From historical literacy to a pedagogy of history.
Philip Roberts

Over the last decade research into history education has focussed upon the development of definitions of historical literacy and historical thinking. This trend has been in contrast with a similar trend over the same period to develop models of pedagogy. Consequently there is a limited body of research that explores the pedagogy of historical literacy and thinking and that provides clear practical classroom advice for pre-service teachers. This paper provides an overview of this gap and explores a project aimed at helping provide such advice for pre-service teachers. Examples of how history teacher educators can learn from museum educators and how this can be applied in pre-service education are explored.

Over the last few decades the teaching of history has become an important topic of debate in public and professional circles. Much of this debate has had as its origin a concern for the role of history in the creation and propagation of national identity with the focus being the perceived deficiencies and potential biases in its teaching. The political considerations this has awoken has led to a focus upon the quality of history teaching in schools, the content of the history curriculum and a muted discussion about what history education is and its purpose. While an attempt has been made in many western countries, and now Australia, to resolve some of these issues with a national history curriculum of sorts, the solution has focused upon the definition of history education in schools as an issue of content. Thus it can be argued that the main political imperative for history education is the transmission of historical content, fundamental beliefs and understandings about the past, and considerations of how we understand the past in relation to national development and identity. Consequently the focus on teaching history has stalled upon historical literacy\(^1\) and historical thinking\(^2\).

This paper does not seek to enter or devalue the debates about content or purpose in any significant manner, rather it suggests that while they are necessary and important aspects of the debate they are not necessarily debates about pedagogy. Instead they only imply a pedagogy that is left for the teacher to conjure from the broad discussions and examples. While this is a significant and provocative suggestion this paper sets out to be speculative and to deliberately not answer the questions or confirm the propositions it suggests, as to do so would pre-empt the discussion it aims to initiate.

### Historical literacy & thinking

To locate the discussion in this paper it is necessary to stand aside from the argument and briefly introduce the main features of historical literacy and understanding. This is not to engage in any detailed discussion of each or to detract from their significant value, rather it is to suggest that while they form the basis of any pedagogy of history they are not of themselves a

\(^1\) (Taylor & Young, 2003)

\(^2\) (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas, 2006; Seixas & Peck, 2004)
pedagogy of history. The three main developments to be introduced in this argument are historical literacy, historical thinking and thinking historically.

Taylor and Young outline a model of Historical Literacy (table 1) that forms an important basis for their guide to teaching history in Australian schools. A strength of this approach has been suggested as its ability counter a publicly suggested historical illiteracy, however more importantly it provides a consistent framework upon which to develop historical understanding and a common language that is based upon a sound research base.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events of the past</th>
<th>Knowing and understanding historical events, using prior knowledge, and realising the significance of different events.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narratives of the past</td>
<td>Understanding the shape of change and continuity over time, understanding multiple narratives and dealing with open-endedness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research skills</td>
<td>Gathering, analysing and using the evidence (artefacts, documents and graphics) and issues of provenance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The language of history</td>
<td>Understanding and dealing with the language of the past.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical concepts</td>
<td>Understanding historical concepts such as causation and motivation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT understandings</td>
<td>Using, understanding and evaluating ICT-based historical resources (the virtual archive).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td>Connecting the past with the self and the world today.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contention and contestability</td>
<td>Understanding the ‘rules’ and the place of public and professional historical debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representational expression</td>
<td>Understanding and using creativity in representing the past through film, drama, visual arts, music, fiction, poetry and ICT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral judgement’s in history</td>
<td>Understanding the moral and ethical issues involved in historical explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied science in history</td>
<td>Understanding the use and value of scientific and technological expertise and methods in investigating the past, such as DNA analysis or gas chromatography tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical explanation</td>
<td>Using historical reasoning, synthesis and interpretation (the index of historical literacy) to explain the past. Historical understanding is incomplete without explanation.</td>
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Table 1: Historical Literacy

The Benchmarks of Historical Thinking proposed by Seixas and linked with the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness propose the six historical thinking concepts of:

- Historical significance
- Evidence

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3 (Taylor & Young, 2003)

4 (Taylor & Young, 2003, p. 33)

5 (Seixas, 2006)

6 (Seixas, 2006)
• Continuity & change
• Cause & consequence
• Taking an historical perspective
• The moral/ethical dimension

Each of these is explained in terms of the aspects involved in each, what students at the most sophisticated level will be able to do and suggested student tasks. This last area, suggested student tasks, starts to hint at the pedagogy of each of the six concepts indicating that there is a pedagogy inherent to teaching these skills. These concepts are proposed within a broader consideration of developing a historical consciousness that is defined as an awareness of the past in the present and the interconnection between them. Within this framework the concepts can be further defined as student aptitudes and skills that clearly need a pedagogy to effectively develop them, however this approach does not articulate such a pedagogy. Thus while the benchmarks and their associated concepts are aimed at fostering new approaches to history teaching and student learning they still rely on a leap between the theory and the skills and practices required to ensure their application in the classroom.

