Involving Psychological Factors, in National History Education

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Abstract

Teaching of National History does and indeed should contain psychological dimensions. Knowledge of history is closely related with cultural issues and as such it concerns a nation’s vulnerable points and chances of survivability. Accordingly; a teacher of history should be more of a professional educator than a mere transmitter of past events and facts. Especially in a developing country, his / her mission is quite related to instilling patriotism, valorizing social happenings in view of past mistakes and promoting progressive efforts. A pragmatic approach to history cannot be denied, in this respect. Such purposes, as far as the techniques go, are best achieved by an emphasis of the affective domain, as well as the cognitive one.

Keywords: History; National; Teacher; Education; Affective Domain

Introduction

“My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”

John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)

Transmitting knowledge to students, though associated with being knowledgeable, is not quite the same thing as being in possession of knowledge. Even some brilliant professors are known as “anesthetists”, merely because they talk with a dull voice, which lulls the students into sleep, in big university auditoriums. To achieve the attention of the student body; it is the affective dimension of education which ought to be activated. Certainly, courses which necessitate some affective accent and which also provide a possibility for their application, are the social courses in general, and history in particular. The affective domain involves interests, attitudes, dedication, personality and value judgements. Those dimensions usually take shape along the course of life experience. But such desired traits can also be acquired by schooling [1].

It appears that the very first scholar to point out to the affective domain was Swiss pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Nas [2] notes that Alfred Rufer wrote the following lines about Pestalozzi: He could recognize the real internal strength of mankind; which consisted of thinking, feeling and living; as driven by the powers of the head, the heart and the hand, respectively. Therefore; the essence of pedagogy will be training the mind, the heart and the hand.

History Course Favors Enthusiastic (Figure1) Teacher-Typology

The fact that some teachers despise the affective domain and consider its emphasis as a sort of laxity, derives from their obsession with measurement and evaluation. Tezcan [3] confirms that measurement-oriented teachers stay aloof from the affective field. Indeed; unlike psychomotor and cognitive traits; affective domain cannot be observed directly. If a person can be observed for long periods of time, under various circumstances and without keeping him under suggestions of any kind; only then; a verdict may be passed, regarding the existence of the affective dimensions / traits in question [4] (Figure1).
Steinbeck [5] in one of his novels reveals the thoughts of the protagonist. University-graduate grocery-clerk Ethan indulges to think about things like: *A person may sometimes undergo a transformation and others may get amazed. In battles, similar phenomena are commonly encountered: A coward may become a hero. A symbol of courage may collapse. Sometimes one reads in a newspaper that a compassionate father has just exterminated his whole family!* Tezcan [3] affirms that the missionary type of teacher stands very close to the affective domain. He is the one who strives to teach ethical values to the child; he regards himself as a kind of missionary. Nevertheless; his role-playing in class may not be consistent with his own behavior.

Ziya Gökalp, [the forefather of Turkish sociologists], says that according to Durkheim, there are two kinds of historiography: One is the objective one and the other is the national one. The former mainly relies on documents; whereas the latter is of a more pedagogical nature, trying to imbue children with love of country and attainment of virtues for the future. Now; the future is the source of our existence, the topography and stamp of our identity. To shape the future, one firstly needs a sense of history. We need to cherish our culture if we want to survive [6].

The republican founders of modern Turkey made it a must for foreign schools, to include Turkish cultural courses, in their curriculums, in this respect, by passing a specific legislation called the Unification of Education. Togan [7] notes that didactic and pragmatic historians mean to contribute to good character formation thanks to their all-colorful charts and tables. As for the history teacher; he is the transmitter of historical events, even if not the chronicler of those events.

