

2019 40

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH ON HISTORY DIDACTICS,
HISTORY EDUCATION AND HISTORY CULTURE
YEARBOOK OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HISTORY DIDACTICS



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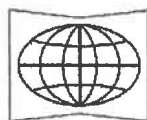


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40/2019

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
RESEARCH ON HISTORY DIDACTICS,
HISTORY EDUCATION
AND HISTORY CULTURE (JHEC)
YEARBOOK
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
FOR HISTORY DIDACTICS (ISHD)

Historical Thinking



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The International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education and History Culture (JHEC) is the official journal of the *International Society of History Didactics (ISHD)* (until 2014: Yearbook · Jahrbuch · Annales). The journal is issued once a year and publishes double-blind peer-reviewed papers in English. For more details about the ISHD, see URL: <http://ishd.co>. Back issues are accessible via URL: <http://opus.bibliothek.uni-augsburg.de/opus4/solrsearch/index/search/searchtype/collection/id/15990> (until 2006) and since 2007/08 via URL: yearbook-ishd.wochenschau-verlag.de
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TITRE CLE ABRÉGÉ:
YEARBOOK – INT. SOC. HIST. DIDACT.
ISSN 1608-8751 (print)
ISSN 2567-1014 (epaper)
ISBN 978-3-7344-0909-7 (epaper)

© WOHENSCHAU Verlag
Dr. Kurt Debus GmbH
Frankfurt/M. 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Developing historical thinking is becoming an overarching goal of history education, at least on the declarative level. The concept is not new and has been developed for many years in various national and international contexts. However, its scope and contents, and especially the methods of transferring it onto everyday school practice still remain work in progress. Moreover, it seems that the more popular the concepts becomes, the more questions it raises revealing new areas of research on both theoretical assumptions and school practice.

These issues were the matter of discussion during the 2018 annual conference of the International Society for History Didactics in Gatineau-Ottawa, however submissions for the journal were not limited to the conference participants.

On the level of theory, the authors of this volume address, among others, the issues of historical agency and pupils' identity, as well as the inclusion of ethical aspects in the process of developing historical thinking.

Shifting from the traditional model of history as memory where education provides learners with ready-to-memorize facts and stories – to teaching critical analysis and discussion on historical narratives seen from multiple perspectives involves deep changes on the level of practice, e.g. in developing curricula, textbooks and lesson plans. In this case, modernizing history education is not about incorporating new technologies but rather about developing new approaches to any and all resources used in the classroom and issues discussed in the process of history education. Some of the papers in this issue of JHEC address the issues posed by the use of films, museums, writing, and the introduction of local and regional history in history education. They present the results of experiments on, and observations of pupils at schools and teacher trainees at universities. More often than not they give voice to the participants of those actions themselves. The reception by and satisfaction of various groups of stakeholders related to all areas of life, education included, has become more important today than ever. In case of the notion of historical thinking, many academic researchers in the area of history didactics speak in favour of introducing it into school practice, even if (or especially that) it involves major re-structuring of traditional

THE IMPACT OF VIDEO TESTIMONIES IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN HUNGARY¹

Csaba Jancsák, Eszter Szőnyi and Ágnes Képiró

This paper reports on a research study conducted in the spring of 2018 in Hungary, on the impact of the use of video testimonies of Holocaust survivors in formal history education. The question the authors aim to answer is how using testimonies in history lessons affects students' learning and attitudes, as well as skills, competences and social values – in comparison to the more traditional, textbook-driven history lessons. Results of the research show that testimony-based history lessons have a strong impact on student empathy skills, promoting affective learning through the connection of students to the stories or the survivors; they facilitate learning and better understanding of the event; they engage students in topics which the traditional lesson does not; and they satisfy the needs of students for visual elements in the classroom.

1. Introduction

Youth research conducted in the past few years in Hungary proves that families spend less and less time talking together while the time spent using smart phones, computers or the Internet is on the increase (Jancsák, 2013). As a result, the transmission of social values from older to younger generations is fading away, and the elements of collective (national) memory among middle school and secondary school age youth are disappearing. The lack of the value transmitting role of family discussions on historical milestones causes disturbances in the educational and socializing function of family communities.

