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En portada: “Christ’s Saddle”. Escalera al Monasterio de Skellig Michael. Fotografía de Thomas Dimson en Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0) editada.

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Beyond the Individual Cognitive Perspective: A Framework for Inclusive History Education

Más allá de la perspectiva cognitiva individual: Un marco para la enseñanza inclusiva de la historia

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Resumen

Aunque la inclusión es cada vez más relevante en la enseñanza de la historia, aún falta una teoría específica sobre el pensamiento y aprendizaje históricos inclusivos. Este artículo contribuye a esta teorización presentando un marco inclusivo que va más allá del compromiso cognitivo individual con la historia. Partimos de la premisa de que el pensamiento y el aprendizaje históricos abarcan más que un mero compromiso cognitivo individual con la historia. Nuestro modelo considera tres niveles clave: la perspectiva individual, la intersubjetiva y el apoyo. Primero, se analizan las diversas concepciones de inclusión y los enfoques previos en la enseñanza de la historia. Luego, se examinan las conceptualizaciones del pensamiento y aprendizaje históricos para identificar aspectos que requieren ampliación desde una perspectiva inclusiva. Finalmente, se propone un marco teórico que integra estas dimensiones, incorporando la perspectiva individual (cognición y corporeización), la intersubjetiva (comunicación y adopción de perspectivas) y la estructura de apoyo (asistencia personal y material).

Abstract

Although inclusion is becoming increasingly important in history education, a theory specifically geared towards inclusive historical thinking and learning is still missing. This paper intends to contribute to this theorizing by presenting an inclusive framework on historical thinking and learning. We assume that historical thinking and learning encompass more than just an individual cognitive engagement with history. The model we present incorporates three distinct levels that must be considered in an inclusive approach to historical thinking and learning: the individual perspective, the intersubjective perspective, and support. To outline the theoretical premises of the framework, the paper first discusses the divergent understandings of inclusion and analyzes former and current research approaches towards inclusion in history education. Then, previous conceptualizations of historical thinking and learning are discussed to identify where they need to be expanded with a view to inclusion. Finally, a framework for inclusive history education is presented that builds on previous discourses and extends them with inclusive considerations regarding the individual perspective (cognition and embodiment), intersubjective perspective (communication and perspective taking) and the support structure (personnel and material assistance).

Palabras clave

Dificultades de aprendizaje, Enseñanza de la historia, Educación universal, Epistemología, Competencias.

Keywords

Learning disabilities, History Education, Universal education, Epistemology, Skills.

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1. Background

Human societies are characterized by diversity. In recent years, the acceptance of social diversity in educational contexts has grown, which can be seen by the increasing importance of inclusion for schools. History education can already point to some potential successes when looking at inclusion in terms of the individual learner. History classes in many countries no longer aim to promote common identities or instill a particular master's narrative in all students but rather seek to build learners' historical skills and competencies (Körber, 2018). As a result, the academic discourse on history teaching also reflects the position of the diversity of society (Barsch et al., 2020). But when looking at the concepts of historical thinking in (Western) academic communities, it becomes apparent that many people are still not included in theoretical frameworks concerning such. Theories of historical thinking and learning are still distinctly cognitively charged, academia-based, and language-oriented as has been noted by various authors (Okolo et al., 2007; Rein, 2021; Völkel, 2017). In particular, people with intellectual disabilities and their historical learning and thinking processes are usually excluded.

We would like to present a framework for inclusive history education that combines existing special education approaches and established models of historical learning and thinking. The model intends to show different levels that must be considered for a history education that aims to be as inclusive as possible. Furthermore, the framework intends to open up implications for further developments in history education research. We are explicitly not developing a new model from scratch but rather expanding and combining existing models of historical thinking with inclusive perspectives.