History is closely related to the present interests of a particular nation. Taşkıran [8] narrates how the Turkish delegates criticized, gently and properly; *the presentation of a Greek delegate at the Twelfth International Colloquium of Military History. The presentation was about the conquering of Istanbul by the Ottomans. At the question-answer session; Turkish military historians affirmed that the verb invasion employed there was not quite appropriate. Otherwise, they argued, in Middle Ages, any battle would have been an invasion. Byzantines were not enslaved; but they were made Ottoman subjects, they pointed out. Those new subjects could comfortably practice their religion and language under Ottoman rule. Moreover; today the name of the city is Istanbul and it is not right to insist on calling it Constantinople.*

Talu [9] mentions about the instigation of a special television canal dealing with history. In France and quotes a sentence of Ethnologist Marc Auge: *The main constructive element of the French society is national history and the interest of people in history. Indeed, the mere preservation of old Paris is an indication of how this nation cares for its own history. Lenezewski [10] points out to the enormous role of the teachers in establishing the Kemalist republican ideas as an enthusiastic professional cadre, in a manner not witnessed even in many western lands. He says that teachers were also rewarded (*) accordingly.*

In the First Congress of History held in July 1932 in Ankara, an exuberant teacher named İhsan Şerif said the following words, in relation to the rehabilitation of Turkish History: *I have been teaching History for 45 years. Formerly; I used to talk in an insipid and lethargic voice in front of my students. This was because I, like my colleagues, knew little about the Central Asia, myself. Such an history education could not build up a sacred love of the homeland. Nowadays, it is a different current thanks to our savor-and-leader [meaning Atatürk]. He illuminated the past of the Great Turk in a dazzling manner! [11,12].

Psychiatrist Adasal [13] affirms that Turks, as a nation, got rid of their social collective feelings of inferiority (**) thanks to such attempts and betterment efforts in Historiography. Nobel-winner Orhan Pamuk, in his autobiographical novel, *The Black Book,* remembers his former history teacher in Istanbul in junior high school: This extremely ugly woman would pop out unexpected quizzes from time to time. But when we tore sheets from our notebooks, she would not tolerate it. She would insist that we keep separate sheets of paper for the exams. She would threaten to give zero grades for those who would destroy the national wealth.

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*History teachers’ roles were especially prominent in this campaign. But; all in all; it must be admitted that in later years the respectability and the salaries of all teachers did diminish in zigzags.

**Ottoman Empire was a big power in the Middle Ages. But eventually it began to undergo a terrible decline and loss of respectability; inducing the above-mentioned low spirits and inferiority complex, almost in each of the subjects of the sultans. It was at the end of an Austro-Ottoman war in 1699 with the Treaty of Karlowitz that Ottoman State shrank in territory, for the first time.

Indoctrinating order and thrift is a good trait of this history teacher; but grading with zero marks is not. (As for her lack of beauty, this is just her bad luck). As Mc Whirter & Voltan-Acar put it; self-respect is in interaction with performance; whereby low self-respect would eventually lead to failure. We may thus easily infer that teachers in general and history teachers in particular should refrain from using low grades as a weapon directed to student body, in a given school. For the sake of promoting excitement and motivation; especially the typical history teacher must be somewhat more generous, in grading the exam papers.

Moreover; the exemplary teacher of History; to make the course pleasant and attractive; should dissuade blind memorization (Figure 2) of dates of wars and clauses of treaties and other facts. Instead; he should encourage the entire comprehension of the topics in outlines, with a view to correlating causes and the relating consequences. Lyautey [14] is very constructive when he says the following: *We cannot enumerate all facts in the past, just as we cannot achieve it in the present. Therefore; we shall concentrate on tendencies, movements and expectations (Figure 2).*
Togan [7] asserts the close relationship between the sociological and the didactive aspects of historiography. He praises Oswald Spengler in this respect; whose methodology pays attention to reveal the “laws of history” hidden behind historical phenomena.