Today's youth can be characterized as having a special world of life 'outside history' due to the lack of family stories. In recent years, the role of universal (trans-historical humanist) social values (such as solidarity, empathy, public and individual responsibility) has been replaced by the peer group and the Internet among young people (which also determines peer discourse). This results in more exposure to accept fake information uncritically (Aczél, 2017; Jancsák, 2018; McIntyre, 2018). As there is no discussion about the past in children's 'interpreting communities' (family, peer group), certain elements of our collective memory (events of our historical past, which are also value holding symbols) are fading away (Seixas, 2016;

Megill, 1994). In the context of school education, past events become highlighted sentences in textbooks with no deeper background knowledge and attitudes.

The Oral History and History Education Research Group (OHERG) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at the University of Szeged sets out to work in the field of research-based educational development and supports the approach of value-saturated history teaching. In the first phase of the research group's work, testimony-based lessons for history classes are developed on the topic of the Holocaust in Hungary, an unspoken of topic in Hungarian society. The lessons are built around video clips of survivors and witnesses from the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation.²

In the international discourse on pedagogical methods in history education two prevalent – but not exclusive – approaches have emerged. The first approach places source analysis and the development of critical thinking in the center of history education (Husbands, 1996; Keating & Sheldon, 2011; Levstik & Barton, 2011), while the second approach argues that one of the main functions of history teaching is the preservation of collective memory (Megill, 1994; Barrett, 2007). The pathway of history teaching in Hungary has taken a shift in the 1990s from methods emphasizing the autonomy of teachers towards curricula- and textbook-driven education. Today, there are rifts between the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, leaders in education policy and institutions of remembrance policy considering the objectives of history didactics and the development of tools for history education. One pertinent element of these discourses and debates among historians and history education experts is the Holocaust in Hungary and its interpretation.

In the last few years, the institution for remembrance politics led by Maria Schmidt³ and supported by the government has emphasized Hungary's victimization (collectively considering both Jews and non-Jews as victims) after the German occupation in 1944; while historians of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Ignác Romsics, Krisztián Ungváry) and the expert of this era, Randolph L. Braham, argue that this portrayal of the Hungarian Holocaust is a distortion of history. Our research group views the role of formal history education in not only transmitting social values, but also in the development of historical critical thinking, which is a crucial aspect for both history teaching and civic education.

As a pillar of our work, we believe that narrative-analytical competence is just as important considering the goals of history education as supporting the preservation of collective memory. We consider the support to shape personal and social identities as well as education for active and responsible citizenship the most important 'added values' of history education (Nora, 1996; Körber, 2011). The formation of social identities (Pataki, 2001) is equally based on information and values transmitted through public discourse, life-stories (Pászka, 2007) as well as oral, personal history and family stories, which are especially important for our research. Therefore, an important pedagogical goal of history education (Husbands, 1996; Levstik and Barton, 2011; Keating and Sheldon, 2011), is to support a more conscious and planned development of students' personalities, as well as to preserve collective memory and to develop analytical and critical thinking. Preservation of collective memory as an aim, is considered to be a contribution to the value-transmitting process of history teaching, while critical thinking is crucial for familiarizing students with the approach of historians: critical, analytical and interpretative thinking.

The narratives ('stories') of the family or the community about the past play an important role in this process (Riley, 1997; Farmer & Cooper, 1998; Bage, 1999). The memoirs of survivors and witnesses are not only part of the individual but the collective memory (Seixas, 2016), therefore, remembrance strengthens the collective conscious, national identity and enculturation. In the case of trans-historical values (Rezsóhazy, 2006; Schwartz, 2006), these memoirs become part of the socialisation processes for youth (Jancsák, 2013). At the same time, it is important that we use the available information-communication technology (ICT) for today's screenager generation in the world of education as well, and these tools and technology-driven opportunities should support the mission of the 21st century modern school.

This research project, and generally the use of video testimonies in history education, does not question the validity of traditional, textbook-based history education, nor does it question the importance of written sources. At the same time, we argue for the use of video testimonies as sources and the integration of oral history into the teaching and learning process, where it proves to be adequate. We acknowledge the importance and dominance of written sources in history education today (predominantly based on

textbooks), we believe that there is need for better cooperation between a variety of educational materials including both written and oral sources, traditional and digital materials.