For this purpose, we will first define the term 'inclusion'. Based on this premise, we will discuss the significance of inclusion for history education in more detail by giving an overview of the current research landscape and outlining potential fields of interest that have not yet been discussed. Afterwards, we will present our framework and elaborate upon the different layers that we consider to currently be missing when conceptualizing historical thinking and learning. Special attention will be paid to the needs of students with disabilities, as this group has been marginalized in both theory and empirical research for decades. Finally, we will not only summarize the results of our thoughts but will also address which implications our theoretical considerations have in history education and research.

2. Defining 'Inclusion'

The development of inclusive school systems has gained enormous momentum in numerous regions in recent decades. In most countries and school systems, the initial approach towards inclusion was a 'narrow' one. Policy makers focused on dismantling segregated special education systems, i.e. through the inclusion of students with disabilities into the respective mainstream school systems. Representative of this approach was *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, in which several countries called for the full inclusion of people with disabilities in their respective education system (UNESCO, 1994).

However, despite this ongoing process to make school systems around the world more inclusive, there is still much work left to be done in order to create a more diverse understanding of inclusion. Inclusive educational approaches cannot focus any longer merely

on people with disabilities but need to focus on other students from marginalized groups as well. For example, a diagnosed disability or an identified need for special education is usually not a singular phenomenon. Comprehensive difficulties in learning are more often found among students from socioeconomically weak families or among children and adolescents with a migration background when compared to those without (Frederico & Orsolini, 2022; Vadivel et al., 2023). Moreover, even within supposedly homogeneous groups, there are significantly more differences between individual students than is often assumed (Barsch, 2020a). Therefore, a 'broad' concept of inclusion is increasingly used in the current discourse on inclusive education, one that adds further subsidiary categories to the initial category 'disability' (Haug, 2017). These subsidiary categories of difference, which often become categories of discrimination, are diverse and changeable depending on the social context and general acceptance of diversity. The most discussed categories in this context of school inclusion are ethnic background and migration (Tajic & Binar, 2020), gender and sexual identity (Glazzard & Vikars, 2022; Omercajic & Martino, 2020), or socioeconomic background (Richardson et al., 2020), in addition to the various forms of disability. Giftedness also needs to be considered when discussing inclusion. All these different facets of inclusion are highly relevant for the design of school lessons and ultimately also for the participation of marginalized groups in societies.

In addition to this categorization, inclusion can also be defined on the practical level of learning in schools as follows: Inclusion guarantees all students equal access to participation in class, active engagement in activities carried out, and acquisition of knowledge according to their individual abilities. According to Gerardo Echeita and Mel Ainscow, inclusion involves the presence, participation and successful learning of all students. Participation is emphasized as a fundamental element as it promotes not only shared learning but also exchange and communication in everyday school life (Echeita & Ainscow 2011).

3. Inclusion and History Education

Although many countries recognized the need for inclusion when signing the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* in 1994, history education is still at the very beginning of engaging with the implications of inclusion. Since the adoption of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006), a greater effort to attend to inclusion can be witnessed. However, research dealing with inclusive approaches towards history education remains limited to this day. Accordingly, the works presented in the following should be understood as potential starting points for further in-depth research rather than as indicators of distinct research efforts.

In history education the 'narrow' understanding of inclusion has been dominant in research and educational practices. Inclusion in history education has been primarily thought of as how to make history education accessible for students with disabilities. Especially in German speaking countries, different possibilities of how to enable historical learning for learners with disabilities have frequently been discussed in the last decade (e.g. Barsch, 2014; Degner et al., 2017; Barsch et al., 2020). However, despite these ongoing discussions about students with disabilities in history education, only few empirical studies have been published in the realm of inclusion. The majority of such empirical studies focus on students with intellectual disabilities. In Germany, for example, empirical studies have been carried out in recent years that have examined the historical learning and thinking of this group (Barsch, 2022; Rein, 2021; Wilkening, 2025). Some American studies have looked at the

effectiveness of inclusive practices to enable historical learning of students with varying levels of cognitive abilities (for a review see Ciullo et al., 2020; Barsch & Barte, 2020; De La Paz, 2013; Okolo & Ferretti, 2014). These studies have shown that interventions such as scaffolding and inquiry-based learning can have positive effects on the historical learning. Moreover, redundancies and periods of direct instruction can also be beneficial for this group of students. In addition to student-activating instructional settings, an explicit thematization of the basics of historical theory also seems to be effective in promoting historical thinking. Specifically, the examination of the construct character of history and the reflection on the limits of knowledge of sources and representations are argued to be valuable (see e.g. Bulgren et al., 2007; Ferretti et al., 2001; MacArthur et al., 2002; Okolo et al., 2007).

