



## CHAPTER 8

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# “I Never Thought About History This Way”: The Development of Elementary Teachers’ Beliefs About History and How a Professional Learning Community Can Influence These

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### INTRODUCTION

Tara is an experienced grade-6 teacher who participated in our professional development program. In the interview before the start, she shared her frustration that she did not really know how “to teach history differ-

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ently from the old-fashioned, teacher-in-front-of-the-classroom-telling-about-the-past-style, that she was taught in herself,” although she liked history a lot and even believed it to be one of the more important subjects in the curriculum. It frustrated her because she was quite experienced in setting up inquiries with students in science lessons and she did not understand why she struggled so much in organizing inquiry in her history classes. The quote shows that, although one can be familiar with instructional strategies for inquiry, having skills specific to the discipline of history is essential in organizing inquiry-based teaching in history. The objective of this chapter is to explore how epistemic beliefs about history of elementary school teachers influence their teaching and how professional development programs can influence these beliefs in such a way that teachers develop a richer picture of what inquiry-based history teaching focused on historical reasoning can look like.

Elementary school teachers are mostly trained as generalists and, therefore, have had much less domain-specific training in each subject than subject teachers in high school (Hultén & Björkholm, 2016; Levstik & Thornton, 2018). Their ideas about what history is are generally formed by how history is presented in the textbooks they learned from as a student, in popular culture, and in the schoolbooks they use in their classrooms (Gibson & Peck, 2020). Where history education researchers emphasize the importance of inquiry and historical reasoning activities in teaching history (e.g., Gibson & Peck, 2020; Levstik & Barton, 2015; Levstik & Thornton, 2018; Van Boxtel et al., 2021; Wissinger et al., 2021), elementary school history lessons mostly focus on the transfer of information, reading and understanding schoolbook texts. One of the challenges may be that teachers can only teach students a disciplinary way of working with history if they themselves master these disciplinary skills to a certain extent. Provisional for this is that the beliefs of teachers are in line with the chosen pedagogy. Beliefs that teachers hold about the nature of history and the construction of historical knowledge significantly influence what they perceive as relevant content and how they teach the subject (Maggioni et al., 2004, 2009; Stoel et al., 2022).

In this chapter we first discuss challenges related to teaching history in elementary schools and how epistemic beliefs of teachers may influence their teaching approach. We then describe several strategies that are employed to chart epistemic beliefs of teachers in teaching history and zoom in on an empirical study about the professionalization of a group of Dutch in-service elementary teachers. From this, we deduct examples of activities that promote development of more nuanced epistemic beliefs

about history. Finally, we formulate implications for prospective professional development programs and elementary teacher education and describe challenges for future research. With this, we join conversations about the professionalization of elementary teachers in the field of history education, and in particular, how participation in professional development programs focusing on historical reasoning influences teachers' epistemic beliefs.

### CHALLENGES WITH TEACHING HISTORY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

In their conceptualization of important elements of elementary school history education, Levstik and Thornton (2018) describe time on task as the most important factor challenging history education in elementary schools. While time on task is the most important factor in the learning of children, in different parts of the world the amount of time allocated to history education is declining in favor of other subjects, like language, mathematics, and STEM education. Also, and partly as a result of this decreasing time, schools experiment with combining history with social sciences or other subjects. Especially in countries where history education starts relatively late, like the Netherlands where it starts at age 8, this can lead to a shallow understanding of historical time and fragmented historical knowledge (Béneker et al., 2020).

The second challenge is how history is taught in elementary schools. In many countries, elementary school history lessons focus on the transfer of information, either by reading and understanding schoolbook texts and making accompanying assignments or by listening to stories and explanations by the teacher (McCrum, 2013). Even in countries where historical thinking has become part of the standard curriculum and teaching materials on historical thinking and historical inquiry are available, like Canada and the United States (e.g., the Historical Thinking Project, n.d.; Stanford History Education Group, n.d.), historical inquiry has not yet become standard practice (Von Heyking, 2004; Martell, 2020).

