



‘I’ve become more critical.’

**Development of Dutch elementary teachers’ beliefs
about history and history teaching in an inquiry-
based professional learning programme**

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Context of the study

Two-year PD programme: Historical reasoning in inquiry-based history lessons.

- 9 Elementary school teachers, grade 3 to 6 (students 8-12 years old).
Mean years of experience: 10,9 years.
- 7 meetings per year – 35 hours total
- Voluntary participation



During the meetings



Inquiry tasks that
promote historical
reasoning



Pedagogical content
knowledge



- Co-design of lessons that promote historical reasoning
- Engage in cycles of experimentation and reflection



*‘I never thought about history
this way’*

‘I’ve become more critical’





Teachers' beliefs

Epistemic beliefs

Pedagogical beliefs

Beliefs about students

Efficacy beliefs

“Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience.” (Pajares, 1992)



Beliefs about learning and teaching history

Three stances (Maggioni et al., 2004)

Copier

There is one story
of how things
happened
History = past

Borrower

Many sources from the past,
so multiple interpretations.
Interpretations are equal.
History = opinion

Criticalist

Subject-specific method
to analyse sources and
evaluate interpretations.
History = interpretation



Conclusions from previous studies into epistemic beliefs of history teachers

- Development of beliefs is not linear and not uni-directional (Maggioni et al., 2004).
- Teachers can simultaneously hold beliefs connected to different stances (Wansink et al., 2017).
- Beliefs develop at different speeds and learners might increase their understanding in one dimensions, while temporarily relapsing on another (Stoel et al., 2022).
- Teachers with criterialist beliefs might not differentiate between history and the past on an epistemic level either. They might hold the belief that history, when done right, takes you to the past itself (Elmersjö & Zanazanian, 2022).

Elmersjö, H., & Zanazanian, P. (2022). History teachers and historical knowledge in Quebec and Sweden: Epistemic beliefs in distinguishing the past from history and its teaching. *Historical Encounters* 9(1), 181-195.

Maggioni, L., Alexander, P., & VanSledright, B. (2004). At the crossroads? The development of epistemological beliefs and historical thinking. *European Journal of School Psychology* 2(1-2), 169-197.

Stoel, G., Logtenberg, A., & Nitsche, M. (2022). Researching Epistemic Beliefs in History Education: a review. *Historical Encounters* 9(1), 11-34.

Wansink, B., Akkerman, S., Vermunt, J., Haenen, J., & Wubbels, T. (2017). Epistemological tensions in prospective Dutch history teachers' beliefs about the objectives of secondary education. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 41(1), 11-24.



Research question

How does a PD programme, in which elementary school teachers learn to reason historically and develop skills to design inquiry-based historical reasoning lessons, influence participants' epistemic beliefs about history and pedagogical beliefs about history teaching?



Method

Data collection:

1. Individual in-depth semi-structured interview (pre, post)

adapted from Voet, M. and De Wever, B. (2016). History teachers' conceptions of inquiry-based learning, beliefs about the nature of history, and their relation to the classroom context. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 55(1), 57-67.

2. Beliefs about Learning and Teaching History-questionnaire (BLTHQ) (pre, mid, post)

Dutch translation by Havekes (2015), from Maggioni, L., VanSledright, B., and Reddy, K. (2009). Epistemic Talk in History, *paper presented at EARLI, Amsterdam, august 2009.*



Method

1. Coding the transcribed interviews (k 0,75):

- General goals of teaching elementary school history (5 subcodes)
- Current practice of history teaching
- Beliefs about the nature of history and how historians work (7 subcodes)
- Goals and experience with inquiry-based history lessons (6 subcodes)
- What stimulated development and makes participants put the new teaching approach to practice?