Also in regard to the 'broad' understanding of inclusion, there have only been few approaches in history education research to date. Most of those approaches focus on history curricula and their neglect of national minorities (Ahonen, 2010; Alexander & Weekes-Bernard, 2017; Mansfield, 2022). Many authors have criticized the clinging to master narratives in this context (Alavi & Barsch, 2018; Paraskeva & Steinberg, 2016; Ross, 2014; Salinas et al., 2015). In addition to curricular reflections, there have been some methodological considerations on how inclusion can be implemented in history education for all learners (Hudson & Reddington, 2021). A very ambitious project in this regard is the *School Education for Sustainable and Equal Inclusion* (SENSEI) initiated by EuroClio, an organization trying to enhance history education in all of Europe. The SENSEI project aims to "create and deliver courses on inclusive education for both pre-service and in-service teachers, by looking at current good practices in inclusion, testing them in different contexts, and integrating them with new approaches" (Modena, 2023) and thereby hopes to enable both theoretical and empirical insights into inclusive history education.

4. Conceptualizing Inclusive Historical Thinking and Learning

How people deal with history has been one of the central points of discussion since the beginnings of our discipline. Up until now, it has been common practice to develop country-specific concepts in order to grasp historical thinking processes theoretically (Seixas, 2017). Frequently used terms to describe historical thinking processes are, amongst others, 'historical thinking', 'historical reasoning', and 'historical competencies'. The Canadian historian Peter Seixas, for example, speaks of 'historical thinking' in his model that explicitly seeks to make historical thinking processes conceptually tangible (Seixas, 2009). Seixas speaks of 'historical thinking' to describe people's interactions with history and operationalizes such by means of six different concepts named *Historical Significance*, *Evidence and Interpretation*, *Continuity and Change*, *Cause and Consequence*, *Historical Perspective-Taking*, and the *Ethical Dimension* (Seixas, 2017, p. 597). While Seixas discusses 'historical thinking' to describe people's cognitive approach to history, the two Dutch authors Jannet van Drie and Carla van Boxtel introduced a framework built around the term 'historical reasoning' in 2004. The framework was designed to approach the phenomenon of how people deal with history (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2004; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). Just like the model of Seixas, the 'historical reasoning' framework revolves around six basic concepts: *asking historical questions*, *use of sources*, *contextualization*, *argumentation*, *use of substantive concepts*, and *use of meta-concepts*. In their model, van Drie and van Boxtel stress the importance of putting "more emphasis on the active role of students" (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2004, p. 89) and therefore try to distinguish their model from other models which, according to the authors'

understanding, conceptualize learners' engagement with history as a less active process. Another approach towards the conceptualization of historical thinking processes was the introduction of 'historical competencies'. Especially in German-language discourse there are reflections on how historical thinking processes can best be described and promoted by different models that assess which skills learners need to develop in order to be able to deal with history in a meaningful way (for an overview see Barricelli et al., 2017). Potentially the most widely received model in this context is the *Förderung und Entwicklung von reflektiertem und (selbst-)reflexivem Geschichtsbewusstsein* (FUER) model, introduced by Schreiber and colleagues (2006). The FUER model is a process model of historical thinking, which understands the possibility of reconstructing and deconstructing history as central goals of the historical education of learners. In order to be able to reconstruct or deconstruct history, four different areas of historical competence need to be developed: *historical inquiring competences*, *historical question competencies*, *historical orientation competencies*, and *historical methodological competencies*.