**True Role-Model Teachers of History!**

Once a young shoe-shine man, a drop-out of junior high school, mentioned about his former history-teacher, while giving me a shoe-shine. He said he does not remember the date of a certain war or a signed treaty. But; he went on, he vividly remembers the moral anecdotes told by a specific teacher of history. He narrated one:

“A young girl falls sick and gets bedridden. The family doctor informs the family members that her days are counted, probably until the first days of the autumn season. The poor girl eavesdrops on the bitter notification. The trees in front of her window shed their leafage, one by one. But a certain yellowish leaf simply refuses to fall. It clings to the narrow branch. Weeks pass and the girl recovers. She walks to the window and she is amazed to see that the resistant leaf is only a picture, painted on the glass. It turns out that a painter, a next door neighbor, also heard the tragic prophecy of the doctor. One night he secretly painted that particular leaflet on the windowpane from outside, to imbue the sick girl with optimism and hope. The plan worked, indeed!”

İbrahim Teksoy, an elderly civilian teacher in a military school in Anatolia, some years ago, was another wonderful example of exuberant history teachers. On occasion, he would pick some students and improvise a *mise en scène*, right there in class. For example; a student would play an assaulting commander, another the one defending a castle, a third the ambassador sent with a white flag to negotiate the terms of a possible surrender. (Formerly, diplomacy was such a temporary task accorded to a prominent statesman with a message to be delivered from his ruler or commander. The stationary diplomats representing a state in the capitol of another country for years, is a fairly new concept in the history of mankind. Ottomans established their first embassy in London as late as in 1793. Sometime later followed the opening ceremonies of Vienna, Berlin and French embassies).

Recep Ülkü, my own lycée teacher of history (nickname: *Ustura*, meaning *Razorbale*) used to make us literally underline the important paragraphs in our textbooks, in the very classroom. Unnecessary and tedious over-information did not count much, in his opinion. An immigrant son, he also spoke Greek and was especially well-informed about the ancient Mediterranean history. A lot of knowledge of history got embedded in my memory, through his mouth, ever since. Here is a specific example, as a case *history*: Ancient Romans, in their early days of setting up the state, used to force their slaves to drink wine and then watch their ridiculous drunkard behavior patters, as a form of mockery. But later on; wealth and fond of debauchery transformed the Romans themselves into to the greatest drunks of the ancient world!

What a good approach to teach practical lessons to history-course- students! Yes, Roman aristocrats held crazy orgies, lying sideway on soft comfortable couches; guzzling and gulping frantically! Tickling their throats with feathers, they vomitted into specially-designed pools and went on eating and drinking (*****). They dried their greasy fingers on natural napkins: Thick curly hairs of young robust Black slave girls and boys. In modern times; the degenerating property of ethyl alcohol would be used deliberately by some exploitative emperialistic Whites. Those men would introduce fire-water to some American Indian and Eskimo tribes and deprive their honor and warrior-like qualities.

For instance; in today’s Chile, there lived once wild Araucanian tribes (Figure 3). From Spanish invaders they learned agriculture and herd-raising. But they also learned alcohol. This liquid did in a few years what the invaders were not able to do in centuries. Predacious, vindictive, relentless, patriotic people stooped to selling their lands, animals, families for alcohol [15] (Figure 3).

Figure 2: A Bad Example is a Teacher Dictating Sheer Memorisation (Illustration By The Author).

Figure 3: Araucanian Husband and Wife, a Picture Dating From 1890 (Internet).
branch most closely related to history. Selahattin Sanrı (nickname: Toto, meaning Football-lottery), was an elderly Istanbulite gentleman. He told us that while he had been a primary school teacher, he had enrolled in two faculties (Economy as well as Geography) simultaneously and had finished both with honors. Moreover, he had gotten to learn French, in the mean time. In our Geography classes; when investigating a neighbor-state; besides the landscape and other factual data; he would add the probable effects of that state onto Turkey; economically, socially and politically. This, he would rightfully boast (***) would no other geography teacher would ever dare to do or manage to accomplish!