In elementary schools in the Netherlands, the core objectives prescribe that students learn how to use simple historical sources, but do not specify historical reasoning skills. Teachers teach a ten-era framework illustrated with events and persons from the Dutch Canon (Kennedy, 2020; Wagenaar, 2007). Schools sometimes experiment with inquiry-based

learning, but this often proves difficult, because teachers can only teach students a disciplinary way of working with history if they themselves master these disciplinary skills to a certain extent. In general, however, elementary school teachers in the Netherlands are unfamiliar with historical inquiry. Thus, we observe that when teachers do choose for an inquiry-based approach in teaching history, students commonly gather information on the Internet and present what they found to their classmates. Since there is no or limited modeling of historical inquiry and historical reasoning, students' understanding of history remains limited (Béneker et al., 2020). This can reinforce the naïve belief, both in teacher and in students, that history is a single story, based on a series of facts (Van Boxtel et al., 2021).

This leads to a third challenge in history education in elementary schools: teachers' beliefs about history. Teachers' beliefs impact their choices of what is taught and how it is taught and can even be a “stumbling block to reform” (Richardson, 2003). The beliefs a teacher holds develop early, often before they start teaching. Sears (as cited in Peck, 2014, p. 249) states that most student teachers “have a strong cognitive frame that history teaching essentially involves the passing on of historical information and not the fostering of historical thinking.” These beliefs are generally formed during their own school time and teacher education. Where focus in elementary teacher education traditionally lay on narration skills and knowledge transfer, this last decade, as a result of history education research, saw a shift toward the use of primary sources and inquiry learning (Koutsianou & Emvalotis, 2021; Martell, 2020; Peck, 2014). But this does not necessarily lead to teachers who want to and can implement this more disciplinary approach to history. Especially not when methods courses do not provide students with much exercise in designing and experiencing inquiry lessons and when the examples of history teaching they see in training schools are not oriented toward inquiry and historical reasoning. These challenges make it interesting to dive into the beliefs that elementary teachers might have about history and teaching history, and ways to enrich these (Martell, 2020).

### *Beliefs About History and History Teaching*

History is about the “conceptual analysis of how human beings relate to the past” (Paul, 2015, p. 14). In historical research, epistemic beliefs form the basis of every question, hypothesis, and analysis. In this chapter,

epistemic beliefs are defined as “psychological understandings, premises or propositions felt to be true” (Richardson, 2003, p. 2). Epistemic beliefs about history focus on the understanding of what history is: the relationship between past and history (Elmersjö & Zanazanian, 2022). Not only historians, but also teachers teaching history are consciously or subconsciously confronted with the inherent epistemological question “what is history?” A certain epistemology lies at the basis of every teaching approach. Epistemic beliefs about history can take the form of two opposing understandings of the nature of history: the first understands history as “the study of the past which results in the past as it was” (Wansink et al., 2017, p. 12). The second understands history as subjective by nature, as only traces of the past are left to study and this study is done by individuals with “individual perceptions at different times and places” (Wansink et al., 2017, p. 12). As we described, history teaching often focusses on master narratives that fall in line with the first understanding: history is seen as stories about the past that seem to be beyond doubt and cannot be challenged, even more so in elementary education.

Epistemic beliefs about history are closely connected to beliefs teachers have about history teaching and learning and are often analyzed as a subset of epistemic beliefs (Stoel et al., 2022, p. 17). Beliefs about what should be taught and how it should be taught filter through in the goals teachers formulate and in the teaching strategies they choose. Several studies (e.g., Levstik & Barton, 2015; McCrum, 2013; Wansink et al., 2017; Wilke & Depaep, 2019; Wilke et al., 2022) relate goals of critical reasoning and multiple perspectives and interpretations to student-centered and constructivist beliefs about teaching and teachers who have nuanced beliefs about history. In inquiry-based education, the learning process is designed in a way comparable to the empirical research cycle and students engage in a social process of co-constructing knowledge under guidance of the teacher (Dobber et al., 2017). Teacher-centered approaches, on the other hand, related to transfer of factual knowledge and history being a single narrative, have been connected to teachers with naïve beliefs in these studies. In a study on beliefs about history of a group of teachers in secondary school, McCrum (2013) describes a teacher whose emphasis on knowing a substantive body of knowledge made her choose a teaching method that focused on the acquisition of knowledge. Another teacher, viewing history as a construction, preferred learning activities where the students were actively working in groups, inquiring into historical sources. The study of Voet and De Wever (2016), on the

