Teaching recent history in countries that have experienced human rights violations: Case studies from Chile

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Incorporating recent history into the educational curricula of countries that have experienced human rights violations combines the complexities of teaching history, teaching recent history, and human rights education. Recent history makes a historical analysis of social reality and a historiographical analysis of the immediate. It is located between history and present, between past and present, between witness and historian, between memory and history. This situation creates problems in teaching. This article investigates the teaching-learning process of the subunit 'Military regime and transition to democracy' in secondary schools in Santiago, Chile, by means of both a quantitative methodological strategy to identify six unique cases, and a qualitative strategy that is reported in this article. A variety of practices highlighted four models: constructivism, development of meta-cognition, historical discourse, and moral discourse. These models are described. Their diversity is due to the existence of different theoretical frameworks. This unit has gaps in content and historiographical knowledge, and there is no coordination with human rights education. The diversity of models is cause for concern because not all of them encourage students to understand the present as a result of a historical process and how to operate within it.

Keywords: classroom, school ethnography, recent history, curriculum

Background

The incorporation of human rights education in the curriculum of countries that have experienced war, genocide, ethnic conflict or military dictatorships imposes new demands on teachers. This incorporation was necessary in South Africa (Jita & Vandeyar, 2006:40; Carrim & Keet, 2005:100, 106-107), Rwanda (Weldon, 2009:184-185), Argentina, and so forth. In Latin America, it involves teaching the history of military dictatorships in the 1970s. In Chile, it means teaching the 1973 coup, the military regime of Augusto Pinochet and the transition to democracy.

Teaching history is hampered by the perception of history as a scholarly knowledge of the past (Pratt, 2000:73). Therefore, when recent history is taught, the situation becomes more complex. There is limited access to information (De Amézola, 2000:1), and ideological and theoretical diversity complicates the didactic transposition (De Amézola, 2000:5). The events that are taught are part of the students' past, whereas they remain the teachers' present (De Amézola, 2003:17). Given the immediacy of the events, both teachers and students are involved in the recent history that is taught. Teachers are thus afraid to present biased anecdotes, and of differences of opinion and emotions. In addition, history intersects with the memory of social and ethnic groups. Teaching becomes more complex and flooded with emotionality (Weldon, 2009:177).

The complexity of teaching increases when recent history refers to violations of human rights. Teaching human rights creates tensions because it problematises reality; demands collective work,

dialogue and horizontal relationships, and reveals power relations and conflicts. Thus, teachers must take a stand in the classroom to promote critical thinking.

In this context, the question arises: How does the teaching-learning process during the subunit 'Military regime and transition to democracy' take place in secondary education in Chile?

Frame of reference

Recent history makes a historical analysis of social reality. It focuses on the present without neglecting other dimensions of time. From the perspective of recent history, the historical present is mobile. It is 'temporary' and not a concrete history. Its boundaries are constantly being reformulated (Aróstegui, 2004:55; cf. Rousso, 2000:279). The final boundary is open, and the present is always changing. It addresses unfinished processes. Its final limit is defined by the presence of actors and witnesses, the existence of a collective memory or the start of unfinished processes (Stewart, 2004:48). It is written by those who experience it (Aróstegui, 2004:129).

Recent history addresses the present for some group members and the past for others. However, they all share an extended present, which is experienced from a different temporal perspective. In addition, social structures and collective memory "... contemporize a past that remains alive in the present" (Cuesta, 1993:12). Thus, recent history makes a historiographical analysis of the immediate. It is located between history and present, between past and present, between witness and historian, between memory and history. Thus, the presence of the historian as both an actor and a constructor of his object of study (Cuesta, 1993:13) means that subjectivity is intrinsic to this historical work.

In Chile, the teaching of the military dictatorship was established during the transition to democracy. History and Social Sciences were defined as an area of learning. Therefore, the curriculum reform also integrated Geography, Civics and Economics. The history of Chile is taught during the second year of secondary education, the last subunit being "Military regime and transition to democracy".

