

SLOVAK MODELS OF HISTORY TEACHING SINCE 1993

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ABSTRACT

Upon the formation of the Slovak Republic, an independent model of teaching social sciences was created on the basis of the Czechoslovak educational system. The implementation of conceptual, procedural and methodological changes followed slowly after the radical ideological transformations in 1989. Teaching history at schools underwent gradual changes due to the amendments of national educational programmes and many recommendations. The extensive school reform of 2008 identified more precisely the criteria for the selection of curricula, nature and content of knowledge, range of students' competences, as well as the methodology of teaching and learning. Students' creativity and active role within the modernizing school system became a priority. National Educational Programmes set the framework for the curricula and their content as well as performance standards for students, which schools individually specified on their own. The other aspect of modernisation of the education system involved the reduction of the number of history lessons per week for elementary schools. Currently, further corrections of the National Educational Programmes for all types of schools and all subjects take place, which are aimed at strengthening even more students' competencies. Such amendment shall come into force as of 1st September 2015. The article provides analysis of the process of creation, modification and implementation of the Slovak models of history teaching since 1993 up to now.

Key words: history teaching, school reform in Slovakia, functionality of factual description, National Educational Programme

Słowa kluczowe: nauczanie historii, reformy oświatowe na Słowacji, system oświatowy, Narodowy Program Edukacyjny

After 1993, two independent models of the school history education have been created based on the strong tradition of the Czechoslovak educational system. In Slovakia, as well as in the Czech Republic, first of all, the selection of curriculum with respect to ideology but also with respect to a stronger representation of own national history was addressed. A considerable reduction of history of the other nation of the former common state took place within this context on both sides. Procedural changes were carried out much more slowly. In Slovakia, even at the turn of the century, in particular the explanatory and reproducing method of teaching survived within

such changes by force of habit. This has been proved also by the results of empirical research¹ which pointed out the routine practices of the secondary-school history teaching. When looking into the usual course of a history lesson at comprehensive secondary schools (four-year Advanced Level Grammar School), the results revealed still persisting traditional history teaching in this period. During the lesson, students listened to the teacher's narration most of the time (73.4%) and acquired knowledge of the main historical facts (83.6%). Much less time was devoted to discussions about various interpretations of historical events (28.9%), work with historical sources, e.g. documents, pictorial materials, maps (18.1%), or to the listening of audio records or watching historical movies (3.0%). They used textbooks or workbooks very moderately (32.4%), and the use of various activities, e.g. creation of mental maps, projects, dramatization and visits of museums was minimum (3.6%). Rather low percentage of students dealt with the assessment of historical events from various aspects, e.g. from moral aspect – what the events meant for human rights (36.6%), or from the aspect of the use of history to explain the contemporary world situation and identify trends of social changes (21.4%). Unsatisfactory results have been achieved as regards students' capability to perceive and assess values of cultural and historical heritage, understand the importance of preserving the character, traditions and monuments of own nations and society (33.7%), as well as their evaluation and protection (13.3%).

Thus, from methodological aspect we can state that teacher's narration and student's activities in our schools reached the highest and the lowest measured value, respectively. There was minimum concentration on creative activities of a student. At present it is clear to everybody that the study of history as a school subject requires the acquisition of necessary set of historical facts. But the thing is not to learn as many as possible facts by heart, but to learn to think about the past with the help of them, to be able to understand what's what and make use of the knowledge in the future. It is important to develop also conceptual cognition by a combination of factual knowledge from various time periods and various spheres of life of the society. Thus, the reflection of historical phenomena in broader connections could be encouraged. In general, the most important contribution of history is considered to be the fact that it teaches us about changes in people's thinking and behaviour, finding the substance of events and being attentive to differences and common features of various systems and cultures. It teaches us to think historically².

