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## History Didactics in France: Research and Professional Issues

It is a trivality to state that history plays a prominent role in French culture. In schools, history is presently compulsory in every stream, from primary school to the end of higher secondary school. When a standard student leaves school, s/he has studied history for one to two hours a week for the past ten years. And s/he has also dealt with the past in literature classes and sometimes in foreign language classes. If one adds the films, novels, comics, role plays, strategic games set in an historical background, one may speak of a prevalent historical culture in France. Several enquiries stated that roughly 75% of the students attached importance to history for understanding the present and for their own lives (Lautier 1997a; Tutiaux-Guillon/Mousseau 1998; Grever/Ribbens 2007) and that French students were concerned with history (Grever/Ribbens 2007; Lantheaume/Létourneau 2016). In contrast to this situation, research on history teaching and learning –in France called “*didactique de l’histoire*” – has had only little influence on everyday practices or contents. However, it has developed significantly since the eighties, both as an analysis of the current teaching and learning and as a suggestion for better practices or contents. This paper intends to interpret this situation for secondary schools but also to present which types of research have been conducted and which contents and practices are suggested by researchers for empowering teachers and students who deal with history.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the emergence of research in history didactics

The term “*didactique*” has been used in France since the 1980s to stress the difference to pedagogy: the research in didactics is centred on the specificities of teaching and learning a specific subject and not on general school questions, as for example “motivation”, “school violence” etc. This means that the core analyses are strongly linked to the subject, and thus to references such as history of school curricula, epistemology and historiography as well as others (social psychology, developmental psychology, sociology, philosophy of education etc.). History didactics studies the contents, aims and practices of history teaching and the process and results of history learning. The issue is mostly history education: history set by curricula, suggested by textbooks and professional tools, taught in the classrooms and learned by students; empirical research in France has established the unavoidable transformations from the first to the last, against the current conception of a smooth translation from prescriptions to textbooks, then to teaching and then to long-lasting learning (Allieu 1995; Audigier 1994). A recurrent key question is the relationship between *scholarly* history, developed by historians, and *school* history (Allieu 1995; Lagüe-Dulac/Legris/Mercier 2016). While some research was based on the notion of an affiliation or an analogy between both, others pointed to the differences and to the existence of

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<sup>1</sup> School history in primary schools and history didactics for primary schools would show a different picture. Cf. Audigier, François/Tutiaux-Guillon, Nicole 2004: Regards sur l’histoire, la géographie, l’éducation civique à l’école élémentaire. Saint Fons.

knowledge created *by* the school and *for* the school. Thus, to know what school history really is, one would have to inquire methodically, to analyse, to interpret. This means that “history didactics” in France does not mean only (or even mainly) proposing practical resources and good practices: it has developed a relevant theoretical and methodological framework.<sup>2</sup>

During the late 1980s and the 1990s, the research was developed mainly in the national institute INRP (Allieu-Mary/Audigier/Tutiaux-Guillon 2006) and extended in some institutes for teacher training (IUFM), in associate groups devoted to innovative and collaborative research (IREGH) and in a few universities (especially Paris 7-Denis Diderot, with Moniot).<sup>3</sup> Reflecting on how few of the innovations promoted by action-research on history teaching has actually been implemented since the 1970s, the researchers investigated students’ attitudes towards and knowledge of history and the learning processes as well as commonly used teaching contents and practices. This research placed greater emphasis on its methods and its theoretical basis (Allieu-Mary/Audigier/Tutiaux-Guillon 2006; Lautier/Allieu-Mary 2008). The first PhD in history didactics was defended by Lautier in 1992;<sup>4</sup> the founding book by Moniot (*la didactique de l’histoire*) was published in 1993. During 1986-1996, eight conferences devoted to the didactics of history, geography and civics took place in the INRP; the IREHG organized some other ones; the process contributed to developing a research community and to linking researchers and teacher trainers. These conferences focused on a broad range of topics. National, then international conferences derived from this trend still occur regularly since 2000.

