HAL
open science

History in French secondary school : a tale of progress and universalism or a narrative of present society ?

Nicole Tutiaux Guillon

To cite this version:

Nicole Tutiaux Guillon. History in French secondary school : a tale of progress and universalism or a narrative of present society ?. Palgrave Handbook of Historical Culture and Education., 2017. hal-01657543

HAL Id: hal-01657543

https://hal.univ-lille.fr/hal-01657543v1

Submitted on 6 Dec 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon

professeure des universités, didactique de l'histoire-géographie

ESPE Lille Nord de France, Arras

laboratoire Théodile-CIREL (EA 4354), université de Lille 3, Villeneuve d'Ascq

History in French secondary school: a tale of progress and universalism or a narrative of present society?

Whereas primary school history tended - and still tends today – to pass on a narrative of nation, in France the general history framework in secondary school is rather different, more versatile and more potent. Since the seventies, more than eight new history curricula have been implemented, mainly in secondary education (Garcia & Leduc, 2003), but the school history aims are quite steady. It will be argued in this chapter that the secondary school history is not nationalistic, but one supporting and supported by values granted to be the ideal for humanity, particularly human rights, democracy, scientific and economical progress, and openness to otherness. Since 1890, the institutional aims insist on the priority of these values over any national identity. The curricula are shaped through interpretations from a universalistic perspective. History narrates how politics, society, economy have developed from archaism and barbarity to modernity and political and social rights, even through acute crises.This provides an opportunity to teach both the history of France and of Europe or the World, interpreted through the same values and to change the contents of the curricula, and thus to implement global perspectives, without changing the core structure of the narrative. Nevertheless, as undelined in this chapter, this assertion has to be qualified: the chosen topics, and the chronological context in which they are set, results in and from ethnocentrism. This might be problematic in a society more and more sensitive to ethnic and religious diversity. But the students themselves are probably more sensitive to the universalistic citizenship associated to inclusive history than to ethicist claims.

This general argumentation will be supported by the current analysis of 20th and 21st centuries curricula in France, especially of the recent ones: 2008 (lower secondary school) and 2009 (upper secondary school). In this analysis the focus will be first on the universalistic values underlying the curricula, second on the “mise en intrigue” organized by the tale of modernity. Thirdly, the tensions between openness to others and ethnocentrism in the French history curricula will be specified. Lastly, an attempt is made to question the relations to the students' identities, that represent both a justification of some teachings and a problem for some teachers.

The relations between school history, youth identities and social memories are presently

of key importance for deciding what to teach and how to teach it (Tutiaux-Guillon and Mousseau, 1998, Tutiaux-Guillon and Nourrisson 2003). Probably the events in Paris on January 2015 will still reinforce its relevance. Since a decade, I question as a specialist of history didactics the place allotted to diversity – cultural, ethnic, religious – in history curricula, textbooks and lessons as well as the place given to diverse and sometimes conflicting memories in school history. It is now a professional question and a disturbing one – for novice teachers and even for some experienced ones. Such issues are what we call since 2006 "*questions socialement vives*" (socially acute questions, Legardez & Simonneaux 2006): questions that are scientifically controversial, socially debated and potentially disturbing classrooms. Of course the matter of identity is one of those socially acute questions, in a country which population is largely since 19th century from migrant origin, where this has always resulted in richness and conflict, and whose society till present days deny more or less or deplore this fact. Several European researches have dealt with the links between youth identity and school history since the pioneer research Youth and History (Angvik & Von Borries, 1997). . Those comparative researches tend to assert both the specificities of French context – partly due to the universalistic model of citizenship – and the international similitude of the stakes and socio-political issues (see for example Carretero, Rosa, & Gonzalez, 2007a; Grever & Ribbens, 2007; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2000). Now arises a new possibility for research in didactics: connecting curricular changes introducing social acute questions and youth attitudes toward history, in a context of apparently growing diversity. This chapter is a first step on this trail.

1 - Teaching history for universalistic values.

