

SISÄLLISSODAT ERI MAISSA

RIITTA MIKKOLA

Uppoutuessamme Suomen vuoteen 1918 on hyvä muistaa, että muual- lakin on sodittu. Miten oman maan sisällissotaa opetetaan koulussa? Kysyimme viiden eri maan opettajilta, opetetaanko sotaa, millaista opetus on ja millaisia haasteita opetuksessa ilmenee. Sisällissota tuntuu olevan vaikea aihe, vaikka se olisi käyty sata vuotta sitten. Näin vastasivat opettajat Bosniasta, Libanonista, Pohjois-Irlannista, Kroatiasta ja Venäjältä.

1. Do you teach your civil war at school? If not, why not?
2. How do you teach it?
3. What kind of problems or challenges are there in teaching civil war?
4. Do you have different names for civil war? Which ones? Who uses them?
5. Does civil war cause feelings / reactions among students / parents?

Bojana Dujkovic Blagojevic, Bosnia

1. Today in Bosnia there mayor 3 national curriculums – Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian curriculum. Each of the has different narrative about the war in 1990s.

Serbian curriculum has prescribed that student should read about war in BiH 1992-1995 and Day-



ton Peace Agreement. It is similar in the other 2 curriculums. Narratives about crises, causes and consequences are totally different. All of them are monoperspective and there is no room for students to make their own conclusions based on historical sources.

2. Like any other lesson. Most used teaching style is ex cathedra, since curriculum is very prescriptive and does not leave space for teacher to choose topics or themes they would like to create.

All 3 curriculums in the country are very chronology based, and lesson about the end of 20th century are thought on the very end of the school year. Based on 'what I was told' from teachers is that these lessons are not properly covered since students are too busy with exams.

3. The problem is that every day press (portals, TV, social networks) is covered with the stories from the last war. Mostly, trials for war crimes, war criminals (which are very often perceived as a heroes of the particular nation, mass graves discoveries, commemorations for the victims from the WW II and from the last war). Unfortunately, none of the nations does not showing the will to face with the war crimes and killings that were done by their own nation. Most common words, when talking about facing with the past is "yes, but..." Meaning, yes we know that there war crimes done on our side, but what the others have done to us....

4. Croatian curriculum – 'domovinski rat' – home-

land war

- Bosnian curriculum – ‘rat u BiH, agresija na BiH’
- war in BiH, aggression to BiH
- Serbian curriculum – ‘građanski rat’ – civil war

Nayla Hamadeh, Libanon

1-2. Yes. Our approach at LAH (Lebanese Association for history) is a disciplinary one. We expose students to more than one perspective and we build their critical thinking. Our focus so far has been on the causes of the war, how it affected the lives of people, and who are the victims of the civil war.



3. Many challenges arise. First, the need for reliable source that are appropriate to the age of students; second, the absence of any transitional justice after the war and the prevalence of an imposed silence complicates matters today as people have not have the chance to reconcile with this past, considered by most of them as still prevalent. Third, the teachers themselves need capacity building in terms of a stronger knowledge base and at the same time skills to lead constructive communication around this topic.

4. This is one of our big challenges. Many terms are used. It is called the ‘Lebanese civil war’, ‘the civil war in Lebanon’, ‘the war in Lebanon’, ‘the events in Lebanon or Lebanese events’, and ‘the war of others on our land’. These are the most prevalent names. The choice of name reflects on one hand how we think about history, on the other hand a difference in how we define a civil war. For some, a civil war doesn’t end until a group eradicates the other, so since we are still co-existing it means it is not a civil war; Others argue that since during the war many regional and international players had a big role then it is not a ‘civil’ war even if the Lebanese fought each other; and some accept use the ‘civil’ attribute because the war was fought between the Lebanese along sectarian lines, its victims are mostly the Lebanese, and the social structures were damaged as a result of the war. Historians have been arguing

on the name and the debate is still going on.

5. So far, we haven’t had any major reactions to the topic itself. On the contrary, in one school parents commended this initiative and students were curious to know more. In another school, where the teacher had planned asking students to interview their parents, some of them were reluctant to speak. We have also piloted a research project in 11 schools where students investigated sites of commemoration and how people engage with them. This project was well received by students, parents, and the public that attended the final exhibition.

Sinéad Fitzsimons, Pohjois-Irlanti

1. The Irish Civil War refers to the conflict that followed the War of Independence (which resulted in the Partition). In school, students learn about the Irish War of Independence, then the ‘Partition’, then the Civil War (and Civil Rights movement) and then ‘the Troubles’, which refers to the political unrest in Ulster and bordering counties, that came as a result of the political/social/economical unrest that was a product of all those events and related ideologies. The period would led to the partition is mainly looked at by considering the legacy of the plantations, and the rise of English presence on the island, and the social/economic/political/religious consequences of this (eventually the rise of political and militant groups on either side, the Easter Rising, etc.).



2. Depending on the school, there is some variety in how it is taught and what background information is used to explain how the civil unrest evolved. In general though, education boards are striving to teach a more rounded perspective of the Troubles and the Partition. The perspective of both republic and loyalist groups are considered.

3. The biggest issue is what prior knowledge the students come into the classroom with greatly influences the lens in which they view the content that is taught. Some students come in with a sense of who

is the victim and who is the villain, wrongly position the conflict as a straight dichotomy. Sometimes teachers must try to encourage them to 'unlearn' certain beliefs or perspectives which are based on myth. Other students may need to be encouraged to take a wider perspective on things. This is especially challenging since many students (those who are not newcomers to the country) do have a family connection or experience to the events of the Troubles in some way, shape or form. Some students come in with a 'family story' of what happened which may or may not fit into the narrative delivered at school.

