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EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE****Future of Education and Skills 2030: Curriculum analysis****Learning progression in history**

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Learning Progression in History

Introduction

Paul Hirst (1974) identified what he called seven “forms of knowledge” that have distinctive methods of inquiry, such as the physical sciences, mathematics and history (among others). He argued that the sciences crucially depend on empirical, experimental and observational tests and mathematics depends on deductive demonstrations from certain set axioms. He compared history and science to demonstrate that while they share comparable “truths that are matters of empirical observation and experiment”, there are clear distinctions between the two. Scientific method is methodologically empirical in nature as it consists of the collection of data through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses.

According to Hirst (1974) the methodology of history is a process of developing “historical explanation of particular events by colligation, the use of general laws and evidence from sources”. Although both science and history use the process of inquiry or discovery learning, each has its own distinctive heuristic. As research by the National Research Council (2000, p. 155) in the United States concluded, “Different disciplines are organized differently and have different approaches to inquiry.”

Denis Shemilt (1983: 2) co-founder of the British *Schools Council History 13–16 Project*, emphasised that unlike science, historical facts are mutable. While an historian can cite sources accurately or inaccurately, precision with evidence does not guarantee the veracity of “facts” associated with evidence as it does in applied science. Martin Booth (1994: 63) believed that the past, the object of the historian’s investigation, is different from the object of the scientist’s investigation, and that the thought processes are equally different. “The logic of historical thought is not a formal logic of deductive inference ... It consists neither in inductive reasoning from the particular, nor in deductive reasoning from the general to the particular.”

Even up to the 1980s history was being taught in many schools and universities in Western countries as “content” or what is now called historical knowledge. It was presented as a succession of dates and events which students were expected to memorize and regurgitate in formal examinations. Students’ minds were seen as “empty vessels” and the role of the teacher was to fill them with irrefutable knowledge. This narrow focus on “facts and figures” made history tedious for many young people and it was not unusual to hear them complain that they did not like history because they could not “remember all those boring dates and facts”.

Of course, factual recall is an important component part of understanding history, but if factual recall is the predominant purpose of learning history, then memorization becomes the key skill learned, a skill that is not unique to the knowledge domain of history. According to Seixas (2011, p. 140) “...the memorization of a catalogue of facts in clearly inadequate, by any standards, as a meaningful goal for history education.”

Fortunately, the study of history has changed dramatically since the 1990s. Many jurisdictions have been influenced by research on historical thinking led by education academics and classroom teachers from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, the Netherlands and Australia. The study of history in schools, from the elementary to

senior years, has shifted from a focus on memorization of historical knowledge to the ability to understand historical concepts and use historical skills.

History education has changed in many ways over the last three decades. Today, history is characterized as a dynamic subject that constantly reshapes itself in response to changes in research and interpretation. Lee and Ashby (2000) explain it is a “complex and sophisticated discipline, with its own procedures and standards designed to make true statements and valid claims about the past.”

Postmodernists remind us that historical narratives, historians, and the tools of historiography are in themselves historically contingent and positioned (Lévesque 2011). History has meaning and justification in “the context of the questions, procedures, and debates in which it develops (Levstik and Barton 2001). This is because history is a construct which is subject to the variables of time and place. For example, national histories always vary geographically between nation states and temporally within each jurisdiction according to which topic is considered to be historically significant at the time.

The study of history offers twenty-first century learners ways of understanding the present as well as anticipating the future. It allows them to see connections between past and present by understanding how past events have impacted today’s world, and to predict how they might impact the future. As the 2017 *Singapore Lower Secondary Syllabus* says, “Learning to manage the present and anticipate the future would not be possible without knowing the past” (p. 3). Students do this by posing questions about the past in relation to the present and drawing connections between the two.

The Future of Education and Skills 2030 report advises that learners of the future will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances, and that priority should be given to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that can be learned in one context and transferred to others (OECD 2018). The study of history not only offers learners examples from the past on which to base hypotheses, but a framework in which they can develop practical skills of understanding, empathy and critical and creative thinking. For example, a crucial ingredient of historiography—the study of how history is constructed—is critical thinking.

What is learning progression in history?

Learning progression is a continuum that measures advances in learning by tracking development from early learning to more sophisticated levels of mastery. Mathematics relies on an understanding of empirical knowledge and concepts in a hierarchical sequence; students need to understand (or master) one mathematical concept before they can proceed to the next. In comparison, progress of understanding in history does not necessarily need to be hierarchical because it is based on mastery of concepts and skills rather than historical knowledge which is geographically and temporally variable.