Conservative historians resisted the decision of teaching recent history, arguing that teaching recent history would extend the curricula, that there was a lack of historical knowledge about the period, that the events were too recent, and that such teachings would damage student politics (Armendariz, 2000:E20). They found it difficult to watch the events dispassionately, and expressed their prejudices pertaining to national reconciliation. The conservative were afraid that the Ministry of Education would influence the young people's image of the past. Other historians have defended the epistemological legitimacy of recent history and reported the intention of its opponents to hide knowledge of the recent past (Armendariz, 2000:E20). They argued that the facts have been thoroughly tested (Gazmuri, 2000:2). Others valued the version of the events presented by the Ministry of Education and aimed to defend an interpretation of recent history that legitimises the military coup and the dictatorship.

In 2007, these conservative historians questioned the presence of recent history in a proposal to adjust the curriculum, arguing that this would politicise the school and generate divisions (*El Mercurio* newspaper, 2007:A3). The Ministry replied that recent history forms part of the curriculum that is valued by the school community and historians (Correa, Rolle, Moder & Gazmuri, 2007:A002).

To enable a post-conflict society to establish sustainable and non-violent relationships, it needs to implement a model of education aimed at peacemaking (Firer, 2008:193), allowing students to understand the conflict experienced and its impact on them and their families. They must also understand the mechanisms and situations that generate violence in order to dismantle them. From a socio-critical perspective, historically situated conflicts should be analysed at the micro (i.e. interpersonal) and macro (i.e. intergroup) levels.

The development of empathy for the Other must be at the heart of this pedagogical model, especially when dealing with asymmetrical power relations (Ferreira & Janks, 2009). In addition, this model also needs to focus on peaceful conflict resolution, social justice, recognition of social and cultural diversity, non-violence, collaborative work, multiculturalism, and environmental care. Human rights education and democracy are thus essential (Pantazis, 2010) for the construction of peace.

It is necessary to face the trauma (Bretherton, Weston & Zbar, 2003:37) caused by conflict and encourage psychosocial repair at both the individual and collective levels. Note that "pedagogies of this nature aim 'at healing the effects of traumatic events that produce guilt, anxiety, resentment and injustice that persist and distort individual and national well-being'" (Hattam, 2004:1 in Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009:109). Thus, collective memory has a restorative role, as does the expression of emotions and dialogue.

The pedagogical actions must create conditions to promote discourse and transformative practices (Ferreira & Janks, 2009) so that the students can take ownership of the concept of peace, enrich it and mould it to their own existence. (Bretherton, Weston & Zbar, 2003:37).

The understanding that peace demands action and participation requires reflection, critical thinking and the commitment to build a peaceful, democratic and egalitarian society (Bretherton, Weston & Zbar, 2003, 2003a). In addition, the teachers must implement these principles in their teaching practice.

Methodology

The population of this study consisted of teachers who taught the course History and Social Sciences in the second year of secondary education in 2005 at educational establishments in the Santiago metropolitan region and their students who enrolled in their third year of secondary education in 2006.

Proportional stratified random sampling was used. The strata were defined by the administrative unit of the establishment.[1] The schools were selected first, followed by the teachers and ten former students. Some establishments refused to participate for political reasons. Therefore, the sample was weighted to match the percentage distribution of the schools according to dependence. The sampling error for the municipal schools was 10%; for private subsidised schools, 5%, and for private schools, 11%. A self-administered questionnaire was given to 262 teachers, and another self-administered questionnaire was given to 2.612 students. Cluster analysis was applied to the results obtained from the teachers to establish teaching styles. Two styles, denoted as innovative and traditional, were defined.

We later identified "six unique cases of the actor" (Pires, 1997:140) of a teacher and his/her students during the subunit 'Military regime and transition to democracy'.

Table 1: Cases

Type	Gender	Type of school	Commune	Teacher style
Privately funded	Joint	No-confessional	Maipú	Traditional
Municipal	Joint	No-confessional	Peñalolén	Traditional
Municipal	Men	No-confessional	Santiago	Innovative
Municipal	Joint	No-confessional	Santiago	Traditional
Private	Men	Confessional	Providencia	Innovative
Private	Women	Confessional	Las Condes	Innovative

The impact of the researcher in the classroom was controlled by establishing a relationship of trust, emphasising the non-evaluative nature of the work and allowing the researcher a prolonged stay in the field.

The lead author recorded the activities in the room. The observation period varied with the time assigned to the topic. Field notes were taken and audio-taped. The registration of observations was limited by the presence of a single researcher in the classroom.