The total number of *thèses* (PhD) is poor; and they are labelled sciences of education, political sciences, psychology, sociology (hardly ever “history”<sup>5</sup>) etc., because history didactics do not exist as an institutionalized domain at French universities. Master’s degree theses and other publications, especially journal articles, are far more numerous and provide a better view of the research conducted: Swiss journals to which French researchers contribute a lot, *Le Cartable de Clio* (from 2000 to 2013), *Didactica Historica* (since 2015), and generalist reviews in educational sciences do so as well. The spectrum of the topics is wide, from ordinary teaching to innovative practices, from learning history to reading/writing in history courses, from memory and identity to intellectual activities, from contents to aims and purposes... (Lautier/Allieu-Mary 2008; Tutiaux-Guillon/Gérin-Grataloup 2001). Researchers in history didactics are both few and plenty. A few only embarked on a career in history didactics either as *enseignants-chercheurs* at university or as teacher trainers. But counting the teams organized by INRP and the ones acting in the IUFM and the IREHG, probably hundreds of teachers and teacher trainers have been involved in research in history didactics. This also means that a large part of them had opportunities to rely on this fruitful

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<sup>2</sup> For a general overview see Allieu-Mary/Audigier/Tutiaux-Guillon (2006) and Lautier/Allieu-Mary (2008).

<sup>3</sup> The INRP (National Institute for Pedagogical Research) played a key role in the development of didactics from the 1980s onward until its dissolution (2010). The IREHG were Institutes for Research in the didactics of History, Geography and Civics, created and supported in a few regions by the relevant National Education Inspectors. IUFM means University for Teacher Training; the IUFM were in charge of initial training for primary and secondary teachers from 1992 to 2013. Presently, teachers complete a master’s degree and are professionally trained in the ESPE (*Ecoles supérieures du professorat et de l’éducation* - Faculties for Teaching and Educating Professions).

<sup>4</sup> It is also one of the very few published: Lautier (1997a).

<sup>5</sup> Most French historians do not credit research in the didactics of history with scientific legitimacy.

research field as a resource for empowering history teachers: even descriptions and interpretations of everyday teaching might support professionalization.

The didactics of history – as most didactics in France – first emerged and grew from school changes. The massive entry of young people into secondary education destabilized the lower secondary schools during the 1970s and the higher ones during the 1980s, because they came from lower social classes. The “new” students were unfamiliar with classical, traditional school culture and failed to learn efficiently by listening to the teacher and working alone with textbooks and notes. This induced questioning the status of knowledge, the current methods and the aims of school subjects – including history. It was also obvious that the society was quickly transforming, that the economy was no more the one of the Thirty Glorious Years, and that politics were set in different ideological and institutional frames. So, which history was pertinent for educating citizens, for providing relevant means to understand the society and to adapt to a changing world? At the same time, there was a deep renewal of scholarly history: first *la Nouvelle Histoire* bloomed, the historians studied “new topics” and “new problems” (Le Goff/Nora 1974). After what is called “*le tournant critique des Annales*” (1988),<sup>6</sup> historians investigated how past individuals thought, spoke and wrote about their present, past and future, how they viewed society, how they made choices, how they negotiated with reality and with other people, and which were their autonomy, their identities and their personal attitudes. Social history, cultural history and political history were thus renewed. The research on memory developed, especially with the influence of Pierre Nora’s *Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992). The historiography and epistemology of history were deepened during the same decades. In fact, this enlarged the gap between university history and historical research on one side and school contents on the other – a gap that not only did not concern historians but seemed necessary to them (De Cock/Picard 2009; Legris 2014).

In this context, teachers felt a strong need for a change in history education either born from an interest in implementing the recent historiography in school knowledge, or developed from caring for students’ achievements. This opened the road during the 1990s and onwards for empirical research in history didactics as well as for an efficient teacher training, both pre- (through the IUFM) and in-service (through the MAFPEN<sup>7</sup>). Some IUFM then developed several research projects started by trainers who were also researchers, and they spurred professional training through research (Baillat/Marbeau 1992). But in fact, new teachers were mainly mentored by experienced ones, who were quite unaccustomed to research in didactics and in educational sciences. The core principle for institutional decision-makers was that one learns to be a teacher by teaching and by relying on exemplary practices, demonstrated and commented on by the best teachers selected by the institution. Presently, this is still a largely shared conception of initial training and it supports the ministerial prescription to give more room to professional experts and to extended practical experience in the new master’s courses.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the editorial for a 1988 journal of *Annales: Histoire et sciences sociales*. Un tournant critique ? In: *Annales ESC* 43, 4/3, p. 291-293.

