

Article

How Finnish Adolescents Understand History: Disciplinary Thinking in History and Its Assessment Among 16-Year-Old Finns

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Abstract: The success of discipline-based teaching requires an interplay between substantive and procedural knowledge. In Finland, disciplinary thinking was included in the National Core Curriculum and in the final assessment criteria a decade ago, which meant a change in history teaching. The outcome of this change is examined in the article with the help of a national-level history test that was conducted in 2011 among 16-year-old Finns. In the test, the adolescents fared moderately well in tasks involving substantive knowledge but more poorly in tasks which measured the mastering of procedural knowledge. In particular, the interplay between these proved to be difficult for the students. The students' knowledge was found to correspond with the earlier curriculum rather than the objectives of the present one, revealing that not all of the teachers were teaching in accordance with the present demands.

Keywords: history teaching; historical thinking; disciplinary thinking; procedural knowledge; substantive knowledge; evaluation; Finland

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, history teaching in Finnish comprehensive schools [1] has been moving away from traditional content-based knowledge toward skill-based curriculums and instruction. It was stipulated in the 1990s that history teaching should focus on the nature of history as a form of knowledge. The backdrop to this was a discussion about the new constructivist learning theory according to which

studying should be based on students' active processing of information instead of a passive acceptance of it. The National Curriculum Reform of 1994 also influenced this change because it emphasized the active role of municipalities and schools in curriculum design. Following the reform, schools were allowed to choose the contents of teaching relatively freely. However, at the end of the decade, the Finnish National Board of Education set the skill-based evaluation criteria common to all schools.

History teaching in Finland has followed the larger disciplinary trends that have challenged both the content and concept of a grand narrative. "New History" has highlighted new actors and events, and discussion has been raised about whose history is to be taught and what is to be focused on [2]. Multifarious viewpoints have begun to be emphasized, as have critical information-processing skills. In many countries, the discussions concerning the teaching of history have escalated into "history wars," which have involved ordinary citizens in addition to teachers and administrators [3–7].

The disciplinary approach to history education has changed the character of the subject. When earlier the mastering of history required a good rote memory, today students must know how to determine causes, present their reasons and consider the authenticity of the evidence given. The objective is to develop the critical thinking skills of the students. Two effects have been manifested in this new way of teaching history: history itself has become more popular [8], but at the same time, it has become a more difficult subject [9]. Students have experienced the transmission of traditional memory–history as less demanding than disciplinary teaching, because in it the information is static and easier to master, whereas with teaching based on studying the form of the knowledge, students must deal with the knowledge's uncertainty [10].

The teaching of historical thinking is also more demanding for teachers than merely mastering content knowledge. Yet the task will become even more challenging when teachers must assess the students' mastering of historical knowledge. The problems of assessment have been discussed in the 2000s, and particularly in Britain where it has been questioned if the uniform assessment of students' knowledge of history is even possible. There have been discussions about "what it means to get better at history" and "how progression is measured" [11,12]. Hanna Schissler [13] has criticized the soundness of common assessment standards because meeting these standards cannot be reliably measured. According to her, interpretation skills and historical empathy, for example, cannot be objectively tested. As well, Richard Rothstein [14] doubts whether the measurement of skills in history is possible in the first place.

Test results have been used in the development of teaching and also as a tool of education policy to show the poor state of current teaching. In the United States, for example, students' individual test answers have been used to indicate the general weakness of their historical consciousness [15,16]. However, David Berliner and Bruce Biddle [17] have demonstrated that in fact students have never mastered history to the extent that the measurers had anticipated. Yet with the assistance of tests, attempts have been made to carry out school reforms [18].

The following pages will examine the objectives of Finnish history education in comprehensive school and how students have achieved them on the basis of the first ever national-level test, conducted in the spring of 2011. It becomes clear in the analysis that students succeeded well in tasks which measured the mastery of substantive knowledge [19]. The second half of the article will look at tasks in which the students had the most difficulty. The purpose of these tasks was to measure students'

abilities to master the procedural knowledge of the discipline. Finally, what the test results tell us about the realization of discipline-based history teaching in Finland will be considered.