Lévesque proposes the idea of Thinking Historically and argues that disciplines have their own modes of thinking and inquiry with his work exploring what these are in history. This is not a new concept, as it has existed since the early days of educational psychology, it is just that over the past couple of decades much of the early learning on learning has been sidelined by the quality and attached accountability agenda. He suggests that thinking historically falls into two categories, Memory-History and Disciplinary-History (table 2), with Disciplinary-History being the true nature of the subject. Memory-History He argues has become the territory of much popular imagination, and political interest, and the connection between it and the role of school history in promulgating national identity clear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memory-History</th>
<th>Disciplinary-History</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Memory is a ‘factual’ tradition (whereas history is contestable and changeable)</td>
<td>• Historical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trend of factual history</td>
<td>• Domain specific processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commemoration, memory, heritage</td>
<td>• Students use to master the concepts &amp; knowledge of history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• History can be known by remembering it</td>
<td>• But, not to the standards of disciplinary experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• History can only be known by ‘doing it’</td>
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Table 2: Memory-History and Disciplinary-History

In his analysis Lévesque discusses the nature of historical knowledge and the difference between ‘first order’ substantive knowledge and ‘second order’ procedural knowledge (table 3). This

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7 (Seixas, 2008)
8 (Lévesque, 2008)
9 (Lévesque, 2008)
10 (Lévesque, 2008)
suggests that the two forms need to be separated as they have become intertwined in education systems. The resulting distinction between what history is about and how it is studied is helpful to the proposition of this paper as it starts to narrow the territory where a pedagogy of history needs to generate from, namely the procedural domain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substantive Knowledge</th>
<th>Procedural Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Content</td>
<td>• Structuring, giving sense &amp; coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What history is about</td>
<td>• Concepts that give shape to historical practice &amp; thinking about the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Concepts not what history is about but arise in the act of doing history</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 3: Substantiative Knowledge and procedural Knowledge in History

Lévesque continues to unpack this procedural knowledge to suggest that they can be explored through the procedural concepts of: historical significance; continuity & change; progress & decline; evidence; and historical empathy. These concepts, which are further explored and their use by students discussed, are similar to those suggested by Seixas and would appear familiar to most trained in the discipline of history and the majority of experienced history teachers. As such the procedural concepts are an important basis for the argument of this paper as they are significant components in defining the types of ideas that may inform a pedagogy of history. However while these are important skills and understandings, and suggest pedagogies, the intricacies of what the teacher does and how they do it to achieve this is not unpacked. As such explaining the process to a pre-service teacher or novice history teacher involves a leap of faith that a suggestion to ‘use evidence’ in the classroom will result in the effective and meaningful use of that evidence. Thus there is a gap between the theory and the practice.

**Taking a critical perspective**

Moving on from the basic concepts that inform this discussion it may be useful here to ground the critical perspective that informs the separation of pedagogy from historical thinking and literacy. To do this the example of history in the junior curriculum in, particularly, New South Wales (NSW), Australia generally and generally other western democracies is used. In these curriculums the discipline of history has been relegated to second place behind the subject being a vehicle to impart civic knowledge and citizenship values, hence the preoccupation with the politics of content and concerns for how it is taught in broad political terms. The impact of this civics and citizenship focus has seen the discipline of history be redefined as civics and citizenship, at least in the mandatory junior curriculum. History has become the host through which civics and citizenship is taught. The focus of testing upon civic and citizenship aspects of history and the language surrounding the rationale and purposes of these courses uncover this host relationship and demonstrate that the discipline is indeed subservient to the political rationale. An example of this in action is where appropriate forms of civic action are sanctioned

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11 (Lévesque, 2008)
12 (Lévesque, 2008)
while others are tactfully questioned and often challenged, such as the positioning of the moratorium movement against the protests in the topic of the Vietnam War era in the NSW stage 5 course\textsuperscript{13}. This results in a dangerous situation where some forms of civic action and values are legitimised while others repudiated. This may be viewed as a rather cynical reading of such relationships, however when placed in the context of recent political discourse and actions such as sidelining legitimate protest in Australia, for example the APEC protests and blocking access to federal parliament while ‘allowing’ protests in sanctioned areas away to the side only, the true nature of such a curriculum may be revealed.