<sup>7</sup> The MAFPEN (regional delegation for teacher training) were in charge of in-service training until 1998.

## 2. Present state and developments

In 21<sup>st</sup> century France, new challenges for secondary schools are being emphasized, because of the growing unemployment, because of the social gaps between poor suburbs and wealthy inner cities, because of discrepancies in educational achievements between schools, and because schools supposedly fail at promoting a shared identity and a peaceful society. The results of the PISA studies, circulated by the media, nurture alarmist critics of secondary education, because, from 2000 onwards, they have revealed a continual decrease in French students' performances compared to other OECD members. Central assessments developed by the ministry of education allow to compare the knowledge in history, geography and civics of 15-year-olds: the students who master most competences are less and less numerous and the number of students struggling to learn increased between 2006 and 2012<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, the state schools (*l'Ecole publique*) are generally seen as affected by violence and as inefficient regarding the promotion of individual achievement. The tensions between shared culture and personal culture, between public sphere and private sphere, between civic society and communities, between common interest and individualism, between *laïcité* and religious demands have all become topical and recurrent issues, aggrieved by terrorist attacks. For decades, the content of history curricula has been discussed critically. This has recently been the case in 2015 (because of new curricula) and in 2017, during the presidential campaign. Especially controversial is the topic of a “national narrative”, which is supposed to efficiently prevent communitarianist divisions by passing on a shared sense of belonging, and opposed to contents considered as too global or too open to otherness (Legris 2014). These urgent questions influence the research in history didactics.

Numerous recent studies focus on the relations between identities, private knowledge, common culture and school history, and on the ways in which each individual subject might develop a relation to the world mediated by a specific scientific point of view (*rapport disciplinaire au monde*<sup>9</sup>). New topics appeared: gender in history education (Le Cartable de Clio 2013; Lucas 2009; Mang 1995); the relevance of history for communities and of otherness for history education (Le Cartable de Clio 2005; 2009; 2012; Chalcou 2005; Durpaire 2002; Hassani-Idrissi 2006; Tutiaux-Guillon/Grever 2008; Tutiaux-Guillon 2012); historical consciousness (Hommet 2017; Tutiaux-Guillon/Mousseau 1998; Tutiaux-Guillon/Nourrisson 2003; Tutiaux-Guillon/Grever 2008). Investigation on national history was renewed (Falaize/Heimberg/Loubes 2013; IREHG 1996; Lantheaume/Létourneau 2016; Legris 2009; Tutiaux-Guillon 2007). Some researches responded to institutional demands, for example by articulating the duty of memory and the duty of history etc. (De Cock-Pierrepoint 2007; De Cock/Bonafoux/Falaize 2007). Professional questions – set in the frame of social controversies and professional difficulties – also induced research on sensitive issues, as for example teaching colonial slavery, the Atlantic slave trade, colonization and decolonization (including the Algerian war), immigration or historical religious topics that are implemented in the recent curricula (Baquès/Tutiaux-Guillon 2008; Boyer/Clerc/Zancarini-Fournel 2013; Carion 2015; Falaize 2009; Lantheaume 2002, 2007; Tutiaux-Guillon 2011). Those issues are

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<sup>8</sup> DEPP 2007: Les compétences des élèves en histoire, géographie et éducation civique en fin de collège. Note d'information 7.45 ; DEPP 2013: CEDRE 2012 Histoire, géographie et éducation civique: baisse des acquis des élèves de fin de collège depuis six ans. Note d'information 13-11.

<sup>9</sup> Wording by Jean-François Thémines for geography, quoted in Le Roux 2004, 167.

closely connected to an international concern for identities and globalisation, and for past crimes and repentance (Jacquet-Francillon/Tutiaux-Guillon 2009).