Elements of progression and thus differentiation can be integrated in all of the models mentioned above. A number of studies have dealt with this both theoretically and empirically (Körber, 2011; Lee & Shemilt 2003; Stoel et al. 2017). However, none of this work has so far developed scenarios for the practical use in schools, meaning that teachers still do not have valid instruments for differentiation and individualization in the context of inclusive historical thinking and learning. Furthermore, when analyzing these different models, it becomes apparent that all of them, despite their different framing and concepts of historical thought processes, have another two aspects in common. Firstly, all models emphasize that dealing with history is a cognitive process that requires elaborated thinking. Secondly, all frequently mentioned models focus on individual preconditions and perspectives of students. These commonalities should not be framed as negative per se. Yet, they do raise several questions in the context of inclusion: How can historical learning look like if students do not have the cognitive prerequisites needed to think historically according to the mentioned (and other) models? What role do other students play in the individual handling of history in increasingly heterogeneous learning groups? And how do potential support structures, like those mentioned earlier in the American intervention studies, factor into all of the above?

Accordingly, we believe that other areas besides the individual cognitive one also need to be considered, including the intersubjective perspective (doing history in collaboration), and the support structure (provided by schools for their students). Also, we believe that the individual perspective on history should not just take cognition into account but also embodied aspects. In the context of the intersubjective perspective, the *Index for Inclusion* offers a helpful starting point. Selected indicators of successful inclusion would include: "Activities encourage all children to communicate. Activities encourage the participation of all children. Activities develop an understanding of differences between people. Activities discourage stereotyping." (Booth & Ainscow 2006, p. 49) Historical learning does not only take place individually, but through exchange and negotiation among each other. In order to ensure that not only a few intellectually powerful dominate, a model for historical learning in schools should also allow for equal exchange among students and the participation of all in the creation of historical meaning. Although it was emphasized early on that historical learning should not only aim at academic skills but should have practical relevance for life (Barton & Levstik, 2004), schools can still be considered locations in which a science-oriented focus still dominates. This approach of equal exchange of different positions among each other also stems from the concept of diversity education, which assumes that the exchange

characterized by diversity also opens up a deeper understanding of the subject matter dealt with in class (see, for example, Applebaum, 2002). In an inclusive model of historical thinking and learning, the role of support structures should be emphasized as well, as subject-specific approaches towards history always require a certain form of support (subject-specific vocabulary, historical-theoretical understanding etc.).

Generally speaking, for history education several challenges arise from inclusion that have not yet been fully addressed in any framework of historical thinking and learning. In our understanding, these challenges can be mapped using a model that distinguishes between the three levels of individual perspective, intersubjective perspective, and support. Even though empirical studies will have to show whether and to what extent this modeling of inclusive history education is accurate, the distinction of the three areas already opens up questions that need to be answered if history education aims to be more inclusive: How can there be a greater focus on the language skills of all those involved in history education? How can necessary support structures be made visible? How can cognitive diversity be addressed? How can history education help ensure that all people can participate in the culture of history, regardless of their individual abilities and skills?

5. A Framework for Inclusive History Education

We would now like to present our framework that is to be understood as an extension of established models regarding historical thinking and learning (Figure 1). The model is an amalgamation of already existing models with the addition of new aspects. In particular, we would like to emphasize the aspects in historical learning and thinking that go beyond the individual. As explained, the model differentiates between three levels that are of importance for inclusive history education: the *individual perspective*, divided into *cognition* and *embodiment*, the *intersubjective perspective*, split up in *communication* and *perspective taking*, and the *support* structures. The framework intends to address both history education in practice as well as research in regards to historical thinking and learning. Such research should include the aforementioned special education concepts, which emphasize individualization and support. As well as approaches from history education, which prioritize individual cognitive processes.