**From my childhood days, I remember a terrific scene from a historical movie about ancient Romans, which I watched in my childhood. A Roman with his mouth and nose smeared with food and drink, suddenly starts burping and belching, while the camera zooms in on his lips just at this particular grotesque moment!**

****One of his future projections proved to be false. He used to say that Turkic states in middle Asia under Soviet rule could cause no benefit whatsoever to the Republican Turkey, they being enslaved nations reduced to misery, anyhow. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, those slave-states popped up one by one, as independent entities in Central Asia and Turkey immediately extended her aiding hands to them. Also, Turkic states in middle Asia under Soviet rule could cause no benefit whatsoever to the Republican Turkey, they being enslaved nations reduced to misery, anyhow. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, those slave-states popped up one by one, as independent entities in Central Asia and Turkey immediately extended her aiding hands to them.

Let malso narrate a case history regarding the compulsory undergraduate course of History of Turkish Revolution, given by late professor Suna Kili (Figure 4), at Boğaziçi University, years ago. In the beginning; she had told us that we would proceed in a rational manner, not relying on heroic and poetic tirades like those encountered often in primary schools. Nevertheless; towards the end of the semester, one day, our professor began to shed tears on the lectern and we got stricken with astonishment. She must have noticed or sensed a common flaw or deficiency or misbehavior within the student body. Then she pulled herself together. Drying her eyes, she spoke up again: -I am sorry; for a moment I must have forgotten that you all are children of Atatürk! I believe that this very emotional scene must have left a great impact on many a students, just as it did on me [16] (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Suna Kili (1929-2015), Professor of Turkish Revolutionary History (Internet).

### Military Schools’ Curriculum & History

Regarding a team-depth in history education (affective dimension included), military schools are the very best ones. Birand [17] depicts this specific point as one of the important points differentiating a military school from a typical civilian one: Turkish History, a course not taken so seriously in civilian schools, is one of the most important subjects in military schooling. In military schools they scrutinize, rather than study, all aspects of the Turkish History. I must admit that I personally made much of the interest of military personnel in history, while making an interview with a gendarm-team about the hunting offences committed by the hunters, in the wilderness: A young gendarm talked about a special training given to hunters’ falcons on Bolkar mountains. A pigeon tyed by the legs and loaded with a coil woven from horsehair between the wings, to ensure fatigue, was thrown into the air. The falcon would capture it before touching the ground.

As I heard the phrase “a coil of horsehair” (crin / Pferdehaar) something immediately occurred in my near-memory. I just remembered the horsehair robe of a historical character from a poetic book of Cahit Tanyol [18], which I had finished reading, recently. Moreover, while visiting the Sociology department in the Faculty of Letters of Istanbul University, a week ago, I had seen a plate on the door of an office, notifying that emeritus Cahit Tanyol [18] had honored the room formerly; a fact compelling me to go through his book in verse for a second time in my head and thereby refreshing the basic points. I told the gendarms that the word “horsehair” made me remember the Cibali-quartier of Istanbul, a distortion of “Cübbâ Ali” or “Çebe Ali”. He was a mystic wearing a robe (çăbbe) made of horseetail. During the besiege of Byzantium he fell under the enemy swords along with two thousand disciples of his, at the gate of Potea. The gendarms displayed immense interest in hearing the story. They got pleased with the information. History is a specialty of the military people, indeed [19].