Subsequently, in order to understand the perceptions and emotions that arise during class, teachers and two groups of four to six students (at random) per course were interviewed. All interviews were recorded.

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1   There are three types of schooling establishments in Chile: municipal, which are wholly financed by the State and situated within the different municipalities; privately funded, which are co-funded by the State and by the students' parents, and private, which receive no State funding at all and are completely funded by the students' parents.

The information collected was organised as narratives. Fragments from the interviews and the field notes were added to the audio recordings. A text comprising the interpretations of the researchers was then developed.

The National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development regulates and monitors ethical standards and mandates voluntary participation, authorisation from the director of the school, and consent of the teacher and the students. Confidentiality, protection of materials and the possibility of dropping out of the investigation were ensured. Participants were also informed that the results would be made public.

Results

The students, teachers, knowledge, time spent, activities, contents and materials used were different in each classroom. However, despite these differences, the following four teaching models of the subunit 'Military regime and transition to democracy' were identified.

Constructivist

A variety of activities motivates the search for information and generates the conditions for students to re-signify their ideas with a higher level of complexity and increased precision. The contents presented were adapted to the context of the students, and contributed to their civic education. The teacher created a learning environment, provided information and re-defined concepts. This model is valid for any subject; its content, rather than its form, defines it as a history lesson. This model complies with ministerial requirements.

Rigorous in its design, this model remains trapped in the parameters of the designed actions; as such, it fails to incorporate the students in the activities or the learning process. The lesson becomes a teacher's performance in which the students are not integrated.

First class: Before the start of the subunit, the teacher asked students to talk to their families about the government of Salvador Allende and the military regime. In the first class, the teacher questioned the students about the information collected. The teacher then presented an audiovisual entitled 'History of Chile' from the Ministry of Education and provided students with a page containing two speeches by Allende, one from the day when he won the presidential elections and another while the coup was taking place. The students read the text. The teacher then instructed the students to form groups to discuss a text on General Pinochet's view of the coup in the subsequent class. The teacher also explained that students who participate in the music course must create a song associated with the class, while those students who attend visual arts class must construct a poster. The respective teachers supported both groups.

Second class: The students continued reading Allende's speeches, and then presented the main ideas of the text. The teacher wrote the key concepts on the board for purposes of definition. The teacher then invited the students to analyse a text by Pablo Neruda, Nobel Prize in Literature, on the coup. The teacher gave them a text in which Pinochet describes the organisation of the coup. The students were allowed ten minutes of reading. They were then instructed to write a paper on the dictator's concept of democracy, the coup's organisation, the proclamations and the military groups. A member from each student group then explained the dictator's concept of democracy.

Third class: The students continued to analyse the dictator's idea of democracy. The teacher then presented a newspaper clip (published the week prior to the class) describing how Allende's government officials were murdered. Using the textbook, the students constructed a table illustrating the political, economic, social and cultural works of the three governments prior to the coup.

Fourth class: the students continued with this work. Based on the their responses, the teacher demonstrated historical continuity and presented a chronology of the history of Chile in terms of the democratically elected presidents.

Fifth class: During recess, the students decorated the room with old posters and posters that were made for this occasion. Desks were organised in circles. Songs from the era of the Allende government and the opposition to the military regime could be heard from a radio installed in a corner of the room. The teacher asked the students to share what they had talked about with their families. They all discussed what

they had learned with their families. A group of girls sang a song whose lyrics correspond to Allende's last speech. The music from the era resumed. A debate on the themes of the coup, the military regime, the national political developments and the current student movements was organised.

Development of meta-cognitions

History is a resource for the development of skills and meta-cognitions. The students had cognitive development and skills that allow them to advance to a stipulated target level while the teacher guided the individual and collective learning process. In other words, students learned to learn. This model was observed in a male-only school attended by members of privileged groups in the country.

Work was done with historiographical texts. However, the class seemed always on the brink of forgetting the content of the course and instead pursued the development of cognitive skills.