Other researchers investigate everyday learning processes. Several focus on the importance of verbal interaction and of language in the process of developing historical thinking and along the way promote new teaching and learning situations (Cariou 2004; 2006; 2012; Dousot 2010; 2011; Le Marec 2008; Le Marec/Vézier 2006; Dousot/Vézier 2015). Researchers no longer look primarily at social psychology for inspiration, but rather at research in other didactics (French language, sciences, mathematics) and in linguistics and communication, but the specificity of historical learning is examined through the epistemology of history. For example, Dousot (2010; 2011) has developed and analysed situations in which the students have to construct historical problems analogous to those researched by professional historians. But the focus on competences prescribed by the ministry since 2006 does not seem to have influenced history courses or didactical research. Perhaps the fact that in France, unlike most other countries, the competences are disconnected from epistemology does not make it easy (Cardin/Tutiaux-Guillon 2007).

Research in history didactics has investigated the structure and the nature of historical content, explored the field of effective teaching and learning history, and has proposed some important innovations. This has been developed through a classic methodology: student and teacher interviews, observations of classroom situations, analyses of videotaped lessons, content analysis of official texts, of textbooks, of lessons, of students' written works... Experiments have also taken place, collecting relevant data for describing and assessing learning processes and their results. Methods have been partly quantitative (statistical analysis of answers from a questionnaire, or of interactions in the classroom) but mostly qualitative, with careful and sometimes collective control of the results and interpretation. We can rely on more precise, detailed and qualified information on history as a school subject and on its social practice by teachers and students, and, thanks to Legris (2014), on the complicated social and political drawing up of history curricula. We have also got results from experiments on new methods and new contents, as well as reflections on benefits and obstacles resulting from their implementation. Some sensitive "hot" issues have been explored and proposals to face them were made. Does this influence effective teaching?

### **3. History in everyday classrooms: far from achievements in history didactics**

As described in former publications (Tutiaux-Guillon 2006; 2011b), teaching history in French secondary schools is mainly the exposition of knowledge by a "*cours magistral dialogué*" (dialogue-lecture), giving room to quick interactions between students and teacher, mostly supported by documents, and, recently, to short exercises. The students are subject to the teacher's expectations. S/he is the one who asks questions, who assesses the students' answers, who complements them with facts and meaning and who incorporates them into her/his own discourse. Those interactions, quite usual in history lessons, have been described as "didactical loops" (Audigier/Crémieux/Mousseau 1996). Most interactions involve the teacher and one pupil only, and finally, the teacher selects what must be written down and learnt. The approach seems to be inductive but rarely makes the students reason historically: most questions invite them to a quick and short answer, using either previous knowledge or pieces of information from a

document (with an occasional easy interpretation). When the students are asked to propose a critical approach to a text, it is most often because the author evidently cannot be trusted, or because the document is anachronistic. This strengthens the impression that any reliable historical document conveys the objective truth about the past. Such modest demands decrease the risks of misunderstanding or “wasting time” in discussion. The quick rhythm of the interactions, the continuous succession of new questions is thought to be a key to support students’ attention and interest. According to the teachers, asking easy questions also provides opportunities to participate in the dialogue even for students who are not very good at history. Usually, the more demanding questions are directed at the best students. The intent is to motivate any student; the unintended result is that only the best are trained to reason (Bonnéry 2011). These practices are focused on the teacher, whose abilities to adapt history to students, to provide a well-structured explanation of the past, to make things “simple and clear”, to focus on main “learnable” facts and to motivate the students (by choosing attractive documents or by rhetorical competences) are reputed to be the basis of their efficiency.

Introducing competences in the curricula had very little effect on this current practice: at most, a few abilities are explicitly aimed at, through the usual exercises and through a search for information, even when the students have to develop an individual project. The students have no time to construct their own knowledge during the course of these tasks: it is always required that, at home, they “learn their lessons” for the assessment (Audigier 1995; Audigier/Crémieux/Mousseau 1996; Tutiaux-Guillon 1998; 2004). Even ministerial inquiries conclude that there is a discrepancy between teachers’ and students’ impressions: the former say that analyzing documents helps develop the students’ ability to think critically, while the latter say that they need to listen to the teacher, to learn, but not to understand.<sup>10</sup> These practices rely on a very traditional and rather blurred concept of learning. Most teachers do not refer to psychology (except for a rather trivial one), neither to educational sciences, nor to epistemology and not to didactics, either. History is what the historians find out, write and publish, what is taught in university. By definition, the students have not enough experience, knowledge and abilities to do the same. The core feature of this concept of learning is that the students have to master “the basics” (facts and terminology, according to teachers) first, before reasoning and thinking historically (Lautier 1997a).