With history, it is not necessary to progress sequentially from one concept in order to comprehend another; learning is measured by mastery of levels of complexity *within* each skill or understanding and mastery can be concurrent and interrelated.

Lomas (1993) offers a comprehensive definition of progression in history in which students are able to

- Utilize greater amounts of historical knowledge with which to substantiate statements and judgements
- Categorize, see patterns, summarize and generalize, and grasp essentials from a mass of details
- Make connections and links between issues across periods and focus upon significant issues in the past, as well as the ability to understand the relevance of the topic and its wider significance
- Move from concrete to abstract concepts
- Explain and substantiate things rather than just describe, and offer precise and accurate explanations
- Develop an independence of thought, the capacity to pose questions, hypothesize and devise ways of finding answers
- Acquire an informed scepticism about the past, as well as an inclination to qualify statements with elements of uncertainty, yet still be able to reach conclusions (Lomas 1993, cited in Phillips 2002, p.102).

Grosvenor and Watts (1995, p. 25) define progression in history more simply as the capacity of students to:

- Expand knowledge and understanding of the past
- Increase understanding of terminology and concepts
- Increase ability to use more complex historical sources
- Understand how and why people interpret history in different ways
- Improve investigative, organisational and communication skills.

The essential characteristic of progression in history is that students are able to demonstrate an increase in their cognitive ability to think analytically and critically.

Historical thinking, understanding and reasoning

Van Drie and van Boxtel point out that different terms have been used over the years to describe the concepts involved in learning history, for example: “historical thinking” (Booth 1994; Wineburg 2001; Lévesque 2008; Seixas and Morton 2013); “historical understanding” (Seixas 1993; Australian Curriculum 2018); “historical literacy” (Taylor and Young, 2003; Lee 2005); and “historical reasoning” (van Boxtel and van Drie 2004).

Each of these terms emphasises the importance given to the analysis of historical concepts or ideas (Parkes and Donnelly 2014) and all represent a range of ways of “doing history”. According to Lee and Ashby (2000, p. 199) “[i]t is these ideas that provide our understanding of history as a discipline or form of knowledge”.

According to Wineburg (2001) historical thinking is an ‘unnatural act’ that does not come easily but must be learned. It is best understood as a movement away from everyday unreflective views of the past towards understanding built upon the investigation of primary sources embedded in their context. Likewise, Booth (1994: 64) explains that, “[t]o think

historically is to make disciplined use of head and heart tempered by a proper consideration of the available evidence and a due regard to the constraints of time and place”.

Seixas (1994, 2006) described historical thinking as the ability to determine historical significance, engage with and critique evidence, understand change over time, acknowledge that history encompasses decline as much as progress, empathise with the past and its inhabitants and embrace complex notions of causation. More recently, Seixas and Morton developed the “The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts” (2013) as a classroom guide for Canadian teachers which consist of historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives, and the ethical dimension.

Van Drie and van Boxtel (2008, p. 88) explain that “the term historical reasoning emphasizes the activity of students and the fact that when learning history, students not only acquire knowledge of the past, but also use this knowledge for interpreting phenomena from the past and the present.”

Table A. Comparison of different versions of historical concepts that have been implemented in school curricula

Canada (Seixas and Morton)	Canada (Lévesque)	Netherlands (van Drie and van Boxtel)	England National Curriculum	Australian Curriculum	Malta Curriculum
Historical thinking	Historical thinking	Historical reasoning	Historical concepts	Historical concepts for understanding	Historical concepts
Significance	Significance		Significance	Significance	
Evidence	Evidence	Using sources	Evidence	Use of Evidence	Use of sources
Continuity and change	Continuity and change		Continuity and change	Continuity and change	Change and continuity
Cause and consequence	Progress and decline		Cause and consequence	Cause and effect	Causes and consequences
Perspectives			Perspective	Perspectives	
	Empathy			Empathy	Empathy
The ethical dimension					
		Argumentation		Contestability	
			Chronology		Time and chronology
			Terms		
			Similarity and difference		Similarity and difference
		Asking questions			
		Contextualization			
		Using substantive concepts*			
		Using meta-concepts*			

School students think historically when they use primary sources as evidence about historical people and events. They demonstrate their ability to understand different interpretations of the past and, ultimately, use historical evidence to develop their own interpretations. It is a student’s ability to demonstrate that they can “think historically” that is measured as evidence of learning progression in history. In order to understand progression in history it is important to distinguish between substantive and procedural knowledge in the process of historical thinking.

Table A shows that there are more similarities than differences between the ways different history education researchers express historical concepts. Within each concept is a hierarchy of complexity and difficulty and examples are provided below. It is also generally accepted that the ability to think critically and develop a rational, well-supported argument are the most cognitively challenging historical concepts. For example, ‘contestability’ and ‘argumentation’ are usually achieved by students at secondary rather than primary level.