First class: Two historiographical publications were given to each student. A list of topics for the test to be administered later was written on the board. To guide the reading, the core contents of the article were then pointed out to the students. The first article concerned the political and economic project of the military regime. The teacher gave examples of questions from the future test and explained the text. The second article referred to the management of power during the military regime. The teacher explained the context in which those articles were written and listed their main concepts. The students then began reading the texts. The teacher asked a student to read aloud and then to stop. During breaks, the teacher asked a question or clarified a concept. Students asked about or commented on the reading while the teacher evaluated their understanding or explained some historical ideas. In the meantime, the students were asked to highlight the key concepts of the articles. When students encountered a text that they did not understand, they asked the teacher about it. These questions conveyed preconceived notions that were challenged and/or embellished on by the teacher using historiographical knowledge. In particular, the teacher added contextual elements that reflected the *zeitgeist* of the period. A key task was to find the definitions of the concepts discussed, for example, in Article 5 of the Constitution and a speech by Pinochet.

Second class: Students presented the definitions they had identified. Based on these definitions, the teacher presented new questions. The teacher then drew a timeline on the board and wrote the title of the second article on the military regime institutions. In order to engage in analytical reading, students took turns to read aloud, and the teacher highlighted the phrases that the students needed to underline.

Third class: A test consisting of a series of questions on the articles was administered to the students.

Fourth class: The test was graded in class. Several students then asked to view a contextualised fiction film that portrays the *zeitgeist* of the military regime. The teacher argued about the need to continue the class and thus provided a new article on the concept of the state in Chile for further reading. The teacher then announced that students would do a personal assignment. Silent reading followed.

Fifth class: The teacher wrote on the board questions that were to be answered individually by the students. The teacher then returned to her desk to help the students individually. The students approached the teacher to ask questions or verify their answers. The teacher guided the students in their reasoning to facilitate learning and to explain how to identify the concepts in the article. The teacher guided students in the development of their responses.

Sixth class: The teacher returned the corrected tests to the students. They read some of the answers. A state-sponsored television programme on the end of the century was introduced. From time to time, the teacher stopped the programme, depending on the content, to clarify any confusion or to explain a situation. Students asked questions about what they did not understand or provided further inquiries regarding topics related to the content of the programme. The teacher pointed out that the fragments of the documentary expressed the thinking of different historians.

Historical

This model presented a story explaining the sequence of events; this sequence was presented in increasingly wider concentric contexts. The purpose was to transfer the development of historical thinking. The

professor was a historian as well as a teacher. As such, the teacher attempted to model historical reasoning. The aim was that the students would create their own interpretation of the events that affect them.

First class: This class explained the role of American imperialism in the establishment of Latin American dictatorships. A historical narrative was constructed from structural history and referred to economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions. It explained the processes and events in context. It presented concepts from the social sciences and promoted democratic values. The teacher then asked questions about the coup which the students had to answer using the textbook. The textbook contained interpretations from different historians. ,Students were thus introduced to different interpretations of the same events. This work was done in a group, and the answers were written down in a notebook.

Second class: The key task was to write an essay on the coup using the information presented in the first class. The teacher then presented different interpretations of the coup. To that end, the teacher presented a documentary produced by the official military government, which justified the coup. A debate was then conducted.

Third class: The documentary "The latest fight of Salvador Allende" was presented. The class ended.

Fourth class: Students submitted their essays during this class.

Moral discourse

Teachers have good intentions based on their political consciousness and perceived moral duty to teach recent history on human rights violations. With the moral discourse model, the teacher's purpose is to promote the contention that 'Never again' will crimes against humanity be allowed to occur. In the classroom, this subject was discussed from the viewpoint of the victims. Assuming the role of a witness rather than a historian, the teacher relived very intense emotions that could not be controlled. Both the teacher and students were overcome with sadness.

This model served as an act of socio-political commitment, but it was also a personal act with the students because they are part of the social sector most affected by the economic and repressive policies of the dictatorship. As such, the teacher was identified as one of them.

First class: Slides were presented. Prepared by a historian, these slides covered the period from 1970 to the end of the dictatorship. The presentation was stopped after the reading of the first slide. The teacher began to tell a story that took the form of a fairy tale. It was about a six-year-old girl who witnessed a raid on her home by the military during the early years of the military regime. The events occurred in the same town where the students live. It narrated the events experienced by a six-year-old child. In the middle of the story, the teacher mentioned that she is the girl in the story. Emotions then flooded the classroom. Both the students and the teacher could not contain their tears. The teacher indicated that they must work with a working guide on the political crisis in 1973. However, she turned to the slides and pronounced the names of the people who appeared on the slides. She then repeated that they should be working with the guide, though she continued to show the slides. She translated the historiography language of the slides in a fairy tale-like manner. This exposed the everyday knowledge of the teacher in the room. The students did not complete the task with the guide, and their reading difficulties prevented them from understanding the activity. The in-class assignment thus became homework.