Thus the teaching of history can still be described by the “*modèle des 4R*” (Audigier, 1995): the students are taught what is thought to be the Results of historians' works and a Realistic view of the past; the lessons Refuse mentioning debates and controversies associated with scientific or social discussions – supposed to convey political overtones – and propose consensual References. School history is organised according to a positivist paradigm: what is taught is “the truth” about the past, and the students have to learn it in the same frame, because this truth enlightens the citizen, and thus his/her political action (Tutiaux-Guillon, 2004; 2008). Recently, partly because of its failing results, partly because its impediments to developing competences, the institution tried to find a path for transforming this teaching practice – but without relying on research in history didactics, whatever their issues and achievements!

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<sup>10</sup> DEPP 2007 (cf. Note 9).

Let us look at one steady trend in history didactics, namely setting historical problems: an institutional requirement, since the 1990s in France, is to associate a given topic with current problems that will assign a significance to the past and will allow to select the relevant content from the abundance of historical knowledge. It is also supposed to make learning easier by stimulating curiosity and by stressing the most important aspects. But most questions introducing history lessons are not “problems”: on the one hand, recording facts provides enough answers, on the other hand, these questions are not constructed by the students but imposed on them (Guyon 1998; Le Roux 2004). Most students do not learn to solve historical problems and so do not know that developing knowledge implies – even for historians – developing questions. Furthermore, they are hardly ever allowed to argue their personal interpretations or to contest the significance and relevance of a problem set by the teacher. And institutional texts do not provide many clues to the appropriate type of problem for history lessons: social issues, or problems of historical research, or school problems focused on specific learning? For researchers in didactics, working with historical problems is supposed to empower the students with methodological and conceptual abilities and involve them in active learning (Le Roux 2004; Pouette/Tutiaux-Guillon 1993; Mével/Tutiaux-Guillon 2012). This also means that the students do not have to be presented with the significant facts, but rather have to work them out, so that discussions and historical interpretation have to take place in the classroom (De Cock-Pierrepoint 2007; Doussot 2011; Guyon/Mousseau/Tutiaux-Guillon 1993; Le Marec/Vézier 2011; Le Roux 2004; Mével/Tutiaux-Guillon 2012). Learning to question, with the teacher’s help, could be achieved through seemingly simple questions (when? until when? who? which change? etc.) that even a young student will memorize. A little more difficult are questions about contemporaneity of seemingly quite different phenomena (Heimberg 2002; Mével/Tutiaux-Guillon 2012). The teachers' aim would be to encourage the students to reason: making inferences, deducing, comparing, evaluating analogies, developing a dialectical ability to accept and to make sense of contradictions, conceiving a multi-causal explanation, adopting a multi-perspective approach, changing the social, time or space scale... Some researchers have also proposed a particular type of problem, the one confronting a student with the irrelevance and inefficiency of her/his first interpretation of an historical situation, inducing a problem-solving approach (Gérin-Grataloup/Solonel/Tutiaux-Guillon 1994; Guyon/Mousseau/Tutiaux-Guillon 1993; Pouette/Tutiaux-Guillon 1993; Le Roux 2004; Mével/Tutiaux-Guillon 2012). Others set in the theoretical frame of problematization lead the students to question the rationale of the course of events: for example, “Why was Louis XVI overthrown on August 10<sup>th</sup> 1792 and not after his failure to escape in June 1791?” (Doussot 2010). Finally, some researchers transpose historical controversies to the classroom, providing the students with resources drawn from sources and from historians’ papers and setting off discussions: for example, “How was it possible for the soldiers to face the long-lasting horrors of the First World War?” (Le Marec/Vézier, 2006). The aim is not only to understand the past, but also to understand how the historians develop their interpretations. The students, in such situations, form a “classroom discursive community” (*communauté discursive scolaire*), where interactions are described as similar to scientific ones (Doussot, 2010). No prescription or recommendation from the educational authorities rely on such analyses.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ministerial recommendations for improving history teaching, still valid for new curricula, do not rely explicitly on research in didactics or educational sciences: cf. the writing of the *vademecum des capacités en histoire et en*