In nineties of the 20th century and at the beginning of 21st century, the pointlessness of cumulating teaching material supported by "fact mania" was stated. This burdened students, and the school system of evaluation also worked in such manner

¹ Empirical research of perception of the role of history and history teaching of secondary-school students *Contemporary historical conscience of adolescents* on a sample of 1922 respondents of the Slovak comprehensive secondary schools was implemented by the Department of History of the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava in 2005–2006.

² M. Bada, A. Bocková [a kol.], *Dejepis pre 1. ročník gymnázií a stredných škôl. (History for the 1st year of comprehensive secondary schools and secondary schools)*, Bratislava, Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 2011, p. 16.

by force of habit, which obligated teachers to prepare their students for the “tests of speed psycho-memory nature”³.

The analysis of the results of another empirical research⁴ pointed out insufficient anticipation of teaching goals, which was considered as the weakest point in our school practice. Teachers did not work systematically with taxonomy of goals, they approached them formally, which means that they only declaratively indicated them in their school plans. They failed to assign sufficient range of various tasks at different levels of difficulty to their students.

So, the traditional teaching maintained a strong position in the 90-s of the last century. During this period, instructional science of history appeared in a certain crisis. There was accepted a thesis that didactic system of school history is formed by transformation of the system of history science. According to the then concept, history and other social sciences had to familiarize students with scientific knowledge and also with the basics of methods with the help of which such knowledge could be obtained. But the turn of millennium was also a new turning point in the theory of history teaching. This was mainly due to internationalisation of subject didactics. Many comparative studies and empirical researches of good quality were available, which became important also in our conditions⁵. Modern didactics of history is in Zdeněk Beneš words defined rather as the theory of social and personal historical culture. In broader sense, it includes the theory and methodology of history teaching, and in the strict sense, methodology of history teaching stands separately. Zdeněk Beneš considers the interconnection of didactic theory and methodological reflection as optimal and sets three tasks of history didactics:

- reflexive (what can be taught);
- normative (what must be taught in order to cultivate historical conscience);
- empirical research⁶.

Both the reflexive and normative tasks of history didactics are directly reflected also in history teaching. A special indispensable role should be played by the value dimension of history education. An indispensable role is played also by empirical research, because it penetrates into relations between theory and practice, maps transposition of the traditional teaching into modern one, factual history into “value” history, and by data obtained it helps to correct educational programmes.

³ A. Bocková, *Výučba dejepisu ako pedagogický problém. (Pohľad na funkčnosť dejepisného vzdelávania a funkčnosť faktografie). (History teaching as a pedagogical issue (View of functionality of history teaching and functionality of factual description))* [in:] *Verbum historiae I*. Bratislava, Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2008, p. 24.

⁴ B. Blížkovský, S. Kučerová, M. Kurelová [a kol.], *Středoevropský učitel. Na prahu učící se společnosti 21. století. Vzdělávací situace, profesní činnosti a podmínky učitelů České, Slovenské a Polské republiky*, Brno, Konvoj, 2000.

⁵ D. Labischová, B. Gracová, *Příručka ke studiu didaktiky dějepisu*. Ostrava, Ostravská univerzita v Ostravě, 2009, p. 12.

⁶ Z. Beneš, *Didaktika dějepisu* [in:] *Manuál Encyklopedie českých dějin*, Praha, Historický ústav akademie věd ČR, 2003, p. 324–332.

