



PRECONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN HUNGARY

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1. Introduction

History education is in crisis, and this is related to the decline of general historical culture. While history education continues to convey the results of the science of history, the content and tone of historical debates, and people's image of the historical past are rapidly moving away from it. In order to play a more effective role in shaping historical public thinking, it is necessary to rethink the overall aims.

Historical education should make an impact on not only the students' historical thinking but their historical consciousness as well.

2. Theoretical framework

Conceptualizing historical consciousness. How can we distinguish between historical thinking, historical understanding and historical consciousness? (Table 1)

Table 2 Stéphane Lévesque's matrix on how individuals and groups position themselves and engage in issues of History (Lévesque, 2018)

Types and competencies	Traditional	Exemplary	Critical	Genetic
Inquiry	Questions are designed to provide straightforward, definitive answers through common sense, real-life practice.	Questions serve to investigate comparative cases for present-day consideration and useful lessons.	Individuals have different questions and sets of concerns highlighting cultural relativity.	Questions are contextually situated and generate forms of inquiry and representations that are open to criticism and revisions.
Historical thinking	Abilities to think historically are reduced to obligations to pre-given moral stances.	Abilities to think historically provides definitive rules and principles for actions.	Abilities to think historically reveal the contextual nature of our own self.	Abilities to think historically are based on concepts, rules and criteria.
Orientation	Past, present, and future are bound in a sense of eternity.	The dimensions of time are recognized and connected through general rules for guiding our actions.	Past, present, and future are distinct and only connected through a negative sense of rupture.	Continuity and change are relational and essential to life orientation
Narrative	Narratives confirm present-day personal relationship with the past and to stabilize identity.	Narratives are constructed representations which offer useful lessons.	Narratives provide counter-arguments to grand narratives.	Narratives offer plausible representations of the past to orient our life that are open to revision and scrutiny.

Table 1

Historical thinking	Historical understanding	Historical consciousness
The aim of historical thinking is to reconstruct what has happened in the past as accurately as possible.	The goal of historical understanding is to understand historical interpretations intelligently and critically.	The purpose of historical consciousness is not to explore and understand certain events of the past, but to develop a general attitude toward what has happened in the past, consistent with our personality.

3. The present study

I applied two methods to explore the opportunities and problems related to developing of historical consciousness.