Years ago in Iznik (ancient Nicea) we ran into a group of military students visiting the city. Their responsible officer, a staff-major, said with an obviously plain, pragmatic, sagacious and true consciousness of history: Your ancestor marched here all the way from Central Asia, at the times; fighting his way out, continuously. Poor thing! Why did he need to undergo all that suffering? To attain those marvellous fruitful soils and fresh water supplies! (The small principality founded by the Ottoman nomads would fast expand into a vast empire and this very city would be world-famous for its beautiful tiles and ceramics full of Islamic motifs). Interest in History does not pertain to Turkey, alone, either. At Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, years ago, I once visited the base library with a Turkish combat-officer friend of mine, a course-participant there. A staff-officer, also a course-participant from Kenya had just borrowed a bunch of books at the desk, as we approached the librarian. The Kenyan officer greeted us, the new-comers cordially and he boastfully added that a staff-officer...
like him should be on good terms with history, after all. My friend got so upset that he could not help murmuring: You, Black ghost; suppose you memorized all those books, so what? At the moment; relying on an ethnomethodological interpretation of Sociology (which is, roughly speaking, based on attaching importance and giving meaning to ordinary every day phenomena by sheer common sense); and flavored with some Shadenfreude / malicious joy on my own account; I automatically inferred my compatriot’s remark as a sharp professional jealousy merely masked in a racist comment.

Stressing Traditional Values and Virtues

Values represent important generalized attitudes easily transforming into behavior patterns. They occupy a rather central place in the individual’s formation of personality. Values, being fed with various inputs including education, are prone to change with time; but in the mentality of a young adult, they are pretty much settled [20]. [On the other hand] during the process of value-infusion; some resistance against change may come into question. People; in a sense; feel personal losses through changes. One feels as if the identity of his group or community were being violated [21].

Especially; a consciousness regarding the history; does not pertain to the past alone; rather; it also comprises the present and even extends on to building the future [6]. Iz Eyuboğlu [22] affirms that history is a bridge between the past and the future. There is no better and stronger evidence than the lived experiences, in understanding and evaluating the story of mankind. The reality of man is contained more in his Erlebnis / experience, than in his thoughts. Nevertheless; comprehending the past is one thing; while clinging to it blindly and trying to keep it alive at all costs, is another thing. While he was military attach in Sofia in his young days as a middle-ranked officer; Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) once wore the attire of a Janissary, in a masked ball (Figure 5). It appears that in this manner, he wanted to own and defend the glorious past of his country (Figure 5).

But; at the same time; his revolutionary ideas were in formation, in his mind. While writing letters to Madame Corinne [a highly-cultured woman living in Pera section of Istanbul, who had graduated from Conservatory in Paris] Kemal would write both in French and in Turkish. While employing Turkish; he would replace the Ottoman-letters with Latin-characters, an act which foreshadows his future revolution of alphabet. Besides; he was wearing a hat instead of the traditional red-fez or fur headgear; a sign of his future revolution in attire [23].

This example is a vivid indication of the idea that a leader’s right interpretation of history is not a hindrance to his passionate wish of progress and modern improvement. We should also specify the role of the concept of realism in the affective domain. Emotions and excitement do not pay off unless converted into practical and tangible use. Infusion of patriotism is good, but not enough. Technical reconstruction and development efforts should accompany the noble feelings involved in the hearts.

Phantasy is One Thing, Realism Another

A point worth mentioning is that a teacher stressing the affective dimension of teaching, should give the utmost care not to fall into mistakes. Why so? Because the retention of knowledge obtained emphatically is long and lasting. Such durable information might as well be the correct information! It is an ethical consideration not to furnish factual mistakes, in this context, as an educator. The topic of values is a delicate issue! Abraham Maslow determined the relationship between motivations and needs in a pyramidal model. At the bottom, we encounter tangible close needs like food, shelter, sleep; whereas only at the tip, we encounter abstract needs like esteem and self-actualization.