The processes of ‘doing’ history

In the 1970s and ‘80s, British researchers Lee, Ashby and Dickinson (1996; 2000; 2005) undertook the study, “Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches (CHATA)” which examined students’ (aged 7 to 14 years) understanding of history. They separated the learning of history into two distinct areas:

- a) **Substantive or “first-order” knowledge and understanding**, which incorporates knowledge of names, dates, people, events, places, as well as **substantive concepts** such as *peasant*, *revolution* or *ideology*; this is knowing *about* history. Associated with this are **substantive concepts** such as *kingship*, *society*, *liberty* and *feudalism*, the meaning of which can change according to time and place (Ayres 2015, 2).
- b) **Procedural or “second-order” knowledge**, such as *evidence*, *change* or *cause*, which are used to make sense of the substance of the past, or knowing how to *do* history. Lee and Ashby (2000) describe procedural knowledge as, “ideas that provide our understanding of history as a discipline or form of knowledge... they shape the way we go about doing history” (Lee & Ashby 2000: 199–200).

Historical knowledge is geographically and temporally specific and can differ within nations, states and local regions, depending on what is deemed significant at the time. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is universal. This is evidenced in Tables B, C, D, E, F of this report which demonstrate that many countries are using the same, or similar, historical concepts and skills as measures of learning progression. Substantive (first-order) and procedural (second-order) knowledge should not be considered in isolation; they build on each other and should function together.

Substantive knowledge may precede procedural knowledge and is not necessarily simpler. Most importantly, it is mutually supportive and continuing (Ayres 2015, p.3). Lévesque (2011, p. 30) advises that, “it is important not to misconstrue the distinction and transition from substantive to structural knowledge as the simplistic dichotomy of content versus skills, as too often happens in school history. It is impossible for students to understand or make use of procedural knowledge if they have no knowledge of the substance of the past.”

Historical inquiry evolved in the last thirty years as the heuristic specific to the subject of history and is the method most commonly used by educators to teach history. History is problematized as a dilemma, conflict, mystery or contradiction that is laid out to be analysed, dissected and interpreted. Fundamental to historical inquiry is the interrogation and critical evaluation of primary sources, which can be written, visual or archaeological. Students analyse written primary sources such as eyewitness accounts, diaries and newspaper reports, and images such as photographs, postcards and paintings. They can also examine artefacts such as pottery, weapons, statues, coins and jewellery, and old or ancient objects of everyday life. During the process of historical inquiry, students can do the same sort of work as academic and professional historians (without the same sophistication and complexity): they can ask historical questions, identify contradictions and conflicts, and develop interpretations supported by historical evidence.

Students also learn to critically evaluate secondary sources, which are sources created *after* the historical event by someone who did not participate in or experience the event first-hand. Scholarly books, textbooks, research articles and documentaries are examples of secondary sources.

Lee and Ashby’s pioneering research demonstrated that children’s understanding of second-order concepts can become increasingly sophisticated; that “[t]he acquisition of more powerful procedural or second-order ideas is one way – perhaps the best – of giving sense to the notion of progression in history” (Lee and Ashby 2000, p. 200). One core tenet of progression is that students should be engaged in a process of historical inquiry throughout their learning (Byrom 2013). The question is, how do teachers measure students’ progression in history?

Learning progression in history curricula

Curriculum documents, such as syllabuses and teachers’ planning programs, are places where learning progression is described within the context of a student’s sequenced movement through an educational system. These documents describe what students should be able to do once they have completed the learning for a particular year, grade, level or stage. Learning outcomes or standards provide teachers with guidance on how to develop teaching and learning activities and assessments that will achieve designated outcomes.

Improvements in learning are articulated as a continuum over time. For example, in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA 2018) learning of historical knowledge and skills is expressed as yearly Achievement Standards that recommend mastery of skills in the order that most students will acquire them; in the English National Curriculum (2013) they are called “Attainment Targets”. These standards, or levels, are based on age (or age ranges, such as 8 to 10 years) and are to be achieved by most students by the end of each grade.

The following examples from England, Canada (British Columbia), Australia, Malta, and Singapore demonstrate different ways of articulating learning progression in history within the curriculum context. These are developed to be useful frameworks that teachers and assessment authorities can use to design teaching and learning programs and assessments.