Within this critical perspective a focus upon how historical understanding is transmitted meets the political agendas of an informed civically knowledge populace, as it is the transmission of accepted dispositions that is sought and valued in such civics and citizenship education. An awareness of such a critical perspective is relevant to any discussion about the pedagogical implications of the focus upon historical literacy and thinking as it reveals that their purpose it to better transmit a history curriculum whose nature is removed from the discipline of history. As such it positions any call for an understanding of the nature of a pedagogy of history as something potentially in opposition to the existing practice in schools.

**Pedagogy and history**

Coinciding with the period of debates about the nature of school history and an interest in historical literacy and thinking has been an interest in pedagogy and the search for near universally applicable general principles. This has resulted in the development of generic models of pedagogy that are said to provide general principles of effective educational instruction across all the disciplines\textsuperscript{14}. In the example of history this has meant that there has not been a focus upon the pedagogy of history as it has instead been assumed to have been covered by the generic models that have been promulgated over the last decades. While such models do provide a useful guide about key elements of effective pedagogy, they deny the unique nuances of each specific discipline and send a tacit message that all educational contexts are the same. While this may suit political agendas about accountability and a prevailing discourse of equity where regarding people as equal and expecting the same level of achievement is seen as a positive, even fair expectation, it could be suggested that such an approach actually magnifies difference. The effective history teacher knows that the skills of inquiry and analysis as expressed in historical literacy and thinking are unique, hence the focus on researching and understanding them. It follows then that how to teach these unique skills must also be unique. The way in which the effective teacher links their lessons with local historical events is in itself a skill linked to this proposition. It may be common sense to study World War I or the 1967 referendum through the experiences of a well known local community member, but how a teacher goes about structuring such an inquiry is a complex task, especially as they subtly link to the mandated curriculum while attempting to teach something of local significance.

\textsuperscript{13} (New South Wales Board of Studies, 2003)

\textsuperscript{14} See for example (Newman and Associates, 1996; NSW-DET, 2003; Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study, 2001)
The unique potential of history education to use local context as a basis for student learning reinforces its value in connecting students with their local community and building learning that is significant to the lived experiences of students. Ironically these are important aspects of pedagogy in the generic models, however how the general principles are translated in practice in a history setting is as yet not clearly examined. However this process needs to be explored and explained to both improve the practice in classrooms but also to help achieve the stated intent of focussing upon historical literacy and thinking. It may be that the focus upon historical literacy and thinking has been assumed to have been a pedagogical project, however when looked at closely these developments do not provide guidance about how to go about the important tasks they advocate in a history classroom. The literature in relation these ideas may often site examples and note best practice, however it does not extrapolate this into replicable descriptions or models.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge
A recognition that there are unique features of a discipline such as history and that it therefore requires a unique pedagogy accords with the notion of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as advocated by Lee Shulman. This approach has occasionally been revisited throughout this period of generic pedagogy models, notably for our context by Taylor and Young in the guidebook ‘Making History’, however it has largely been sidelined by the quality agenda aligned with standardised models and measures. According to Taylor and Young Pedagogical Content Knowledge, in the context of history education, recognises that;

‘History teaching is a complex task that involves transforming subject matter into forms that are meaningful to learners, while retaining the integrity of the subject.

To achieve this end teachers draw on their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). PCK is a subject-specific knowledge that includes:
• knowing the structures of the discipline
• knowing about the difficulties students come across as they work with different subject matters
• knowing about the ways young people learn a particular subject
• knowing about strategies to assist with and assess learning.

Unlike beginning teachers, who often encounter difficulties translating subject matter for young audiences, most experienced teachers have extensive PCK developed over years of classroom practice in varying contexts.