Neither history didactics as research field, nor the psychology of learning have a large place in secondary teachers' training. Any student who intends to become a history (or geography) teacher has to achieve a bachelor's degree (most often in history). It is not compulsory to attend pre-professional courses. Up until 2013, students did not enter their first courses in didactics until the first – or even only the 2<sup>nd</sup> – year of their master's degree. But during the same years, the student also had to succeed in a highly selective competition (CAPES). The curriculum for this competition was composed of thorough history and geography issues, of courses on epistemology and historiography and of detailed knowledge about school curricula in history, geography and civics. Didactics had no part in it. If selected, the student became a teacher, mentored by an experienced teacher during the first year of practice. Since 2015, the new frame of the CAPES gives more space to what is called "pedagogy", and less to epistemology. One written and one oral paper require that the scientific knowledge be adapted for school students, but without taking into account factors such as age, abilities, previous knowledge etc. Even this (limited) evolution prompted strong reactions in the prestigious history revues *Annales HSC* and *Vingtième siècle*<sup>12</sup>. But as stated by Doussot (2017), the controversy seemed to ignore a possible part played by history didactics in selecting teachers. At the same time, the master's degree has moved towards more professionalism, including practical experience during the 1<sup>st</sup> (2 sessions of 2 weeks each) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (8-10 hours a week) years, and also some courses in educational sciences and in didactics. To summarize, history didactics based on research and not on practical tricks represents less than 15% of the time devoted to training, with differences from one ESPE to another, and from one teacher trainer to another. An additional opportunity is provided by the requirement, as part of the master's degree ECTS, for developing and analysing a practical experiment supported by academic research: depending on the tutor, these references might include history didactics.

But a quick glance at some recent professional publications that intend to support the teaching of history, edited by authorities – experienced teachers, teacher trainers and/or school inspectors in history, geography and civics – , makes for disturbing reading: the references to didactics are scarce and random; the literature recommended consists of publications by historians or geographers. The column "didactics" in the professional magazine *Historiens & Géographes* was mostly devoted to examples of lessons, to relevant content and to pedagogical tricks. It was not until 2006 that this magazine decided to present a general overview of history didactics – but with an introduction praising the teacher's lecture (Bruter/Moniot 2006). The reports published by the INRP did not find a large audience, even in the IUFM. Only some recent books partly change the deal, namely those by Lautier (1997b), Baquès (2001), Pinson (2007), Mével and Tutiaux-Guillon (2012). For most inspectors, teachers and teacher trainers who might be "smugglers" of history didactics, professional common sense is the only useful and meaningful resource to reflect on history teaching and history learning, and practising is the best way to improve practice. Didactics is only "theory", alien to school reality. When some approaches that might have been borrowed from research pass into professional common sense and practice, they are often fully rebuilt and

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*géographie*, <http://eduscol.education.fr/cid58268/vade-mecum-des-capacites-en-histoire-geographie-education-civique.html>.

<sup>12</sup> *Annales ESC* 2015: Lire *Le capital* de Thomas Piketty - Recherche historique et enseignement secondaire. 1; Bourdon et al. 2015. The only researcher in history didactics, L. De Cock, is the same in both issues.