STAGES OF "CHANGES" OF THE SLOVAK SCHOOL HISTORY

1997 – Curricula of history

Curricula of history for the 5th–9th forms of elementary schools⁷ and Curricula for four-year comprehensive secondary schools⁸ introduce historical conscience as the essential category for the school history right in their Part 1. Such general target category should be manifested in students' capability to understand the past and the present of the country they live in, to understand the situation of the Slovak Republic, as well as its position within Europe, and at the same time, to realize the need of peaceful coexistence of nations. Such general objective has been further specified in curricula in the structure of goals which were understood in relations of superiority and subordination, as well as their manifestation in capabilities of logic thinking in relations and connections. Within taxonomy of goals for elementary schools, in particular those goals which create the so-called cognitive area have been elaborated. In the 2nd structural part of curricula for elementary schools, a framework content of the school subject history has been drawn up. It has been elaborated according to the national curriculum as follows: for the 5th form – one lesson per week, from 6th to 9th form – two lessons per week. A specific feature of history teaching in the 5th form consisted of thematic lessons aimed at preparing pupils for genetic-chronological and synchronic teaching of the world's and national history. Frameworks of the content in senior classes have been arranged chronologically in thematic units including both the national and world's (rather European) history. The 3rd structural part of curriculum – process – was the weakest part of the elaboration of curriculum. 15 lines remained in the "shadow" of the content and objectives of teaching, which was manifested also in maintaining the traditional teaching in school practice.

At comprehensive secondary schools, in the first two years, history was taught two hours per week according to the national curriculum. In the 3rd and 4th year, students could include in their timetable a two-hour optional subject – seminar in history. A student could also choose a GCSE Advanced Level exam in history as an optional GCSE Advanced Level subject. In accordance with the requirements for history teaching of the secondary-school students, a general objective has been drawn up accordingly in the curriculum applicable from the school year 1997/1998. Students had to understand changes of Slovakia, Europe and the world, be aware of global problems of mankind in political, social, economic, environmental and cultural areas. As citizens, they should acquire general education in history allowing them a deeper insight in major problems of human society, and they should be able to participate in managing various spheres of life. In order to create a more comprehensive concept, we present a division of the general goal into concrete objectives from history cur-

⁷ Curriculum of history for the 5th–9th form of elementary school. Approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic on 3.4.1997 by decree No 1640/1997-151, in force from 1.9.1997.

⁸ Curriculum of history for four-year comprehensive secondary school. History as a compulsory subject. Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic 24.2.1997 under No 1252/96-15, in force 1.9.1997.

riculum for four-year comprehensive secondary schools, which should enable the students the following:

- to understand history (acquire knowledge):
 - to acquire knowledge of the past, which will provide them basic framework to understand the present;
 - to try to estimate reasons of people's conduct and identify differences between the past and the present;
 - to understand that history deals with a change and continuity;
 - to realize the impact of a change on an individual and on the society and people's responsibility for a change and development;
 - to understand that a change and progress are not identical;
 - to understand that statements concerning the past are possible only if historical sources are available;
 - to distinguish between the cause and effect, identify them on a particular historical event;
 - to realize that a historical event has usually more than one cause and effect;
 - to realize that in each society there is someone executing the power and that there are various forms and ways of doing so;
 - to understand that historical traditions and interpretation of history influence the thinking and conduct of people at present;
- getting to know historical material (developing skills and capabilities):
 - to classify a historical event – find and select from the text the information necessary etc.;
 - to explain a historical event, e.g. from the text, pictures, caricatures, diagrams, graphs, maps;
 - to analyze facts, events, developments, processes, historical periods, eras;
 - to define basic features of events, create a set and structure of them (e.g. give characteristics of Athenian democracy, national movement in the 19th century etc.);
 - to compare facts, events, developments, processes, historical periods, eras (e.g. to compare polis (city-state) and the Roman republic, or a liberal state with a totalitarian political system, Gothic style with Renaissance etc.);
 - to synthesise, generalize historical events based on various historical sources or texts from textbooks, to write or give explanation, identify causes and effects of historical events;
 - to make distinction between fact and fiction (to be able to distinguish a fact from fiction in historical movies, novels, myths, legends);
 - to understand the relation between the space and time in historical context (to be able to classify events, to mark down places of events in outline maps, to make a chronological line etc.);
 - to realize that there is more than one opinion on one and the same historical event (to be able to work with contradictory, controversial sources, make distinction between facts and interpretation);