It is known that in World War II, Nazi invaders abused young oppressed French youths and literally employed them for their subversive purposes. Those young minds were confusing their hatred of society with their hatred of country! Below the bread-line, in extreme miserable conditions, how can noble values and ideals ever flourish in a young and unexperienced head? Lacombe Lucien (1974) is a French movie (Figure 6) dealing with this theme. (Some French patriots are known to have reacted to the release of this movie). Lucien Lacombe, a teenager youth in a small provincial town living in deprivation and with a low level of self-esteem; is discovered and recruited by Gestapo. He begins to denounce members of the French underground forces of Resistance. He takes delight in his new capabilities and status, backed by the German officials.
He later encounters a Jewish girl living in seclusion (a family resembling that of the famous Anne Frank) and manipulates his official behavior pattern in a manner to favor his personal feelings, also. With the turn of the events, he eventually tries to escape the country. At the end of the movie, a message on the screen notifies the spectators about his tragic death in the hands of the Resistance members (Figure 6).

Even a well-to-do member of an etnical or religious minority may love the country he is living in, much more passionately than an unfortunate vagabond, who apparantly has nothing to lose. This is a fact to consider! In a similar analysis; today’s United States of America is a relatively young nation, as far the historical roots are concerned. But high ideals like democracy, freedom and good opportunities to flourish economically have all worked together to create a patriotic nation, after all. During the national struggle after World War I, in the dismembering remnants of the Ottoman state; it was not so easy to activate the peasant, who had been neglected for so many years by the Palace. The villagers’ welcoming of the leader was not so exciting, at all times. The peasant was sick and tired of the burden of on-going wars; as Jevakhoff [24] narrates.

Years later, in the Republican Turkey, as Stirling [25] puts it; the Turkish peasant is well-aware of belonging to a nation. He used to distinguish himself from other people on the basis of language and creed; but now; he is nationalistic. He is proud of the military power of Turkey and is interested in technical development. The affective domain should not lack a matter-of-fact and measured tinting. It should not evolve into utopias and chauvenistic feelings. Today’s student, upon facing tne future-realities as an adult; may collapse into a total nihilism and hopelessness; otherwise. History teachers should have a somewhat pragmatic and down-to-earth approach in attaining the ideal equilibrium between literalism and excited patriotism, always drawing on the present conjecture.

In a course I participated in Texas some years ago; our female English educator once told interesting things about the interpretation of American history. Her grandfather was a northern citizen, namely from Illinois. He would tease his grand-daughter for serving in a southern state, the territory of the former “rebels”. The old man was still insisting on a term employed long ago, in the aftermath of the Civil War!

Today; most Americans regard the Civil War (1861-1865) as a lesson in history. Historians, rightfully too, attribute accent to the events in a pragmatic manner and emphasize the charismatic qualities or courageousness of the defeated Southern commanders (like General Nathan Bedford Forrest Harding or General Robert Edward Lee, for instance), instead of their political ideas or separatist tendencies.

***It will be interesting to note that on a foreign language test for adults administered in Ankara a few years ago, I ran into a passage on American history. (A number of comprehension questions were based on the given passage). The main idea got embedded in my memory. It was approximately something like: American history refrains from emphasizing the Civil War; rather the independence struggle under the leadership of General Washington against the British empire finds primary place. That was indeed understandable from the viewpoint of home policy.

Conclusion

Handling the affective dimension of history involves infusion of love of one’s country and more significantly, working hard for the betterment of one’s country, in a manner not to refrain from self-sacrifice, if necessary. It goes without saying that deficiencies and mistakes are not concealed but critisised so that they will not re-occur in the future times. All nations have their defeats, shortcomings or even shameful days, in the past: but well-raised new generations make up for them. They get motivated to promote their national goals, honor and glory. They do through hard work inspired by internalized sharp ideals and in a manner boosted by excitement and enthusiasm (Figures 7-9).
Despite Exuberance and Optimism; Realism is There, not to be Neglected, either. Using the Term Coined by Sociologist Cooly; the Mirror Image of Oneself as a Whole Nation is also to be Reckoned with, All the Time, Like the Situation of Turkey, a Candidate for the European Union for Many a Years, never Surmounting the Threshold to Actual Membership. Turkey is Still Regarded as an Agrarian Country, despite Gigantic Leaps in Industry and Technology (illustration by the Author).

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