it is important to study appropriate sources in order to supplement their historical knowledge and further their creative participation by delivering more complete and interesting – to them – historical knowledge. For example, students who read a verse preserved by a local chronicler, which dates back to 1797, when the Democratic French conquered the Islands, it would be possible for them to understand it and to use it as an opportunity for critical commentary and to create their own narrative text. "*The French are telling us they want no lords, that they burned the Libro d' Oro in the public square*" (Stathis 1949, Leontsinis 1987, p. 117). Here, students have the opportunity to use this information to comment on the text; furthermore, by incorporating it into the context of the broader subject matter they are studying, they can compose their own short, brief narrative history, delivering either an oral or a written account.

In either case, the existing ready-made narrative texts students have in front of them in class, combined with supplemental pertinent source development,

leads them to a personal approach to historical events, which they could then, as a result, use to consciously compose a structured historical narrative. By combining both methodologies, students produce, as the case may be, shorter or longer narratives; this demonstrates that narrative, as a historiographical text, demarcated by certain rules of approach and the discovery method, is identified with history both as discipline and as instructional subject. It provides transformation opportunities for the history narrated each time. Describing people by defining their attributes (ideology, mentalities, attitudes and behaviours, initiatives and choices) acquires particular value in the instructional process as biographical history. More specifically, teachers might suggest to students to try to create a narrative text, by describing persons using contemporary compositional techniques and methods of presenting their individual dynamic in the area they live in. This activity could be attempted by the teachers in the way of providing indicative narrative examples and encouraging the pupils to carry out particular narrative exercises.

### **Identity and Human Behaviour – Evaluating the Instructional Process, via the Development of Narrative Abilities in Historians, History Teachers, and History Students**

Historians, teachers, and students all differ in their presentation of the events, nature, character, and content of the historical topic they investigate and one should not normally expect anything else. However, narrative can prove deceptive and misleading, since it is a function of the development of each individual's intellectual abilities and intentions, as well as an extension of his personal experiences, which allow her to grasp the complex meaning of the surrounding world. At all times, her narrative text, her discourse, is both the filter and the reflection of these abilities, of her social and political behaviour. In every case, these abilities essentially impel an individual to critically approach the environment and to recognize the vital importance of human behaviour and the dimension of the civilization and culture of the society she lives in. Primarily, however, it suggests the development of an ability to define the criteria (principles and, potentially, values), which people in the historical period under examination would recognize as essential, useful, and necessary for their choices and initiatives. The period's mentalities, attitudes, and behaviours unfold in the minds of both teacher and student, as they jointly try to detect various aspects of the historical situation under study and examination (Leontsinis 2003, p. 65ff).

There is, nevertheless, a variety of reasons that lead to misapprehension – or

even to the deception of the other via linguistic devices and all kinds of fabrications. Fanaticism, egotism and dogmatism, inadequate historical education, religiosity, social conventions, and political expediencies demonstrate deliberate, biased choices, obsessions, and conspicuous obstinacy (Leontsinis 2009, p. 103ff). These also stem from the ideological stereotypes of various persuasions (promoting, for example, a selective ideology to advance one's political and social self, etc.). This creates a narrative discourse that conveys a "personal" identity, social and political behaviours of a static nature, and/or other problematic references – the consequences, as a rule, of inadequate historical education and of the use of an unsuitable methodology. When the narrator herself realizes that she has grasped the deeper meaning of the event, of the historical phenomenon she has studied, that she touched its human pulse and understood the emotional charge of the actor involved, then, obviously, we are led to believe that the narrator made an essential effort to approach the subject experientially and not simply reproduce mere historical information (Leontsinis 1999, pp. 132-164).

Narrative, therefore, may be used as one of the main criteria of teaching evaluating, since it indicates whether students acquired an in-depth understanding of the historical phenomenon they studied, aspects of which they are then able to narrate themselves. In reference to the historical instructional process, we must always keep in mind that whatever applies to every other narrator who discusses, converses, and, certainly, narrates applies here as well. Namely, when you allow someone to narrate, she essentially reveals herself, with her qualities and the strength and depth of her references. In general, she reveals her intellectual world, her social, political, and cultural orientation, as well as any dependencies on the environment she lives in and any obligations due to imperative –or not, as the case might be –needs in her life. Her narrative discourse also indicates whether she has developed the ability to be aware of and understand the people and events functioning within her environment, or outside her chosen environment, i.e., among the difficulties and adversities of life. It indicates the narrator's historical background and competence (Leontsinis 2003, p. 161ff).