other hand, shows that there is no one-on-one relation between epistemic beliefs and pedagogical choices. In their study, experienced history teachers who had nuanced ideas and were in favor of a more student-centered approach emphasized content knowledge and only a few mentioned learning goals that focused on the development of historical reasoning skills. Wilke et al. (2022) discuss possible explanations for a mismatch between teachers' epistemological beliefs and instructional practices that are mentioned in the literature. First, teachers may make a distinction between disciplinary knowledge and "school knowledge" (fixed and complete). Second, teachers may have a poor understanding of historical thinking and reasoning. Third, teachers' competence in designing activities and materials that reflect the understanding of history as interpretation might not be sufficiently developed. Fourth, contextual factors (e.g., time, curriculum requirements) may play a role.

### MAPPING TEACHERS' EPISTEMIC BELIEFS ABOUT HISTORY

Building on the work of King and Kitchener (1994) and the levels of epistemic reflection by Kuhn and Weinstock (2002), Maggioni et al. (2004) were one of the first to conceptualize different epistemic stances for history teachers. Where King and Kitchener (1994) distinguished pre-reflective, quasi-reflective, and reflective reasoning about processes of knowing, and Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) discern realist, absolutist, multiplist, and evaluator perspectives, Maggioni and her colleagues developed their model of teacher thinking about the nature of history into three stances of teacher beliefs: the copier stance, the borrower stance, and the criterialist stance. Characteristic for the copier stance (also referred to as the objectivist stance) is a view of history wherein the teacher believes history to reflect the past and therefore history and the past are the same, like an object. At the borrower stance (also referred to as the subjectivist stance), the teacher realizes that most of the sources that remain of the past are based on human witnesses and that there may exist different interpretations. However, teachers in this stance are not yet (fully) aware of the disciplinary tools historians use to evaluate the quality of historical interpretations. Therefore, they see history as a series of subjective opinions, and they *borrow* from the testimony that seems to be closest to their image of reality in the past. At the criterialist stance, history is understood as an interpretation of the past and the methods of historical investigation are tools to question and analyze historical sources and evaluate historical

interpretations. They possess “the ability of historical thinkers to use the disciplinary tools and criteria for historical inquiry and to focus on a multiplicity of particulars without losing the capacity to perceive a broader view” (Maggioni et al., 2009, p. 195).

In their review on conceptualizations of epistemic beliefs, Stoel et al. (2022) describe two frameworks that can be recognized in studies on epistemic beliefs of history teachers. The research of Maggioni and colleagues falls within the developmental framework, where students’ or teachers’ beliefs develop in a stage-like pattern, although this does not imply that an individual is “in” a specific stance at a given moment. Other studies, for example Wansink et al. (2017), use a dimensional framework. In this approach to epistemic beliefs there are various dimensions that define epistemic beliefs, for example, “the critical/explanatory objective” or the “perspective-taking objective” (Wansink et al., 2017). An important result of these studies is the insight that teacher’s development on these dimensions is not straightforward, but takes a different path and its own time for each of the dimensions (Stoel et al., 2022, p. 17). A combination of the two frameworks was proposed by Barzilai and Weinstock (2015), including dimensions related to, for example, the certainty of knowledge, the source or justification of knowledge, and epistemic perspectives (absolutist, multiplist, and evaluatorist) to describe students’ epistemic beliefs. Also, Koutsianou and Emvalotis (2021) use a combined approach of four dimensions and three perspectives to show how elementary school teachers’ subject-specific epistemic beliefs relate to specific positions toward inquiry-based learning.