2. Methodology

The aim of this research is to study the impact of education materials using video testimonies in Holocaust education, in contrast to more traditional, textbook-based history lessons. Our main research question considered how the testimony-based lesson affects student learning and attitudes as well as skills, competences and social values of the students. The sample consists of 72 students in 11th grade (17-year-olds), in two secondary grammar schools (see Table 1). In each school two lessons were held by the history teacher of the class on the topic of the Holocaust: one lesson built around video testimonies of Holocaust survivors and witnesses (lesson A), the other one is a traditional, 'textbook-driven' lesson, without any multimedia tools (lesson B), representing the control group of the research.⁴

	Type of lesson	No. of lesson participants	No. of interview participants
School 1 (Capital city)	Testimony-based (lesson A)	13	5
	Textbook-driven (lesson B)	16	6
School 2 (City in East-Hungary)	Testimony-based (lesson A)	21	7
	Textbook-driven (lesson B)	22	6

Table 1. Description of the sample of the research

The teachers voluntarily participated in the research, using self-developed educational materials in the traditional lessons. The teacher of School 1 developed the educational material for lesson A as well, while in School 2 the teacher used the lesson plan of our research group, which is accessible online at <https://eyewitness.hu/hu/a-magyarorszag-holokauszt-kozepiskola/>. All video testimonies used in the educational materials in our research are part of the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah

Foundation. The testimonies were selected based on the learning aims of the lesson. For example, when a teacher wanted to teach about stages of discrimination during the Holocaust, testimonies were selected in such a way that they represent these stages. It is important to note, that the testimonies were not used as mere illustrations, students had to not only identify the type of discrimination that the experience in the clip entailed, but unpack the meanings and interpret deeper layers, such as how that impacted on the person's life. The testimony clips primarily portrayed local experiences of Holocaust survivors, to further support the development of a connection between the students and the personal stories. These two lessons contain clips of ten different testimonies, mostly in Hungarian language. This paper presents the results of the first phase of our work; there are more lessons being developed, using different testimonies, and further research will be conducted on a wider sample of schools and students.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the differences in impact between the lessons, we used a mixed methodology approach, collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. Students filled out a 'pre'-questionnaire one week prior to the lesson and a 'post'-questionnaire a week after the lesson took place. In addition, structural group interviews were conducted with 5-7 students from each lesson on the same day as the 'post' questionnaire. Regarding the impact of the testimony-based lesson in contrast to the traditional, textbook-driven approach, we propose three hypotheses:

- H1: Testimony-based lessons promote learning about the topic of the Holocaust.
- H2: Testimony-based history lessons develop skills and competences of students that would not be possible within the framework of a traditional history lesson.
- H3: Testimony-based lessons have a more significant impact on social values through personal stories.

The present research faced certain challenges which are important to keep in mind for the interpretation of our results. The first challenge is a dual selection bias, considering the teachers on the one hand, and the interviewed students on the other. Both teachers leading the lessons participated in the teacher training of the USC Shoah Foundation on the use of video testimonies in Holocaust education

and both have a strong interest in the educational method as well as the topic. The students were selected for the interviews in various ways; where there was opportunity, the interviewer selected students randomly, but in other cases students volunteered or teachers appointed the interview participants.

Another crucial challenge concerns the sample size, as this analysis uses data from the first round of data collection of a larger research project. The small sample size resulted in few statistically significant results, nevertheless the overall outcome of the research has important implications for the use of video testimonies in formal education.

3. Results of the Quantitative Analysis

Students evaluated the lessons they participated in and were asked about the extent the lesson helped them in a number of areas, such as developing or strengthening certain values, skills and competences, among other questions relating to the impact of the lesson on their interest in the topic of the Holocaust and their intent to engage in activities related to the topic (e.g. watching (more) video testimonies or visiting local memory sites). This section presents the most important findings from the student questionnaires.⁵

The evaluation⁶ of the testimony- and textbook-based lessons did not differ (statistically) significantly, nevertheless the results are indicative of a more positive evaluation of the testimony-based lesson (lesson A). It is important to consider these differences for future research and the possible implications, keeping in mind that in this sample there is no statistical association of these elements.