As in many Western countries, French school history has been subject to ideological and pedagogical criticism since the 1970s (De Cock & Picard, 2009). Especially the nationalist historical narrative has been condemned as historically obsolete, politically irrelevant and ethically harmful. This critical discourse is far more relevant for primary school than for secondary school history. The French history curriculum in secondary education has several official goals: promoting political and cultural collective identity, encouraging social cohesion, fostering citizenship and developing intellectual abilities. The latter particularly concerns critical thinking, and more recently personal bloom. A core aim is fostering adherence to universal values as human rights, democracy, justice, solidarity, tolerance etcetera, besides the French republican values of *Liberté, Egalité*, and *Laïcité*. These values are part of the legitimate culture, particularly of the political one, and also are reputed to provide sound basis for social and political judgements. Such principles show a clear tendency to critical rationality rooted in Enlightenment (Carretero, Rosa, & Gonzalez 2007b) and in Auguste Comte's positivism. The key reference is the French citizenship, defined during the 3rd Republic (1871-1940) as overcoming any particularism. This is not so far from the "constitutional patriotism" that Lopez Facal (2001) sees as a possible base for linking together people attached to different symbols. Of course universalism has been a part of French intellectual and political tradition since the Enlightenment. But also in the curricula, since 1890, the priority has been explicitly the greater good of humanity, over the greater good of France. Even in the ministerial prescriptions of the late 19th and early 20th century for secondary school, universalism prevailed over French identity. It is well-known also that the French curricula included since 1902 a very large part of European history and even some glimpses to Russia and to America (not only to United States) (De Cock & Picard, 2009; Garcia & Leduc, 2003). The

grand narrative of an organically growing nation has been very important (and renewed in 2008) in primary school but is weaker and discreet in secondary school curricula. This might be partly explained by the fact that, during the first 20th century, secondary school addressed only to social elite's children, when primary school intended to build French republican citizens from common people (including immigrants).

The stress on human rights has increased over the three last decades. Let us have some examples. The black slave trade is taught since decades, with emphasis on the sufferings of the slaves and on the inhumanity of the trade; and in some French cities enriched by this trade, this is explicitly linked with local history. Since probably 50 years the *nationalistic* narrative regarding colonization has disappeared. For the last thirty years, teachings on French or European colonization are accompanied by documents and information presenting its negative effects, and the present textbooks emphasize the exploitation of colonized people through the lesson and through sources as well. Since the seventies, the textbooks mention that the French army used torture in dealing with Algerian patriots/rebels. The post-colonial point of view is obvious (Mycock in this volume).The same goes for other dark pages of French history as the Dreyfus Case or as the Collaboration in 1940-44 and the Shoah[2]. And there is a long time that the Discoveries of 16th century are studied as source of exploitation, massacres and fatal deceases (Páez, Bobowik, Liu in this volume). The lessons on all these topics focus on the crimes and on the French social minority that defended human rights: Montaigne, the *dreyfusards*, the intellectual demonstrating against torture during the 1950s, the Righteous among nations etcetera. In such a narrative, the positive reference is no longer France as a nation state, but the imaginary native country of Human Rights (Lantheaume, 2009). Of course this is linked with political changes – not as drastic as in several other countries (Carretero, Rosa, & Gonzalez, 2007a), but still important: the end of colonial empire, the confrontation with the recent past (regime de Vichy, responsibility in genocides, Algerian war), the arise of conflicting memories in public space... But the key idea is to support trust in democratic values and thus in a satisfactory future.

The tendency to select history contents that support universal values explains how the issues of past crimes (even committed by French) and of victims can be integrated in school history. Specific histories of minorities can be inserted in the school narrative when they are told from this universal perspective. Teaching about the suffering of a particular community in the past is not fostering "*communautarisme"* (= in France a threat to political unity and a promotion of politically irrelevant private interests) but working for human rights. All victims, outcast, dominated or oppressed people (medieval peasant, poor *Tiers Etat*, industrial worker, slaves...), in French classrooms are considered as the People. Thus they are made part of the "us" group, an attitude which Von Borries evaluated as historically and politically positive (2006). However, this inclusive approach, obvious in the classrooms, is not explicit in the official prescription. In these texts, the inclusion is based on citizenship and not on victimisation and common sufferings.

The French Republican citizenship is based on the transcendence of any specific interest in favour of the common interest, and of private matters, in favour of the public ones. The French citizen is somehow an 'abstract' being, free from any distinctive identity, such as religion, gender, ethnicity or class, who bases his political judgements and actions on reason and on universal values. Thus, even if citizenship and nationality are legally bound together, citizenship is not explicitly rooted in a national heritage. Of course, the focus on French political history conveyed a perspective that fostered nationalism and ethnocentrism. At the same time, as written above, it aimed at extending the universal

