

Teaching History and the Changing Nation State

Transnational and
Intranational Perspectives

Edited by
Robert Guyver

B L O O M S B U R Y

Portugal and Brazil: How Much of 'Our' Past Is 'Theirs' Too?

Marlene Cainelli, Helena Pinto and Glória Solé

The nation – politics and transnational dimensions

Political and cultural changes at both a national and worldwide level during and since the 1980s have had deep effects on the Portuguese and Brazilian educational systems, and these changes have consequently influenced history education.

In Portugal, the national curriculum is compulsory. The Portuguese educational system is governed by the constitution of 1976. In addition to the constitution, Portuguese education is governed by decree laws promulgated by the executive branch. The General Law of Education that presently regulates the educational system was passed in 1986 and sets the main goals of the educational system in cycles of schooling (Pires 1987). Thus the Portuguese educational system is highly centralized. Despite some efforts at decentralization, the Ministry of Education in Lisbon sets education policy for all public and private schools.

After the Portuguese revolution of 1974 and a transitional period, the Education System Law was designed and implemented (Law no. 46/86, later amended by Law no. 115/97, Law no. 49/2005 and Law no. 85/2009). Since 1986, elementary education (*Ensino Básico*) – universal, compulsory and free – extends for nine years, comprising three cycles – the first cycle, from the first to the fourth grade (six to nine years old), the second cycle, corresponding to the fifth and sixth grades (ten and eleven years old), and the third cycle, from the seventh to the ninth grade (twelve to fourteen years old). By Decree-Law no. 286/89, 29 August, a curriculum reform for primary and secondary schools was established, and has been implemented since 1991, when the Portuguese Ministry of Education (ME) defined primary and secondary curricula. There was a short consultation period involving teachers' associations. These statutory requirements are still in place, and include the subject of history. The first cycle of elementary education had a new curriculum arrangement by Decree-Law no. 91/2013, 10 July, but with regard to the area of Environmental Studies the curriculum as defined in 1991 still applies. Environmental Studies covers a combination of content areas, concepts and methods from various subjects including history, geography, natural sciences and ethnography, among others, and seeks a progressive understanding of the interrelationships between nature and society (ME 1998: 104). In the second cycle of

elementary education, the subject of History and Geography of Portugal – thus integrating the two components, history and geography – is embedded in the area of languages and social sciences, complementing the first cycle of Environmental Studies. Its curriculum includes the content areas, concepts and goals as proposed by the curriculum reform (ME 1991a, 1991b). In the Portuguese curriculum system, history and geography are mandatory and autonomous subjects only in the third cycle of elementary education.

The process of curriculum reorganization of elementary education entered into a new stage with the passing of Decree-Law no. 6/2001, 18 January, which set out the National Curriculum of Basic Education. The Ministry of Education and the Parliament approved a curricular reorganization of 'basic' school (involving students from six to fourteen years old) that had been tested since the beginning of the 1990s. This document assumed a comprehensive notion of competence, which included knowledge, skills and attitudes. The overall culture that everyone should have developed at the end of elementary education included the appropriation of a set of fundamental concepts and procedures, but not a simple memorized knowledge of facts and 'simple' procedures, lacking the elements of understanding, interpretation and problem solving. This curriculum reorganization did not focus on changes to programmes, considering that competences and learning experiences should be points of reference to interpret programmes.

If history programmes have not changed since the 1990s, deep changes have been introduced in methodological and teaching practices. These changes related to a new perspective towards history teaching that originated in the 2001 National Curriculum of Basic Education document, embodied in a constructivist teaching approach. The logic of teaching now focused on the achievement of a 'knowledge in action or in use', by promoting specific and general competences (Roldão 2010). In order to put these proposals into action, the guiding document 'Learning Outcomes' was developed in 2010. The learning outcomes of history, produced by the team coordinated by Isabel Barca, were grounded in research results and empirical studies in history education, applied in school settings with Portuguese students. According to Barca and Solé (2012) these studies 'rely on recent epistemological perspectives on this area of knowledge, giving relevance to the construction of notions of change, evidence, empathy and explanation in history' (p. 92). However, this process of curricular reorganization was not enforced, due to governmental changes and a new political agenda, as in late 2011 the National Curriculum of Basic Education was revoked by Order no. 17.169/2011, 23 December, and official documents of the Ministry of Education and Science, such as programmes and examinations, stopped making reference to its learning guidelines.

