

Supporting History Education Reform in Kyrgyzstan

History & Memory Masterclass for History Educators: Promoting Belonging and Inclusion through Learning

PUBLIC REPORT

Osh, Kyrgyzstan
September 28-30 2017



The participants of the Osh Masterclass pose for a photo in front of the Kyrgyz landscape

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From September 28 to 30 2017, EUROCLIO - European Association of History Educators, the Global Centre for Pluralism (GCP), and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) Kyrgyzstan ran a 3-day workshop, the **History and Memory Masterclass for History Educators - Promoting Belonging and Inclusion through Learning**. Below is a summary, including objectives, participants, programme highlights, outcomes and learnings, and next steps.

Aims of the Masterclass

- The professional development of the educators that participated in the seminar (in the understanding of the role of history in society, historical thinking, active learning methods, and dealing with difficult histories);
- The building of a network of history education practitioners, with different professional backgrounds, who are aware of the characteristics of an approach to history education that supports pluralism, and are interested in working on the implementation of such an approach in Kyrgyzstan.
- Better insight into the needs and situation of history education actors in Kyrgyzstan (by local and international stakeholders).

Workshop Participants

The workshop had approximately 50 participants from across Kyrgyzstan, with the majority coming from the southern regions. Participants came from a range of cultural and professional backgrounds, though all work in some way in the field of history education. This included history teachers from schools in Southern Kyrgyzstan, two teachers from Khorog, Tajikistan, university professors, teacher trainers, an advisor to the Ministry of Education, and representatives from Open Educational Resources (a website where people can access historical sources free or charge). There was a good range of diversity among participants and excellent participation over the course of the three days, making for lively and engaged discussion, both during and outside the sessions.

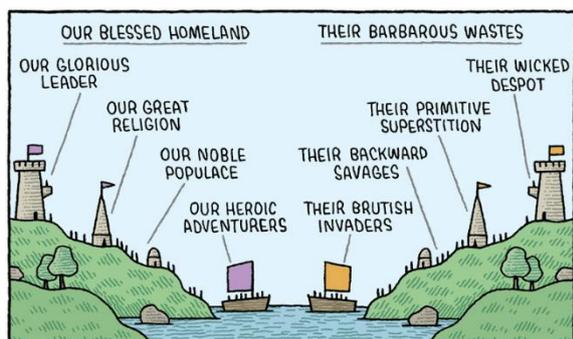
DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

The programme was designed to begin with theory and end with more practical activities. Most sessions were offered by the international partners, including Steven Stegers, Programme Director at EUROCLIO, and Julia Kushnereva, a history teacher from Moscow and teacher trainer in EUROCLIO's international network, as well a trainer from the Anne Frank House, Sergii Kulchevych. Local experts also contributed, including Asilbek Dotaliev and Asimova Matluba from the Republican Teacher Trainer's Institute and Gulnara Aitpaeva from the Aigine Cultural Research Center. All sessions were provided in English, Kyrgyz, and Russian.

THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2017

The first day of the Masterclass began with welcoming remarks from Katie O'Brian of the Global Centre for Pluralism, Burulai Aitikulova of the Aga Khan Foundation, and Steven Stegers of EUROCLIO - European Association of History Educators. Katie O'Brien, in particular, spoke on the issue of history and memory as drivers of pluralism, and how the acknowledgement in society (as well as in the classroom) of different and sometimes contrasting accounts of history is a necessary step in democracy-building. The purpose of this workshop would then be to demonstrate to the participants different ways in which

they could incorporate pluralism into their history education activities, and move towards presenting history as an ever-developing and inquisitive study with many perspectives.



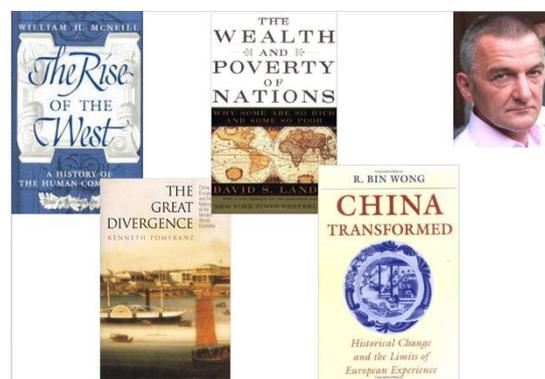
A political cartoon by Tom Gould, a cartoonist for The Guardian newspaper and the New Scientist magazine.