values of progress, human rights and democracy. And presently these components are far more relevant and legitimate for teachers and for students than any nationalism. When asked about the purpose of school history, 80% of high-school teachers affirmed the civic function of history (Lautier, 1997; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2004). They believed that understanding history would 'naturally' evolve into the development of positive attitudes to politics, culture, 'otherness', and human rights. Their main attempt is to foster citizenship and critical thinking (Bonafous, De Cock-Pierrepont, & Falaize, 2007; Lantheaume, 2009; Lautier, 1997; Tutiaux-Guillon, Boyer, Ogier, & Vercueil-Simion, 2004). Identity comes far behind citizenship in the teachers' preoccupation (Lautier, 2001). Usually, most teachers give a priority to topics that aim at tolerance and social harmony. For example, when studying the medieval Mediterranean area, they emphasize more Al Andalus and the Sicily ruled by Roger II than the crusades[3.] Thereby they hope to provide examples of people from different religions living peacefully and even fruitfully together. Individually and collectively, they discuss, criticize or possibly reject some explicit or presumed political demands for school history, if they judge these aims opposed to human rights and to historical truth[4]. For example in 2005-2006, there was a huge and strong protest against a legal obligation to teach 'the positive effects of colonization'[5], in which not only historians associations and the Human Rights League, but also history teachers and their inspectors took an active part. This is also the focus of some professional websites as for example *aggiornamento-hist-geo (http://aggiornamento.hypotheses.org*). The teachers might even decide to teach about some issues that are not prescribed. Before 1962 some taught about France during the German occupation (1940-1944) and collaboration, when the curricula ended before the 2nd World War. Some have taught colonisation and slavery in French colonies before the recent prescriptions. During the 1990s some engaged pedagogical works on the students' familial memories, etcetera (De Cock & Picard, 2009). Generally there is no discussion about the consensual historical narrative, the tale of the progress and achievements of humanity (at least of western humanity).

2 – A narrative of progress and modernity

"The utility of teaching history is to inform the young men of the evolution of humanity since the cave ages to the century of aviation" (quotation translated from official prescriptions, 1925). Researchers analysing the former history curricula have stressed that in secondary school it was centred on political, economical, social or cultural human progress (Bruter, 2005; Garcia & Leduc, 2003; Mousseau, Jakob, & Cremieux, 1994). It is no more explicit but still underlying the 2008 curricula for the *collège*:

- Each of the 4 years, at least 3 topics point at some type of progress (political, scientific/cultural, economical or social). This means roughly 40% of the contents. Whatever the period, the contents insist on the apogee of the civilizations (European – different ages –, Indian, AsianChinese, Muslim-Arabic, African).

- The scientific/cultural progress is studied each year: Greek scientists and philosophers, cultural and scientific revolution (16th-17th centuries), scientists and philosophers of Enlightenment, scientific and technical evolutions of present time.

- The political progress is not as continuous. Two main streams coexist: the conquest of democracy (Antique Athens, French Revolution, 19th and 20th century – with the counter-example of dictatorial regimes and totalitarianism), and the building of a

State (medieval and modern France, 19th century). The building of European union, studied in the last year of *collège* might be added to this list.

- The economical progress seems limited to industrialization and capitalism that figure the economical modernity. But what is not explicit in the prescriptions might be detailed in the textbooks: the social progress, for example, appears through the documents and is connected with either scientific progress (health, school) or the political ones (social claims and conquests, equality).

The same general narrative gives its consistence to the new curriculum for the first grade of the *lycée*, which has no chronological continuity: 7 of 11 topics echo the ones referring to progress in the history curricula of *collège.* Even in the curricula focussed on 20th century some topics address economical growth, social development, emancipation and democracy – and world wars and totalitarianism are set as counter examples.

Also the textbooks now and then used the issue of progress as the sense and significance of history. This was very usual in the textbooks of the first 20th century. The recent ones, even for the older students, still picture colonization through school, health care and modern agriculture, as before the sixties – even if most documents of the same chapters refer to colonial exactions (Lantheaume, 2006; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2006). In the years 2000, textbooks characterized monotheism as a social and intellectual progress compared with polytheism (Baquès & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008). The newest textbooks for the 5th grade presented the role of the Church during the Medieval age as socially progressive: for example one of the subchapters is titled "*l'Eglise au service de la société*" (Church serving society) and this is elaborated as protecting against violence, caring of ill and poor people, schooling and encouraging intellectual development6. The chapter dealing with women's history in 20th century (1st grade of *Lycée*) develops the theme of economical and political emancipation as a continuous progress, whatever the historians' researches. It is also surprising that in the textbooks dealing with geography as well as history, the same topics that are presented as source of environmental problems today (deforestation, fossil energy...) are still set only as figures of economical improvement, without any questioning of the shift in the perspective. At the same time the progress might be at least 'qualified' because past difficulties and violence are not omitted, even for the periods that are set as birth of modernity, as 19th and overall 20th centuries. When interviewed about the past changes, most students answered by two main events: the French revolution, associated with Human rights, republic, democracy won over the king; the world wars associated of course with violence and massive death but also with Human rights and the birth of European integration as a positive reaction against totalitarianism and war (Tutiaux-Guillon, 1998, 2001). A narrative of progress lets anybody find a place in it participate in it, does not exclude anybody except reactionary and fundamentalist people, and functions as a catalyst of social unity (Carretero, Rosa & Gonzalez, 2007b) This is probably why it is introduced in some recent democratic curricula (Osandon Millavil, 2001). The option is different of the ones promoted usually: subordinating others or enforcing national history (Lopez Facal, 2001).