In the last two years, the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science (MEC) has been establishing an agenda of curricular reorganization, implementing a new regulatory document, the 'Curricular Outcomes', for different subjects, but programmes created after 1991 are still a point of reference. The 'Curricular Outcomes', which identify essential learning for students, are organized by domains (for example, corresponding to the themes of the Geography Curriculum Guidelines and History Programme) and these are divided into sub-domains which are organized into general

objectives, and afterwards specified in descriptors. These curricular outcomes, which have been subordinated to existing programmes since 1991, have been strengthening the role of content that students should learn, and reflect a more conservative political approach. So far they have been published for History and Geography in the second and third cycles of elementary education; but in the first cycle, however, these are only compulsory for the Portuguese language and Mathematics, leaving a huge gap in Environmental Studies, a less valued area in the current education system.

The Curricular Outcomes of History and Geography of Portugal for the second cycle of Basic Education (MEC 2013) identify the essential learning that must be undertaken by fifth- and sixth-graders, based on the content and guidelines of the existing History and Geography of Portugal Programme (ME 1991a, 1991b). This seeks to provide students with an introduction to specific tools and concepts, bearing in mind that they are required for the transmission and use of knowledge – dealing with time and space, the actions of people and their decisions in specific contexts, the comparison between different temporal contexts, and the communication and transmission of historical and geographic knowledge.

Finally, the Curricular Outcomes of History for the third cycle of Basic Education (MEC 2013) identify the essential learning that must be undertaken by seventh-, eighth- and ninth-graders. Based on the existing History Programme (ME 1991a, 1991b) the document defines core content that should be taught to students, shaping the teaching of this subject. To achieve the goals implies following procedures related not only to the acquisition of information (knowing) but also to the integration and elaboration of that information (understanding).

In Brazil, which is a federal country with twenty-six states (and each one of these has considerable autonomy), the Ministry of Education does not establish nationwide educational programmes, in contrast to what happens in Portugal, but defines by legal instruments the guiding principles for the organization of such programmes. For obligatory education (*Ensino Fundamental*), the Federal Educational Council determines which subjects are compulsory for the national common core, defining their objectives and scope. The Federal Council in each state lists the subjects contained in the diversified part of school curricula, for the area under its jurisdiction.

Brazilian political open-mindedness in the 1990s allowed a curricular flexibility under the supervision of National Curricula Parameters (SEF 1998) considering that primary and secondary curricula should have a common basis which would be complemented in each Brazilian state according to regional and local aims and features.

In Brazilian elementary education, the discussion of cultural, racial, social and economic diversity has been included in school curricula since the end of the twentieth century. The first document that brought to light these discussions, the National Curricular Parameters of 1998, mentioned the possibility of working crosswise with different issues.

Whereas in the last decades in Brazil the debate on cultural pluralism and multiculturalism has gained momentum both in academic and in educational fields, several changes have been proposed, including those covered by the law that made mandatory first the study of Afro-Brazilian and African culture (Law no. 10.639/03), and second Indigenous culture (Law no. 11.645/08). However, working with these

issues involves a recognition that there are struggles over changes which can be seen in a move away from teaching history to create a consolidated identity, traditionally connected to the idea of nationalism and the construction of a single, homogenous and Eurocentric past, to a position which makes it possible to work diversity and difference into the construction of Brazilian identity. This is in some ways an approach that corresponds with a recommendation by Jonker, who writes that there should be a refraining from identity politics, a doing away with grand narratives and instead a teaching of 'little histories in an open framework. Drawing on a recommendation by Peter Seixas (Seixas 1993: 301–27), Jonker suggests that teachers should:

[m]ake room for personal histories that colour, flavour, and contradict the larger stories, thus making critical interpretations of the grand narratives possible. To accomplish this, a certain 'provincialism', in the sense of a lack of centralized curricular power, may contribute to the freedom needed to challenge identities and canons.

Jonker 2007: 106

In historical narratives the 'other' is often seen as different, diverse, exotic and strange when compared to the dominant, Western, white, European, civilized, Christian culture. Qualified this way, the culture of the 'other' turns out to be identified as primitive, ethnic, inferior and archaic. Alternatively this can be understood as essentialist, i.e. pure, static, unchanging and stable, thus ahistorical. Ultimately, depending on the approach, the relation identity/difference can be seen as a process of controlling the 'other' as a victim or a submissive person, stealing or diminishing the diversity of their life experiences (Fernandes 2014). For a long time in Brazil, history teaching approaches to Indigenous people were generally characterized by reducing them to the category of Indians, belonging to a single ethnic group sharing the same culture. This can be seen in the textbook pictures and texts representing Indigenous people that were used in Brazilian schools until the late twentieth century.