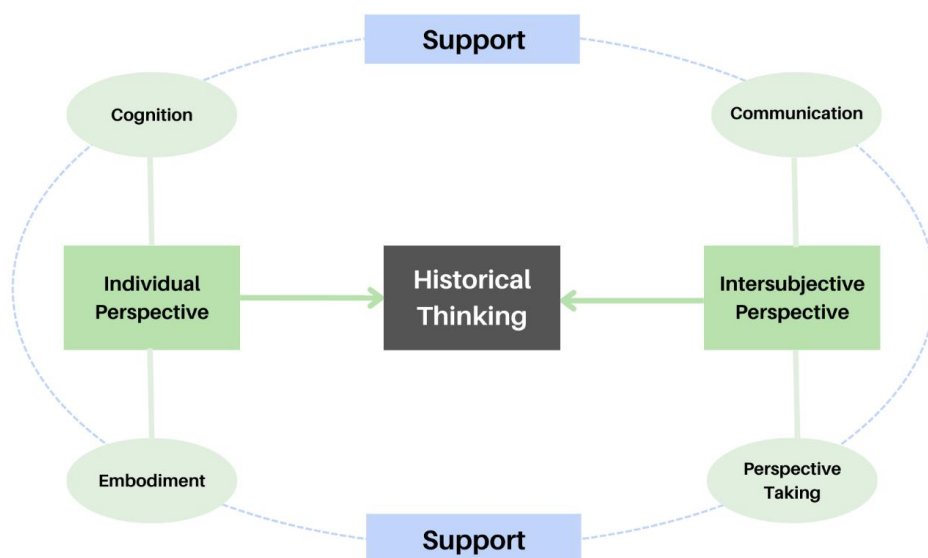


Figure 1. Framework for Inclusive History Education

5.1. Individual Perspective

The individual perspective focuses both on established approaches to teach history, by emphasizing the role that cognition plays in historical thinking and learning, as well as on ideas that have rarely been explored. Through stressing the importance of embodiment for history education, the proposed model aims to broaden perspectives on individual approaches towards history, which have mostly been understood as purely cognitive processes.

a. Cognition

Cognition plays a major role in established approaches to historical thinking and learning. Thus, cognitive processes in historical learning were brought into empirical focus early on. Besides discussing the influence of cognitive processes on epistemic beliefs, also the concept that cognitive activities help to deal with the contradictory and complex nature of history was explored (Maggioni, 2010; Wineburg, 1991). Mathis and Parkes argue that the “historical thinking turn” in the 1970s required decidedly cognitive approaches to history, as history was now no longer to be “learned” in the form of numbers, dates, facts, and master narratives. Rather, students were to be empowered to perform the complex processes that historians perform in reconstructing history (Mathis & Parks, 2020, pp. 191-196). Summarizing the developments of recent years, it can thus be said that epistemic cognition in history education has been given a high priority, both in regards to research and also on a curricula level. The two have placed a higher value on historical thinking, thus focusing on students' individual analytical approaches to history as well as on teachers' beliefs (Stoel et al., 2022). The described models in chapter 4 of this paper are representative for this approach. Despite our critique of understanding historical thinking and learning solely as a cognitive process, it is hard to argue against the importance cognition holds when confronting history. Cognition is especially relevant in analytical approaches to historical thinking. Furthermore, it influences epistemic beliefs about the nature of history. Given that history is understood and written narratively, cognitive processes will always play a pivotal role in history lesson. Nevertheless, we argue that there are more aspects than just cognitive approaches.