Maggioni et al. (2004, p. 190) described that development through the stances is “not unidirectional.” More specifically, Wansink et al. (2017) explained how individuals can simultaneously hold opposite beliefs and can switch between epistemological stances, usually when confronted with history that is connected to personal identity or religion. Elmersjö and Zanzanian (2022) delineate how the borders between positions are diffuse and even in a criterialist position, one can still have the unconscious belief that, when done right, history takes you to the past itself. Stoel et al. (2022) mention temporary relapses that teachers can experience in a dimension, while they are overall increasing their understanding about the nature of history in the context of professional development activities. In conclusion we see that there is general agreement that teachers are not “in” one specific stance, but that generally their beliefs contain characteristics of several stances or dimensions.

## THE POTENTIAL OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Adopting a perspective on history that focusses on historical inquiry and reasoning requires a new vision on what students need to learn in the history classroom, how lessons can be organized, and what competencies teachers need. Professional development programs can help teachers develop beliefs about history and teaching history that foster inquiry into historical sources and historical reasoning. Such programs should focus on informing teachers about historical inquiry and reasoning and let them experiment with this way of teaching and learning. According to Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), change in knowledge, beliefs, and attitude triggers change in teachers' practice when they engage in professional experimentation. Teacher beliefs can also change by experimenting with new approaches and reflecting on the effects on student learning and learning outcomes. Likewise, Richardson (2003) describes that professional development programs and teacher education programs incorporated investigation into beliefs to promote development and change in teacher beliefs.

In previous research on teacher beliefs about history, attention has been paid to how epistemic beliefs of teachers in middle and secondary schools influence their choices in teaching history (Voet & De Wever, 2016; Wilke & Depaepe, 2019) and how pre-service teachers' beliefs about history develop (Gibson & Peck, 2020; Wansink et al., 2017). Maggioni et al. (2004) describe developments in elementary teachers' epistemic beliefs during a professional development program on content and methods of teaching American history. In their study, the shifts in epistemic beliefs after the program were limited and suggested relative stability in teacher beliefs. Movement in beliefs was seen in different directions, including from criterialist to borrower ideas about history, making the researchers reflect on the risks of enhancing naïve ideas about history in teachers who are unknown with disciplinary methods. A reason for the limited shifts could be that the program did not specifically target participants' beliefs, nor their knowledge about disciplinary methods of historians and how these translate to the classroom. This is in line with Van Uum et al. (2021) who concluded that the development of epistemic knowledge takes time, that an implicit approach is less effective, and that epistemic beliefs should receive specific attention.



Studies on effective and sustainable teacher development point to several characteristics of professional development programs that promote effectiveness. Effective programs aim to develop pedagogical content knowledge and are perceived as relevant and useful to participants' daily work in the classroom. They encompass activities where participants actively work together. Also, these programs span a longer period (Van Veen et al., 2012). Van Boxtel et al. (2021) describe several elements of professional development programs that can prepare teachers for inquiry-based learning in history lessons. Engagement in historical inquiry was found to improve understanding of history, as well as positively affect teachers' beliefs about learning outcomes of inquiry-based history learning. Modeling is important, because observing and participating in inquiry gave teachers ideas for their own classrooms. Receiving information about learning effects of inquiry on history learning, about misconceptions, and information about the effect on, for example, literacy skills were also important for teachers to see the benefit compared to traditional teaching approaches.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF DUTCH ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' EPISTEMIC BELIEFS ON HISTORY DURING A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

An example of a professional development program where the development of teachers' knowledge of the nature and construction of history played an important role was the two-year professional development program “The History Workplace” that focused on historical reasoning in inquiry-based history lessons. In this paragraph we shortly describe the program and how beliefs of the participants developed. Aim of the program was to prepare teachers in grades 3–6 (students between 8 and 12 years old) to engage students in historical inquiry and reasoning and develop teachers' own historical thinking and reasoning skills and their design skills to develop such lessons. Nine teachers from six elementary schools in the Netherlands participated in this program. One of the studies connected to the program focused on the development of epistemic beliefs of the participants (Potjer et al., [in press](#)). During each meeting, the development of pedagogical content knowledge was encouraged through offering theoretical background about historical reasoning and inquiry learning. In addition, participants engaged in collaborative inquiry