- to make use of skills acquired in other subjects (e.g. to make a graph of unemployment growth, write a report, commentary, leaflet, pamphlet, diary, letter, make a record of interview, make a model, take a photo, make a picture, collage, caricature etc.);
- to work with a text (to be able to rephrase it, find the main idea and look for arguments supporting it etc.);
- to use specialized publications (to be able to work with index in the book, as well as with comments and bibliography);
- to enrich one's own vocabulary (to be able to use historical terms, historical metaphors, idiomatic expressions etc.);
- to use and be knowledgeable in school and public libraries (e.g. to be able to make a correct bibliographic record and use it);
- to learn the method of writing (to be able to draw up the structure, define the thesis, develop it by arguments and make a logic summary in conclusion, to keep the language and stylistic level, be accurate, short and clear);
- to write a paper (e.g. to use in it comments, quotations correctly and consistently and thus avoid plagiarism, and others);
- to form attitudes and viewpoints (create values):
- to reach deeper interest in the past, and through its successes develop a relation towards historical heritage;
- to develop imagination and empathy with people living in other historical periods;
- to manifest understanding and tolerance for other's opinions and attitudes (to realize that they can be influenced by bias and prejudice);
- to acquire the awareness of civic and social responsibility;
- to learn distinguishing between the good and evil, justice and injustice;
- to respect attempts at peaceful problems solving;
- to understand that history may serve political or other purposes, that history is interpreted in different ways by various groups of people or institutions within society;
- to understand history as a process of quest where the starting point is an effort to obtain unbiased historical knowledge;
- to realize that historical impartiality is an ideal which historians can more or less approach.

Although the above mentioned curricula created conditions for the transition to modern history teaching and many teachers changed their teaching habits and did a lot for the "openness" of teaching, it was not enough as such. Our students were not sufficiently prepared to grasp history deeper methodologically and systematically. This was proven by the above mentioned results of empirical research carried out in 2005/2006. It revealed weak ability of pupils to work with facts, use various sources of information, answer structured questions and discuss them in broader context. We are convinced that this situation manifested in particular rather low "conscience of functionality of purely factual description" – i.e. imbalanced knowledge, understanding and reasoning of the meaning of information provided for the building of

own value system. This conclusion is connected also with the fact of failing to create adequate working conditions strengthening intellectual, emotional and practical activities of students.

In 1998, Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic approved also the alternative model of history teaching at four-year comprehensive secondary school entitled *Alternative Curriculum of Comprehensive Secondary School*⁹. In accordance with this curriculum, the teaching of any school subject, including history as well, could have been strengthened. The alternative curriculum broadened the so far existing differentiation of education according to the students' interests and needs by higher proportion of optional school subjects. In the first three years of study, students could acquire standard general education of good quality which they could deepen and broaden in optional subjects chosen by them in the last, profile year of study – maximum eighteen classes for the whole study. This alternative model was in force until 2008 when a new extensive school reform was launched and the curricula valid until that time were replaced by the new National Educational Programmes.

2001 – National Programme of Education, Recommendations of the Council of Europe

In 1998, the Government of the Slovak Republic included in its policy statement a task to develop the National Programme of Education. In 2001, the National Programme of Education for the period of 15–20 years was drawn up¹⁰. The reason was as follows: the school system needs a change inevitably. The project was presented as a project of changes, transformations, the improvement of education in the Slovak Republic, improvement of the school system, which was not aimed at changing just “firm's logos”, formal changes just for the sake of changes, but at the changes of substantial nature of the whole school system. In 2001, the Ministry of Education adopted also the Recommendation of the Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers to the Members States concerning history teaching in Europe of the 21st century¹¹. The ambition of both documents was to modernize, improve the quality of, decentralize the educational system and open it for broader intercultural communication.