Another issue, of course, is that teachers also come into the classroom with their own perspectives, so ensuring that it is taught with an open perspective is sometimes hard for the education authority to achieve. There has been major strides taken to establish resources, learning guides, and create other curriculum resources to assist educators in the last 5-10 years, so there has been significant improvement. But, the challenge will be there for a while yet.

4. The Irish War of Independence can also be referred to as the Anglo-Irish war. It's too complex to say which groups use which name (and a 'grouping' I try to stop my students from doing, so I won't do it myself). This ended with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (commonly known in Ireland as the Treaty) in 1921. The period after the signing of the treaty is referred to generally as the Irish Civil War.

5. Yes, there are definitely feelings and a varying spectrum of emotions. I do not mean that this emotion is targeted at the teacher, because I have never experienced that. But, there can be emotion, family history, etc. The topic is taught keeping this in mind.

Dea Marić, Croatia

1. War in Croatia 1991-1995 is taught in Croatia in 8th grade elementary school (age 13-14) and 4th grade secondary school (age 17-18). In Croatia this war is dominantly referred to as Homeland War, while in Serbia name War in Croatia



or War in Krajina are most common. One of the disputes surrounding the war is qualification of its nature (if it was aggression or civil war). The war obviously had elements of both as until 1992 Croatia was not internationally recognized and thus the war that went on until that moment was a war between citizens of Yugoslavia (civil war) and as it included the armed rebellion of Croatian Serbs after the proclamation of independence (civil war). The rebellion of Croatian Serbs was supported by Yugoslav and Serbo-Montenegrin forces (aggression). The dispute over the nature of this war is shaped not by different legal and scientific definitions of these terms but is used for political purposes.

2. It is hard to assess how as there is almost no research on classroom practices of teaching this topic. Curricula in force are mainly in line with official interpretations of the war qualifying it as a righteous defensive war against Serbian aggression presenting ethnically biased, closed and military operations focused narrative of the war. Also, teacher trainings on the topic of Homeland war organized by educational authorities are promoting an idea of only One truth about the conflict as legitimate along with the idea that the only legitimate interpreters of this truth are war veterans of Croatian army. In terms of textbooks, the situation is nuanced and we can say that there are mono-perspective and multi-perspective approaches to representations, text-dominant and source-rich textbooks, as well as approaches that take the middle road. In some textbooks, presentations of this period are more nuanced and inclusive than the curricula demands.

Following the initiative of Minister of War Veterans at the time, starting from the year 2014th all 8th grade elementary schools pupils attend obligatory study visits to Vukovar Memorial and Documentation Center of Homeland War, a memorial center that gathers several memorials to Croatian victims in town of Vukovar. Vukovar is a city close to the border with Serbia that was heavily destructed and suffered tremendously in war and that has due to that meanwhile become a symbol of Croatian suffering during the war. Prior to the start of this study visit program, no discussion on alignment of such a study visit with (history) curricula nor on age-appropriateness of a study visit concept in which pupils aged 13-14 years sleep in military barracks and are

exposed to violent images and stories took place.

3. There are two main lines of criticism towards the current approach to teaching the topic and both are interconnected. History education should not serve for the transmission of one narrative but foster enquiry. Voices dissonant to the dominant narrative should be taken into account and provide a basis for development of historical and critical thinking skills of students. Current approach hinders that possibility.

History teachers along with experts from other disciplines (psychologists, sociologists...) should be the ones to engage in a discussion on how to approach this topic rather than being told what to say and how to do it by military staff and politicians.

5. The topic causes a lot of emotions among different groups of people: parents and teachers for sure as some of them had an active role in the conflict, but also with war veterans, victims associations and families of the victims. Students tend to react emotionally as well as the topic is very present in public and they hear the stories from their relatives that were involved.

Dmitry Deniskov, Venäjä

1. Yes, we teach. We have this theme even twice in our school curriculum — for 9th and for 11th grades.

2. I prefer to explain civil war as the greatest national catastrophe. So it is necessary to determine causes and especially views of factions which were also combatant groups. 11th grade curriculum allows to spend much more time to examine personal history and personal paths into/through this conflict.

3. I think the main problem is glorification of any army / group / person in this conflict. It creates an illusion of righteousness.

4. We (I mean me and my colleagues) are using term 'Russian Civil war'. I don't know about another



contemporary and relevant names.

5. Students like to work with so-called 'big concepts' like national identity, self-interest, war, conflict, complexity, invasion. By developing an understanding of these concepts, students are able to apply this knowledge to other historical events and even their own lives. It can provide a great learning environment that motivates students to want to learn more (for example, about history of their families).

Tatjana Tarasova, Venäjä

1-2. We teach the civil war at school. We have three lessons in 9th form and 2-3 lessons in 11th form. More tasks are connected with problem questions and work with historical sources and their analysis in 11th form.



3. There are some problems in teaching the civil war, such as the age of students. The events of the civil war are hard for understanding, especially for the 9th form students. It's a very painful question because these events are not far from nowadays and are important because the civil war touched the every family. It's a very problematic question. It's not clear who is hero and who is anti-hero in this war. At last, it's a very difficult question. There are many discussions about the periodisation of the civil war, for example.

4. We don't have different names of the civil war but the only question is spelling. There are two variants: the Civil war and the civil war.

5. Yes, it does. It was the immense tragedy of the Russian history because there are no winners in the civil war. The studying of the civil war can not remain indifferent. ■

Kirjoittaja on Kleion päätoimittaja.