Despite several changes occurring in history teaching due to textbook evaluations, recent research on history teaching and curricula has revealed that some history textbooks and teachers are still working with a historiographical conception that approaches national history through an identity reconstruction linked to the great deeds of so-called 'national heroes', usually white Portuguese, hiding the participation of other social segments in the historical process of the country. Most of the textbooks had neglected the participation of ethnic minorities, especially Indigenous and Afro-descendants.

There are two types of approaches to Indigenous history in Brazilian schools. The first inserts Indigenous people within a setting of Brazilian prehistory. Their story is focused on their ethnic structure and organization. The second addresses Indigenous history starting from the contact with Portuguese colonizers. In these two approaches the Indigenous appear as inferior to white people, in both their way of life and their social structure. Another important factor is the temporal existence of the Indigenous, which is always placed in the past. When Indigenous history refers to the present it is always relegated to an inferior position to the triumphant story of the whites.

Landmarks with questions

Brazil was a Portuguese colony from the beginning of the sixteenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth century. For three hundred years the colony's economy was based on sugar plantations, linked to slave traffic from Africa, and on gold mining. The independence of Brazil in 1822 followed the Portuguese Liberal Revolution of 1820 and accompanied other independence movements in South America, following the example of the United States. After independence, immigration of many European peoples (especially Italians, Poles and Germans, beside Portuguese) added complexity to the social, economic and demographic structure of Brazil, especially after the abolition of slavery in 1888.

In a brief diachronic view of history teaching in Portugal, based on Torgal (1996), we will focus on history teaching in primary education. The teaching of history in Portugal appeared in the context of the liberalism associated with public education reform in 1830. This affected both primary schools and secondary schools and was part of an educational project which would prevail until the beginning of the Republic in 1910.

During the New State (the period of dictatorship in Portugal, from 1933 to 1974) there were not any structural changes in the historical content taught in primary schools, which focused on the third and fourth grades, but changes were rather in the ideological orientation of the content, privileging certain periods of the history of Portugal, such as the foundation of nationality and the 'discoveries', golden eras in the history of the nation, thus ignoring or devaluing other periods such as the Spanish domination from 1580 to 1640, and sometimes taking critical positions against certain events and periods, such as the Liberal Revolution (1820–34) and the Republic (1910–26). The New State emerges as a corollary period during which the nation's problems were solved, a situation widely exalted in the primary education textbooks of the time. Nevertheless, during the 1960s, programmes were modified and textbooks reduced their nationalist ideological burden, which had focused on memorizing facts, events, dates and names of national heroes. However, according to Freitas (2005) some textbook authors during this period reflected 'a concern to integrate somehow a story of everyday life' (p. 2139). This movement was reinforced after the Democratic Revolution of 25 April 1974, which retrieved the liberal-republican paradigm, banishing the 'reactionary' ideological principles of the New State¹ and enhancing local history, enabling it to be integrated in the national context.

The analysis of Portuguese primary education programmes reveals that their history content had been shrinking since the 1970s. During the 1980s programmes included a rubric called 'Historical Perspective', which focused on great moments in the history of Portugal: foundation of nationality; 'discoveries' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and political developments of the nineteenth century. In the 1990s, the Environmental Studies programmes reduced the study of the past to the personal and family past, to references about events related to local or regional heritage, and to the knowledge of historical facts linked to national holidays, according to a spiral approach, albeit with a narrow view of Bruner's 'spiral curriculum' (Bruner 1960). Beginning with the hypothesis that 'any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest

form to any child at any stage of development', Bruner (1960: 33) explained that this involved information being structured so that complex ideas can be taught at a simplified level first, and then revisited at more complex levels later on. Therefore, subjects would be taught at levels of gradually increasing difficulty. In this type of Environmental Studies teaching structure a child starts from the 'nearby' and moves to the 'distant', and from what is 'known' to the 'unknown' (Roldão 1995: 14–15). Within this curriculum structure the child is seen as being active in the learning process, and their life experience knowledge must be valued as the starting point for learning, so the subject content should be adjusted to the different years of schooling levels. These theoretical principles held by Dewey and Piaget had implications for the practice of teaching, and drew on the conception of the curriculum structure called 'expanding horizons' associated with a 'progressive perspective' of moving spatially outwards and chronologically backwards from the child's immediate experience. This could be seen mostly in Social Studies, both in the Anglo-Saxon world (Egan 1986) and also in Portugal (Roldão 1995).