The substance of such change of history consists of considering, first of all, the relevant socio-cultural starting points and consequences arising thereof in the sphere

⁹ By the letter dated 06.04.1998, the Ministry of Education of SR sent to all four-year comprehensive secondary schools the *Alternative Curriculum* approved under No 813/1998-152 with effective date 1 September 1998 starting from the first year of study. The curriculum for comprehensive secondary school No 3597/1990-20 amended under No 2622/1998-152 with effective date 1.9.1996 remains in force together with *Alternative Curriculum*. A decision on the curriculum to be applied by the comprehensive secondary school concerned from the 1st year shall be taken by the school headmaster upon discussion with the board of teachers.

¹⁰ *Milénium – Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania na Slovensku na najbližších 15–20 rokov.* (Millennium – National Programme of Education in Slovakia for the nearest 15–20 years), Bratislava, Vydavateľstvo Iris 2001.

¹¹ Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers: Recommendation Rec(2001)15 to the Members States concerning history teaching in Europe of the 21st century. (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 October 2001 at the 771 meeting of deputy ministers).

of understanding human rights and democracy. It was recommended to eliminate prejudice and emphasize positive interaction among various countries and ideas in historical development of Europe through educational programmes of history. Ministers declared that history teaching should be based upon understanding, knowledge and clarification of the national and world's cultural heritage and it should highlight its cross-border character. The recommendations schematically "addressed" the areas of problems, or respectively the needs of history teaching in European countries: misuse of history, European dimension in history teaching, teaching methods (the use of sources, personal research, group research, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach), and training of future efficient history teachers, information and communication technologies. In particular higher concentration on history of the 19th and 20th century was accentuated, inter alia, in the content component for the purpose of better understanding the problems of contemporary world. On the other hand, in the area of methodology, multiperspectivity was underlined. Multiperspectivity as methodology of study, strategy of understanding and comprehension requires the ability and willingness to put individual perspectives to interrelation. Versatile approaches, which are normal in historiography, appear to be difficult in history teaching for both the teacher's preparation and study activity of a student. This method should be used by a student to verify interpretation models, conclusions and judgments of a problem. This includes the way of thinking, method of selection, study and application of evidence material originating from various sources, by which the complexity of the situation, historical fact can be or will be explained. Although specialized literature dealing with the given issues has been introduced on the Slovak market¹², teachers took rather negative, indifferent stand on practical application of such method. In the context of history, the application of this method of work requires that the following basic goals are achieved:

- comprehensive and broader understanding of historical events and development taking into consideration similar and different elements in presentation, as well as various views of all parties involved;
- deeper understanding of historical relations among nations in general, between neighbouring nations or between the majority and minorities within one country;
- achievement of a clearer picture about dynamism of events through the study of interaction between the people and groups involved and about their mutual dependence.

In systematic work with multiperspectivity in history teaching, students should learn the following:

- it need not be always true that there is only one correct version of a historical event;
- one and the same historical event can be described and explained in different ways;

¹² R. Stradling, *Vyučovanie európskej histórie dvadsiateho storočia*, Bratislava, Metodické centrum mesta Bratislavy, 2002; Idem, *Multiperspektíva v dejepisnom vzdelávaní*, Bratislava, Metodické centrum mesta Bratislavy, 2007.

- no historical presentations are ultimate;
- one and the same statement can have, however, different meaning for people depending on their particular position;
- it provides certain counterbalance with respect to rather simplified interpretations of the relationship between majorities as they are often presented in many history textbooks¹³.

With regard to the recommendations to create more space for the teaching of history of the 19th and 20th centuries, discussions on the need to include controversial themes into history teaching are in progress. They bring about also big questions not only whether such themes should be taught but also how they should be taught. Each country has and addresses its own controversial and sensitive issues. They can divide whole groups, society, nations or neighbouring countries. They call people to join “one” or “the other” side, or evoke prejudice in them. Historians and history teachers are concerned by right about such new themes, because the discussions like – who started it, why it happened, who was right, whose approach to the choice of evidence material was too selective etc., rarely bring consensus and even historians themselves are often unable to reach agreement on many aspects of history. However, in all of that we have to take into consideration that controversial issues have their reasonable place in particular in the teaching of history of the 19th and 20th century. Therefore, it is important to teach students also this way to understand the present and to show them how we got in the present situation and to show them the state of problems solving; to teach them how to apply certain procedural working methods and ways of assessing historical controversy, e.g. critical analysis of evidence material, critical analysis of its interpretation, evaluation of sources and evidence material.