**Table 8.1** Content of the professional development program

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	Pedagogical content knowledge
Year 1	Introduction of historical reasoning framework
	Use of primary historical sources
	Types of inquiry-based learning
	Historical contextualizing: what, how, when?
	Dealing with students' misconceptions
Year 2	Generating historical questions
	Searching, choosing, and adapting primary historical sources
	Scaffolding historical reasoning activities
	Thinking like a historian
	Role of teacher in lessons: coaching skills
	Enhancing historical argumentation in classroom discussion
	Historical reasoning activities
Year 1	Responses to the Spanish flu and COVID-19: identifying similarities and differences
	Cinnamon trade in Sri-Lanka (Ceylon): identifying causes and consequences
	Resistance to slavery in the Dutch West-Indies: identifying similarities and differences
	Labor conditions in textile factories in the nineteenth century: identifying multiple perspectives
	Promoting students to ask historical questions: photos and paintings
Year 2	John Smith on Pocahontas: corroborating historical sources
	Mad Tuesday: identifying causes and consequences
	Revolt of the Batavi: adapting textbook lessons to include historical reasoning
	The betrayal of Anne Frank: analyzing steps in historical research
	Floodings in Dutch history: use of eye-witness accounts
	Dutch response to the independence of Indonesia: causes and consequences, multiple perspectives, and change and continuity

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activities. An overview of the content of the course and the inquiry activities is provided in Table 8.1.

During each meeting of the professional development program the teachers worked on an inquiry activity using primary sources. The assignment was discussed afterwards. Although development of epistemic beliefs was a goal of the program, the nature and construction of historical knowledge were not a separate topic for discussion during the professionalization meetings. In discussing the different topics concerning historical reasoning and inquiry in history, however, the interpretative nature of historical narratives and the disciplinary method, criteria, and tools of historical inquiry were elaborated on. Characteristic for these activities was that (1) the inquiries are based on rich historical questions, (2) in the activity's

introduction the facilitator provided a rich context, (3) various historical sources were provided for the inquiry, and (4) worksheets helped the sourcing and historical reasoning process. These align with the elements that Popp and Hoard (2018) describe as support for sourcing by elementary students.

In a few of these inquiries, the nature and construction of historical knowledge were explicitly discussed. These activities were responses to the Spanish flu and COVID-19, labor conditions in nineteenth-century Dutch textile factories, the activity on John Smith and Pocahontas, and the review of newspaper articles on the betrayal of Anne Frank. Participants identified similarities and differences in reactions of people and governments during the Spanish flu pandemic and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this exercise we discussed the importance of knowing the context when interpreting historical sources, how difficult it is to reconstruct a situation based on a few sources, and the risk of interpreting sources from our own time and situation. In the activity about the working conditions of nineteenth-century laborers in the Dutch textile industry, participants analyzed the differences between how factory owners and factory laborers described the working conditions in the factories and how such different points of view could come about. We also discussed the pitfall of saying that the factory owners lied (a response that students often give).

In the inquiry into two narratives by John Smith, about his hostage-taking by the Powhatan native American people (Stanford history education group, n.d.), political and personal motives play an important role.

Evelyn: I noticed that the first document is very positive and the other is very different, although it is written by the same person. [...] What we did not really understand is that, when you look at the timeline, she [Pocahontas] married a totally different John.

Jack: It seems as if the account was made more positive for the public compared to how it actually was.

Facilitator: Do you mean he added some drama?

Jack: Yes. And it does not become clear in the source itself if it is historically correct. [...] Well, it says 'true information', so he probably tried to describe what really happened.

Facilitator: Could you explain that, based on what happened between 1607 and 1608?

Oscar: I think we should look at what they wanted, which was to attract new colonists. So, then you have to show there is peace between the local inhabitants and the colonists.

[...]

Jack: Pocahontas is not mentioned in the first source.

Kathie: She was 10 years old when he was held captive.

Facilitator: Is it likely that a ten-year-old would save this man and fall in love with him?

Jack: Not if we reason from our norms and values.

Kathie: But she did marry at a young age.

Jack: Yes, she was 17 years old when she married that John Rolfe.

Facilitator: What may have changed, as a result of which it became less important to describe everything so positively? And instead, like it says here, that he was sentenced to death. What made him want to write Pocahontas into his history?