Thus the study of the personal and family past is addressed mainly in the first and second grades of the first cycle of Basic Education. In the third grade particular emphasis is given to the local past, and deepened in the fourth grade with an investigative strand. Also in the fourth grade it is aimed to approach the topic of multiculturalism within the units 'knowing the customs and traditions of other people' and 'other cultures of their community'. The national symbols (flag and hymn) of Portugal and the autonomous regions of Madeira and Azores, related to the identity of the nation and the Portuguese people, are explored in this grade too. The study of history is now extended to the nation (*History of Portugal*), valuing historical facts linked to national holidays (the dates that are commemorated: the restoration of independence, 1 December 1640; the launch of the Republic, 5 October 1910; and the Democratic Revolution of 25 April 1974), personalities and important events of national history, such as the foundation of nationality, 'discoveries', colonization and decolonization, the New State and the key event of 25 April 1974, valuing the essence of political history, but also revealing aspects of daily life in the past, though with less emphasis.

In the second cycle of Basic Education (fifth and sixth grades) the subject of the History and Geography of Portugal involves two components in which the programme is organized in three key topics. The first one, *Place of Passage and Residence, Portugal in the Past and Today*, focuses on the Iberian Peninsula in terms of natural resources and people who had inhabited the area before the foundation of Portugal (Indo-European, Pre-Celtic, Celtic and Iberians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths and Muslims).

The second topic, *Portugal in the Past*, includes the key episodes of Portugal's history, from the foundation of Portugal (twelfth century) to nowadays, in a long-term overview or diachronic perspective emphasizing the dynamics of change. The role of personalities of the history of Portugal who represent different epochs is contextualized so as to help students understand that historical events cannot be explained only by individual actions, but also by valuing the social components and everyday life. Also here there is an element of 'high politics' encountering 'history from below' because

ordinary people have always had to live with the consequences of the actions of the 'great and the good', including politicians.

Within this second topic, one of the most extended issues in the fifth grade is *Portugal in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, which corresponds with the maritime expansion period (from the conquest of Ceuta in northern Africa to the 'discovery' of Brazil). The Portuguese diaspora is explored, and economic, political, religious and cultural factors are examined. Acculturation and miscegenation are part of the expansionist movement of Portuguese people, as well as concepts such as (religious) mission; colonization; and ethnic, Indigenous and cultural diversity. The relationship between Portugal and Brazil arises in various issues which begin with the arrival in Brazil (Land of Vera Cruz) of the Portuguese navy commanded by Cabral in 1500; being of relatively little interest if compared with the Cape Route and its rich spice trade, the former exploration focused on natural resources (dye plants and exotic birds). After the restoration of independence in 1640, and the spice trade crisis in the late sixteenth century, the Portuguese Crown's interests turned to Brazil and its economic potential, associating sugar or tobacco plantations with the slave trade, and later focused on gold, coffee and cotton. This triangular relationship between Europe, Africa and America (Brazil) was mirrored in the exchange of different cultures that crossed over several generations and manifested not only in the ethnic crossroads (miscegenation) but also in the cultural intersection (acculturation, assimilation, interculturality), depending on the perspective of colonizer or colonized. Brazil is once again a content area within this diachronic approach, especially when studying the period of the French invasions which led to the moving of the entire Portuguese court to Brazil in 1808 and to a change in Brazil's status, then considered as a kingdom joined to Portugal.

After the American and French revolutions fostered the desire for independence of Brazil in 1822, there followed the rise of the liberal movement. The study of the decolonization of Brazil or other events of its history as a country is not part of any history programme in the three cycles of Basic Education (even in secondary education), with the sole exception of the reference to the European emigration movement to Brazil in the late nineteenth century. The third topic that students of the second cycle are taught is *Portugal Today*, and here it is intended that students should be given opportunities to understand their current society, focusing on economic, political and social matters.

Regarding the third cycle of Basic Education in Portugal, the organizational concept of history curricula that is used is a spiral, involving the revisiting of almost the same topics as in the second cycle, namely in the fourth grade, but within a broader scope (mostly European) and a deeper exploration of sources and knowledge of contents.