Robert Stradling recommends the following strategies in the case of controversial themes in history teaching:

- distance (if the issues appear to be highly sensitive, tensions of the class can be eliminated by redirecting them to the searching of analogies and parallels or by searching roots of the problem concerned);
- compensatory (if students hold the opinions definitely originating from their ignorance, “intimidation” or from the prevailing clear consensus exclusively in favour of the only one interpretation of an event, contradictions are accentuated, the “layer” of myth is wiped off, arguments for and against are given, change of roles...);
- empathic (if the issues dealt with concern the group or nation which is not favoured by majority of the students or they involve latent discrimination). The above mentioned methods can be used successfully, or as the case may be, discussions on various fates of people through the analysis, “oral history”, movies, documents...);

¹³ Idem, *Vyučovanie európskej histórie*, p. 106.

- exploratory (if the teacher wants to use the given issues as the means for developing analytical skills and the student explores broader connections through seminar papers, study of diaries, letters, interviews with eyewitnesses etc.)¹⁴.

Another problem considerably reflected in history teaching consisted of excessively mechanic perception of ties and relations between the teaching of the national and world's history, which is manifested in the fact that students have well categorized individual topics, stages, spheres but mutually separated from each other too much to be able to see the past as a whole. This is a general phenomenon in many schools (not only in ours). Such approach is much easier and less complicated. Therefore, it persists for a longer time.

It is very important to obtain comparative criteria; however, such comparison is still underestimated in our school practice. It is possibly not surprising when historical research has been for many decades directed at national history, at artificial separation of the national history from the world's history. Slovak historiography has in fact given up the ambition to study at least basic trends which have formed the nature and shape of modern Europe¹⁵. The way of connecting national history with broader territorial view of some historical processes is the way of forming new reality. How does the Slovak schooling cope with such other problem? The emphasis put on European dimension of historical development opens other themes in which we have to consider Slovakia as part of a bigger whole with its naturally maintained and cultivated own identity. The attitude towards such relationship influences the interpretation of many different historical problems. However, there is a requirement that such broader connections should be explained taking into consideration the needs and possibilities of a concrete – national recipient. (Slovakia as a member of the Steering Committee of the Council of Europe signed a binding protocol setting explicitly as a main objective the inclusion of such aspects of historical development into schooling and secondary-school textbooks). A “tricky” question – how to communicate multi-polarity of historical knowledge not only to the community of teachers but get it over also to the preparation of young people for practical life – has been added to the “technical” problems – questions regarding the forms and methods of acquisition of historical knowledge. In particular the problem of admissible multi-polarity of views is arising in its whole complexity before us even more, because many of the present history teachers are not very much aware of it although they have already experienced problems with the “correct” interpretation of historical themes, periods and

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 79.

¹⁵ L. Lipták, E. Kovaľáková, (citované podľa M. Tonkovej), *Výučovanie a vzdelávanie v národných a vo svetových moderných dejinách na Slovensku a v podmienkach Pedagogickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave – potreby, možnosti, šance a perspektívy. Retrospektíva a perspektívy poslania Pedagogickej fakulty UK v Bratislave* (quoted according to M. Tonková, *Teaching and education in national and world modern history in Slovakia and in the conditions of the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava – needs, possibilities, chances and prospects. Retrospection and prospects of the mission of the Faculty of Education*), Bratislava, Univerzita Komenského, 2007, p. 90.

events, and just now they cause them possible ideologically contradictory attitudes towards them¹⁶.