2. Objectives of Teaching History and Assessing Their Fulfillment

Since the end of the 19th century, the Finnish national identity has been shaped by the teaching of history. Up to the 1990s, the national grand narrative was supported by such teaching. The objective was to transmit the substantive historical knowledge and particularly the nationally important historical events. The National Core Curriculum of 2004 was an epochal reform because it changed the subject from an identity subject into one which develops the critical information-processing skills of young students. The aim was to have students understand the “form” of historical knowledge. Teaching historical thinking became the main objective.

In the National Core Curriculum of 2004 for comprehensive school [20] the objectives of history teaching are that students will learn to:

- obtain and use historical information
- use a variety of sources, compare them, and form their own justified opinions based on them
- understand that historical information can be interpreted in different ways
- explain the purposes and effects of human activity
- assess future alternatives, using information on historical change as an aid.

These objectives emphasize studying the form of historical knowledge. Students should learn the second-order concepts of cause, change, significance, evidence and empathy.

In Finland, the final assessment criteria help teachers to formulate history teaching. According to these criteria, at the end of compulsory education students should:

- know how to distinguish between factors that explain a matter and secondary factors
- be able to read and interpret various sources
- be able to place the events being studied into their temporal contexts, and thus into chronological order
- know how to explain why people once acted differently from how they act now
- know how to present the reasons for, and consequences of, historical events
- be able to answer questions about the past by using the information they have obtained from different sources, including information acquired through modern technology
- be able to evaluate and formulate their own justified opinions about events and phenomena.

The learning of historical thinking cannot take place without an interplay between substantive knowledge and conceptual thinking [21,22]. Conceptual thinking refers to mastering the second-order concepts. As Peter Lee has stated, it differs from the skills discourse that easily marginalizes the importance of knowledge and understanding [21]. To gain an understanding of history, one must have both a knowledge of the past and a basis of knowledge claims about that past. Therefore, studying content and developing learning skills should occur hand in hand. In the National Core Curriculum, the substantive historical knowledge to be taught at grades 7–9 (13- to 16-year-olds) is widely defined in terms of ten core content elements. “Nationalism and life in the 19th century” and “The World War II period,” as core content, for example, allow teachers plenty of leeway for the arrangement of their

teaching. Thus the core content provides teachers with an opportunity to concentrate their teaching on the second-order concepts. However, disciplinary-based teaching has only taken its first steps in Finland when compared internationally. The older teaching and learning strategies are still used across the board, and textbook publishers have not yet produced enough material that is in line with the present trend.

In Finland, there are no standardized high-stakes tests at the end of comprehensive school. Students who finish comprehensive school seek admission to general upper secondary school or vocational upper secondary school with the grades given by the teachers of their own school. To ensure the fairness of evaluations, the Finnish National Board of Education conducts large-scale assessments every year, the results of which are given to the schools and teachers. This regular national analysis, carried out using sample-based assessments, attempts to ensure the parity of teacher-based evaluation. About 10% of the age cohort is analyzed in reading, mathematics and science [23]. The schools can compare their own success to a national average, but the results are not made public. Therefore the teachers may decide themselves how to utilize the information from the assessments.

In the spring of 2011, the Finnish National Board of Education assessed for the first time students' knowledge in history and social studies. A total of 4726 students (2352 boys and 2370 girls) participated in the test from a student population of 60,000 (about 8% of the age group). The test was planned by the Centre for Educational Assessment of the University of Helsinki and was carried out by the Finnish National Board of Education [24]. The history test included 15 complete tasks. "Complete task" means a group of questions based on one theme. The questions were either closed ended (multiple choice tasks) or open ended (productive tasks). In one task, for example, there were 27 questions in which students had to answer either yes or no. Usually there were from two to six questions in each complete task. The pupils answered 81 history questions. Two-thirds of the tasks were questions to which answers could be clearly scored right or wrong, and were mainly multiple choice. One-third of the tasks were open-ended essay questions in which the pupils wrote out their answers. Designed to measure the fulfillment of the objectives of the National Core Curriculum, the test took 135 minutes and measured students' knowledge of both history and civics. Furthermore, the students answered an inquiry which surveyed their working habits and study motivation. It was expected that the students would complete the tasks in history in about 60 minutes.