As for Brazil, the study of Africa and Afro-descendant people became mandatory in Brazilian schools and in universities with Law no. 10.639/03, mainly because until then the bulk of the work in schools was limited to the substantive content of 'Brazilian Slavery'. African and Afro-Brazilian descendants were thus only fitted into Brazilian history in the condition of slaves. Once slavery ended they either disappeared as historical individuals, or if they did not disappear completely they were seen in contemporary images connected to misery and poverty.

Along with the new law teachers were required to emphasize in the classroom the role of Afro-Brazilian culture in founding and constituting a renewed vision of Brazilian society in which black people are perceived as historical individuals. In this enterprise black personalities of Brazil are valued, and respect is given to the different dimensions of the Afro-Brazilian world, its intellectual and cultural achievements, including the realms of religion, music, cuisine and dance.

The way students of both countries conceive the 'discovery' and colonial periods in terms of historical significance is one of the goals of this study. Indeed, for them to understand the role of the Portuguese in Brazil, the tropes of 'discovery' and colonization are central questions.

Pedagogy, democracy and dialogue

As regards history, regulatory documents in both Portugal and Brazil recommend teachers to approach topics such as citizenship, memory, heritage and social identity with the purpose of developing students' sense of belonging to a group, a place, a nation, the world, analysing differences and similarities, continuity and change, with the aim of improving and making more inclusive the old perception of the 'us' and the 'others', making it possible to go beyond a standardized view and a traditional perspective of history teaching that used to overvalue heroes and narratives of conquerors and colonizers. As in other countries, for example Australia, there seems to be a growing acceptance of a need to go 'beyond the canon', to have a combination of a disciplinary approach with an element of collective memory, but a collective memory informed by inclusion and diversity.

Within this framework, we unveil some results of several qualitative research studies carried out in the last five years in the north of Portugal and in the state of Paraná, Brazil, with students from eight to sixteen years old taking part in history-learning activities. Underpinned by the theoretical scaffold of Jörn Rüsen, Peter Lee and Peter Seixas, among other authors, the studies reported here have focused on historical consciousness, aiming to understand students' ideas on significance and historical empathy as regards people in the past, namely in the 'discoveries' epoch.

The concept of significance can be considered at a basic level related to historical facts and the intrinsic importance they assume in the past or in the present, and at a broader level connected to the notion of historical interpretation. In this second idea, significance is generally relative because it acknowledges an underlying relationship between events, which depends on the historian's perspective, on the 'historiographical' line-up and on the context as well as the attention given to evidence (Pinto 2011).

Lee and Ashby (2001) state that in the UK 'empathy' tends to be used to mean the explanation of the action itself or the ideas, beliefs and values that lie behind the actions and social institutions. The complexity of this 'second order' concept has been the subject of debate and research since the 1980s, which has required a progressive clarification – since the term has a broad scope not only within the diverse areas of social sciences, but also a specific sense in the area of historical cognition. Empathy allows students to understand social actions and practices, thus to be able

to consider (but not necessarily accept or share) the connections between circumstances and actions (Lee 2003). Besides knowing that people in the past had a certain historical perspective towards the world, students should be able to see how this perspective will have affected certain actions in specific circumstances. According to Lee (2005) the central idea in historical empathy is that people in the past did not share the way we see the world. It implies an understanding of institutions, social practices and past actions, making sense of them in the light of circumstances and contexts in which those people lived – without the distortions of anachronism or retrospective teleology.

Understanding how students, teachers and people in general 'use' the past in terms of temporal orientation is also a core research problem in the field of history education, as it shapes formal history teaching and learning practices (Pinto 2011, 2013). The need to make individual historical meanings usable in personal everyday life has been emphasized under the notion of historical consciousness, which has implications for history education. Historical consciousness functions as a key temporal orientation, providing a temporal matrix to practical life (Rüsen 2004), evoking the past as a mirror of experience within which contemporary life is reflected and its temporal features are revealed.

Rüsen (2007) considers that historical consciousness is a specific form of historical memory: it is rooted in it and, to a great extent, even identical with it, but it is also different in some important aspects. The specificity of historical consciousness lies in the fact that 'the temporal perspective, in which the past is related to the present and through the present to the future, is designed in a more complex and elaborate way' (Rüsen 2007: 175). Lowenthal (1999) also states the distinctiveness of memory and history, considering that both history and memory engender new knowledge, but only history intentionally sets out to do so: 'We accept memory as a premise of knowledge; we infer history from evidence that includes other people's memories' (Lowenthal 1999: 213).