misshaped, mainly to fit into the professional culture. For example, teachers might use the notions of *“transposition didactique”* (didactic adaptation) or of *“representations sociales”* (socially shared conceptions), yet their meaning is very different from the one referred to in research. For teachers and teacher trainers, managing the *“transposition didactique”* means adapting the scholarly history to effective teaching, and, in the process, keeping it as close as possible to historians’ works and to university publications, while researchers insisted on a full re-framing of scholarly knowledge, on uprooting it from the initial academic field, on deep change in the nature and the structure of information, on the implementation in a planning alien to scholarly research, on the ontological difference between school subject and scholarly discipline (Chevallard 1985). The concept of *“représentations sociales”* was borrowed from social psychology by Lautier (1997a). It has become very popular in history didactics since, either by itself or linked with the theory of *“polyphasie cognitive”*, indicating that current knowledge very often mixes rational (“cold”) and affective (“warm”) knowledge. A *“représentation sociale”* is a cognitive product involving experience, judgement, knowledge, affective, resulting from social interacting and socialization. It plays a key role in learning, because new information is grafted onto existing representations and because the mind rejects information that contradicts the core content of well-rooted ones. The researchers in history didactics use this concept to interpret learning results and learning processes, to analyse communication in the classroom and to suggest classroom activities. *“Collecting conceptions”*<sup>13</sup> is at present commonly used in the classroom, but many teachers only do a quick oral assessment of the students’ previous knowledge (and sometimes opinion) at the beginning of a new chapter and then go on with their course. Emotion and values are discarded because usually French history education does not deal with these. The teachers point out errors in order to provide the students with “truth” and look for the basic knowledge useful for their teaching project. The results of research, which could help to interpret the students’ *représentations sociales* and might suggest new practices, are apparently ignored. Other practices developed through research – problem-solving, serious games, debates – are also watered down in order to disturb the traditional way of teaching as little as possible: from support to active learning, they become motivating resources.

In fact, why would a teacher, happy with her/his job – feeling competent in knowing what is going on in the classroom, quietly assessing the students on the basis of their “abilities”, “gifts”, “involvement”, “work” – read papers or books suggesting other ways to manage the students’ learning that would probably only disquiet them? If s/he is satisfied with thinking and acting in the frame of a positivist paradigm, why would s/he move to a new one (characterized by constructing, educating, mediation, learner, curriculum, concept, cognition, competence, evaluation etc., according to Astolfi 1992)? Research in history didactics is not comforting. It takes for granted that knowledge, even scientific knowledge, is a construct, that learning is a process and that what is learned is a social and personal reshaping of what is taught, including errors, provisional arrangements and revisions, needing reflection, discussion, attempts etc. In fact, the foundation of history didactics is set in a different intellectual world than the usual teaching.

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<sup>13</sup> This expression is biased: what is collected are verbal or graphic expressions that might be interpreted as “social representations”.

## 4. Perspectives

Recent research in history didactics makes more room for the presentation of social problems relating to the future (which development? which citizenship? which understanding of common interest and civic society?) as well as relating to the past (how to deal with competitive memories? with the dark side of the past? with multi-identity and multi-perspectivity?). These topics are probably more sensitive because our society does not trust in future and progress anymore, resents cultural diversity (often unduly rejected on ethnicity) as a threat and confronts culpability regarding the excess of past occidental supremacy. Such issues mean that not only the content but mostly the aims and purposes of history education are at stake: we need research on the role of purposes and on practical work considering them explicitly as *content*. The research on “acute social questions” (Legardez/Simonneaux 2006; Simonneaux/Legardez 2011; Tutiaux-Guillon 2011) contributes to such a goal. But developing such research means perhaps less stress on epistemology and more on the philosophy of education; it also begs strong methodological questions: How do we investigate the long-lasting effect of history learning and its reinvestment in social and political everyday life? It is quite difficult because most of the content proposed for schools is also shared in the larger French society: as said above, words, events, figures, explanations, significances are part of the current culture. How to establish and to verify interpretations of the links between historical content, learning, and social and political attitudes? How should we explicitly implement attitudes and behaviors, an adherence to values, in historically valid content? Which would be the valid epistemological position of a researcher who is also a citizen involved in and committed to political life? Where is the priority: testimonies about what is done, about the difficulties or experiments and recommendation? And in this last option, what is the first step: proposing a fruitful historical school culture or proposing activities empowering students? The work is still to be developed.