Furthermore they argue that;
‘Research undertaken by Wineburg and Wilson indicates that history teachers use their PCK to develop representations of the subject for learning purposes. These representations are derived from historical content (past and present events, people, places, themes and movements) and include maps, graphics, visuals, drama, reconstructions and stories, together with the analogies and metaphors teachers use to

15 (Shulman, 1986, 1987)
16 (Taylor & Young, 2003)
17 (Taylor & Young, 2003, p. 170)
explain or illustrate a point. Each one of these is a pedagogical device for linking subject matter and the learner.

Wineburg and Wilson isolate two broad categories of instructional representation commonly used by history teachers.

- **Epistemological representations** - These model how historical knowledge is constructed and inquiry is carried out. They connect specific subject matter to wider historical concerns and may include focusing on how to read documents critically, analyse and interpret visual sources.
- **Contextual representations** - These are presentations of particular events, concepts and ideas grounded in a specific time and place.

These types of representations used by teachers capture both historical content and processes for teaching and learning purposes.

The debates of the last decades in relation to the content of school history suggest that the ‘content’ component of PCK has been a strong focus and possibly reasonably well understood. Similarly the structure of the discipline has been adequately explored, albeit with a critical debate about the impact the civics and citizenship focus upon it. It is the focus however upon student learning in the subject that needs greater attention. From the explanation given by Taylor and Young in relation to PCK there is clearly an implied pedagogy of history that is possible to be articulated. However after raising the importance of the issue this paper suggests that they did not go on to provide a strong description of the pedagogy component of the model. Suffice to say that recognising how students learn a subject, the difficulties they face, the way it is represented and how learning is assessed are broad descriptive categories and not a pedagogy of itself. Instead they are about understanding the nature of historical learning and have resulted in a focus on historical literacy and thinking as a substitute for the process knowledge of pedagogy. They also focus upon the learner of history and the skills the teacher aims to foster in learners rather than the skills and practices the teacher needs to facilitate this learning.

This oversight does not mean that PCK is not an important component of the development of a pedagogy of history. To the contrary the importance of the PCK model is that it reminds us of the critical importance of linking strong content knowledge with strong pedagogical knowledge to achieve effective student learning. Indeed the importance of strong subject knowledge is embedded within the discussions of historical literacy and thinking and further reinforced by Taylor and Young who argue that;

‘Effective teachers:
- present history as a constructivist/social activity that involves students in working with the raw materials historians use when shaping the past and in drawing on the knowledge and understanding historians bring to the history-making process

18 (Taylor & Young, 2003, p. 170)
understand that constructing the past is an associative, speculative and imaginative process that requires learners to connect and relate various pieces of evidence to build images of the past.\(^\text{19}\)

Clearly in this interpretation a sound knowledge of both the subject matter and the nature of the discipline is an essential component for effective student learning. Revisiting the critical perspective it also suggests that the present approach to school history and its relationship to civics and citizenship may not be serving the needs of effective teachers and limiting the ability of developing a strong pedagogical understanding. Within this understanding of effective teachers exists the cause of the lack of focus upon the pedagogy of history, as researchers have been preoccupied with understanding the nature of the discipline as expressed through historical literacy and thinking. However Taylor and Young’s description of effective teachers clearly indicates a definite pedagogy of history that needs to be further developed and understood so that it can be both researched and taught to history teachers. With the advent of an Australian National Curriculum and the necessity of teachers to study history as a distinct discipline in primary schools for the first time in a considerable period an extra dimension exists here, as it is necessary to develop a pedagogical understanding across all years of schooling. This however needs to be broader than the disciplinary understanding of historical literacy and thinking as it needs to articulate how these are taught to students.

**Questioning pedagogy and coverage**

As part of this discussion it is necessary to be cognisant of Seixas and Peck’s view that school history has a distinct purpose, that being the development of critical skills in students.\(^\text{20}\) Such a purpose is distinct from developing general historical understanding or even specific content knowledge. The idea however enables the focus upon historical literacy and thinking to be seen as vehicles to developing the critical skills of students as distinct from the disciplinary knowledge. However the realignment of the discipline with the political imperative of civics and citizenship and its role in public political debate creates an odd contradiction with its stated purpose as previously intimated. Regardless, the important role of developing critical skills in students remains an aptitude to foster rather than a pedagogy for teachers to employ. While Sexias and Peck go as far as to suggest a series of questions for teachers to employ\(^\text{21}\) which are an important step in informing a potential pedagogy, they are again not a pedagogy themselves. Indeed there is a strong implied pedagogy for the effective teacher in developing critical skills, and indeed the historical literacy and thinking skills discussed, but not specific practices for the uninitiated.