Rose: Maybe because she was popular. Show that they [the native inhabitants] could convert to Christianity. If she was popular and he was saved by her and they married, he was famous too.

Oscar: I think it is more likely that this was used as legitimization. A person like Pocahontas is convenient. [...]

Jack: Maybe also to show the native people as kind of wild people that could easily smash your brains. But also, as Oscar says, to legitimize war. Something like: the others are aggressive and we will have to defend ourselves.

Facilitator: So, can we answer the question? Did Pocahontas save John Smith or not? Based on the sources.

Jack: With these sources we cannot answer that for sure.

Rose: Probably not, because if he wanted to write a positive story in the first document, he would definitively have written this.

Facilitator: Others? Can we find arguments in the sources?

Kathie: Well, he wrote the second book after Pocahontas died. It remains a strange story and she could not contradict it. The timeline really helps, but what is the source of the timeline?

To identify development in participating teachers' beliefs about history and history education we collected data using an individual in-depth semi-structured interview and the Beliefs About Learning and Teaching of History (BLTH-)questionnaire (Maggioni et al., 2004). The three main categories for coding the interviews were (1) beliefs about the nature of history and historians' research method, (2) beliefs about general goals of teaching elementary school history, and (3) beliefs about goals and experiences with inquiry-based history teaching activities. The interview data were supplemented with data from the BLTH-questionnaire.

Participants in the program developed more nuanced beliefs about history and their thinking about history teaching became more oriented toward historical inquiry. Changes in the number of teachers who in the interview reported on the nature of history and the historical research method were most apparent. Where in the first interview six out of nine participants pronounced copier beliefs about history and the nature of historical knowledge, none pronounced such ideas after the program. This shows that over the course of the program, participants came to realize that history is not a series of fixed facts. Clearly standing out as well was the increase of participants outing beliefs connected to a criterialist stance, from three during the first interview to six during the final interview. There was, however, also an increase in expressions coded as borrower stance ideas about the nature of history, from two participants in the first to five participants in the final interview. These results indicate that the program made participants realize that analysis of historical sources is important in historical research, that many sources remaining of the past are based on human witnesses, and that opposing testimonials exist. However, most participants appeared not fully aware of the disciplinary tools historians use to analyze historical sources and build evidence. Two participants expressed both borrower and criterialist ideas in the post interview. Furthermore, the descriptions became richer and more detailed, indicating a better understanding of the concepts used.

The results of the BLTH-questionnaire showed that the development of participants was not unidirectional. For all participants the general score on statements connected to criterialist stance beliefs about history and teaching history was, at all three measurements, highest of all stances. Borrower stances beliefs, although decreasing with some participants, increased with others, sometimes even quite sharply. The complexity of coming to understand the nature of history was shown in the final interview, where four participants remarked on the activity in the second year of the program where newspaper articles that were read about the research process and conclusions reached about the betrayal of the hiding place of Anne Frank's family. From these articles, participants were asked to deduce the steps of historical research. These were discussed and compared with the step-by-step plan of classroom inquiry. Kathie, a grade-4 teacher, says:

I became aware of how everything that is written down is the product of research of someone who studied certain sources. Also, by reading certain articles, like the news about the research into Anne Frank's betrayal. That

makes you think: there are different approaches to this research. I never thought about history this way. Your idea about history really changes. I became more aware of this. It was written down once and you have to realize that most of it was true, but also that you cannot be sure of it for some part.

In the professional development program we not only focused on developing participating teachers' historical reasoning competences and a better understanding of the nature of historical knowledge, but they also experimented with developing activities and materials for inquiry-based learning in history lessons and implementing these in the classroom.