The test was designed to measure students' knowledge in accordance with the Core Curriculum's final assessment criteria. The tests were evaluated by the schools' history teachers according to the written instructions provided by the designers of the test. With the help of examples, the instructions explained in detail what was required for the assignment for certain scores. The validity of the teachers' evaluations was ensured by five external censors chosen by the Finnish National Board of Education, who assessed 694 students' answers (15% of the whole sample). The evaluation instructions can be considered unambiguous because the censors' and teachers' evaluations did not significantly differ [25].

Two points must be taken into account when judging the results of the test. First, the students were not readied for the test through any test-preparation activity. Because the students' knowledge of history was being tested for the first time, the teachers had no information about what tasks were included in the test. They had been notified that the purpose of test was to assess the learning that was defined in the Core Curriculum, but they were not given more exact information. Second, the

mastering of history was measured in the ninth graders of the comprehensive school from which the teaching of history had ended in the previous year [26].

The evaluation was not used for ranking the schools. The test results were also not revealed to the students' parents because in Finland such testing is used only to support teachers' self-evaluation. Teachers in Finland enjoy a large degree of autonomy, which means that the central education administration interferes little in their everyday working lives; for example, there are no formal teacher evaluation measures. Teachers have the autonomy to create their own work plans and school-based curricula. It depends on the teachers themselves whether they develop their teaching in the direction determined by the National Core Curriculum.

3. Mastering Procedural Knowledge Separated Stronger Students from Weaker Ones

The 4726 students who participated in the test scored an average of 36.4 out of a possible 73 points. The students therefore answered approximately 50% of the questions correctly. There were no statistically significant differences in the results between boys and girls. With the closed-ended questions, 83% of the tasks were solved correctly, as were 33% of the productive tasks.

Part of the test measured the students' mastery of substantive knowledge. Almost all participants (94%) knew, for example, that Urho Kekkonen served as the president of Finland from 1956 to 1981, and understood the concept of "war child," which is related to the events of the Second World War in Finland. Nearly as many (91%) could correctly date when the Internet became common. And the majority (56%) could name eight states in Europe which had gained their independence as a consequence of the First World War. The tasks measuring substantive knowledge were mainly closed tasks; of these, 62% were solved correctly.

In this article, "historical thinking" and "mastery of history" mean a student's ability to combine substantive and procedural knowledge by, for example, creating reasoned arguments from primary sources. To accomplish this, the student must master both the content and the second-order concepts. Mastering procedural knowledge and the interplay between substantive and procedural knowledge of history was measured by the productive tasks. The solution percentage [27] for these remained considerably lower, at 35%, which indicates their degree of difficulty for the students.

Many Finnish history teachers have regarded the implementation of the 2004 Core National Curriculum as difficult because of its skill-based approach, and have continued teaching content knowledge. They have also assessed students' knowledge with tests which mainly measure their factual recall of events. Many students taking the test had apparently never faced tasks that measured their mastery of second-order concepts. Therefore their poorer results in the tasks measuring procedural knowledge is not surprising [28].

Because the students had approximately 60 minutes in which to complete the history tasks, the open-ended questions had to be defined precisely. The students did not have enough time to write long essay answers and were expected to present arguments of no greater length than 3–5 sentences. Because of the short response time, the evaluation of students' mastery of second-order concepts has been seen as problematic [29]. However, the test's productive tasks served to distinguish the more successful students from the less successful ones. The better students succeeded in these tasks as they did in the other tasks of the test; in turn, the poorer students had very low scores [30]. Students who

succeeded well in both kinds of tasks achieved the objectives of the Core Curriculum. However, their proportion was small. The students received satisfactory or good results in the tasks which measured their mastery of substantive knowledge, while the general level of performance in procedural knowledge as a whole was adequate or moderate. Next, the students' success in the tasks which required argumentation will be examined in more detail.