At a time of dramatic expansion and increased interest in the teaching of history in schools the lack of a guiding pedagogy for teachers leaves those new to the subject susceptible to the popular and political influences upon it. This is not to argue for a universally applicable methodology that teachers are made accountable for implementing, but to rather suggest that without more specific guidance than general statements of desired attributes there is a greater chance that

\(^{19}\) (Taylor & Young, 2003, p. 165)  
\(^{20}\) (Seixas & Peck, 2004)  
\(^{21}\) (Seixas & Peck, 2004)
teachers new to the subject or recently trained may adopt approaches that reinforce the wrong, nationalistic, utopian, non-critical history. As a result the purpose of history in the classroom and the reason for its inclusion in a national curriculum may be undermined – or perhaps, albeit cynically, reinforced.

It would appear that the discussion of effective history teaching stalled at historical literacy and thinking. One explanation for this may be that we have come to expect that the purpose of education is itself the process of education. If so this is a dangerous conclusion that misses the learning of the last thirty years of educational sociology. This learning has made clear that it is the act of teaching, the knowledge that is valued, and the way ideas are transmitted and assessed that creates divisions in student achievement and reinforces privilege. Following this logic it could be suggested that focusing upon historical literacy and thinking is aimed at uncovering the hidden codes within historical learning and, following Seixas and Peck, developing critical skills to challenge authority and power. This paper however challenges this logic by arguing that the lack of a known pedagogy to deliberately develop these skills actually has the opposite effect and reinforces existing prejudices.

This is not to argue for the redefinition of teaching as a technical trade where the skills of the professional are redefined along competency lines. It is just to recognise that our understanding of the act of effective history teaching as a process need to be better understood so that teachers can be prepared to teach it, so that the historical literacy and thinking can be effectively taught and developed in students for all the wonderful reasons the authors of these models argue. In the present political climate of quality and accountability in many western educational systems there is an ever-present danger that seeking to define a process will result in a one-dimensional model to be implemented and measured. Such an approach contradicts effective professional learning and significantly limits the potential of such understandings. Therefore this call for a pedagogy of history needs to be seen clearly in the context of opposition to generic models of pedagogy.

This discussion is however predicated on the view that an understanding of the process of teaching disciplines is important in understanding and developing effective teaching. One reason why this has not been a concern previously suggested by Lévesque is a belief that as history has grown more popular, and been studied to a greater extent by future teachers at university, that the quality of teaching in schools would subsequently increase. Such a belief reinforces the earlier discussion of the preoccupation of school history with the development of national identity and reveals a pre-occupation with content and coverage, which arose from the perceived crisis in historical knowledge. Contradicting this view however, at least in the American context, Wineburg found that when levels of historical knowledge are compared over the last century there has not been a significant change.

It does not necessarily follow that an increase in the popularity of history in higher education and the expansion of history faculties correlated with an increase in the development of the

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22 (Lévesque, 2008)
23 (Wineburg, 2004)
pedagogy of history. Indeed it has been noted by Calder that the study of history (in universities) has missed the move to understanding cognition\(^\text{24}\) and is instead stuck in coverage. It is not surprising therefore that evidence from years of research into the effectiveness of the best-qualified history teachers, including those with higher degrees, demonstrates that they do not employ any better pedagogy as they are more concerned with coverage, meeting the mandated curriculum and meeting benchmarks.\(^\text{25}\)

**Signature pedagogies**

It would appear therefore that greater historical knowledge and training may have indeed resulted in a default position of content above pedagogy. This is something that a preoccupation with measurable standards of learning and debates about what should be included in a curriculum unfortunately reinforces. Consequently there is a need to move the debate on from what is taught, which in this argument includes historical literacy and thinking, to how it is taught. In taking this step there is a growing body of work in higher education looking at what has been termed the signature pedagogies\(^\text{26}\) of the professions, including academic history. While the context is different to the school setting these discussions suggest a way of progressing our understanding of effective teaching and provide a strong endorsement of recognition of the differences between subject disciplines. By way of limitation though they are still developing and similar to historical literacy and thinking only indicate directions for further development rather than providing complete conclusions. It should also be noted that they are also informed by discussions of the singular knowledge’s of historical literacy and particularly historical thinking.