Narrative is a matter of educational exercise accompanied by criteria for acquiring individual autonomy and emancipation from predetermined plans of collective reference and definable meanings. It is characterized by the ability to set the limits of the autonomy of the actor who is also the event creator. Based on this, we might claim that this instructional process stimulates and sharpens student sensibilities producing a talent for understanding events, human actions and sensitivities, initiatives and choices, and presenting them lucidly, with personal autonomy and freedom. A large part of the evaluation of the educational



outcome of the history lesson may be based on the qualitative characteristics of the narrative of both teacher and student, on the dynamic characteristics of contemporary thinking and perception. It simultaneously indicates her historical knowledge on the topics she researches and studies, as well as the dimension of her understanding of the specific historical reality. What is also highly appreciated is the ability of the narrator (either teacher or student) to remain unbiased from various types of processes reproducing existing narratives (from school textbooks or other historical writings) and to become skilful enough to extend, supplement, and modify what she has learned, heard, and most importantly read (Leontsinis 2003, pp. 28-45).

### Conclusion

The teacher plays a decisive role in the development of narrative discourse abilities in students at both a younger and an older age. We know that from an early age (Kindergarten and Early Elementary School) accounts of myths, fairytales, and stories create a favourable audience environment. However, the history lesson requires certain choices and instructional practices that agree with its targets and develop a learning environment to manage the issues of teaching history. Teachers can thus absorb student expectations into the teaching act; it is, therefore, advisable that study programmes incorporate useful mythological, fairytale, story, and short story narrative texts into school education. The structural elements and the evolution of myth, according to Aristotle's definition of its parts, cultivate the interest of audience and readers (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448a19-28). The instructor's choice of stories and simultaneous narrative presentation to students, apart from developing their conscious interest, cultivates their ability to reproduce alternative forms of narrative. In the class milieu, stories narrated by experienced narrators offer pupils opportunities to become acquainted with a variety of narrative approaches.

Beginning with childhood stories, students who have a greater affinity for simple narrations are gradually directed towards more complex forms of narrative, which are, accordingly, required by the history lesson in advanced classes. This constitutes an essential parameter of the lesson approach and suggests ways students may develop debating abilities supported by knowledge and a detailed examination and understanding of history. It is based on selected historical narratives, as well as on teachers' beliefs in the necessity of narrative, organically assimilated in the educational procedure, and the certainty that discourse, in narrative form, constitutes one of the basic ways humans communicate and expe-

rience the historical object. The environment we live in (natural and humanmade) – when incorporated into the educational process and approached empathically and autonomously – offers us opportunities to enrich our narrative discourse.

Into the educational process, historical narrative is generally evaluated as a learning tool for the study of the past, since it provides students with the ability to approach history using various instructional practices and readings. Based on a constructive studies programme, teachers should be encouraged to use narrative to share with children the events derived from myths, traditions, well-crafted stories of historical events, narratives from eye-witnesses to historical facts, and fictional stories. Many children's books contain such texts, which might provide pupils with the impetus to understand time and time-lines, and to acquire a situational awareness of place and historical time. In general, myths, fairytales, and stories can be used in school education to provide students with opportunities to understand historical reality and to develop the ability to consciously cultivate various criteria in order to approach human choices and activities, as well as to ascertain the views, the situation, and the position of the people they are referring to and whose accomplishments they are approaching and studying. Historical narrative allows, as the case may be, for the creation of a productive context in which to answer history's questions like "Who, What, Where, Why and How", since narrative helps children pinpoint, understand, and critically approach human experiences. It can also pleasantly contribute in acquiring, renewing, and assimilating a new vocabulary by accepting or rejecting the historical or fictional information it provides them.

Narrative is an acquired art and when we consciously accept this and, accordingly, begin instruction early on in school, we can expect the history lesson to become more creative and better understood. As an extension of our position regarding the need for students to acquire historical knowledge and to develop their own narrative abilities, it should be pointed out that for educators and students to relate to the ways students produce and understand a historical narrative, they must take into consideration the particular characteristics of historical knowledge, recognizing that history's narrative nature is inherent. There are signs, however, on the horizon of contemporary historiography that the two separate viewpoints regarding whether or not narrative is necessary are reconciling.

Given the great deal of discussion regarding the evolution of the science of history in its various forms, Braudel had remarked that for some traditional history, true to the narration of events and slave to this narrative, exhausts the memory, lavishly supplying it with dates, names of heroes, and the heroic acts of renowned people. For others, "new history", which sets scientific goals,

focusing its interest on long time periods rather than events, is responsible for the failures of teaching, the discouraged students since, if nothing else, it leads to an inexcusable ignorance of dates. But what purpose does this confrontation between traditional and new history serve? Here our unknown variable has to do with teaching and not scientific theory. Therefore, these discussions not only do not illuminate the problems and culpabilities but instead keep them under wraps (Braudel 2001, p. 38). This reconciliation mentioned previously, i.e. among the concerns posed by “new history” and the traditional notion of history as narrative (whose rejection has been gestating since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) was meticulously expressed by Paul Veyne (1984). These rejectionist trends became very apparent in the Annales historians, and were also shared by other positivists and historians. The trends of narrative history were promoted during a wide-ranging discussion, which continues to this day (Chsydis 2006). It combines the dissemination of historiography’s contemporary issues with the recognition and the use of the inherent narrative feature of history.