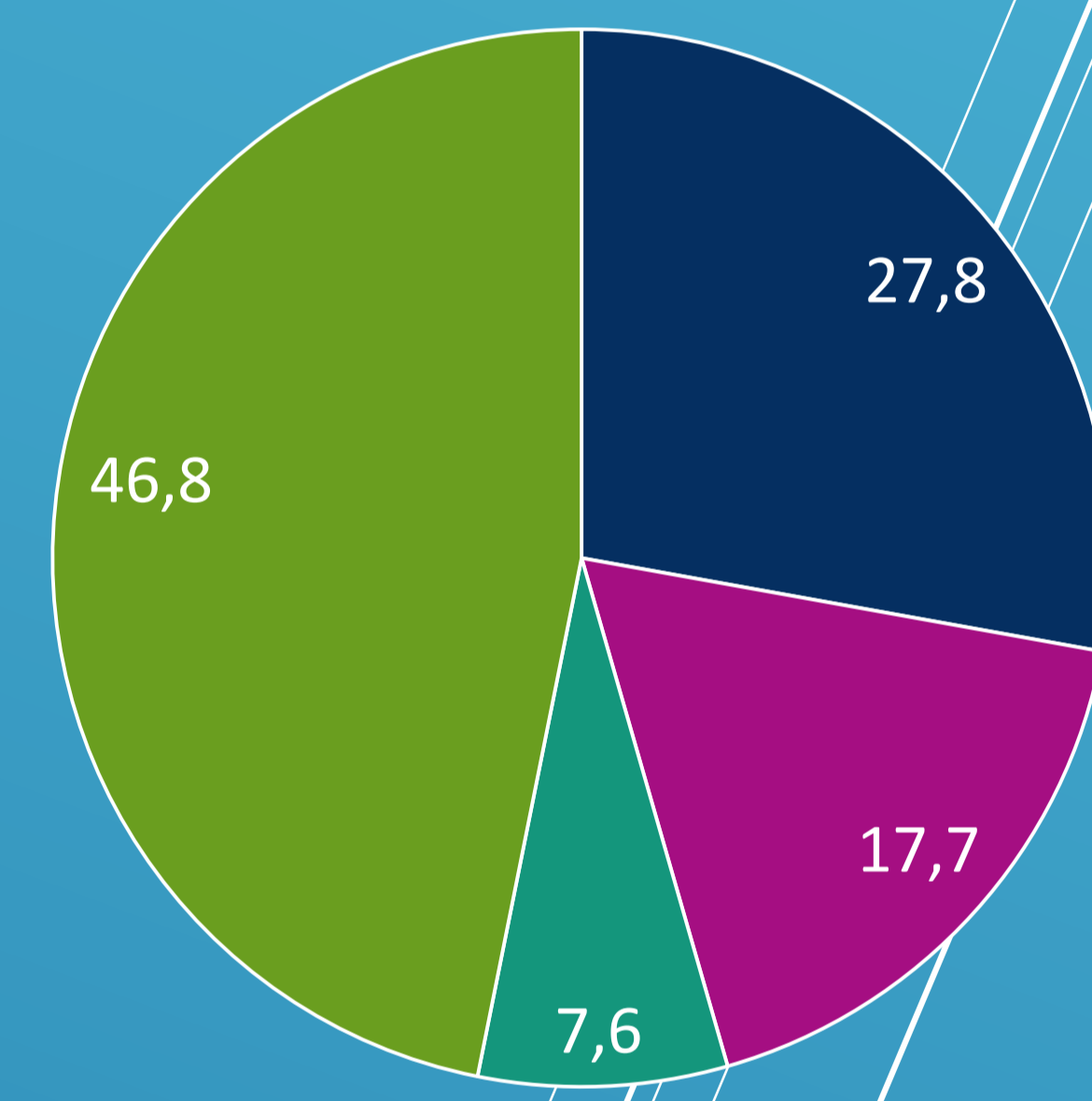
A) Analyzing the professional draft of the new Hungarian history curriculum from the aspect of developing historical consciousness

Method

I examined the goals and requirements formulated in the curriculum in terms of the types of historical consciousness defined by Rüsen (Rüsen, 2006). I also applied Stéphane Lévesque's matrix (Lévesque, 2018) for this (Table 2).

Result

The different types of historical consciousness in the history curriculum (2018)



Legend: Traditional (dark blue), Exemplary (magenta), Critical (green), Genetic (olive)

Diagram 1 Proportions between goals and requirements for different types of historical consciousness in the draft national core curriculum (2018)

In the final version adopted by the government in 2020, the development of traditional historical consciousness was given a slightly greater emphasis.

B) Surveying students' attitudes to past and history

Method

Data on the questionnaire were collected through an online survey in Spring 2020. The questionnaire was part of a larger survey intended to measure students' attitudes to past and history. Participants of the survey were 122 students in their final years of upper secondary (ISCED 3) education.

We asked whether they agreed with compulsory history teaching and, if so, why.

Results

Of the 122 students, 102 agreed to compulsory history teaching in secondary schools. Many different aspects appeared in their arguments in favor of teaching compulsory history. (Diagram 2)

4. Conclusion and discussion

The development objectives of the new national core curriculum are balanced in terms of developing historical consciousness. In addition to the development of traditional attitudes, the development of genetic historical consciousness also received due attention.

High school students' responses suggest that learning history is seen as important not only for learning about the national past, but also for understanding the present and making decisions for the future.

All of these could provide a good starting point for developing students' historical consciousness and, through this, for improving the historical culture of society.

Much depends on the ability of history teachers to develop appropriate strategies and methods to shape students' historical consciousness. And research will be able to explore this problem field more deeply.