Historical memory and historical thinking have an important cultural function: they form and express identity in a temporal perspective. Therefore, a crucial dimension of the study of historical consciousness involves how cultural practices and tools for understanding the past are handed down to the next generation (Pinto 2013), possibly contributing to or even challenging notions of 'collective memory' (Seixas 2000). Applying these ideas of historical consciousness to history education, Lee (2004a) suggests that we might ask questions about the cultural tools which are available to the students in relating themselves to the past, their content, the social action they inhabit, and the ways these tools affect students' conceptions of the past and of history. Lee (2004b) states that the kind of past that students work with helps determine the kind of orientation available to them. Although children and adolescents have ideas about the past that merit serious consideration, they construct those ideas not just from what they learn at school but from the historical information they encounter in their families, their local and national communities and the media. Research on these ideas and their social contexts can help us to understand better how students make sense of the nature and purpose of history (Barton and Levstik 2004), and this can support developing meaningful programmes of history education.

Most school lessons underline the episodes and processes of national history to strengthen national identity and pride while ignoring the wider dimensions, whether they are European, trans-American, transatlantic or international (Pinto 2011). However, students will understand history better when they perceive the linkage between local and international events and trends and find out about differences and similarities in local and a more international history. In this case, of course, with the natural link between Portugal and its former colonies or empire, and the commonalities of language across these boundaries, Brazil and Portugal can form genuine transnational links.

Shared histories, shared commemorations and re-evaluating past denials

Albeit that each country has a lot of particularities, namely the teaching history topics involving African-Brazilian history and Indigenous history in Brazil, and the contribution of different people to Portuguese culture and history, there are several political similarities and shared cultural features.

The historical paths of Portugal and Brazil since the nineteenth century have several similarities, but the most significant parallels are the political change from monarchy/empire to a republic (Brazil in 1889 and Portugal in 1910) and the periods of dictatorship (Portugal from 1926 to 1974; Brazil between 1937 and 1945, and from 1964 to 1985).

There are several common topics in both school history curricula concerning the period of colonization of Brazil, namely those concerning features of the administration and the commemoration of historical events. On the other hand, features related to acculturation, miscegenation and slave traffic are treated in a 'softer' way within the Portuguese curriculum than in Brazilian ones.

Brazilian Federal Law no. 11.465/08 has defined the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian issues in all elementary and secondary school curricula (implemented since 2003), and also the teaching of Indigenous history and contribution to Brazilian culture in the subjects of History, Geography and Literature.

Traditionally work with substantive content dominates the subject of History in Brazilian elementary education. Generally there is no place for students to engage in dialogue, to share their ideas, to decide or to hypothesize. Students are used to repeating what they have been taught and to reproducing the contents of the textbooks.

Based on Collingwood's (1978)² statement that historical thinking is an intellectual activity involving recreating the past grounded in the interpretation of existing sources as evidence, a questionnaire was given to Portuguese and Brazilian students, asking them several questions related to events discussed in history teaching about the 'discovery' of Brazil (Cainelli and Barca 2013). As to the method, this was a descriptive study (with both qualitative and quantitative approaches) whose guidelines belong to the field of history education. The research focused on questions related to historical cognition. The sample included 450 students from the sixth and ninth grades in two schools of Londrina (Paraná, Brazil) and two other schools in northern Portugal. It was

intended to analyse how Portuguese and Brazilian students from twelve to fifteen years old constructed their historical thinking when approaching facts related to national history in both countries, such as the topic referred to above. Thus, one of the questions students were asked to answer admitted the possibility that Portuguese were not the 'discoverers' of Brazilian lands in 1500, and they were challenged to think about the history of Brazil without the Portuguese presence:

If the Portuguese had not arrived in Brazil in 1500 how would it be for the history of the country? What would be different and what would remain in the history of Brazil?

Analysis of students' answers revealed two categories regarding substantive content and two meta-historic possibilities as to second-order concepts.

Within the first category Brazilian students referred to the maintenance of Brazil's Indigenous population and its untouched state of nature, the absence of technology (mostly sixth-grade students) and a change in the way of teaching history. It showed that some nineteenth-century romantic myths seemed to persist as well as the influence of a mass-media version of historical culture:

Yes, it would be different, because if Portuguese had not arrived here, we would be living with thongs and in the woods. Gold and silver could be found easily and we would know how to deal with the most common diseases in Brazil. Wars between tribes would remain.

