

Geschichtsdidaktik empirisch 17: Translation II

Bridging the gap between theory and practice: the potential of a transdisciplinary approach in history education research

*Carla van Boxtel**

In this presentation I will discuss the potential of a transdisciplinary approach in history education research in which researchers use constructs, theories, methods and results from both the discipline of history (e.g. constructs such as 'historical narrative' and 'historical consciousness') and the discipline of educational studies (e.g. sociocultural theories of learning, instructional theories) and in which they collaborate with practitioners. Transdisciplinarity goes further than combining knowledge and methods from multiple disciplines (Canter & Brumar, 2011). It draws together discipline-specific theories, concepts, and approaches, resulting in new concepts and theories that are characteristic for the discipline of history education research. I will illustrate this with research questions related to the learning and teaching of historical thinking and reasoning. Current conceptualizations of historical thinking, for example, might improve by enriching them with theories from either educational studies or from the discipline of history.

Another characteristic of transdisciplinary research is the strong engagement of stakeholders in society (Klein, 2008). Collaboration with practitioners (e.g. history teachers, teacher educators, history textbook authors, museum guides, curriculum designers) in authentic learning settings is needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Many history education researchers, for example, emphasize the importance of developing students' historical thinking and reasoning abilities and intervention studies have resulted in effective instructional strategies. But the teaching of these abilities is not common practice in the history classroom. Another example is that researchers have identified essentialist (master) narratives about the national past in history textbooks and provided suggestions to realize a more multiperspectivist approach. However, in history textbooks multiperspectivity is still limited. Furthermore, many questions and concerns of history teachers are still not well researched. For example, how to teach history to students who experience difficulties with the reading and writing that is required in the history classroom? How to teach about sensitive history? What does a learning-teaching trajectory from lower to upper secondary education for historical thinking skills look like?

I will reflect on the strengths and difficulties of collaboration with practitioners using examples of some practice oriented research projects.

* University of Amsterdam