The students' mastery of second-order concepts was assessed with the help of four tasks, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Key areas of assessing the learning of second-order concepts.

Questions	Concept	Topic of the task
4–5	Cause	The Russian Revolution
12–13	Change	The Rise of Nazism
81–82	Evidence	The Winter War
149–150	Empathy	World War II

In the task (questions 4–5) that measured the understanding of causal explanations, the students were given background information about the price of food in Russia from 1913 to 1917. They were asked to describe which historical events caused the food shortage that occurred, and were also asked to explain what caused food prices to rise. The other tasks that measured the mastering of second-order concepts were similar. In them, new evidence was introduced to the students, which they had to connect with the substantive knowledge they had acquired. The students were expected to demonstrate their abilities to use procedural knowledge and not only recall the context. In the task (questions 12–13) concerning the rise of Nazism, the students had to explain why ordinary Germans voted for the National Socialists in 1933. In the task (questions 81–82) which was related to the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union, they had to assess the motives behind the Russians' propaganda leaflet drop over Finland. For the task (questions 149–150) related to the Second World War, they had to consider why American soldiers treated prisoners of war cruelly. The percentages of appropriate responses rose to about 50% only in the task which concerned the rise of Nazism. Otherwise the figures were between 18% and 35%.

The task (questions 149–150) that measured the mastering of historical empathy proved to be particularly challenging. In what follows, the students' written argumentation in this task is examined. The students' performance here was very strongly associated (Pearson Correlation 0.62) with their success in the overall test. Students who scored excellently in the task also received outstanding results in the other tasks. However, most of the students had difficulty with the task in question. One can conclude from their answers that the important aspect of mastering historical knowledge was not easy for them.

4. Scrutinizing Students' Mastering of Historical Empathy

Questions 149–150 measured the students' mastering of historical empathy. Historical empathy means that one can put him-/herself in the position of another person in a specific historical context. Empathy in history requires, as Peter Lee has stated, knowing what someone believed, valued, felt and sought to attain [31]. Some researchers consider that the concept of historical empathy must be

emphasized more in teaching so that young students might learn to better explain the actions of people in the past. Others, however, oppose this view, considering historical empathy to be a contrived concept. There has been considerable discussion concerning to what extent one can allow young people to empathize with the role of controversial historical figures [32]. The difficulty is that students should be able to stand in another person's shoes in a certain historical context and not think objectively like a historian.

Researchers have created different models to define the level of students' historical empathy [33–35]. According to these researchers, historical empathy does not improve automatically with age; rather, developing towards the most advanced form of empathy requires systematic training. According to the Core Curriculum, Finnish adolescents must be familiarized with historical empathy.

The consequences of the Second World War were chosen as the subject matter of the task which measured students' mastering of historical empathy, because understanding the hearts and minds of people in the past requires substantive knowledge of the context of the period in question. The Second World War belongs to the core content that has been defined in the Core Curriculum. Furthermore, the Holocaust holds a significant place in history textbooks. The task in which the students' had to examine the consequences of the war was, however, based on an atypical perspective. The subject of the task concerned the treatment of German prisoners of war in American prison camps. The context was enlarged through a newspaper article that revealed how the wartime atrocities of the Germans had been detected by American soldiers and how this information affected their attitude towards their German prisoners. The prisoners' perspective was brought out through one German prisoner's interview.

In what follows, the students' answers to questions 149 and 150 are examined. The answers are divided into four groups according to the students' scores. A score of three points means an excellent mastery of historical thinking while a score of zero means a poor grasp.

In question 149, the students' task was to study the newspaper article and present three reasons why American soldiers treated the German prisoners badly. Many teachers and textbooks had taught about war crimes by introducing their students to the Nuremberg trials. In the test, however, an unconventional viewpoint was chosen to reveal the students' disciplinary thinking. To achieve full marks (3 points) the students had to include at least three of the following probable explanations:

- (a) revenge for the suffering of American soldiers;
- (b) blurred morality of the guards due to the exceptional circumstances;
- (c) effect of war propaganda on the soldiers;
- (d) revenge for the Holocaust and for other cruelties committed by the Germans;
- (e) doubting the interpretation of the interviewed prisoner of war.