→ Number of participants that were coded with a specific subcode

→ Comparing variables pre and post interview

→ Relation between specific variables



1. Results interview: number of participants

Beliefs pronounced by participants in interviews before and after PD programme

Main categories	Subcategories:	# teachers in interview 1	# teachers in interview 2
1. Beliefs about general goals of teaching elementary school history			
	Development of historical time	7	4
	Development of historical knowledge	8	9
	Development of historical skills	9	9
	Understanding and explaining the present	8	8
3. Beliefs about the nature of history and historians' research method			
	History equals the past: copier	6	0
	History is a set of opinions: borrower	2	5
	History is a construct based on criteria: <u>critierialist</u>	3	6
	Researching historical source material	9	9
	Contextualisation	6	5
	Multi-perspectivity and historical empathy	9	9
	Historical reasoning	4	1
4. Beliefs about goals and experiences with inquiry-based history teaching activities			
	Inquiry into historical sources	7	8
	Historical reasoning skills	5	9
	General reasoning skills	6	9
	Role of the teacher during IBL	7	9
	Challenges with IBL in history	5	9
	Students' behaviour or motivation	9	9

Jack: *History is a description of the past.*

pre

Dylan: *It is just what you look at and the story you tell with it.*

pre

Nicole: *I now realize that it may have been different than you read. Historians interpret things differently. [...] What is the truth anyway?*

post

Rose: *It is an interpretation of the past, that you have to substantiate with sources. And especially reliable sources.*

post



1. Results interview: quality of what participants say

Beliefs pronounced by participants in interviews before and after PD programme

Main categories	Subcategories:	# teachers in interview 1	# teachers in interview 2
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Jack: *You could give them texts from different diaries and let them compare the different perspectives.*

pre

Jack: *The most important thing is to make them curious, share your curiosity but don't tell them what happened. Then you give them the sources and they have to find out what happened and use arguments from the sources.*

post



Method

2. Analysis of the BLTHQ

- Qualitative approach
- Comparison added scores per stance for each data collection moment

3. Relation questionnaire and interview

- Association of statements BLTHQ and corresponding themes in interviews
- Two profiles of participants



Connecting results: two profiles

Profile 1:

Participants with copier and borrower beliefs about history at the start of the programme come to understand how difficult history is, epistemically.

High score criterialist statements (BLTHQ), but find it hard to make ideas explicit in the interview.

Risk of developing misconceptions about every historical narrative being equally valid.

They develop ideas about doing inquiry in history lessons

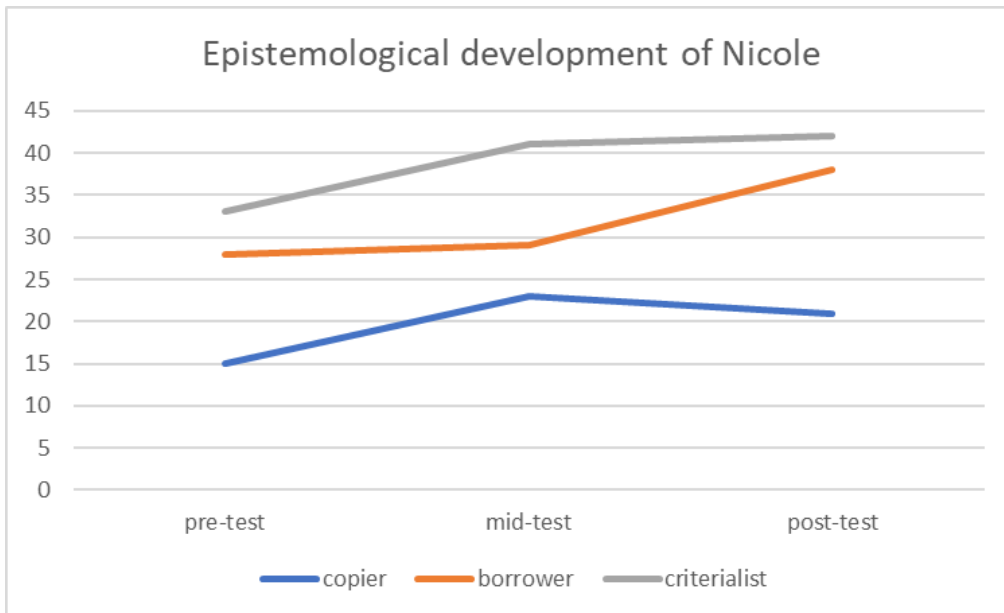
Profile 2:

Participants with beginning or more explicit criterialist beliefs about history and history teaching at the start of the programme develop richer criterialist ideas and very explicit ideas about inquiry by students in history lessons.



Connecting results: profile 1

BLTHQ



Borrower beliefs that scored high:

Good students know that history is basically a matter of opinion.