Building on Shulman’s\(^\text{27}\) recognition that each discipline has a distinct way of understanding and transmitting knowledge Chick, Hayne and Gurung\(^\text{28}\) argue that an understanding of the disciplinary ways of thinking are an important area to be addressed in education. They suggest that while this may be a simple proposition in certain professions such as Business and Law, in the Humanities and Social Sciences it is a more difficult prospect, as often skills such as critical thinking and writing are more highly valued\(^\text{29}\). Indeed they argue that good teaching extends beyond the generic\(^\text{30}\) especially when we consider Shulman’s argument that what we want students to learn in each subject is different and that therefore different instructional approaches are employed.\(^\text{31}\)

The approach of developing a signature pedagogy is not about narrowing students focus within each discipline, as generic pedagogy models conceivably do, but about broadening students understanding of the unique aspects of each discipline, and therefore better equipping them for

\(^{24}\) (Calder, 2006) \\
^{25}\) (Lévesque, 2008) \\
^{26}\) (Shulman, 2005) \\
^{27}\) (Shulman, 2005) \\
^{28}\) (Chick, Hayne, & Gurung, 2009) \\
^{29}\) (Chick, et al., 2009) \\
^{30}\) (Chick, et al., 2009) \\
^{31}\) (Shulman, 2005)
a pluralistic and evolving world. Caution needs to be exercised though to guard against the extent to which a knowledge of a signature pedagogy could potentially confine that pedagogy within its accepted and described parameters, as is often the case with many generic models. Instead, a signature pedagogy needs to be developed in such a way that it describes effective practice while actualising it as an issue of degrees rather than a measure of accountability.

The idea of signature pedagogies comes from the notion that ‘effective teaching results from core values and principles of our courses and our disciplines, rather than from generic views of learning’. This idea supports the need for an understanding of historical literacy and historical thinking, however it also implies that an additional layer of knowledge of how to teach these in the context of the discipline is crucial to quality learning. Such an approach in relation to history will help move away from the coverage model of teaching to a model based upon understanding. This however raises the question of what it is we seek to understand. Is it a signature pedagogy of history, the subject taught in schools, is this subject separate from the university subject as Seixas and Peck suggest, is it a signature pedagogy of teacher education itself incorporating the teaching of history, or is it the signature pedagogy of pre-service history teacher preparation? The potential answer to each of these questions will use the ideas of historical literacy and historical thinking in different ways, and in so doing highlight one of the problems with seeing them as indicative of a pedagogy of history.

In thinking about the features that such a signature pedagogy may involve there are a number of studies that provide useful signs on the road to understanding. For example in their collection of research in history education Levstik & Barton note that little educational research focuses upon teacher and student thinking and that which does dwells upon the findings and the technical issues of their methods. This is helpful as a pedagogy can be partly seen as a way of thinking so highlighting a gap in this area reinforces the suggested gap in pedagogical understanding. Their collection starts the process of understanding what a pedagogy may involve as they provide insights into some aspects of teachers thinking and the ways in which students learn history. However like much work in this genre the processes to be employed by the teacher, for example to use historical 'narrative' effectively, still needs to be brought to light from their cloak of implied meanings.

Another higher education development that may assist in the thinking towards a signature pedagogy of history is the effort to 'decode the disciplines'. In this example Middendorf and Pace suggest that the focus on higher order thinking over the last decades has meant a lack of focus on how to teach the important foundational 'lower order' skills in each discipline upon which the higher order skills are developed. One example is that of reading offered by Pace who recognises that reading in history is different to other disciplines and is not usually explicitly taught but instead left for the student to figure out. To counter this he sets out in his

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32 (Chick, et al., 2009) p.4.
33 (Sipress & Voelker, 2009)
34 (Levstik & Barton, 2008)
35 (Pace & Middendorp, 2004)
36 (Middendorf & Pace, 2004)
chapter to understand the process of reading in history\(^{37}\), an approach that suggests at least a couple of aspects of a potential signature pedagogy of history.

The effort to ‘decode the disciplines’ recognises that disciplines need to focus more on how people learn them and that there are different cognitive processes involved in each.\(^{38}\) The result they suggest should be more effective teachers and consequently better advocates for the disciplines. This approach would refocus the discipline of history and its advocates upon developing disciplinary skills and knowledge as opposed to being restricted by the current ‘essential content’ approach of the school history wars and its popular political discourse. In developing an approach to begin ‘decoding the discipline’ a framework has been developed that\(^{39}\) even though it is based in higher education provides some insight and idea as to how signature pedagogies can be developed.