To achieve a mark of "good" (2 points), students had to mention two of the explanations, and a "pass" (1 point), one of them. "Weak" answers had none.

The success percentage for question 149 was 35%, showing that it strongly distinguished between the participants' better and poorer mastering of historical thinking. Altogether 28% of the students received a rating of "good" or "excellent," and an equal percentage answered unsatisfactorily and received no points (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' ($N = 4726$) successful answer percentages for question 149.

Points	Frequency	Percent
0	1313	28
1	2087	44
2	1105	23
3	221	5
Total	4726	100

In “excellent” (three-point) answers, a symbiotic relationship is evident between substantive historical knowledge and disciplinary thinking, as will be evident below.

(a) Revenge for the suffering of American soldiers

They wanted revenge for the deaths of their fallen comrades. They took revenge for their own suffering [36].

The students emphasized that many American soldiers had learned to hate the Germans because of their own losses in battle. The soldiers were also forced to give up their civilian lives and blamed the enemy for this. Some American soldiers wanted revenge because of their own suffering. In their opinion, the German prisoners of war should not be allowed any comfort and should suffer as their victims did.

(b) Blurred morality of the guards due to the exceptional circumstances

Perhaps some guards bullied the defenseless prisoners of war only for their own amusement and to raise their own self-esteem.

The students felt that the soldiers' morality could have been compromised by the exceptional conditions of the war. Soldiers at the front may have been guilty of acts that they could not imagine committing during peacetime. The war had possibly hardened the American guards and blurred their idea of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

(c) The effect of war propaganda on the American soldiers

The Americans were the winners and the Germans the losers of the war. During the war, propaganda had spread among the Americans of the monstrosity of the Germans. Therefore prisoners were thought to be responsible for these cruelties simply because they were German.

According to the students, some of the American soldiers may have adopted a picture of the Germans colored by war propaganda. In the propaganda, all Germans were stigmatized as being responsible for the war. Therefore the guards showed no pity for their German captives.

(d) Revenge for the Holocaust and for other cruelties carried out by the Germans

They wanted revenge for the Jews and others who had died in the concentration camps of the Germans.

The American soldiers had seen or heard about the cruelties of the Germans in the extermination and concentration camps. According to the students, the callous killing of defenseless civilians made

many American soldiers hate the Germans. They probably considered these prisoners of war to be guilty of the cruelties and therefore sought revenge on them.

(e) Doubting the interpretation of the interviewed prisoner of war

In this task the information about the treatment of German prisoners was based on an interview of a former prisoner of war. None of the students doubted his reliability, which is noteworthy because history education should develop the critical information-processing skills of adolescents and make them more dubious of intentions.

In most “poor” answers, which scored zero points, the students had either not answered or had tried to pick their answer directly from the information given in the task. This kind of answering strategy reflected an inability to connect substantive knowledge with the mastering of second-order concepts.

The second part of the empathy task, question 150, proved to be even more difficult than the previous. Its percentage of successful answers was 23%. Only 17% of the participants performed well or excellently (2 or 3 points), and 50% answered wrongly or did not answer at all (Table 3).

Table 3. Solution percentage of the participants ($N = 4726$) in question 150.

Points	Frequency	Percent
0	2354	50
1	1593	34
2	637	14
3	142	3
Total	4726	100

In question 150, the students were asked to present three reasons why the Americans guilty of the deaths of the German prisoners of war were not held responsible for their acts. For “excellent” answers, worth 3 points, the students had to be able to project the issue into a wider context, that of the winners’ and losers’ different rights. An “excellent” answer usually contained the following explanations:

- (a) the Germans were not able to bring the victors to court because they had lost the war;
- (b) the Germans were guilty of significantly greater cruelties than the Americans;
- (c) it was difficult to prove the cruelties of the Americans.