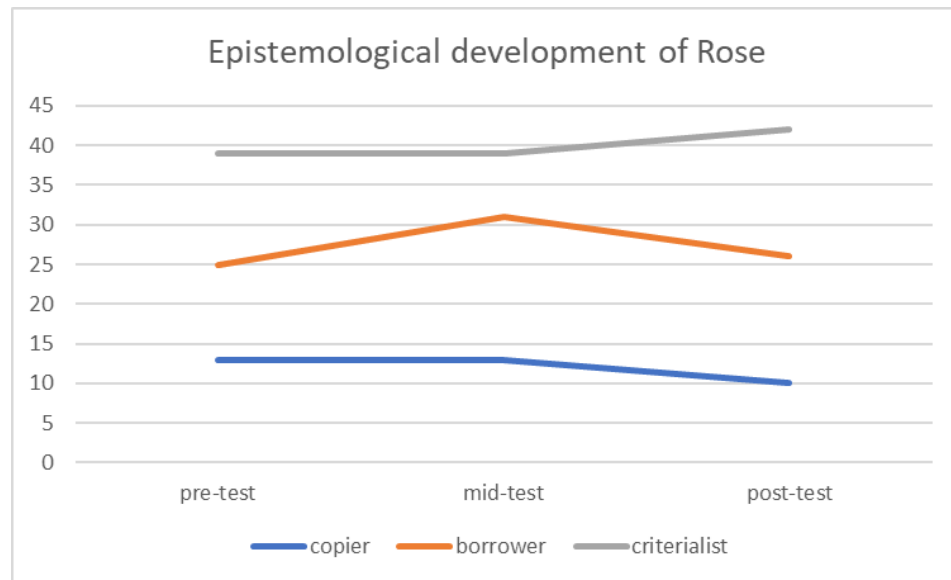
Students need to be aware that history is essentially a matter of interpretation.

Final Interviews

- *Well, the past is what has been, but history is very much based on sources and how reliable are these sources?*
- *There are many sources to study. I think a historian will critically study these, but is it critical enough? We read the articles and were talking about Anne Frank and there was a witness and later they interpreted it differently and then it was all turned back in this controversy about the study. People have been working on that research a long time and can we now say they were right or wrong? So yes, I got more insight in how complex it is.*
- *[Inquiry is] learning to think critically yourself. Looking at a topic from different sides. Being critical and looking more in-depth. Placing things in the correct time.*

Connecting results: profile 2

BLTHQ



Criterialist beliefs that score high:

Students should learn to compare sources and look for author subtext as essential components of the process of learning history.

Final Interviews

- [History is] *an interpretation of the past, which you have to substantiate and connect to sources and then of course reliable sources.*
- *You have to realise who wrote them and that you are always dealing with interpretation. (..) That's how you get differences. But you can compare and look at their intentions.*
- [Students have to learn to] *formulate inquiry questions (..) and make a step by step plan of how to do the inquiry. Children also need tools with which they can investigate the question.*
- [Students also need to] *argue, reason and think logically. Which sources are there, are they reliable and how do they relate to each other? How to deal with two sources that do not correspond?*



Conclusions: influence of PD programme on epistemic beliefs

1. All teachers participating in the PD programme developed more nuanced beliefs
 - More naïve beliefs remain besides more nuanced beliefs
 - Epistemic switching or ‘wobbling’ (Wansink et al., 2017)
2. From history as a single narrative to realization of many narratives
 - Historical method and its disciplinary tools are not clear to all participants
3. Although the PD did not explicitly target epistemic beliefs (Maggioni et al., 2009), spending much time on historical method and historical reasoning in PD may also have a positive effect on the development of epistemic beliefs.



Conclusion: influence of PD programme on pedagogical and student beliefs

1. More explicit ideas about inquiry learning in history
 - Inquiry-based history learning can best be organized as guided inquiry instead of open inquiry.
 - Realization that content matters when taking a disciplinary approach to history teaching.
2. Students in elementary school can conduct inquiry into history and can reach substantiated conclusions.
 - Students can study primary historical sources themselves.
 - Students are highly motivated for this type of lessons







Conclusion

→ Elements of PD that promote the development of pedagogical beliefs in favor of inquiry-based history teaching:

- Combination of historical inquiry during the meetings and developing classroom activities and putting them to practice.
- Beliefs are set in motion by trying out a new teaching approach and discussing choices and experiences afterwards.
- Support through modelling and scaffolding



Thank you for your attention



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