Aspects mentioned by secondary students that make it necessary to teach history

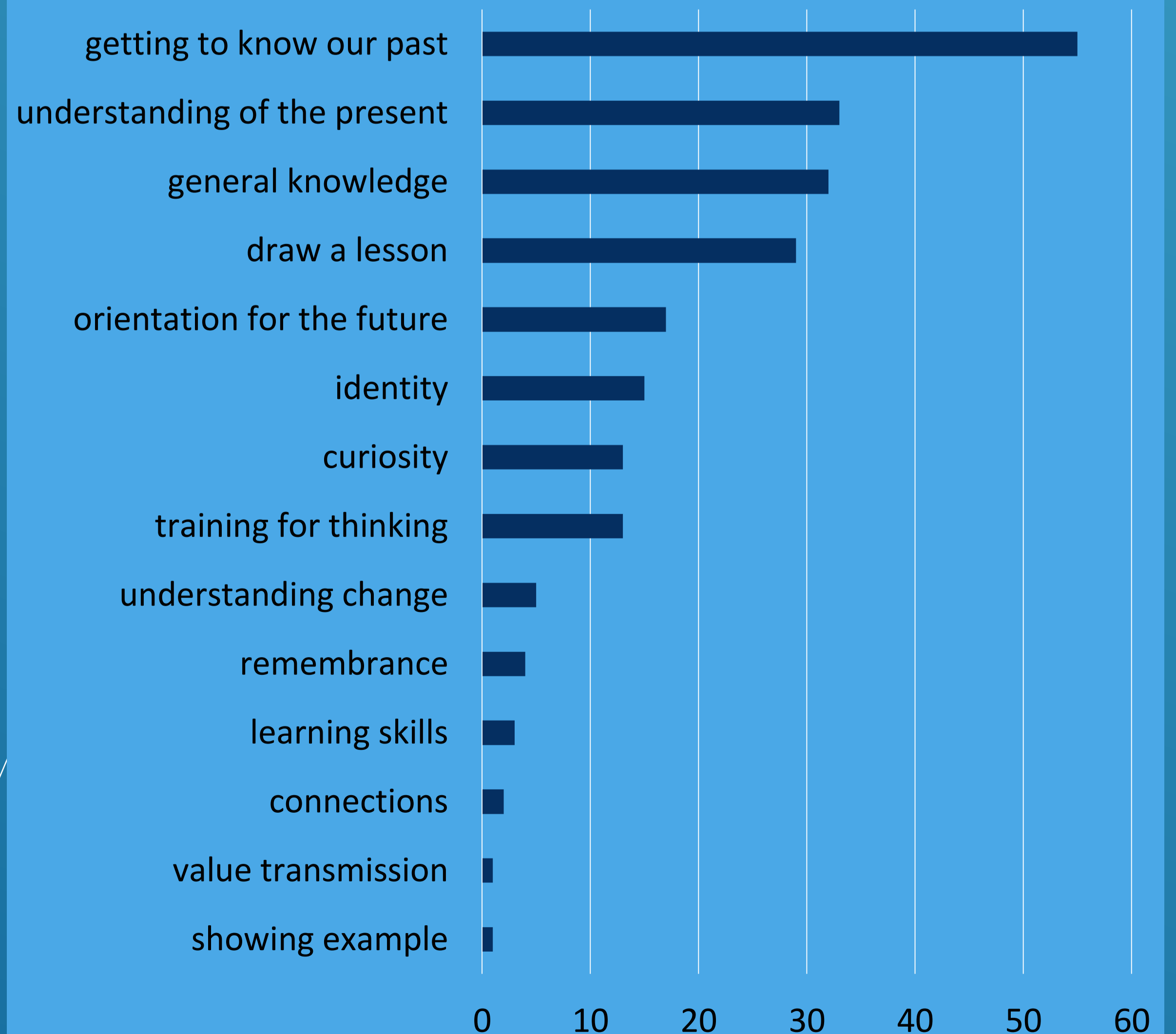


Diagram 2 High school students' answers to the question of why they agree with compulsory history teaching

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- Lévesque, S. (2018). A new approach to debates over Macdonald and other monuments in Canada: Part 2. ActiveHistory.ca
- Rüsen, J. (2006). Historical Consciousness: Narrative, Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development. In Seixas, P. (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 63–85.