England

English National Curriculum (2013) Attainment Targets for History

Table B. National Curriculum (England) attainment targets for history for children ages 5 to 14

Key Stage 1 Ages 5 to 7	Key Stage 2 Ages 7 to 11	Key Stage 3 Ages 11 to 14
Develop an awareness of the past, using common words and phrases relating to the passing of time .	Continue to develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local and world history, establishing clear narratives within and across the periods they study.	Extend and deepen chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local and world history, so that it provides a well-informed context for wider learning.
Know where the people and events they study fit within a chronological framework and identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods.	Note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms .	Identify significant events , make connections , draw contrasts , and analyse trends within periods and over long arcs of time .
Use a wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms .	Regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference , and significance .	Use historical terms and concepts in increasingly sophisticated ways.
Ask and answer questions , choosing and using parts of stories and other sources to show that they know and understand key features of events .	Construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information .	Pursue historically valid enquiries including some they have framed themselves, and create relevant, structured and evidentially supported accounts in response .
Understand some of the ways in which we find out about the past and identify different ways in which it is represented .	Understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources .	Understand how different types of historical sources are used rigorously to make historical claims and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed .

Commentary – National Curriculum in England: History programmes of study www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study

All state-funded schools in England are required to follow the National Curriculum. Academies and private schools are not required to; they can develop their own curriculum provided it is “broad and balanced”. There are 4 “Key Stages” which are organised according to 2-year age groupings with national testing at the end of each. Progression in history is tracked according to development of understanding of procedural concepts. (Substantive knowledge is prescribed in other documents according to Key Stages). The most sophisticated development comes at the end of Key Stage 3 when students aged 11 to 14 years should be capable of understanding more complex historiographical concepts such as how history is constructed and that interpretations of history are contested. Progression in history is measured both within schools by formative assessment (Ayres 2015), and by external examinations at the end of each of the 4 Key Stages.

British Columbia (Canada) Learning Competencies for Social Studies

Table C. British Columbia (Canada) learning competencies based on six historical thinking concepts

<i>Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyse ideas; and communicate findings and decisions</i>			
	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments at particular times and places. • Identify what the creators of accounts, narratives, maps, or texts have determined is significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments at particular times and places. • Identify what the creators of accounts, narratives, maps, or texts have determined is significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their historical significance at particular times and places, and from group to group.
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the credibility of multiple sources and the adequacy of evidence used to justify conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the credibility of multiple sources and the adequacy of evidence used to justify conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the justification for competing historical accounts after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence.
Continuity & Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterize different time periods in history, including periods of progress and decline, and identify key turning points that marked periods of change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterize different time periods in history, including periods of progress and decline, and identify key turning points that mark periods of change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different groups at the same time period.
Cause & Consequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which causes most influenced particular decisions, actions, or events, and assess their short- and long-term consequences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which causes most influenced particular decisions, actions, or events, and assess their short- and long-term consequences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups affect events, decisions, or developments.
Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events, and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events, and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs.
Ethical Judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make ethical judgments about past events, decisions, or actions, and assess the limitations of drawing direct lessons from the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make ethical judgments about past events, decisions, or actions, and assess the limitations of drawing direct lessons from the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize implicit and explicit ethical judgments in a variety of sources. • Make reasoned ethical judgments about actions in the past and present and determine appropriate ways to remember and respond.

Commentary – British Columbia Curriculum: Social Studies

https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/social-studies/en_social-studies_k-9_elab.pdf

Education is the jurisdiction of provinces and territories in Canada. In the province of British Columbia curriculum is organised according to grade groupings. History is embedded in the learning area of Social Studies and uses Core Competencies which are arranged hierarchically. The Social Studies curriculum document uses active verbs such as *identify*, *explain* and *assess* to describe what students should be able to do at the end of the learning period (grade). It uses the process of inquiry learning and emphasises the development of thinking skills through six major thinking concepts: *significance*, *evidence*, *continuity and change*, *cause and consequence*, *perspective*, and *ethical judgement*. The curriculum Rationale explains that the six thinking concepts can be applied to “information about virtually any topic from sources around the globe” which students will use to “to solve problems, make decisions, and communicate their ideas effectively.”

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/core/goals-and-rationale>.

This approach aligns with the recommendation of the OECD that twenty-first century students should be learning transferrable skills (OECD 2015).