The most notable difference by lesson-type is how students evaluated the lesson being instructional, having a clear message. As the figure below shows, in lessons A, none of the students said that it was not instructional, nor were they neutral in this respect; half of the students thought the lesson was rather instructional, while the other half said it was very instructional, having a strong message (see Figure 1). In comparison, in lesson B, 15 % of students did not find the lesson instructional, or took a neutral stand. This difference, considering that there was not one student who did not find the testimony-based lesson at least somewhat instructional, is an illustrative indication of the effect the testimonies, and more

importantly the stories, told in those testimonies can have on students.

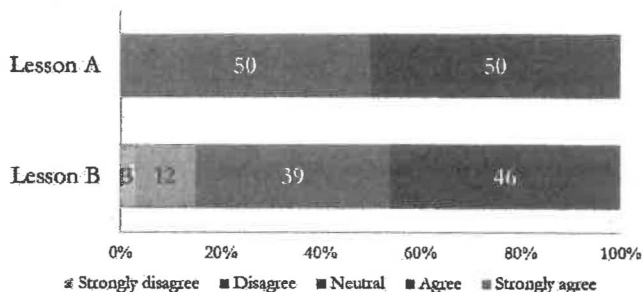


Figure 1. The lesson I attended had a clear message, by lesson type (%)

Among the aspects students were asked to reflect on, and the extent these aspects helped them or supported the development of their skills, competences or social values, almost exclusively the elements related to empathy or tolerance proved to be significantly different according to the type of the lesson.

In the first set of these questions, students needed to indicate the extent they agree⁷ that the lesson they attended helped them in three categories: practical aspects related to school and advancing in school; cognitive aspects related to acquiring knowledge, understanding the content or deepening prior knowledge; and aspects related to empathy.⁸ The two aspects which proved to have a significant correlation with the lesson type were the ones related to empathy. In the case of the first statement (see Figure 2), students participating in lesson A strongly agree in 68 % that the lesson helped them to 'see and feel the 'human' side of the historical event', compared to the 30 % of students who strongly agree in lesson B. Moreover, there is no student in the testimony-based lesson who said the lesson did not help them (disagree or strongly disagree answers) to see and feel the 'human' side of the historical event; while 9 % of students in the control group stated the same about their lesson.

Regarding the second statement ('The lesson helped me to empathize with the sufferings of the victims') the trend is similar to above: only 21 % of the students in lesson B say the lesson helped them a great deal (strongly agree), compared to 56 % of students in

lesson A. In both cases a higher percentage of students gave a positive answer (agree or strongly agree) in the testimony-based lesson.

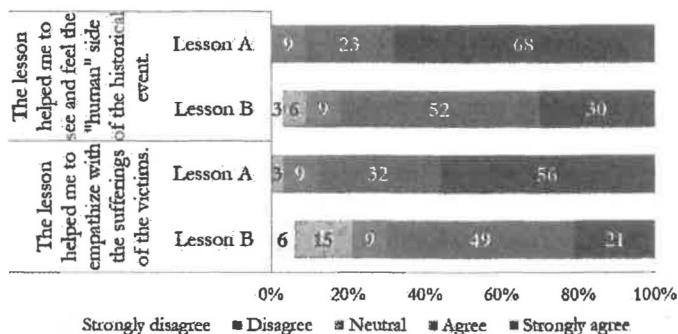


Figure 2. Development of different aspects of empathy, by lesson type (%)

In the second set of questions, students were reflecting on somewhat different aspects in which the lesson could have helped them. These aspects compose four categories: aspects related to social values (e.g. taking responsibility for others or a better understanding of democracy and its values); aspects related to skills and competences (e.g. understanding the relations and impacts of the past and the present); aspects related to a better understanding of society today (e.g. understanding the thoughts and behavior of today's Jewry); and personal aspects (e.g. clarifying one's own values).