It's hard to find something that has not changed. Possibly our fauna and flora, there would be more trees and plants, and the extinct animals, but none of us would be born. In short, if Pedro Álvares Cabral had not mistaken his trip, maybe Brazil would be a big jungle.

It would not be the same because there would be many trees, Indigenous people, and if nobody had discovered it yet, it would be a greener (natural) country.

If the Portuguese had not come to Brazil we would not be white, we would be living in the forest instead of the houses, and the air would be a bit cleaner.

Portuguese students also stated the maintenance of Brazil as it had been before the Portuguese arrival, and some of them focused on what would have happened to Portugal (mostly sixth-grade students) with regards to wealth and colonial exploitation:

If Portuguese had not arrived in Brazil, Portugal would not have known the gold, the Indians and many other things. And if Portugal had not known Brazil the king would not have had the possibility to move there [during French invasions] to protect himself, and maybe Portugal could be a French country.

Sixth-grade student, northern Portugal

Some Portuguese students mentioned that other countries could have discovered Brazil, or the absence of Brazil on the map, or the cultural development and current influences:

It would remain the same, i.e. Indigenous.

It would stay the same way – animals and plants, and people would be darker because they were Indians.

It would remain as at the beginning, there would be even more Indians because they would not have been so brutally exploited.

Students' answers show an idea of permanence, even an idea of no change in the case of absence of the event of Pedro Álvares Cabral's arrival in Brazil (Cainelli and Barca 2013). There is a break in the history of Brazil, in the untouched time of the nature. The idea of a 'non-event' caused perplexity in attempts to reach historical conclusions and left students a bit lost without their textbooks or teachers' indications about the historical possibilities of a change in events.

The way history teaching has been constructed is one of the reasons for the core messages of Portuguese and Brazilian students, somehow still facing the formation of a national identity as in the nineteenth century (Cainelli and Barca 2013). What we can infer is the idea of a foundation myth expressed in the Portuguese arrival in Brazil. It is a myth that is always gaining new ways of expression, new forms of language, but it is a repetition of itself (Chauí 2000). School history in Brazil continues to remake this myth every year all over the country. This and other topics that conform to and confirm this version of a mythic past of the nation resist the critics and continue to reproduce themselves in Brazilian textbooks and classrooms.

The second study referred to here is part of research for a PhD thesis (Solé 2009, 2013) with Portuguese children, which allowed students (twenty-five fourth-graders) to understand concepts of historical empathy and historical consciousness. We have analysed students' ideas regarding the 'other' when studying the topic 'overseas expansion', based on the exploration of several sources: a comic about Portuguese discoveries, written documents and iconographic sources (images and maps). When exploring comics and discussing their ideas, students revealed different levels of historical empathy in their arguments, according to the category model in terms of the progression of ideas proposed by Ashby and Lee (1987), which seem to match with the categorization proposed by Shemilt (1984). Ashby and Lee (1987) based their classification on their studies with students from eleven to eighteen years old, and on the studies of Dickinson and Lee (1978), but mainly on Shemilt (1984) and have revealed a categorization of students' ideas on historical empathy which included five progression levels: (1) 'the "divi" past'; (2) 'generalized stereotypes'; (3) 'everyday empathy'; (4) 'restricted historical empathy'; and (5) 'contextual historical empathy'. In the first stage, 'the "divi" past', students perceived the past as unintelligible and people in the past as 'not as clever as us'. In the second stage, 'generalized stereotypes', they provided a stereotypical account of people's roles and actions. In stage three, 'everyday empathy', students understood the past with reference to the present and were thus unable to see the differences between the past and present. In stage four, 'restricted historical empathy', students were able to understand the past with specific reference to the situation in which people found themselves, noting that these situations must be different from similar ones in the present. In stage five, 'contextual historical empathy',

children were able to apply the fourth concept to a wider picture, indicating that if a particular situation in the past differs from a similar one in the present people's lives in general must have differed in the past (Ashby and Lee 1987).