Australia

Table D. Years 7 and 8 progression in history in the Australian Curriculum uses a hierarchy of concepts and skills

By the end of Year 7 (age 13) a student will be able to:	By the end of Year 8 (age 14) a student will be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggest reasons for change and continuity over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise and explain patterns of change and continuity over time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the effects of change on societies, individuals and groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the causes and effects of events and developments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe events and developments from the perspective of different people who lived at the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the motives and actions of people at the time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the role of groups and the significance of particular individuals in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the significance of individuals and groups and how they were influenced by the beliefs and values of their society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify past events and developments that have been interpreted in different ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe different interpretations of the past
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sequence events and developments within a chronological framework, using dating conventions to represent and measure time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sequence events and developments within a chronological framework with reference to periods of time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop questions to frame a historical inquiry when researching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop questions to frame a historical inquiry when researching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and select a range of sources and locate, compare and use information to answer inquiry questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse, select and organise information from primary and secondary sources and use it as evidence to answer inquiry questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine sources to explain points of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and explain different points of view in sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify their origin and purpose when interpreting sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify their origin and purpose and distinguish between fact and opinion when interpreting sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use historical terms and concepts, incorporate relevant sources, and acknowledge their sources of information in developing texts and organising and presenting their findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use historical terms and concepts, evidence identified in sources, and acknowledge their sources of information when organising and presenting their findings

Commentary - Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences learning area <http://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/>

In the primary years (ages 5 to 12), history is integrated into the Australian Curriculum learning area of *Humanities and Social Sciences* with geography, civics and citizenship, and economics and business. In the secondary years (ages 12 to 16) history is taught as a stand-alone, compulsory subject and is organised into two interrelated strands: historical knowledge and understanding (substantive knowledge) and historical inquiry and skills (procedural knowledge). There are seven historical concepts for developing historical understanding: *evidence; continuity and change; cause and effect; significance; perspectives; empathy and contestability*. The historical inquiry and skills strand promotes the use of seven skills in the process of historical inquiry: *chronology; terms and concepts; historical questions and research; analysis and use of sources; perspectives and interpretations; explanation and communication*. Within this strand there is increasing emphasis on historical interpretation and the use of evidence.

Historical inquiry processes and skills are described in bands of schooling at two-year intervals. The two strands are integrated in the development of a teaching and learning program. The historical knowledge and understanding strand provides the contexts through which particular skills are to be developed. In each grade progression is articulated by applying the skills to increasingly complex concepts. The *Australian Curriculum* uses active verbs such as *identify, explain, assess* to differentiate what students should be able to do at the end of the learning period.

*Europe – Malta***Table E. Levels 7, 8, 9 and 10 history syllabus in Malta shows progression in working with historical sources**

Subject Focus	C. Working with historical sources		
Learning Outcome	I can develop an understanding of historical skills and concepts when analysing and interpreting historical sources.		
	HISTORY GENERAL		
Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
C7.1 I begin to identify different ways in which the past is represented. C7.2 I can describe concrete evidence (e.g. pictures, artefacts, buildings). C7.3 I can distinguish between primary and secondary sources. C7.4 I can make simple inferences from primary and secondary sources. C7.5 I can describe simple maps, diagrams and graphs. C7.6 I am aware that there is a wide range of evidence for different historical periods. C7.7 I am familiar with the question 'How do we know?'	CG8.1 I can find out about aspects of history from more than one source. CG8.2 I can sort and classify sources into different types and motives. CG8.3 I can use two different types of sources to investigate questions about the past. CG8.4 I give great importance to the question 'How do we know?'	CG9.1 I can study aspects of history using a wider range of sources. CG9.2 I can compare two contrasting accounts of the same event. CG9.3 I can make some reference to the broader historical context of the sources. CG9.4 I can state why certain sources may be more relevant or objective than others.	CG10.1 I can recognize clear cases of bias and propaganda in sources. CG10.2 I can explain how certain sources are more relevant than others. CG10.3 I can make a comprehensive reference to the broader historical context of the sources. CG10.4 I can explain why sources were made (e.g. the Mitrovich's petition of 1835).
	HISTORY OPTION		
	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
	CO8.1 I can find out about aspects of history from more than one source. CO8.2 I can distinguish between fact and opinion. CO8.3 I can establish the importance of sources from the evidence included in them. CO8.4 I can interpret and compare statistical sources. CO8.5 I can sort and classify sources into different types and motives. CO8.6 I can use two different types of sources to investigate questions about the past. CO8.7 I give great importance to the question 'How do we know?' CO8.8 I can notice which sources on a particular issue are more relevant or reliable.	CO9.1 I can study aspects of history using a wider range of sources. CO9.2 I can recognize clear cases of bias and propaganda in sources. CO9.3 I can interpret complex statistical sources and reach conclusions from them. CO9.4 I can compare two contrasting accounts of the same event. CO9.5 I can make some reference to the broader historical context of the sources. CO9.6 I can analyse historical situations from sources and reach substantiated conclusions about them. CO9.7 I can explain how sources may be more relevant or objective than others. CO9.8 I can notice contradictions, gaps, inconsistencies, bias and propaganda in sources.	CO10.1 I can investigate independently using a wide range of historical sources. CO10.2 I can recognize more subtle instances of bias and propaganda in sources. CO10.3 I can distinguish between relevant and irrelevant evidence. CO10.4 I can explain reasons for contradictions and gaps in evidence. CO10.5 I can reach plausible conclusions on a topic on the basis of the available evidence. CO10.6 I can make a comprehensive reference to the broader historical context of the sources. CO10.7 I can ask and answer questions to determine the motive why sources were made.