Two of these questions showed significant results with regard to the lesson type, one from the category of skills and competences and the other from social values. The first considers the development of empathy towards the persecuted and the victims, and the second concerns the rise of sensibility towards social issues. The answers by lesson type show a similar pattern to the previous questions (see Figure 3). Students in lesson A said that lesson helped them a great deal (strongly agree answer) in the development of empathy in a higher ratio – 59 % compared to 18 % of students in the control group. The results are similar in the case of social sensibility, although the difference between the two groups of students is smaller considering the strongly agree answers only: 41 % in lesson A

compared to 30 % in lesson B. Moreover, the positive answers generally (agree and strongly agree answers together) are higher for both empathy and social sensibility in lesson A, than in lesson B.

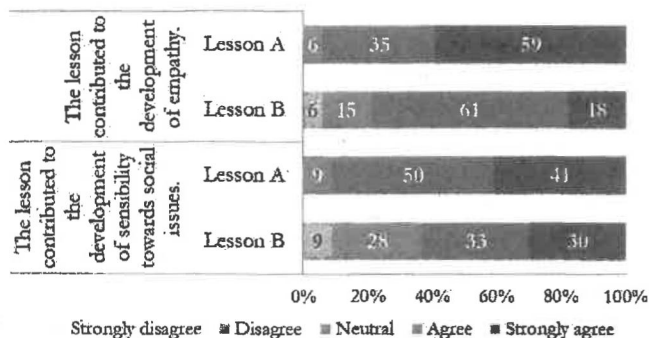


Figure 3. Development of empathy and social sensibility, by lesson type (%)

The implications of these results are twofold. First, the results show that based on the students' self-evaluation the use of video testimonies in Holocaust education have a significantly greater impact on their skill of empathy and related aspects of affective learning, than for students who followed the traditional, textbook-driven lesson plan. Second, due to the small sample size the statistically significant associations and correlations of variables are scarce, therefore it places additional emphasis on the results showing the impact testimony-based lessons have on students' empathy and social sensibility. At the same time, the sample size constitutes one of the main limitations of our study, impeding generalization of the results. Nonetheless, the differences between the two types of lessons and the salience of empathy are indicative of the (possible) impacts of educational materials using video testimonies in formal education.

4. Results of the Qualitative Study

Based on the analysis of the interviews,⁹ we identified three main thematic areas which signify the most important differences between the testimony- and the textbook-based lessons and highlight the results in relation to educational aims, such as responsible citizenship, in order that citizens have the necessary tools to engage in debates

and actions with critical and multi-perspective thinking. The themes are 1) promotion of learning, 2) different topics of engagement, and 3) students reflecting on their own learning. The main results of the qualitative study are presented through these themes, in addition to the general evaluation of the lesson by the interview participants.

It is important to note, that the results of the qualitative study should be considered as case studies of two Hungarian schools, as they portray a very specific section of Hungarian education, as both schools are secondary grammar schools with teachers who are very invested in teaching about the Holocaust as well as using testimony-based educational materials in class.

4.1 *Evaluation of the Lessons*

Students evaluated the lesson very positively in all groups, there were very few criticisms and most of them were a response to follow-up questions specifically asking about aspects of the class they did not like. The most common factors of why students liked or enjoyed the lesson were the teacher's personality or way of teaching or explanations. One student explained why he/she likes their teacher's way of teaching (although reflecting on history classes in general, not only on the one lesson in question), as follows:

I think it is very good in the history lessons that it is not simply pushed down our throats that this and that happened but we are forced, figuratively speaking, to try to find the connection between the events. (School 1, lesson B)

The most common negative aspect of the lessons, that students mentioned in the discussions, was that they did not learn new things or there was not enough new information.¹⁰ Most criticism or negative comment appeared in the discussion of lesson B in School 2, although they also highlighted that they liked the lesson, because of their prior interest and the interactive nature of the lesson. The only student who explicitly said he/she did not like the lesson, was also in this group. She/he explained her/his point of view in the following way:

For me there weren't many interesting things in the lesson. I have already engaged with these things, with this topic, I watch videos in relation to it, so I didn't learn much with this lesson. (School 2, lesson B)

In the groups of lesson A, the students immediately started reflecting on the video clips when generally asked about the lesson. One of the students in School 1 explained that the reason why he/she liked the lesson is because he/she already knew the facts about the Holocaust and it was interesting for him/her to learn about the 'emotional side' of the event. In School 2, the two most common elements of the positive evaluation of the testimony-based lesson were its interactive character (with tasks related to the testimony clips) and its peculiarity, in the sense that it was different from most history lessons and it was not only interesting but also special.