b. Embodiment

Despite this centrality of cognition for history education, it is not sufficient to understand history merely as an intellectual subject. Therefore, the model aims to shed light on aesthetic and emotional aspects of historical thinking and learning. The fact that aesthetic and emotional components play a role in history education has been demonstrated in many studies (Bleher & Hoanzl, 2018; von Borries, 2014; von Borries, 2016; Brauer & Lücke, 2013; Deile, 2016). Furthermore, approaches such as ‘Subjektorientierung’ (Kühberger 2015) advocate for emphasizing learners' own biographical experiences in the context of historical learning. This proposition is supported by the notion that the results of historical learning should manifest impact within the learners' personal lives, thereby equipping students with the capacity for orientation and action in both the present and future. Bärbel Völkel posits an even more foundational perspective by proposing that historical learning should originate from students' temporal experiences. Her theory encompasses the idea of leveraging students' biographical experiences as the foundational starting point for history education. Völkel's ideas on *Leiblichkeit* based on considerations from philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty provide an even richer theoretical foundation

for approaching aesthetics and emotions in history education (Völkel, 2017). According to her, the foundation of embodied historical learning lies in the time consciousness, which arguably all students develop regardless of their cognitive abilities. The aim of historical learning and thinking processes is for students to experience and recognize that they and their environment have historical context. This understanding, then, initiates historical thinking and learning. Through experience, Völkel argues, aesthetically based concepts of *here and there*, *a moment ago and soon* and of *duration and change*, can be specifically trained. Thereby, students are put in a position to connect general historical content with real life world relevance and their own experiences, as the learning and thinking processes always concern the students' temporality and biography, Völkel claims. Following these ideas, the model advocates for focusing more on the students' individual experiences. By taking action, and having new experiences, students expand their abilities to act and orient themselves on an embodied level. Although by no means all of Völkel's theorems have been empirically tested, a study by Rein (2021) shows that students can access their own experiences from the past to expand their historical consciousness.

5.2. Intersubjective Perspective

As mentioned above, an inclusive model of historical thinking and learning requires a shift towards intersubjectivity. Theoretically, this means that more attention needs to be paid to what happens within groups when they think and learn historically. For research, this also means capturing the negotiation processes about history in heterogeneous groups. Research should also be conducted on how communication and the ability to recognize perspectives of others, especially in diverse groups, can be shaped. Concretely, for teaching this means that opportunities for communication must be created even in the face of barriers. There should also be a focus on ensuring that students always gain insight into the perspectives of their peers. In terms of historical education, intersubjectivity also means giving more space to general principles such as multiperspectivity, in which the negotiation processes of a multiperspective approach also gain in importance.

a. Communication

Communication plays a significant role in historical thinking and learning on many different levels. History education takes place in a social system in which members must communicate (Zülsdorf-Kersting et al., 2022). Thus, for an inclusive perspective, it is enormously important to enable communication among all participants, even though this should be a goal for history education in general. As Wilfert and Lankes point out, any form of historical thinking is characterized by social and communicative processes anyways. The interpretation of history always takes place in a cultural context and is not detached from collective ideas. Moreover, thinking about history is also shaped by contemporary discursive standards, consciously or unconsciously (Wilfert & Lankes, 2022). In addition to its epistemological function, language - as in any other school subjects - naturally has the function of a medium of communication since it serves as a means of exchange about the subject's content. Furthermore, the language of sources and historical narratives are central subjects in history. Historical learning occurs in subject-specific language action procedures, such as the written interpretation of sources or the conversation in class (Handro, 2015).

This, therefore, requires teachers to be sensitive to linguistic practices in the classroom. Teachers need to create support structures (see below) that enable communication. On the one hand, individual learners are addressed, e.g. by offering scaffolds or easy language.



This also includes language support for individual students. However, communication in inclusive history teaching also means taking meta-linguistic aspects into account to a greater extent than before. In other words, the question of how historical facts can be analyzed and interpreted together becomes central. This requires finding a common language within learning groups, in which all may struggle with understanding. The question of what history means to each individual is negotiated within the group in order to achieve intersubjective understanding. In doing so, the lack of language skills must be taken into account, as well as differences in the linguistic complexity used within the group. Initial studies show that this approach can be particularly useful for students with intellectual disabilities (Barsch, 2019; 2020b; 2022). Accordingly, inclusive history teaching must take note of the different language competencies/levels of the students involved when it comes to planning lessons. Possible questions that can guide such planning are: What is the meaning of certain historical words in different languages (including sign language)? How do their connotations differ, and why and how can common understanding be ensured despite the differences? How does the language need to be adapted for the whole group so that all can understand? What type of language needs to be invoked and networked?