The first presentation was given by Julia Kushnereva, from Moscow School n.67, who spoke of “the image of the other” and the language of rivalry. Her primary message was that there is a natural tendency when we speak of our own history to overemphasize that which we are proud of (the good things) and mitigate mentioning that which we would rather forget (the bad things). However, the opposite is often true of other nations and cultures: we overemphasize their bad and underemphasize the good to position ourselves in a more positive light than our neighbours. Thus, Julia’s presentation

discussed how to avoid the oversimplifications of “othering” and included an interactive strategy game to explore how looking at different perspectives can make a student understand that both bad and good things are committed by all peoples, and therefore all are simultaneously victims, heroes, villains, and bystanders in history.

After lunch, Gulnara Aitpaeva spoke about the experiences of the Aigine Cultural Research Centre, to provide the perspective of the history educator that works from outside the classroom. Society’s views on history are informed not just by school education but by the work of museums and cultural centres, and she spoke about the differences in their roles in history education, and how multiperspectivity is approached by the centre.

Finally, before the cultural programme planned for the evening, Steven Stegers spoke about why historical accounts differ. To do this, Steven told a personal account of how his own history education had developed. He had studied different regions and periods with information presented by the professor as the singular narrative to memorize, until he took a course which explored different historians’ interpretations of what had caused the rise of the west after 1450. He was impressed by how the different historians all came to different conclusions on the issue, and how all these different ways of looking at the same history could all be valid. As a result, Steven had to think for himself and make a judgement about which historical account he found most convincing; this time, it was not up to the professor to decide which historical interpretation was the best.



Prof. Dr. Peer Vries who taught the course on how to explain the rise of the West, and the covers of some of the required reading: *The Rise of the West* (McNeill), *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (Landes), *The Great Divergence* (Pomeranz), and *China Transformed* (Bin Wong).

Steven discussed how he wished that he had been introduced to this method of looking at history earlier, because if he had been made aware that it is an interpretive discipline, he would have approached learning history differently, and been able to engage, and thus remember, a lot more of what he learned.

FRIDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2017

Julia Kushnereva began the second day of the workshop with a session about using historical sources in the classroom, and how presenting students with different sources can illustrate for them how historians face difficulties in finding “historical truths.” When two sources of the same event offer different views on what occurred, one must weigh the evidence and determine what biases are informing which views. This approach illustrates what Steven had discussed the previous day about different teaching methods for history: a teacher can simply present information as correct, or can present the students with sources so they can draw their own conclusions as to what occurred.

The second workshop of the day was led by Asilbek Dotaliev and Asimova Matluba from the Republican Teacher Trainers’ Institute (RTTI), who spoke about multiperspectivity in history teaching. They focussed on the meaning of the term and demonstrated with an example from the 30 years’ war how the concept can be applied in practice.

After lunch, Julia Kushnereva led a roleplay activity which had participants acting out the roles of different actors in British history from 1640-1649, in an activity called “Civil War comes to Deerhurst.” This was one of the most interactive moments of the workshop, where participants really got into their roles and experienced how history could be taught in a highly active, as well as enjoyable, way. Not all students respond well to reading textbooks, and this sort of approach is refreshing for very active students.

The last presentation of the day was held by Sergii Kulchevych, who introduced the educational work of the Anne Frank House with a special focus on memorials. He brought images of memory sites around the world and showed how you can interrogate them as a source.

As part of the cultural programme at the end of the day, participants hiked up Sulaiman Too Sacred Mountain, visited two nearby history museums, and several memorial sites. Participants heard from Lada Khasanova, Director of Osh Travel, who gave a presentation on Sulaiman Too, highlighting the contributions that Uzbeks had made to the cultural development of Osh. Some participants reacted quite strongly to her words, stating that the memories of the Kyrgyz Revolution of 2010 are still extremely traumatic and that current interpretations of them may create challenges to advancing respect for diversity and pluralism in Kyrgyzstan. This illustrates that speaking openly about Kyrgyz history can touch on sensitive topics, and it is these topics precisely which are vulnerable to being taken over by singular narratives.

SATURDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

The final day involved fewer workshops and more group work between the participants. In the morning, Steven Stegers gave a workshop on teaching strategies to motivate and involve all students in learning. He showed, for example, two different paintings of the storming of the Winter Palace, one made by a Russian painter and the second by an American, and how differently the two depict a moment in history and its actors. The



Far left: “Storming of the Winter Palace” by Pavel Sokolov-Scalia, an artist from Russia (1947).