As in the example of considering the implications of which signature pedagogies we want to develop, it is important that the parameters of what history we are referring and it purpose are clearly defined. For example while his paper has suggested that the purpose of history in the school curriculum is more along the lines of developing disciplinary thinking and even critical skills, there remains that overarching political narrative of national identity and civics and citizenship. To tease this out we need to think about the role of schooling and its connection to higher education, i.e. while school should not be just preparation for higher education, should the organisation of disciplines reflect that of higher education rather than the amalgam many find themselves in schools? Do we want to teach disciplines in schools as an amalgam as their purpose in that setting may be different to higher education or would a recognition of different discipline knowledge’s improves society by illustrating the distinct ways of being and methods of understanding or making sense of the world? The answer to such questions will significantly influence the types of signature pedagogies that may be developed for history education. Either way a discipline based approach to considering such pedagogies would be, as Lévesque suggests in relation to the procedural concepts of thinking historically, more democratic learning, real and relevant learning, the development of a stronger connection to the past and a future orientated and challenging\(^{40}\) curriculum.

**Looking to Museum Education**

A key strength that the discipline of history has over others is its openness and accessibility to everyone. This has the potential to make it a key component in a more democratic and inclusive curriculum. History exists everywhere, and while this may challenge those that want to use it to perpetuate certain myths or ideologies, it is accessible in all communities through the memories

\(^{37}\) (Pace, 2004)  
\(^{38}\) (Middendorf & Pace, 2004)  
\(^{39}\) (Middendorf & Pace, 2004)  
\(^{40}\) (Lévesque, 2008)
of community members, local institutions\(^1\) and historical societies. As a result the tools for open inquiry such as artefacts\(^2\) of the past and experience in reading and deriving meaning from these artefacts exits in every community. In addition to this ‘public history’ regional, state, national and even international institutions are the custodians of the artefacts of our collective past. More importantly however for this argument, these institutions have a wealth of experience in reading this past and presenting it to the public in a meaningful and interesting way through the experience of the professional museum educators who work within them. This makes the museum education field an invaluable source when considering the potential components of a pedagogy of history. However there does appear to be a lack of conversation between museum education and teacher education. This is strange considering visiting a significant museum or cultural institution is a part of the course for most history classrooms, however it would appear that on such occasions the educative act of discussing and analysing the collection is left to the museum educator.

Broadly speaking museum educators help visitors make sense of an exhibition or artefacts in the museums collection. The role is often aligned with the mission of the institution and as such there are a great diversity of approaches and expertise ranging from archaeological evidence, written records and manuscripts, other artefacts, artwork, film and more recently digital and media archives. To most history teachers these form the evidence for the history lesson and are often used to illustrate a point and, when more effectively used, are interrogated by students to build meaning. It is this later example that this paper is concerned with. When simply used to illustrate a point the meaning of the source is positioned as self-evident having been contextualised with the content. However when teachers are truly taking a disciplinary approach and encouraging students to use the array of historical literacies and historical thinking skills the source itself becomes the object of study, and the meaning and relative historical context built out of the source. This involves questioning for reliability, something most history teachers are good at as it forms the basis of much exam based activities, however it also involves a number of complex skills of inquiry to see the source in its full extent and tease out all relative bits of meaning and then connect it to a larger historical issue or trend.

Through perusing the museum education journals it becomes apparent that there is a great deal of potentially valuable material to inform a signature pedagogy of history. A limited analysis of these journals for this paper demonstrated that these journals feature many articles referring to: visual representation, multimodal displays, art history, structuring exhibits and artefacts, constructivist learning, memory, public history, authenticity, cultural artefacts, local museums in communities, and many methodological issues like narrative and thematic displays. There is also a large genre of presenting museum displays using the advances in technology and modern entertainment (and learning) forms. All of these have a direct connection to the skills a history teacher needs to use in the modern classroom to engage students and effectively guide their learning in history. They also hint at features of effective pedagogy as described in generic

\(^{1}\) Institution/s here refer to any organisation housing artefacts of the past including but not limited to formal cultural institutions, government bodies, and private business. It also includes physical structures such as monuments and plaques in public and private locations.