Commentary – Malta: History Syllabus

https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/syllabi_as_from_sept_2018/Documents/Year_07/History_Learning_Outcomes_Levels_7_to_10_Sept_2018.pdf

As a relatively small nation state of the European Union with a population of almost 500,000 people Malta has a national curriculum. History is taught as a stand-alone subject from Years 7 to Year 10 but is not explicitly taught in the primary years. Learning outcomes in the curriculum describe what students should be able to do. This sample (C: Working with historical sources) is from the suite of 5 historical concepts and skills that demonstrate students' learning progression, or "attainment", from Level 7 to Level 10, which is considered to be at "gifted and talented" level (DLAP 2018). These levels are aligned to age/year levels, i.e. Level 7 corresponds to Year 7 and so on.

Syllabus documents are very detailed in their descriptions of what students should be able to do as well as the historical knowledge they should know. At Level 7, students "...can identify and explain changes in values and beliefs of people from the past to those of today (for example, slavery was accepted in the Classical Period but considered illegal today)". The syllabus includes "Teaching Objectives" which provide teachers with instructions on what they should do, for example, "The teacher will train students how to define, explain and use historical concepts and terminology in the right context." Descriptors are arranged according to historical concepts and skills and are written in the first person from the student's perspective, for example, "Time and chronology in history – I can understand and use historical time periods, dating systems, scale of time, sequence and chronology." The

details of the syllabus documents provide teachers with guidance on how to design formative assessment items and prescribe what will be included in external assessments.

Asia – Singapore

Table F. Comparison of progression in history from ages 12 to 17 years in the Singapore national curriculum

	Lower Secondary Express + Normal (Academic) Courses (12 to 14 years)		Upper Secondary Express + Normal (Academic) Courses (15 to 17 years)
Objective 1: Deploying Knowledge	<i>Students should be able to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recall, select, organise and use their knowledge and understanding of history in context demonstrate knowledge of the historical inquiry process (formulating questions, gathering evidence, exercising reasoning and reflective thinking) 	Objective 1: Deploy Knowledge	<i>Candidates should be able to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recall, select, organise and use historical knowledge in context
Objective 2: Communicating Historical Knowledge and Constructing Descriptions / Explanations	<i>Students should be able to demonstrate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> their understanding of the past by identifying, describing and explaining: key concepts: causation, consequence, continuity, change and significance within a historical context key features and characteristics of the periods studied and the relationship between them their ability to evaluate causation and historical significance to arrive at a reasoned conclusion (<i>for Sec 2 Express students only</i>) 	Objective 2: Construct Explanation and Communicate Historical Knowledge	<i>Candidates should be able to demonstrate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> their understanding of the past through explanation and analysis of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> key concepts: causation, consequence, continuity, change and significance within a historical context key features and characteristics of the periods studied and the relationship between them their ability to evaluate causation and historical significance to arrive at a reasoned conclusion
Objective 3: Interpreting and Evaluating Source Materials	<i>In using source materials, students should be able to understand, examine and evaluate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a range of source materials as part of an historical inquiry how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented in different ways as part of an historical inquiry by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> comprehending and extracting relevant information drawing inferences from given information comparing and contrasting different views 	Objective 3: Interpreting and Evaluating Source Materials	<i>Using source materials, candidates should be able to understand, analyse and evaluate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a range of source materials as part of an historical inquiry how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented in different ways as part of an historical inquiry by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> comprehending and extracting relevant information drawing inferences from given information comparing and contrasting different views distinguishing between fact, opinion and judgement recognising values and detecting bias establishing utility of given information drawing conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of evidence and arguments

Commentary – Singapore: History Syllabus

www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/humanities/

With a population close to 6 million people, Singapore has a national curriculum. Singaporean syllabuses emphasise the importance of engaging learners actively in historical inquiry, acquiring knowledge and understanding of various eras and understanding different representations of the past (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2013). In the primary years history is coupled with geography within the subject of Social Studies. In the secondary years History is taught as a stand-alone subject within Humanities, along with China Studies in English, commerce, economics and geography. History (Modern) is also taught at senior secondary level.