In order to address the issues brought up, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic approved the Alternative Model of History Teaching at four-year comprehensive secondary school¹⁷. According to this alternative model, which comprehensive secondary schools could opt to apply, the teaching with two hours per week concentrated on modern history and history of the 19th and 20th century. In the first year, having passed introductory themes concerning the work of a historian and basics of methodology of history study, the teaching of modern history started. In the second and third year, the attention was paid to the 19th and 20th century. Older history – pre-history, ancient times and Middle Ages could be taught according to this model in the third year as an optional subject – history seminar. In the optional subject – history seminar in the fourth year, the already acquired knowledge about modern and contemporary history, as well as the skills of working with various information sources and their communication should be deepened and improved. However, this alternative model was applicable only till 2008 when the school reform was launched.

2008 – School Reform

The required changes of our history education were carried out in new conditions of the school reform in 2008, and some of them were “swept along” by it. History lessons in senior classes of elementary schools were reduced by one hour per week, which means that instead of two hours per week only one hour per week remained, with the exception of the ninth form. The applicability of alternative models of history teaching at comprehensive secondary schools was terminated by the reform. The creation of the new binding national educational programmes started hurriedly¹⁸, and based on them schools elaborated their own educational school programmes. It means that the state determined a framework minimum of what students should learn, and the rest was left up to each individual school. Elementary schools could work with five hours allocated to them which they assigned to the existing school subject at their own discretion, or they used them for the creation of a new school subject. The national educational programmes, compared to the former curricula of history of

¹⁶ M. Tonková, *Historická pamäť, historická veda a vyučovanie dejepisu. Slovenská stredoškolská mládež pri vnímaní európskeho kontextu slovenských dejín (Historical memory, history science. Slovak secondary-school youth and their perception of the European context of Slovak history)*. Referát na medzinárodnom pracovnom seminári: Stredoškolská mládež – jej historická pamäť a orientácia v európskom priestore. (Presentation at international workshop: Secondary-school youth – its historical memory and orientation if European area) Bratislava 21.–22.10.2005.

¹⁷ Approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic on 28.2.2006 under No CD-2006-2771/5676-1:092, the document „Alternative model of history teaching at four-year comprehensive secondary school” as methodological material for history teaching at four-year comprehensive secondary school, in force from 1 September 2006.

¹⁸ National Educational Programme for senior elementary school (lower secondary education) – ISCED2 – history, available on internet: www.statpedu.sk and the National Educational Programme for comprehensive secondary schools – ISCED3A – history, available on internet: www.statpedu.sk. Framework Educational Programmes have been amended as of 01.09.2011.

1997, defined a stricter framework of the content, drew up more precisely the characteristics of the subject, the subject competencies of students, cross-sectional themes, and proposed also a possibility of creating new school subjects, e.g. regional education, project teaching, media education etc. They emphasized in particular the inter-subject communication and application of interdisciplinary connections. The relevant materials, including textbooks for all types of schools and for all school subjects have been developed in a very short period of time not adequate to the difficulty of the given task. This posed a threat that the so far applicable programmes will be just reformulated and replaced by a sort of scattered information connected by updates if we take into account the implementation of current approaches.

The school reform required changes in the nature and content of knowledge more strictly, the development of capabilities and skills of both students and teachers in association with modernisation of teaching methods and strategies. Main principle of the schools reform consisted of “absolutely different” approach to education. Students’ creativity became a priority. Critically revised teaching material should be presented to a student in such a manner that he/she would have a chance to discover it for himself/herself as a value which would attract his/her attention and which is worth some efforts when learning. Problem-based teaching was “given the all clear”. However, teachers’ nervousness grew proportionally to the normative requirements. The authors of new programmes of education were recommended the following key activities – to seek correlation between education and values, not to allow giving up the objectives of education, devote more attention to the process of acquiring working procedures, process-oriented and reflexive methods of history teaching. At present, the ability to obtain, use and create new knowledge is considered as important as the volume of the knowledge acquired.