The level of communication also concerns the understanding of the contents to be dealt with in class, which are often also negotiated. Depending on the composition of the group, different historical topics can become relevant for the lessons, which also focus on content beyond the meta narratives (such as migration, disability, postcolonial critique). Empirical studies that take a closer look at communication in history lessons should therefore focus not only on the nature of the interactions, but also on their content. One major aspect playing a role in all of this is the different perspectives taken by students in the classroom.

b. Perspective Taking

Taking historical perspectives has thus far been understood as the ability to comprehend the actions and thinking of historical actors. Peter Seixas' aforementioned model is one of many that emphasizes the importance of said ability (Gautschi, 2006; Lee & Ashby, 2001; Sauer, 2006). Although the respective definitions differ and are hardly operationalizable for empirical studies (Hartmann, 2008), they all convey the taking of historical perspective as a predominantly individual process of learners concerning the past. In our model, we also understand perspective taking as an individual process but advocate for expanding it even further. We see inclusive history lessons as an opportunity for students to not only explore one's perspective of the past, but also those of their peers.

Ideally, this process contains three steps that are oriented towards Badr Goetz's concept of dialogical learning (2007) (for the potential of dialogical learning for inclusive historical learning overall, see Barsch, 2020a). First, students' differing perspectives should be exchanged within a learning group. Perspectives on history are influenced by a variety of factors, such as a potential migration background, a possible form of disability, or divergent socio-economic backgrounds, to name just a few. Students should be allowed to learn about these different historical perspectives of their peers in order to contextualize their own understanding of history. It is important though, that students learn to reflect and explain why they take this perspective and not a different one. Only then is it possible to discuss the perspectives presented in the second step. Discussing diverging perspectives helps to avoid letting historical perspectives become a plastic juxtaposition that remain unquestioned. Rather, the goal must be to exchange views on the existing perspectives, to criticize and to negotiate them in order to build a common perspective within the learning group. We



understand the formulation of this common perspective as the third step, which represents the final point of an idealized exchange about perspectives. Idealized, because we also have no answer to the question raised several times as to how students without recognizable means of communication can be involved in history lessons (Barsch, 2023; Völkel, 2017;). Whether and to what extent tried and tested formats in special education can help these students to participate in history lessons remains to be seen (Dins & Keeley, 2022; Keeley, 2015).

5.3. Support

Every (history) lesson inhabits certain support structures, no matter the age of the students or the schools they attend. The school administrative body, teachers, and non-teaching staff all play a role in creating an environment for students that influences students' ability to learn. How helpful this environment is for learning varies from school to school. However, it is clear that students benefit from an environment that actively supports them in their learning, especially from one that adapts to their individual needs (Robinson & Meyer, 2012). Learners with disabilities, for example, require different support structures than those with an immigrant background; support for high-ability students, in turn, looks different than that for students with ADHD.

As part of the on-going discussion of inclusion for history classes, there are now various proposals of how exactly support structures for specific groups of students might look like (Barsch et al., 2020). Generally speaking, history education support can be installed through personnel or by means of material. Personnel assistance refers to support provided by teachers and other school personnel, who may also be in the classroom to enable students to follow the lesson plan and complete assignments. For teachers, this means to consider the heterogeneity of the classroom in methodical and didactical decisions. In addition to adapted lesson planning, it is also possible to request teaching assistants for students with specific needs, e. g. students with visual exceptionalities who need help with reading assignments or autistic students who need help with the structuring of their material. Material support, on the other hands, refers to the provision of technical aids and adapted source material. For example, students who have problems with reading assignments can make use of systems that help translate text into speech; a procedure which has already been discussed in the context of history lessons (Schwabe, 2020). Adjusting sources in an inclusive manner has also been a point of emphasis in recent years in (German) history didactics (Barsch et al., 2020; Degner & Lücke, 2016; Degner et al., 2017).