Left: “Russian Revolution” by Carroll Nathaniel Jones Jr., an artist from the United States (1954).

Russian painting glorifies the event, putting the people and the Soviet flag in the forefront, while the American painting vilifies the attackers. The day continued with group work. As this was the workshop intended to launch a project aiming to develop more effective history teaching resources and strategies in Kyrgyzstan, the participants had an open discussion on the current state of affairs and what could be done to improve the existing situation. This was followed by the sharing of results of the participants, and the official conclusion of the workshop. After the Masterclass concluded, participants explored Osh on their own, visiting the Bazaar and an Uzbek graveyard.

RESULTS AND FEEDBACK



Outcomes & Learnings

Thanks to presentations and workshops from Steven and RTTI, some of the participants were introduced to the concept of multiperspectivity in history education for the first time. They also had the opportunity to participate in a range of active learning activities and engage with a number of new methodologies and sources. The active workshops were especially engaging for participants, in particular the ones

where they worked in groups with photos and other sources.

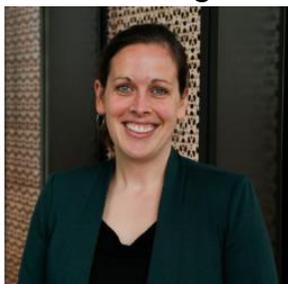
The evaluation of the masterclass indicated that, overall, participants were pleased with the training and found the sessions useful. Participants indicated that they could apply what they learned in practice, especially materials that focused on methods and working with sources, in particular visual sources (photos, paintings, and cartoons). The sessions working with photos, such as the session on monuments by Sergii Kulchevych from the Anne Frank House, were particularly well-received. Participants agreed that the role play on Day 2, while in essence a good idea and very engaging, turned out to be a little hectic in practice, and could have been shorter. The main suggestion for improving the Masterclass was a stronger focus on national and regional history. Participants also requested more resources and were eager to have the new national textbooks for their use, though they are currently under development at the time of writing this report.

The Masterclass tapped into and built upon the high degree of enthusiasm and commitment of history specialists in Kyrgyzstan. There is a clear appetite for more of these types of trainings and workshops.

Next steps and plans for 2018

In 2018, building on the momentum from 2017 and the keen interest from the Ministry of Education, the President's Office, the Republican Teacher Trainer's Institute, teachers and historians, EUROCLIO, the GCP and the AKF will continue to build on the work identified in the December 2017 meeting. Should additional funding be secured, efforts will be focused on the development of new history resources for Grades 5 and 6, based on the principles of multiperspectivity and following a competence and inquiry-based approach, in cooperation with international and local experts.

Masterclass organizers



Katie O'Brian, Global
Centre for Pluralism



Nina Bagdasarova,
American University
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Steven Stegers,
EUROCLIO



Burulai Aitikulova,
Aga Khan Foundation
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About the organisers

The Aga Khan Foundation (part of the Aga Khan Development Network) is a private, international, and non-denominational not-for-profit organization established in 1967 in Switzerland by His Highness the Aga Khan. Its activities are mainly concentrated on the needs of rural communities in mountainous, coastal and resource-poor areas. The Foundation seeks to develop and promote creative solutions to long-standing global challenges like poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease. AKF is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of development agencies with mandates that include the environment, health, education, architecture, culture, microfinance, rural development, disaster reduction, the promotion of private-sector enterprise, and the revitalisation of historic cities. For more information, please visit the website at www.akdn.org

The Global Centre for Pluralism was founded by his Highness the Aga Khan in partnership with the Government of Canada, and is an international research and education centre located in Ottawa, Canada. Inspired by Canada's experience as a diverse and inclusive country, the Centre was created to advance positive responses to the challenge of living peacefully and productively together in diverse societies. For more information, please visit www.pluralism.ca.

EUROCLIO - European Association of History Educators is a membership based international NGO, founded in 1992, with support of the Council of Europe. It is the mission of EUROCLIO to inspire and empower educators to engage learners in innovative and responsible history and citizenship education. It does so by providing opportunities for professional development, developing (open) educational resources as part of a collaborative process, and facilitating exchange of ideas and experience amongst education professionals. For more information, please visit www.euroclio.eu