Based on the interviews, the general evaluation of the two types of lessons did not differ significantly. However, in lesson B students based their positive evaluation on aspects of cognitive thinking (what they learned or how the lesson pointed out connections and reference to events and mechanisms of history), while in lesson A, students emphasized aspects of affective learning, showing empathy and a sense of connection to the historical event, such as the quote shown below:

It was special, the classes are not usually like this. Our teacher usually just projects a [presentation] slide that we write down, we discuss it and that's it. But now that we saw video interviews, the topic got closer to us. What the people could have felt when they were taken. (School 2, lesson A)

4.2 Promoting Learning

The testimony-based lessons promote learning for students in various aspects which arise directly from the testimonies, therefore presenting a contrast with traditional, textbook-driven lessons. The first aspect emphasizes that the personal stories (at least partly) resolve the disconnect that students feel towards history and historical events generally. The event of the Holocaust which – according to the students – is an event that happened a long time ago in the past and a part of their textbook they need to learn, became a human story, the story of individuals, which they could identify with. This relates to the second aspect which is the individualization of history. For many students, history is the story of the masses, and through the personal stories they were able to see this event that they knew by the numbers of how many people were killed and where the concentration camps were located, as the history

of individuals. Students attending the testimony-based lessons also mentioned that this helped them understand better what happened.

When we approach it like this, that people tell how it affected them, we can better identify with the topic, because then we see that it wasn't a big crowd but every person in that crowd had their own feelings and own stories. In my opinion, we understand it better. (School 1, lesson A)

I think it also shows [...] that it didn't happen that long ago. (School 2, lesson A)

The third aspect is related to the authenticity of the sources. As the excerpt illustrates below, students felt that hearing the story personally from someone who lived through or witnessed it, is more credible than reading it in the textbook. This shows the important difference between the written source and video testimonies: the content of both can be the same but the additional elements of the video testimonies, seeing and hearing someone talking about their own experiences and the emotions relating to it have a different effect on the students' learning and their view on the source itself.

For me, it was more credible to hear him speak about his feelings than read it in a book from a source. The written source doesn't come across that much, I liked it a lot more that I could hear him talk about his personal opinion. (School 2, lesson A)

The fourth and final aspect of testimony-based education promoting learning is related to the technical part of this educational method. The video testimonies bring audio-visual elements to the classroom which are needed in the era of continuous digital stimuli. This need was expressed directly by a student in one of the traditional lessons, where they did not use any multimedia tool, emphasizing that for him/her, it is easier to remember information if they use visual elements in class.

It wasn't visual at all. There were no pictures, no videos, nothing. We worked with numbers and texts which stay in one's mind less, while video and pictures stay more. (School 2, lesson B)

The group interviews showed that the testimony-based lesson promotes learning through complementing learning on the cognitive level – which is very much in the focus of Hungarian education, where primarily fact-based knowledge is rewarded in both classroom

and national assessments – with affective learning. Through the testimonies, students are able to connect to history, they can relate to the stories, to the interviewees and through that connection, together with the use of an audio-visual educational tool, testimony-based lessons facilitate students' learning. Moreover, personal stories bring history closer to the students and they personalize history, which is considered by many of them to be the story of masses and faceless crowds. Additionally, affective learning is crucial in the continuous and long-term process of attitude development which leads to the formation of social values.

4.3 *Different Topics of Engagement*

The topics students brought up throughout the interviews differed notably in lessons A and B, indicating that different topics became salient and a subject of interest for students attending A or B lessons. The topics that emerged in the testimony-based lesson were not part of any discussions with students in the control group.

In the discussions of lesson A, the most determinant and capturing aspects of the lesson for students were specific events in the stories told, or small details of the testimonies, such as hope: the way people were hoping until the last minute affected many students. Another example that affected students was how much a little kindness and humanity could help survival in the ghetto:

People were dependent on each other [in the ghetto]. Just by offering nice gestures they could make life easier for each other. (School 1, lesson A)

Some students, especially in School 2, were strongly affected by the interviewees themselves. They expressed admiration for their courage to talk about what happened and they were affected by seeing the emotions on the faces of the survivors, which, as mentioned before, is relevant for affective learning and is an important added feature of video testimonies compared to sources such as written memoirs.