Second class: This was suspended because of 'Environment Awareness Week'. Classes resumed two weeks later.

Third class: The teacher asked the students to recount what they heard at home about the coup and the military regime. Amid the tales, the teacher gave her opinion about the political situation. She then proceeded to relate another piece of personal history. This story was about her as a high-school student who opposed the military rule, and encompassed an important part of the class. Throughout the story, the slides containing the historiographic knowledge were displayed on the wall in the background. Nevertheless, when the slides exposed human rights violations, the teacher began a detailed account of the torture that was carried out on opponents of the dictatorship. It was a tale of horror. A dialogue about impunity was then started between some students and the teacher, who finally took the floor to explain

the objective of the class: "In order not to forget this historical memory. And so that 'Never again, never again in Chile'".

Conclusion

There are significant differences in the way in which recent history is taught in Chile. Two models are based on teaching theories inherited from psychology (i.e. 'constructivist' and 'meta-cognitive' approaches), and another is developed from historiography (i.e. the 'historical' model). Finally, there is the 'moral discourse' model, which lacks a clear theoretical basis in teaching practice.

The 'constructivist' and 'meta-cognitive' models emphasise form over substance, the prominent role of the teacher and the process of learning, the importance of the disciplinary knowledge; resulting in less historical knowledge on the part of students. The 'historical' model focuses on the analysis of historical interpretations at the expense of ethical evaluations of democracy and human rights. Common sense prevails in the 'moral discourse' model that focuses on human experience while other content is being neglected. The content of this model is specifically limited to the coup and dictatorship, and disregards the transition to democracy and an analysis of the present. Historiographical knowledge is scarce, as are concepts that can be illustrated by the daily lives of students in order to encourage democratic values (Waghid, 2001:30).

There is also no evidence that history teaching is being combined with the notion of 'People with rights'; the past is not linked with the experiences of students, enabling them to confront the validity of human rights.

The value of the prior meanings attached to these events is not adequately recognised, and the interpretations of these events are often exposed as polarities, thereby missing important nuances. There are few opportunities for dialogue, and there is even less development of historical empathy and expression of emotions. Not all models aim to construct the students' own interpretation of the past.

The existence of a variety of teaching models is not in itself negative. However, not all of these methods are aimed at achieving the main purpose of the course, namely that students understand the present as a result of a historical process and know how to operate within it (MOE, 1999:9).

The existence of specific teaching guidelines were not observed. Pedagogical practices were not based on proven models but on each teacher's resources. The managers of the curriculum should ensure not only explicit and clearly explained teaching principles, (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003:133), but also their implementation.

Countries that have experienced social unrest must assume that the teaching of history is a controversial issue. As such, it is necessary to recognise and present the different versions of events, on which the teacher, as a member of society, should take a stand. For this reason, the emotions linked to these events must be managed. However, it is also necessary to develop an understanding of the human experience produced by human rights violations. It is important to develop historical empathy, an appreciation of democracy and respect for human rights.

Democracy, participation, reflection and critical thinking should all be practised in class (Waghid, 2001:31), thus advancing the congruence between the values discussed and the teacher's action (Weldon, 2009:185). It is also necessary to recognise the victims – including generations who have inherited the legacies of the dictatorship – in the pedagogical space to allow discussion of feelings of guilt, anxiety, resentment and injustice that persist in a society traversed by conflict in order to advance social reconciliation (Hattam, 2004:1 in Keet, Zinn & Porteus, 2009:109).

Future research should develop methods to record the students' actions and so-called "volatile conversations" (Geschier, 2010:31) during class, to study the learning processes promoted by the different teaching models, and to identify those models that are most suitable for students in different socio-historical contexts (Waghid, 2001:29).

It is also necessary to develop theoretical and pedagogical tools based on the principles of peace education that can be applied to complex educational contexts, particularly in countries that have experienced human rights violations in "various forms of violence, poverty and discrimination" (Keet,

Zinn & Porteus, 2009:116-117). Above all, "we have to find a way of remembering without becoming trapped in the past" (Weldon, 2009:1007).

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