\(^{2}\) Artefacts here refer to physical, literary, digital materials and local oral history.
models of pedagogy and thus clearly have implications for a signature pedagogy of history. Not surprisingly then museum education journals also contain a significant amount of material relating to educational theory and educational theorists. Much of this is common with education studies with similar issues, theorists, pedagogical ideas and learning theories. It is surprising then that an preliminary analysis suggests only limited evidence of these two working together, especially considering museum studies often sits in universities that also have faculties of education.

Bridging this gap may improve the quality of education for everyone involved, and in the process assist in further democratising the past. Such a proposition however rests on an assumption that while many history teachers are skilled at using primary sources there is still much they can learn, as can pre-service teacher educators, to skill up the future generations of teachers. Similarly museum educators may be able to learn new ideas about pedagogy and learning from teachers and teacher educators. The skills that may be more effectively developed in history teachers through such collaboration would include, but are by no means limited to, skills like understanding of the use, analysis and display of artefacts and other primary sources, and the analysis of documents and artwork in their contexts. This development would ensure that a site visit to an institution is enhanced through the teacher having better prepared a class prior to a visit which is integrated into their learning program, thus making the visit more effective than it already is, and then assisting stronger classroom follow up and the integration of the visit and skills practised in their everyday lessons. Such a development would effectively raise the learning to another level, however it would also put the onus on everyone to improve the standard of education, and consequently the historical literacy and thinking of everyone. The danger is however that entry costs, distance from cultural institutions or a view that the correct history is the preserve of cultural elites may limit all students’ access to such learning. Thus measures need to be taken to ensure that access to institutions, which are custodians of the artefacts of our past, is open to all regardless of economic resources, geographic location or culture.

Skilled history teachers use and analyse primary sources with their students as a matter of course, however the approach of museum educators (and the professional historians and archaeologists who work along side them) of building meaning from artefacts is not necessarily something all history teachers demonstrate. Often the use of primary sources in history classrooms revolves around questions of reliability, and thus only a few historical literacies and aspects of historical thinking. Unfortunately this is negatively influenced by concerns of coverage, civic and citizenship influences, and the imperatives of external assessment regimes. Strengthening the skills employed in effective history teaching would enable teachers to develop more open and democratic learning experiences based upon a range of artefacts and the inquiry skills that build knowledge from these artefacts while making the learner the centre of the process. It would strengthen the exiting skills of reliability testing and perhaps better serve the contradictory modern purpose of history in schools as a civic and citizenship function. Students would learn to question and analyse evidence and come to conclusions, thus building the skills needed for effective democratic participation. Similarly the student would also be the
centre of learning and build meaning for themselves guided by the teacher, something generic pedagogy models suggest is an important feature of effective teaching.

This does not mean a loss of content for relativistic skills and knowledge. To the contrary it means connecting the content to the students experiences and inquiry in a meaningful way that deepens learning and understanding. In a climate of external testing and pressure to cover content it is natural for many teachers to experience an anxiety about handing over inquiry to students. However research behind the now existing generic pedagogy models indicate that when effective instruction takes place the achievement on external standardised testing takes care of itself\(^{43}\). This approach also places the students learning locally as they build meaning from an object out to a global knowledge. Here students interrogate local artefacts that they then place in a global context, giving meaning and value to the students’ local community, rather than placing it as an external consequence of, or on, the periphery of ‘larger’ more ‘significant’ global trends. The alternative of using local experiences as an example of a larger historical ‘truth’ being studied undermines the value of historical learning as it reinforces an idea that local and individual actions are of limited consequence to global forces. Through starting locally and linking to larger global developments students are engaged in true democratic learning as they see that these global forces are not universal truths but amalgams of individual decisions and actions.

Developing an understanding of a signature pedagogy of history teaching and the issues it raises is all work that remains to be done. However it is the argument of this paper that it is work that will result in an improvement of the quality of history and develop more open and democratic knowledge systems. The first step in moving towards such an outcome however is to begin a conversation between the museum education and teacher education sectors to develop a greater understanding of how each sector goes about teaching historical skills and understandings. This conversation will breathe new life into the focus upon historical literacy and thinking by considering the skills and practices teachers need to use these effectively in their classroom. What this process will look like and how the conversation will develop remains to be seen as the aim of this paper has not been to define what the potential signature pedagogy of history teaching is, as to do so would pre-empt the discussion it aims to begin. Rather it’s purpose is to ask the question, ‘do we need to move from historical literacy to a pedagogy of history’?

\(^{43}\) Newman, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001}
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