Another important aspect was the personal connection of students to specific stories told by the survivors and the empathy they showed. The excerpts below illustrate an essential contrast between the impact of lessons A and B. The video testimony and the personal stories touched upon an everyday aspect of life – family and having children – which the student could connect to and fully empath with and feel

for the survivor. In contrast when a student in lesson B describes how the lesson and more specifically that people did not know what was about to happen, affected her, s/he expresses pity and not empathy towards these people.

And then I imagined, if I were there and the feeling that I would need to protect my children and I couldn't do anything about it. It affected me. (School 2, lesson A)

It always has an effect on me, because I know what the consequences were. And we can be smart from the future about these, but I feel sorry for those people, no one could see it at that point. (School 1, lesson B)

The topics students were interested in after the lesson were mostly related to factual or content knowledge in lesson B, while all the topics and questions brought up in the groups of lesson A were uniquely connected to the testimonies. The most common theme of the testimony-based groups was trauma processing, trauma resolution. Students were interested in how these people were able to move on, how they processed what happened to them.

After all this happened [...], they had their own families and kids, how could they process all this? (School 1, lesson A)

How did it affect their later life? What was the extent of the psychological and emotional damage it caused? (School 1, lesson A)

These themes are important considering our research findings, because it further shows the additional aspects the testimonies bring to the classroom. The topics students found interesting or engaging in lesson A, such as trauma resolution, can also be included and brought up in lessons with other methods not exclusively with video testimonies, nevertheless in comparison, these themes were not mentioned by students of lesson B.

4.4 *Reflection on Learning*

The last aspect of analysis concerns the ways students reflected on learning processes. Although this theme is somewhat distanced from the original research question, the extent students reflected on their own learning¹¹ calls for its inclusion in the analysis results. This section comprises of three main approaches of reflection on learning, all illustrated with quotes from students.

The first approach is a reflection on a very peculiar characteristic of oral history, that each story told is from the perspective of the person who experienced the given event, therefore no one tells the same story. One of the students highlighted this element as the advantage of watching the video testimonies.

Different people say different things about what they experienced. They give accounts from different perspectives, about how they experienced that period of their lives. (School 1, lesson A)

This points out that the skill of looking at, understanding or even evaluating an event or situation from multiple perspectives also constitutes a part of teaching with video testimonies.

The second approach concerns the relation of using video testimonies and more traditional approaches to history lessons. One of the students said that even though she liked the testimony-based lesson, it is not sufficient to only learn about history this way. It was very interesting to hear students reflect on learning this consciously. Moreover, this thought is in line with our approach to testimony-based teaching: we consider this method relevant and important, because it offers additional opportunities to learn certain skills, values, bring history closer to students and facilitate learning about an unspoken, thus sensitive topic in today's Hungarian society, by enabling students to connect – to people and to stories. Testimony-based history education is complementary to lessons building on other methods and sources, and the testimony-based method does not and should not aim to replace these other approaches. Nonetheless, video testimonies and affective learning is an important part of history education, it is part of the 'comprehensive picture':

If we only learn about the Holocaust like this, in itself it wouldn't be enough, it wouldn't give a comprehensive picture, because these are the experiences of individual people. But I don't think we missed having more details or information in this one class. (School 1, lesson A)

The third reflection on learning processes arose in the discussion of lesson B in School 1. Students in this group knew that the other group participated in a lesson with video interviews, and very early in the discussion students started to defend their lesson by many of them saying that they are glad they did not have video interviews during the lesson, because their thoughts must not be clouded by emotions or affection while learning about history as 'history is not

something that we can learn based on emotions, but it is a subject to be learned objectively' (School 1, lesson B). This criticism was coming from students who have never participated in a testimony-based lesson before and it was interesting to see that their preconceptions were that the goal of video interviews is to make everyone become emotional and feel how terrible this event really was.