(a) The Germans were not able to bring the American soldiers to court because they had lost the war

The Americans were the winners of the war, so the judges in the war tribunals were also American and naturally did not blame their own soldiers.

Some students suggested that the winners are always the ones who write the history. Others explained that the leading position of the United States in the postwar world prevented their soldiers from being held responsible for their cruelties.

(b) The Germans were guilty of significantly greater cruelty than the Americans

The prison camps of the Americans were not as large as those of the Germans and the number of the victims was also smaller. Thus the prison camps of the Americans remained in the shadow of the

concentration and extermination camps of the Germans. The Germans committed such severe crimes that they lost their human dignity in the eyes of the Americans.

The war crimes of the Americans were minor in comparison with those of the Germans. Therefore they were not under consideration. According to the students, the court sided with the winners: *One wanted to forget the cruelties of the Americans because they had caused the death of Germans who were thought to have deserved it.*

(c) It was difficult to prove the cruelties of the Americans

The Americans did not deliberately kill their prisoners; rather the Germans starved to death or died of disease. Therefore it was difficult to demonstrate their guilt: *One was not able to prove that the Americans starved the Germans on purpose.*

The students who explained the American soldiers' not being charged because the prisoners were Germans or that it was not against the law to treat prisoners badly scored zero points. An answer worth no points was also one in which the student claimed that the guards were forced to mistreat the prisoners. Most students did not answer this question at all, which reveals that the question was extremely difficult for them.

5. Conclusions

The answers to the task which concerned the treatment of German prisoners of war in American prison camps indicate a weakness in the Finnish students' disciplinary thinking. The arguments were generally of a low quality and only a few participants answered the questions well. The poor quality of the arguments could have been a result of the scope of the test and the limited amount of time to answer. However, the teachers who administered the test reported that the students had enough time to complete it. The written arguments could have been better in the light of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in which Finnish adolescents have achieved top rankings in literacy in all four measurement cycles. The students' weak performance in the test, in fact, can be explained by how Finnish adolescents have been taught to master historical knowledge. The test results suggest that the concept of historical empathy, for example, has not figured sufficiently in the teaching.

The students could not make sense of the questions concerning American soldiers' behavior without being exposed to historical empathy. Only the most capable students were able to transcend the conventional picture of history that had been emphasized in the teaching, and to examine history from another perspective. In addition, the test revealed that the majority of the students had poorly mastered the second-order concepts. This also involved a lack of interplay between substantive and procedural history which was uncovered in the discovery that the students were unable to connect evidence to a context familiar to them. The students had sufficient knowledge of the substance but they understood the sources as information rather than evidence. The fact that they did moderately well in the tasks which assessed substantive knowledge reveals the teaching they had received. These results seem to show that the teaching had concentrated more on substantive history than on the procedural ideas about history. It appears that the students lacked the conceptual tools needed for the study of the past as a discipline.

The test, carried out in the final phase of comprehensive school in Finland, suggests that history teaching is still continuing the tradition which dominated history education until the late 1990s. Until that time, the task of teaching history was to support the national identity and provide general knowledge to students. The curricula were mostly lists of historical content, and this was also reflected in the textbooks. The National Curriculum of 2004 and the Final Assessment criteria of 1999 embodied new approaches to history teaching because they were based on disciplinary thinking. However, teachers received no in-service training for implementing this new approach and history teachers' discussions about the matter have not been reflected in their seminars or journals.

Progression in historical thinking ought to be developed simultaneously within substantive and procedural knowledge and not from one to the other [37]. Therefore, the interplay between substantive and procedural knowledge should have been seen within teaching as a deeper studying of fewer themes. However, not all teachers have limited the amount of historical content in their teaching, and some have overemphasized substantive knowledge, trying to portray a bigger picture of history for their students. According to Peter Lee [22], students should perceive the big picture of mankind's past, but they also need more detailed knowledge of a finer texture. Students should be able to connect their in-depth studies to the big picture, which, in turn, should make clear the general significance of the themes that are studied. Richard Rothstein [14] describes the struggle for history education as a question of breadth and depth. Although many say they are willing to strive for both, they cannot be achieved at the same time. According to Denis Shemilt [38], thematic study will be successful if attention is paid to the second-order concepts, and that even if students do not gain a full and comprehensive picture of the whole past, they will acquire a general view of history as a form of knowledge. Yet he suspects that few teachers are ready to reject the traditional content-based curriculum and move to a thematic one. Further, behind the surface are teachers' habitual ways of teaching, ones they consider to be important.