Therefore, one of the aims of inclusive history education must be to support both individual and intersubjective perspectives of learners utilizing personnel and material assistance. A promising approach to integrate both layers of support is the so-called *Universal Design of Learning* (UDL) (for an introduction to the principles of UDL, see Meyer & Gordon, 2014). In the context of history education, an adaptation of UDL means to offer learning groups different access possibilities to a common topic (Kühberger & Barsch, 2020; Robinson & Meyer, 2012). For example, a historical text could be made available in different languages and language varieties, or as an audio track. In addition, historical objects mentioned in the text could be provided in order to offer students a material possibility of appropriating history (for the usefulness of material objects for history lessons, see Barsch & Kühberger, 2020; Degner & Franz, 2020). An implementation of the ideas of UDL requires a language-sensitive lesson design by teachers. Educators need to ask themselves which linguistic or non-

linguistic approaches are the best fit for the material used in each history lessons. In the German-speaking area, there are now initial proposals for language-sensitive lesson design, mainly based on ideas surrounding scaffolds and plain language (Barsch, 2020a). Both approaches aim to support students in their individual engagement with history by adapting sources and making them easier to understand. These adaptations, focused on the individual learner, can then, in turn, help the whole learning group by ideally providing all students with the means of accessing history. Those can be used as a basis for discussion in the described intersubjective engagement with history.

As of today, only a handful of studies have discussed the development of personal and material support structures to enable historical learning (Okolo et al., 2011; Wilkening, 2025). Okolo and colleagues attempted to evoke historical learning processes in students with and without disabilities using a virtual history museum based on the principles of UDL, while Wilkening's study aimed to empower students with intellectual disabilities to engage with history through the provision of multimodal sources and representations. However, it should also be pointed out that neither of these two studies aimed to test the efficacy of the provided support structures. Empirical studies that specifically try to elaborate further on the effectiveness and practicability of personnel and material support for historical learning are lacking to date.

6. Final Reflection

With our contribution, we have tried to add new facets to established models of historical thinking and learning from an inclusive perspective. We hope that our three described levels, 1) individual perspective, 2) intersubjective perspective, and 3) support structures, can help to create new and expand existing approaches to look at inclusive history lesson. For too long, we believe, the focus has been on individual cognitive approaches towards students' handling of history. Even though individual cognition will always play a major role for historical thinking and learning, other factors such as the embodiment, the interaction with classmates and the support structures, which guide each and every lesson, need to be considered when trying to implement an inclusive setting.

In order to focus on the 1) *individual perspective* of inclusive history education, it seems promising to consider both cognition and embodiment. For heterogeneous groups of students, it is not only possible to promote elaborate historical competencies but also to encourage an inner consciousness of time. From the 2) *intersubjective perspective*, inclusive history education involves communication and perspective taking. Despite its limits with regards to students without recognizable communication possibilities, this approach should further help implement the inclusive claim to history education. Negotiating different historical perspectives within a learning group ensures, at least in theory, that every student can participate in the making of history. Individual perspectives should be discussed regardless of possible forms of disability, divergent cultural backgrounds, or different language levels; the focus is on the different narratives, not on the students themselves. Furthermore, 3) *support structures* can be provided through personnel assistance, involving teachers and other school personnel helping students follow the history lesson and complete assignments. Alternatively, material support involves providing technical assistance and adapted source material, such as text-to-speech systems for students with reading difficulties.

Whether these three proposed levels are sufficient to model inclusive history education remains to be seen. As mentioned, empirical studies that could validate these theoretical



assumptions are still largely lacking. We bank on such studies to be carried out in order to contribute to a more in-depth discourse on the potentials and limitations of inclusive history education. Because one thing should have become apparent over the course of this paper: Our discipline is at the very beginning of grappling with the implications of inclusion, both for research and education.

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Specific contribution of the authors

All authors contributed equally to this research.

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Panta Rei

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