5. Conclusion

Our study focused on the impacts of educational materials using video testimonies in comparison to traditional, textbook-based history lessons in Holocaust education in Hungary. The findings of the study partially prove our hypothesis, as the small sample size only allowed examining our expectation to a limited extent. Testimony-based lessons have a strong impact on empathy and tolerance (social sensibility) and promote learning through several factors.

First, testimony-based lessons promote learning by personalizing history. The testimonies bring history closer to students, which helps them remember information better and to connect their factual knowledge to personal stories and the people themselves. Second, complementing cognitive learning with affective learning impacts skills and attitudes of students that cognitive processes cannot reach. Affective learning together with the themes students have become engaged and interested in during the lesson plays an important (facilitating) role in the formation of social and civic values in the long-term. Third, the use of multimedia tools in the classroom offers students a different way to process information, moreover it is a sufficient way to respond to the needs of students for visual elements during class. Additionally, the video testimonies create lifelike situations, where students can have an experience similar to talking to a family member at home – which helps them connect more to the stories and thus to history.

In a more general sense, lessons using video testimonies help realize the pedagogical objectives of history teaching (a deeper understanding of the teaching material) and the non-formal educational goals of history teaching (helping students reach more informed opinions to form their attitudes, developing historical empathy and sensibility towards social values such as tolerance and

responsibility). According to our results, the same goals seem to be less efficiently realized in the case of lessons using only textbooks.

The results of the study imply that the use of video testimonies complements other teaching methods, as personal stories convey elements of affective learning as well as social and civic values that are unique to this educational tool.

Notes

¹ The results of this paper were presented at the ISHD Conference 2018. (Université du Québec en Outaouais, Ottawa, 10-12 October, 2018). The research is sponsored by Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

² See more on the Visual History Archive: <https://sfi.usc.edu/vha>; and on the work of the USC Shoah Foundation: <https://sfi.usc.edu> (6.02.2019)

³ Maria Schmidt is Hungarian historian and director of the House of Terror. See more on the institution: <http://www.terrorhaza.hu/en> (22.04.2019)

⁴ All lessons were observed by a member of the research group, collecting additional information on the engagement of students and the classroom environment.

⁵ The small sample proved to be insufficient for more complex methods discovering causal relations between variables (due to the lack of statistical significance in the results), therefore associations and correlations were used (in the form of Pearson correlations and contingency tables) to examine the relations and patterns of different variables within the dataset.

⁶ The evaluation of the lesson included 7 elements in the questionnaire: 1) the lesson was interesting; 2) the lesson was instructional, it had a clear message; 3) the lesson was diverse; 4) I learned new things, new information during the lesson; 5) the lesson was engaging; 6) I learned a lot from the lesson; and 7) the lesson was interesting but I have not learned anything new.

⁷ Students were asked to indicate the extent they agree with each statement on a scale of 5 (where 1 meant they strongly disagree and 5 meant they strongly agree).

⁸ The students were asked to report on the extent the lesson they attended helped them in the following aspects (grouped in 3 categories. Practical aspects: 1) expanding the history content knowledge; 2) understanding the material of the history subject; and 3) preparing for the matriculation exam. Cognitive aspects: 1) better understanding of what happened; 2) better understanding of the impact of the Holocaust; 3) learning the events of the Holocaust; 4) managing your knowledge; and 5) deepening your knowledge. Aspects related to empathy: 1) seeing and feeling the 'human' side of the Holocaust; and 2) empathizing with the sufferings of the victims.

⁹ The structured group interviews encompassed five main topics guided by the questions of the interviewer: 1) evaluation of the lesson; 2) questions students

had generally about the lesson or in the case of testimony-based lesson, questions they would ask the survivors; 3) topics that affected students (emotionally); 4) main messages students have learned from the lesson or from the testimonies; 5) what students think should be done beyond remembrance and what is it that they personally can do.

¹⁰ The criticism of students that they have not learned new things in the lessons was partly explained by the prior knowledge of the students on the topic of the Holocaust in School 1 and by the revisions (i.e. repetitions) of materials the students have learned in previous classes (e.g. the events leading up to the Holocaust) in the case of School 2.

¹¹ As an overall observation, students in School 1 were generally more reflective, as well as more analytical in their thinking than students in School 2.

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