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## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ Ν. ΛΕΟΝΤΣΙΝΗΣ

### *Αφήγηση και διδακτική της ιστορίας. Ταυτότητες και ανθρώπινη συμπεριφορά*

Στο κείμενο προσδιορίζεται η θέση που έχει η αφήγηση ως ένα από τα κύρια μέσα οργάνωσης της διδασκαλίας του μαθήματος της ιστορίας στη Γενική Εκπαίδευση (Πρωτοβάθμια και Δευτεροβάθμια). Επιχειρείται σύντομη αναφορά στη σύνδεσή της με τη διδασκαλία του ιστορικού μαθήματος από την εισαγωγή του στην εκπαίδευση (μέσα περίπου του 19<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα στην Ελλάδα και σε άλλες χώρες). Εντοπίζονται οι επιδράσεις της ιστοριογραφίας στους τρόπους προσφοράς του μαθήματος της ιστορίας, καθώς ο αφηγηματικός χαρακτήρας της θεωρήθηκε εξαρχής ως μια από τις βασικές μεθοδολογικές της αρχές. Ουσιαστικά αυτός δεν αμφισβητήθηκε και δεν αναρρέθηκε ούτε και από τις νεότερες και σύγχρονες προσεγγίσεις της ιστορικής έρευνας και της διδασκαλίας της ιστορίας. Λαμβάνοντας αυτό υπόψη, αποτιμώ ως δεδομένο το γεγονός ότι φυσικός τρόπος της ιστορικής γραφής είναι η αφήγηση και όποιες εισηγήσεις απορρίψης της επεισοδιακά από τη διδασκαλία της επιχειρήθηκαν, στηρίχθηκαν στη συνολική εικόνα που έχει διαμορφωθεί με τη μορφή περισσότερο μιας ετικέτας που έχει επικολληθεί στην αποκαλούμενη «παραδοσιακή»-«παλαιά» ιστοριογραφία, η οποία και έχει ως φυσικό επακόλουθό της ό,τι προφανώς χαρακτηρίζεται ως «παραδοσιακή αφηγηματική ιστοριογραφία». Αναφέρομαι σε αναιρέσεις αρχών και πρακτικών της παραδοσιακής ιστοριογραφίας και στο διάλογο που προκλήθηκε μεταξύ ιστορικών, που επηρέασαν και την διδακτική της ιστορίας, αναφορικά με τις προτάσεις και τη μεθοδολογία της «νέας ιστορίας». Καθώς αυτή με ενθουσιασμό επιχειρούσε να απορρίψει αρχές και πρακτικές της «παλαιάς» ιστοριογραφίας, συμπεριέλαβε σ' αυτές, με κάποια ασάφεια, και την απόρριψη της αφήγησης, την ίδια στιγμή όμως που στην πράξη από τους ίδιους τους ιστορικούς απλώς χαρακτηριζόταν ως μη εποικοδομητική η ευθύγραμμη χρονολογική αφήγηση (διδασκαλία των γεγονότων με χρονολογική σειρά).

Μια κριτική προσέγγιση της παραδοσιακής αφηγηματικής ιστοριογραφίας εντάσσεται στους στόχους της μελέτης αυτής. Με απασχολεί η πλευρά κατανόησης των λόγων που οδήγησαν στην υποχώρηση αυτής της απορριπτικής θέσης, τονίζοντας ως αναγκαία την ανανέωσή της και στη διδακτική πράξη. Επιχειρείται να αναδειχθεί η σημασία του αφηγηματικού λόγου σε ένα πλαίσιο συνδυασμού

σχολικής έρευνας και διδασκαλίας της ιστορίας, μιας βιωματικής συγκεκριμένα διδασκαλίας, όπου ο αφηγηματικός λόγος με εγχειρήματα ερμηνείας και ανάλυσης σε βάθος των γεγονότων, με αναπαραστάσεις τους, με δεξιότητες σύνθεσης από τους μαθητές ουσιαστικού γραπτού και προφορικού λόγου συμπεριλαμβάνει αξιολογικές κρίσεις για το παρελθόν και το παρόν και προσπάθειες ανάπτυξης κριτικής σκέψης. Στο κείμενο προβάλλεται ο προβληματισμός για μια αναγκαία προσαρμογή της ιστορικής αφήγησης σε μεθοδολογικούς και ερμηνευτικούς κανόνες, που εντοπίζουν παράγοντες, αιτίες, πρόσωπα, ιδέες και γεγονότα με βάση τα οποία η κοινωνία μετασχηματίζεται και λειτουργεί. Συγκεκριμένα, φωτίζονται και αναδεικνύονται μέσω μιας ευρύτερης θεματολογίας όψεις της ιστορίας και ζητήματα της κοινωνίας που δεν είχαν αξιολογηθεί από την παραδοσιακή αφηγηματική ιστοριογραφία αλλά σήμερα αναγνωρίζουμε αυτά ως θεμελιακά για την κατανόηση της ανθρώπινης κοινωνίας κατά το παρελθόν και στο παρόν.

ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ



ΑΘΗΝΩΝ