While exploring various sources and focusing on comics, students recognized the diversity of people with whom the Portuguese had contact (Muslims, Africans, Indians, Chinese, Brazilian Indians), identifying physical, cultural and civilizational differences, which led them to conclude the co-existence of different degrees of civilizational development as stated in their comments: 'blacks wore a cloth around the waist, were very poor, accepted all from the Portuguese, and did not defend themselves' (Isidro); 'Brazilians [Indians] stayed naked and had plumages on their hair' (Tiago) – also making inferences from the map by Lopo Homem that had been previously explored; 'They used necklets and shaved [their] hair' (Roberto Manuel); 'Brazilians were much more peaceful' (Ricardo Manuel). These comments seem to express a stereotypical view of blacks as being peaceful and slow workers and Brazilian Indians as friendly and serene. They can be included, in terms of historical empathy, in the generalized stereotypes level of the category model proposed by Ashby and Lee (1987). Anabela's comment seems to be at a more sophisticated level: 'Those from India were more developed' as regards clothing, Brazilian Indians stayed naked and the others have clothes, and one can see an umbrella'; comparing the two people in terms of development, she already reveals a restricted historical empathy, by showing some understanding of the past and the existence of multiple contexts to justify differences between people.

Students often denote in their comments what people had or did not have in terms of material progress referring to change markers in material culture: 'They [in India] had more buildings' (Marco Angelo); 'In Brazil they only had wood shelters' (Tiago). They recognized the co-existence of people with different civilization levels of development, as stated by Anabela: 'There are people who are more developed than others'; and Isidro invokes this same idea with regard to the present: 'Nowadays not everyone lives as we do.' These two comments reveal more sophisticated ideas of historical empathy close to a level of contextual historical empathy as proposed in Ashby and Lee's (1987) model of categorization, as these students recognize civilizational differences between people in the past in cultural, technological and other dimensions, placing them in context.

In another task of this didactic experience students explored an iconographic source, an engraving of India of 1619, and a discussion took place about the people represented. Initially it appeared them to be an image of Brazil, focusing on fruit trees and skin colour: 'they do not seem to be black, blacks are dark and these are more like brunette' (Roberto Manuel). Anabela claims: 'This cannot be in Brazil because these men do not have long hair', expressing a conception that the Brazilian Indigenous people have long, black and straight hair. Roberto replies: 'But this may be more modern than what we saw about Brazil', recalling the Lopo Homem map ('Terra Brasilis' – Miller Atlas, 1519) they had explored before, representing part of the Brazilian coast and illustrations of the Indigenous population. Another student, Isidro, argues the relevance of the source as witness of an epoch, recognizing that there may have been different representations of the 'other', for example the Indigenous, according to the context in which one of them was living, which may not correspond to the traditional image of the Brazilian Indian. Thus, when one student exclaimed: 'It seems

to be in India,' Anabela agreed and concluded: 'In India there are people with dark skin but not as black as those in Africa.'

These types of tasks allow us to analyse students' historical thinking and reasoning, with special focus on historical empathy and historical consciousness as evinced above, and revealing very different levels of historical thinking, from a less elaborate level to a more complex and sophisticated one.

History teaching and learning activities focusing on a thematic and historical period, such as 'Portuguese Discoveries', can be implemented from the early years of primary school. The exploration of diverse sources such as history comics, historical pictures, maps, timelines and historiographical documents, when combined and systematically interpreted by students, may enhance historical understanding, helping them to make sense of the past – especially with regards to dealing with historical empathy and significance – and to orientate themselves in time, since historical consciousness implies an interconnection between past and present, and eventually the future.

Conclusions

The learning and teaching of history covers subject matter as well as skills and concepts. Even though the content of history is important, isolated recall of facts and events makes little sense as a skill to serve young people in becoming active citizens in the increasingly globalized world.

History education is an important bridge in understanding how different groups have interacted over time, and in promoting mutual respect, tolerance and social justice. In the classroom history educators have to find ways to explore sensitive and uncomfortable issues in national and international history. It is important that those aspects of the past are not ignored or hidden. If we are to encourage young people to become active participants in democratic society, history teaching has much to contribute to this process, strengthening critical thinking, multi-perspectivity and inclusion.

With regard to power relations, systematic research is essential to analyse how students understand these interactions and examine what is common to all social spaces. It is also necessary to understand how they identify and locate spaces and historical processes that in the past affected those relations and decision-making. As to cultural relations, it is important that students were able to recognize themselves and others as builders of a common culture, considering the specificities of each social group and the relationships between them. Thus they understand how they realize the constitution of diverse cultural experiences over time, and the continuity and change in different community traditions or societies.

Notes

- 1 The New State had many similarities to the Italian Fascism of Mussolini, including its youth movements.
- 2 R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History* was first published in 1946.

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