

## B E R I C H T E

### TEACHING HISTORY IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL A SURVEY OF AN EUROPEAN SEMINAR

#### INTRODUCTION

The School Education Division of the Council of Europe organised in Donaueschingen (Western Germany) a seminar about history teaching in the primary school (2-7 May 1983).

This seminar was intended for teachers of primary schools and training-schools. In the perfect building of the "Staatliche Akademie für Lehrerfortbildung" took the meeting place: the lectures, the discussions, and the activities of the workgroups. It was a pity that there weren't representatives of all the European countries. The greatest part of the participants came from Western Germany. Other participants were representatives of France, Norway and the Netherlands.

#### HISTORY TEACHING AND THE CURRICULUM

The seminar started with a lecture of supervisor Stephan (Western Germany). He pointed out that it was very confusing to speak about 'the primary school' in the seminar. The organisation of the primary school isn't congruent in all the countries. The primary schools in the Netherlands and Norway for example have six classes (for children till twelve year); the primary school in Western Germany has four classes (for children till nine year). This is a very meaningful difference for the subject of the meeting: teaching history! History isn't mentioned in the curricula of the federal states of Western Germany. In former days it was a part of 'Heimatkunde'. After the second world war this name has been changed in 'Sachunterricht'. In the federal state Baden-Württemberg is a revision of the curriculum planned. In 1984 this part of the curriculum will be called: 'Heimat- und Sachunterricht'.

What's in a name? It looks like a wordgame, but it is a struggle between a more scientific curriculum or a more childcentered curriculum. History is in the old (and new) curriculum of Baden-Württemberg only a part of integrated education. That is easy to understand, while the curriculum

is made for children from six till nine years old! The children meet history in subjects as the light or the post through the years.

#### CHILDEVELOPMENT AND HISTORY

Psychologist Ueberall (Western Germany) gave a lecture about the psychological development of children from seven till eleven years old.

She made a survey of the ideas about childdevelopment of Piaget and of Galperin. But the consequences of these ideas for the teaching of history didn't became clear. The lecturer wasn't specialised in history. So she could only mention a few general remarks about the development of the ideas of children about time.

#### THE AIDS TO HISTORY TEACHING

The next lecture of trainingteacher Van der Kooij (the Netherlands) was about the practice of history teaching. He underlined the meaning of the (history-)story by the teacher and of the meaning of the historical childbook. Further on he mentioned and showed aspects of working with schoolbooks, the area around the school, slides, models, objects, older people, soundtracks and so on. He made connections between the ages of the pupils, the aims and the different aids.

#### SCHOOL AND MUSEUM

The museum was the subject of the last lecture by supervisor Dr. Veitshans (Western Germany). The number of museums and the number of the visitors are growing each year in Western Germany (in 1977 one of two Germans visited one time a museum). And there is a growing interest of schools in visiting museums. The museum as a kind of education-place. He mentioned some ways to work with children in museums: to look for, or to play with, or to try out, or to draw, or to measure, or to ... After his lecture there was a visit to the museum of Villingen with the discoveries of the famous celtic burial mound, one of the greatest of Middle Europe, from the sixth century before Christ.

### HISTORY TEACHING IN EUROPE

Very important during the course were the reports about history teaching in the states of Europe by the participants of the seminar. It was clear that there is very little information about history teaching in the European countries. At the end of the seminar there was a plea to the Council of Europe to take the initiative for a survey of history teaching in the primary school in the European countries. This survey can be the start of further activities on European level about history teaching in the primary school.

### WORKGROUPS

During the seminar there were three workgroups. One about history teaching and the museum, one about the first meeting of young children with history and one about general problems with history teaching in the primary school.

The last workgroup found it necessary that the Council of Europe takes the initiative for further activities on behalf of the teaching of history in the primary school in Europe.

### A REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

Under the responsibility of supervisor Stephan (Western Germany) there will be a report about this conference, available at the School Education Division of the Council of Europe in Strassburg (BP 431 R6-67006 Strasbourg Cedex).

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