On the other side, the curricula have changed recently, introducing not only new topics (slave trade, immigration, colonization...) but also competences (and acting in context), cross-disciplinary approaches, opportunities for projects developed by the students, and stressing the importance of skills. The frame of reference is set not so much by scholarly history as it is by social requirements: the relevant knowledge is considered to be the one efficient for acting. At the same time, it is compulsory for teachers to contribute through their lessons and works to educating for a sustainable development (*éducation au développement durable*, since 2007), educating for health, developing competencies in ICT etc. History education is no longer connected only with geography and civics (this was the French tradition since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) but also with interdisciplinary topics touched upon by any subject. A few research projects begin to explore the effects of such new bylines on the structure of the discipline and on the practices,<sup>14</sup> and the necessary replenishment of the references to history, epistemology and historiography. Beyond this, new

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<sup>14</sup> A symposium devoted to these changes has taken place in the AREF conference (2013): *Compétences, nouveaux contenus et éducations à: quels effets sur les disciplines scolaires installées ?*, with contributions by Anne Vézier and Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon for school history in France. [http://www.aref2013.univ-montp2.fr/cod6/?q=content/comp%C3%A9tences-nouveaux-contenus-et-%C3%A9ducatons-%C3%A0%C2%A0-quels-effets-sur-les-disciplines-scolaires-in](http://www.aref2013.univ-montp2.fr/cod6/?q=content/comp%C3%A9tences-nouveaux-contenus-et-%C3%A9ducatons-%C3%A0%C2%A0-quels-effets-sur-les-disciplines-scolaires-inhttp://www.aref2013.univ-montp2.fr/cod6/?q=content/comp%C3%A9tences-nouveaux-contenus-et-%C3%A9ducatons-%C3%A0%C2%A0-quels-effets-sur-les-disciplines-scolaires-in)http://www.aref2013.univ-montp2.fr/cod6/?q=content/comp%C3%A9tences-nouveaux-contenus-et-%C3%A9ducatons-%C3%A0%C2%A0-quels-effets-sur-les-disciplines-scolaires-in. Cf. Tutiaux-Guillon, Nicole 2015.

trends emerge regarding informal history learning through museums (Cartable de Clio 2011; Hommet 2017), through cinema (Briand 2014; Cartable de Clio 2007; Doussot 2015), through role plays.

Those new fields of research question the models and concepts elaborated by history didactics for the past 30 years: for example, is the *modèle des 4R* (Audigier 1995) still relevant? Or, what is the heuristic value of the proposal of two paradigms, one (positivist paradigm) interpreting the usual teaching and learning and one (constructivist & critical paradigm) interpreting the changes in the status of knowledge, in the activities, in the intent to develop active citizenship (Tutiaux-Guillon 2004; 2008a)? Present comparative research analyzes the didactical transactions between teacher and students in which an historical content is being taught: it shows that, due to the dominant interpretations of institutional prescription and to practical epistemology, the current teaching is still interpretable through these models. But this is probably because the change in effective history teaching occurs slowly, more slowly than wished for by the recent curricula.

The last domain is a large and sensitive one, because of the recent transformation and because of the social stakes involved: teacher training. What is presently – and what would and must be – the job and what are the competencies of a teacher of history (and in France of geography and civics)? What would be a good training based on didactics? Which professional attitudes could be qualified as specific to history teaching? Now that citizenship is changing and that most teachers do not believe in the accuracy of collective identities, which relevant meaning of history education would nurture a professional identity? We need research on the professionals' feelings in the present context, on how teachers negotiate changes and stability, on how they face professional problems, on how they build their disciplinary awareness when they have to create new activities, to enable their students to develop interdisciplinary competencies, to promote behavior etc. We need research *about* training and *for* training. We have to identify the needs of history teachers as well as ways to meet them – not by providing tricks but by resorting to reflective resources. The ESPE plan initially intended to offer opportunities for the creation of collaborative research teams, associating teachers and school inspectors on the practical field side with researchers on the more theoretical side with a common interest in adapting and transferring the results of history didactics into implementation and in detecting the professional requirements. At the moment, this collaboration is still scarce and problematic, partly because of the gap between different conceptions of professional training, partly because of the discrepancies in what could be seen as relevant references, partly because of a latent struggle for dominating the ESPE. The social move in granting relevance to history didactics is still to come.

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