In Finland, the assessment of students' mastery of historical knowledge has provided valuable information to pedagogs about realizing the objectives of teaching history. The test results were also a form of feedback for teachers. The results generally indicate where they should change their teaching in order to better adhere to the requirements of the Core Curriculum.

The situation in the 1990s in England resembles the present state of the history teaching discourse in Finland. According to Christine Counsell [12], the 2008 National Curriculum in England followed the teachers' practices rather than the other way around. The National Curriculum process has lasted two decades and behind it is the inheritance of the Schools Council History Project from the 1970s. Following the launching of the National Curriculum in the 1990s, teachers did not sufficiently discuss the development of history teaching. In the 2000s, teachers instead engaged in critical professional discourse through their local and national networks, annual conferences, the Teaching History journal and discussions on the Internet [12]. History teachers in Finland have not entered into a dialog with education administrators or their colleagues on how the present trend in history teaching should be reflected in their work. Because of this, disciplinary history is not in practice being taught—the teaching is still based on memory—history. Furthermore, the publishers are not ready to change their textbooks as long as teachers do not demand it.

Numerous teachers in Finland mainly teach historical content even though disciplinary teaching has been an objective for more than ten years. The dichotomy of content *versus* skills is not valid because

both are needed in developing students' historical thinking. However, a choice of teaching emphasis must be made. In content-based teaching, historical events fill the lessons while procedural knowledge remains peripheral. In turn, the content to be studied in skill-based teaching must be restricted because skill-based studying is usually thematic and the learning is based on in-depth studies.

A skillful history teacher can involve substantive knowledge so that students will also develop their procedural knowledge. This, in particular, distinguishes experienced teachers from novices, as Chris Husband [39] has demonstrated. Especially for novice teachers, it is difficult to find the correct composition of teaching. For many, substantive knowledge overrides procedural knowledge. Because the National Curriculum is being reformed, experienced teachers, in turn, might see no reason to follow the newest didactic discussions, or they do not have sufficient skills to teach procedural history. Therefore, they tend to continue teaching the way they have—in this case, focusing on the transmission of a substantive knowledge of history.

In Finland, the Core National Curriculum and the final assessment criteria are one way to steer history teaching. Another steering mechanism could be the regular use of tests designed according to skill-based tasks that indicate the importance of disciplinary thinking. It is believed that tests influence teaching because the test results are public and the professional skills of the teachers are measured by them [40–43]. Such tests in Finland, however, are used only to support schools' and teachers' self-evaluation. It depends on the teachers how the performance of their students in the tests affects their teaching. However, one must hope that Finnish teachers may use these tests to develop their work.

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24. The author of the article was part of the three-person team which designed the test. Helping the team were four prominent history educators from the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences as well as staff from the Centre for Educational Assessment at the University of Helsinki. The latter ensured the reliability of the measurement. The Centre for Educational Assessment performed the preliminary test and the Finnish National Board of Education the actual test. The results of the actual test were analyzed at the Finnish National Board of Education. The test questions are only partly revealed in the present article because some of the questions will be reused as so-called anchor questions in future tests.
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26. At the lower-secondary level of comprehensive school, history is taught in grades 7–8 and social studies in grade 9. Students' historical knowledge was tested at the end of the 9th grade because the same test measured the students' civics knowledge.
27. The percentage of successful answers was determined by dividing the score by the theoretical maximum score and converting the result into a percentage.
28. The perceptions in this paragraph are based on surveys which the author has conducted during two decades as a teacher educator.
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