Table F shows that it is expected cognitive progression will be achieved in the historical skill “Objective 3: Interpreting and Evaluating Source Materials” somewhere between the ages of 14 to 17 years. The syllabus recommends that students should develop higher-order critical thinking skills of

- distinguishing between fact, opinion and judgement
- recognising values and detecting bias
- establishing utility of given information
- drawing conclusions based on a reasoned consideration of evidence and arguments.

In her analysis of the Singaporean curriculum, Bertram (2016) observed progression of procedural knowledge can be best seen in the learning outcomes of the upper secondary and pre-university years (ages 17 and 18). At this level, substantive concepts move from local to regional to national to international history, eventually becoming more universal and abstract. These concepts were “taken up a further level” to a more universal, decontextualised level. For example, the concept of “government” in junior secondary was extended to the broader concept of “European imperialism” in the senior secondary years. Bertram concluded “... that there is some attempt to describe progression in the development of procedural knowledge across the years. However, the curricula which embrace procedural knowledge do not make clear how these historical thinking skills should be sequenced across grades.”

Assessment of progression: challenges and possible solutions

Designing effective assessment instruments

Although curriculum documents provide teachers with guidelines and descriptors of learning progression at different stages in a continuum of learning, measuring a student’s progression in history is not necessarily an easy task. This is usually achieved by using some form of assessment and then reporting the results. Unfortunately, there is no single magic bullet for assessment. The challenge is for educators to design appropriate assessment instruments that effectively measure and report on students’ learning.

Formative class, grade or school assessment

If the overall aim of learning is for students to “get better”, then the purpose of assessment should be diagnosis for improvement rather than simply reporting. The teacher should be able to identify strengths and weaknesses so that learners can improve and progress (Phillips 2002, p. 111). Several researchers advise that diagnosis is best achieved through formative assessment which allows teachers to not only assess students’ learning, but most importantly, assess the effectiveness of their teaching (see William 2011; Carr and Counsell 2014; Fletcher-Wood 2015). Assessment should not conflate attainment (or achievement) and progress; it should provide students and teachers with meaningful information on how they both can improve. There are many suggested formative assessment strategies online to help teachers check for understanding (see D.C. Everest Area Schools, n.d.).

Meaningful assessment descriptors should articulate the knowledge, conceptual understandings and skills that are typical for a learner to achieve at each level. These can be articulated in assessments in the following ways:

1. **Benchmarks or standards** which are measurable criteria against which learning can be evaluated. These are often developed at a macro level by state or national assessment authorities. Benchmarks might be set for the level at which concepts or skills must be mastered in each grade. They might also be used to determine where a particular student, class, or school ranks in comparison to others. Meyer and Land (2006) call this point of mastery “threshold concepts” which are determined to be central to a subject, and when understood by students, allow them to “cross the threshold” of their understanding of that subject. Similarly, Fletcher-Wood (2013) calls this the “hinge point”.
2. **Learning outcomes, objectives, goals** which are clear descriptions of what a learner is expected to be able to do, know about and/or value at the completion of learning. They describe the substance of learning and how its attainment will be demonstrated. They are often developed at the micro level, in schools, grades or classes for lessons or sequences of lessons. “Threshold concepts” or “hinge-points” are also valid measures of progression at the micro levels of class/grade/school.

Progression levels can vary greatly within a class because individual students have different learning abilities and therefore progress at different rates; they may not necessarily neatly align with year groups or chronological age. Therefore, the challenge is for teachers to develop progression models that clearly define levels of proficiency that reflect an individual’s level of achievement and the complexity of their learning.

The example in Table G was developed by British history education academic Alex Ford (2016) and is based on six second-order concepts and the process of historical inquiry. The concepts are deepened and strengthened by continuous revisiting, and students work towards mastery of each concept, which he describes as a series of “signposts”.

Ford’s progression model allows progression to take place according to the individual student’s abilities rather than at prescribed age or stage levels. He emphasises that second-order, or procedural concepts should never be stand-alone marking criteria; they should be inherently tied to specific historical knowledge and contexts in order to develop an holistic awareness of students’ understanding. The model should be used to inform teaching and assessment but not used as a standalone set of targets. The concepts outlined should be revised by students throughout their historical studies, to strengthen and build upon historical knowledge and skills in parallel (2016, p. 10).