History is defined in the curriculum as a compulsory subject which is within the national educational programme for elementary schools and comprehensive secondary schools included in the educational area “Man and Society” together with geography and civics. Students at eight-year comprehensive secondary schools are also educated according to this document. Numbers of hours allocated to the compulsory subject history for different types of schools are indicated in the following Tables:

Table 1. Hours per week allocated to elementary schools according to forms (10/11 – 14/15 years old pupils)

5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
1	1	1	1	2

Table 2. Hours per week allocated to 8-year comprehensive secondary schools (11/12 – 18/19 years old students)

1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	5 th year	6 th year	7 th year	8 th year
1	1	1	2	2	2	2	0

Table 3. Hours per week allocated to 4-year comprehensive secondary schools (14/15 – 18/19 years old students)

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
2	2	2	0

Table 4. Hours per week allocated to secondary technical schools (14/15 – 18/19 years old students)

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
½	0/1/2	0	0

Table 5. Hours per week allocated to optional subject – seminar in history at secondary school (14/15 – 18/19 years old students)

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
0	0	2	2

In this period, groups of both criticisers and advocates of reformatory history were formed. On the one side, there were those in whose opinion the main purpose of history teaching was to teach students about important events and developments in the national, European and the world's history. On the other side, there were supporters of the thesis that the main purpose of history teaching and history education as such is the acquisition of analytical working methods in evaluating and interpreting historical material. The content of educational programmes is in their opinion only the means to achieve such goal. The second approach has been gradually established since 2008 followed by amendments of documents in 2011 and additional corrections in 2013/2014.

Basic structural elements of the national educational programmes are still being detailed: characteristics of the subject, objectives of the subject, subject competences (capabilities) of students and framework table composition of the content and performance standard. We present two examples of different table elaboration of the content and performance standards. In the first model of table elaboration of the content and performance standards of 2011, the performance standard was subordinated to the content standard (chronologically arranged curriculum), and in the second model of current amendments of valid documents (2014), the performance standard was set as the key standard – what performance we expect from students. Themes of general and national history have been selected for them, again in chronological sequence. The table structural models were identical for both the elementary and secondary schools, of course at different levels of elaboration.

Table 6. 2011 – Framework Table for currently valid educational standard (for illustration we present first indications for the 5th form of elementary school – for full version see “National Educational Programmes” (www.statpedu.sk))

Thematic unit	Content standard		Performance standard
<i>From the near to the remote</i>	Themes <i>Space and time</i>	Concepts <i>house, flat, housing estate, village...</i>	Capabilities <i>Students: they specify and evaluate changes in their place of residence which happened during their life...</i>

The second framework model of Table turns attention to the manner of implementing corrections which should come into force starting from 1 September 2015. Higher generalization of historical themes and concepts has been accepted.

Table 7. 2014 – Illustration of indications from the thematic unit for comprehensive secondary schools – Czechoslovakia behind the Iron Curtain

Performance standard	Content standard
<i>Students:</i> – recognize milestones of the development of home affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1945–1948 – analyze historical sources of the given historical period...	<i>National Front, Benes decrees, February coup d'état industrialisation, collectivisation, political processes, rehabilitations, the Prague Spring...</i>

Concretisation of the framework educational programme lies within authority of each school. Teacher's task in his pedagogical-professional work is to transform normative performance of students (his subject competencies) into various “formulas” of history education.

We may study, get to know and understand history in various ways.

We can understand history as a people's story with a variety of forms, and to know about them means to include into our own part of such story also the awareness of what has been passed on, entrusted to us, what from the past can affect us negatively, and on the other hand, what binds us, what inspires and directs us. In history there are eternal questions, it is good to know about them and about historical answers to them. Answers, similarly as history in general, are not for description but for orientation.

(Róbert Kvaček)

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