In another publication (Potjer et al., [in press](#)) we discuss how participants reflected on the development of inquiry-based history lessons. Participants indicated that developing such lessons is challenging, especially finding suitable historical sources and gaining the level of subject knowledge needed to design an inquiry lesson. Most participants indicated that they preferred ready-made historical inquiry lessons so when preparing, they could focus on their role in guiding the inquiry. On the other hand, developing such lessons themselves seemed to be important for the professional growth of participating teachers.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter we described how epistemic beliefs about history of elementary school teachers influence their teaching and how professional development programs can influence these beliefs in such a way that teachers become more open to inquiry-based history teaching and historical reasoning. The challenges with implementing an inquiry-based learning approach in teaching history in elementary schools originate mostly in the fact that domain-specific attention for subjects is limited and that many teachers have beliefs that emphasize history as one true story and see the aim of history education as passing on a specific body of knowledge. We know from research by Levstik and Barton (2015), McCrum (2013), and Wansink et al. (2017) that beliefs about what should be taught and how it should be taught filter through in the goals teachers formulate and in the teaching strategies they choose. Goals of critical reasoning and multiple perspectives and interpretations have been found to link to student-centered and constructivist beliefs about teaching and teachers who have nuanced beliefs about history.

Teacher preparation and professional development play a central role in the development of nuanced beliefs about history. In elementary teacher education teachers are prepared for all different subjects taught in elementary school, with specific attention to reading, writing, and mathematics. Due to limited time on task in teacher education, prospective teachers' beliefs about history are not always challenged and often remain naïve. On the other hand, teacher education programs have often incorporated teaching of inquiry-based lessons where students engage in co-constructing knowledge under guidance of the teacher educator and where pre-service teachers learn to develop lessons and guide the learning processes themselves (Dobber et al., 2017). In some elementary teacher curricula, insights from research into history and experiences with historical reasoning in secondary education have been incorporated. However, if teachers hold less nuanced beliefs about history themselves, it is unlikely that they can cultivate more nuanced beliefs in their students.

Our empirical study into a professional development program aimed at historical reasoning in inquiry-based history lessons for elementary teachers provides implications for professional development programs and future research. Our professional development program had a number of special features. On the one hand we focused on developing a better understanding of historical inquiry and historical reasoning through active engagement in inquiry-based learning tasks. On the other hand, participating teachers focused on the development and implementation of lessons in which students engage in historical inquiry and reasoning. Participants' beliefs about history became more nuanced during this program and more favorable toward inquiry-based learning. Of the professional development activities that influenced this development, participants indicated that the historical inquiry activities they performed themselves and discussing these were most powerful. These inquiries, based on rich historical questions and using various historical sources, were preceded by an introduction by the facilitator providing a rich context and supported by worksheets that facilitated the sourcing and historical reasoning process. What marked the discussions was the insight that doing historical inquiries raises a lot of questions and that discussing these takes time. Participants also realized how difficult it can be to work with only a few sources and that it is challenging to analyze what happened.

Future professional development programs may combine the same activities as we did, mainly because we know that developing epistemological views alone is not sufficient and attention should also be paid to

understanding historical reasoning and competences to design inquiry-based lessons (Wilke et al., 2022). This might be supplemented by modeling by the teacher educator and providing information about learning effects of inquiry on history learning, about misconceptions, and information about the effect on, for example, literacy skills, because these are found to be important for teachers to see the benefit compared to traditional teaching approaches (Peck, 2014; Van Boxtel et al., 2021). Maybe most important is that both in-service and pre-service teachers need to experiment with implementing historical inquiry lessons and develop skills to guide this inquiry as a teacher and provide a learning environment in which historical reasoning skills can grow.

Future programs could, however, pay more *explicit* attention to the role of epistemological beliefs, as is suggested by several researchers (Maggioni et al., 2009; Peck, 2014; Van Uum et al., 2021). Professional development programs and history methods courses in elementary teacher education can be advanced by the insights from empirical studies, for example by discussing with both pre-service and in-service elementary teachers the epistemic stances and elaborating on the relation between nuanced beliefs about history and the method of historical inquiry and historical reasoning. As engagement in historical inquiries by teachers and discussion afterwards were found to improve understanding of history and impact teachers' beliefs (Potjer et al., *in press*), these elements could play a more central role in these programs.

Future research can focus on the question which elements in professional development programs enhance sustainable implementation of newly learned skills. New skills need to be practiced on a regular basis and teachers' beliefs and capacities can better translate into classroom instruction when contextual factors, such as the curriculum, available resources, support, and collaboration within the school, are supportive.

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