Table G. Overview of Second Order Concepts in History

1) Causation		4) Historical Interpretations	
SIGNPOST 1 Causal Webs	Change happens because of MULTIPLE CAUSES and leads to many different results or consequences. These create a WEB of related causes and consequences.	SIGNPOST 1 Identifying Interpretations	Historical interpretations are everywhere. Every piece of historical writing is an interpretation of some sort. The past is not fixed but CONSTRUCTED through interpretations.
SIGNPOST 2 Influence of Factors	Different causes have different LEVELS OF INFLUENCE. Some causes are more important than other causes.	SIGNPOST 2 Drawing Inferences from Interpretations	It is possible to draw INFERENCES from interpretations of the past, just like with historical sources. INFERENCES will reveal the MESSAGE of a particular interpretation.
SIGNPOST 3 Personal and Contextual Factors	Historical changes happen because of two main factors: The actions of HISTORICAL ACTORS and the CONDITIONS (social, economic etc.) which have influenced those actors.	SIGNPOST 3 Evaluating Interpretations	The APPROACH of an author must always be considered. This means considering their VIEWPOINT, PURPOSE, AUDIENCE and EVIDENCE chosen to build their interpretation and how this might impact on the final interpretation.
SIGNPOST 4 Unintended Consequences	HISTORICAL ACTORS cannot always predict the effects of their own actions leading to UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES. These unintended consequences can also lead to changes	SIGNPOST 4 Interpretations in Context	Historical interpretations must be understood on their own terms. This means thinking about the CONTEXT in which they were created, what conditions and views existed at the time, and how this might impact the final interpretation.
2) Change & Continuity		5) Significance	
SIGNPOST 1 Identifying Change	Past societies are not fixed, there are changes which have occurred spanning centuries. Changes in the past can be identified by looking at DEVELOPMENTS between two periods.	SIGNPOST 1 Resulting in Change	Events, people and developments are seen as significant because the RESULTED IN CHANGE. They had consequences for people at and/or over time.
SIGNPOST 2 Interweaving Continuity and Change	Change and continuity are INTERWOVEN and both can be present together in history. CHRONOLOGIES can be used to show change and continuity working together over time.	SIGNPOST 2 Revelation	Significance is ascribed if they REVEAL something about history or contemporary life.
SIGNPOST 3 Flows of Continuity and Change	Change is a process which varies over time. Change can be described as a FLOW in terms of its PACE and EXTENT and can be said to TRENDS and have specific TURNING POINTS.	SIGNPOST 3 Identifying Significance Criteria	Significance is seen as something constructed therefore CRITERIA are needed to judge the significance of events, people or developments within a particular historical narrative.
SIGNPOST 4 Complexity of Change	Change and continuity are not a single process. There are many FLOWS of change and continuity operating at the same time. Not all FLOWS go in the same direction	SIGNPOST 4 Provisional Significance	Historical significance varies over time, and by the INTERPRETATIONS of those ascribing that significance. Significance is PROVISIONAL.

Source: Sample from Alex Ford's progression model from "Progression in historical thinking: An overview of key aspects of the mastery of historical thinking and practice", published at www.andallthat.co.uk.

Research gaps and future directions

The OECD Learning Framework 2030 offers a vision and underpinning principles for the future of education systems at a global level. It advises that the three most important challenges that will be faced by young people in the next decade are environmental, economic and social (2018, p. 3-4). However, although all three challenges pose serious threats to the future, they are not new; humans have faced these challenges many times before and have responded in many different ways.

The study of history at a global level offers young people opportunities to learn about how humans have tackled these challenges in the past—what worked, what didn't work and why—and how they might use these examples from the past to inform future actions. The lessons of history can offer young people useful advice, cautionary tales and visions of future possibilities.

The Singapore history syllabus outlines the benefits of learning that focuses on broad, transferrable knowledge and critical thinking skills to prepare students to become active and informed citizens of the future:

“Disciplinary knowledge will continue to be important, as the raw material from which new knowledge is developed, together with the capacity to think across the boundaries of disciplines and ‘connect the dots’. Epistemic knowledge, or knowledge about the disciplines, such as knowing how to think like a mathematician, historian or scientist, will also be significant, enabling students to extend their disciplinary knowledge. Procedural knowledge is acquired by understanding how something is done or made – the series of steps or actions taken to accomplish a goal. Some procedural knowledge is domain-specific, some transferable across domains. It typically develops through practical problem-solving, such as through design thinking and systems thinking.” (Ministry of Education Singapore 2016, p. 5).

At present, research on students’ progression in history is being undertaken at local and national levels rather than from a broader global, human perspective. The OECD 2030 Learning Framework provides educators and researchers with several suggestions on how they might extend their work to make it more relevant to twenty-first century learners. Curriculum and assessment developers could work collaboratively to develop criteria for measuring students’ progression in history, and education researchers could gather data on the impact and effectiveness of teaching on students’ ability to progress in history. Both actions could be taken transnationally and internationally so that educators—not only students—think across boundaries and “connect the dots”.

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