This historical narrative of progress has probably two main origins. Since 1830, the development of a secular teaching of history has substituted the holy history with the national history: the narrative is of course different, but the structure is still teleological. The end is no more a godly eschatology, but the fulfilment of nation, and of socio-economical progress and of democracy (Bruter, 2005). Also the school aims might explain that historical time and progress just keep the same pace: a persistent one was providing

the students with means to understand the present times and to integrate society. This meant selecting from the past what prefigured or explained the society and the world in which they live and in the same time nurturing adherence to present values and norms. Now, the place allotted in school to the victims' narratives is taken as a way of healing the social wounds of the past, of developing tolerance and social cohesion. An important mission of school in France is to fight social division, to solve social and cultural problems by teaching. Opening the school history to others, particularly to wounded self-proclaimed heirs of slaves or of colonized peoples, is supposed to foster democratic progress.The recent curricula chose to avoid a total absence of histories that might be significant for some communities in French society, and thus tend to prevent a feeling of foreignness, but in the same time they limit the issues to specific historical moments: this process of selection and reconstruction aims at reconstructing shared references, if not national identity (Lopez Facal, 2001). Furthermore, except in such specific chapters (for example devoted to "immigration in France") there is no mention of any cohabitation of natives and aliens: the French people is always a homogeneous entity.

3 – Between "our" history and "their" history : openess and ethnocentricism

My analysis of the official texts showed some ambiguities. The contents of the *socle commun des connaissance et des compétences* (common base of knowledge and competences), compulsory for schools since 2006, seem prioritizing World and Europe above France. The prescribed attitudes are set in the field of universality, as mind-opening to any culture. The abilities do not focus on any cultural, historical or geographical area. In the detailed knowledge a frequent wording is "France, Europe and World" and the cultural reference are both European and Global. If the history of France has to be known, it is the same for the history of European union. It cannot be said that such aims, prescribed for primary and lower secondary school (*collège*), are focused on national identity. This is the result of French tradition, of European integration and of globalisation. These developments do not mean that school history in secondary education does not take the national history into account at all: the curricula are compromise between different actors and tendencies, often contradictory (De Cock & Picard, 2009; Legris, 2014). In the recent detailed prescription for *collège* (50 pages), the "*histoire nationale*" is mentioned less than 10 times and mostly to characterise what the students have learnt in primary school. The contents in secondary school are explicitly presented as enlarging the scope. They deal mostly with European/Western history (24 topics), and present less national history (10 topics), but still less non Western history (5 topics). The time prescribed for history lessons might roughly be divided between 20% allotted to the history of France (mostly political history), 26% allotted to topics that deal both with France and Europe, 26% allotted to the history of Europe or Western countries without mentioning France, and 17% to non Western history. But this rather open view contrasts with a more unobtrusive one: taking in account the titles, subtitles and prescribed examples, "France" appears 19 times. If we add every moment devoted to the study of topics explicitly mentioning France, the total is close to half of the school history hours! Furthermore, the 57 dates that a student must know for the final exam (*Brevet)* enlist 30 "French" ones and 11 which are part of French history. This is close to 72%! The tale of progress is not mainly a national one. But in every secondary curriculum, political progress is treated largely referring to France, and cultural, scientific and economical progress is referring to Europe. And probably a close analysis of

the textbooks would still increase the weight of France: not only through the contents but also and more through the documents.

The issue of the documents proposed in the textbooks and used in the classrooms disturbs also the perspective of a curriculum open to others. For example in the 5th grade the students have to learn about the history of Sub-Saharan Africa. But most texts are not from African sources (partly due to the overestimate lack of written sources): they are European, as some pictures of African kings or a frequent print of a razzia. And some photographies seem to come from a touristic booklet more than from scientific references. If we look at the chapters addressing medieval Islamic civilisation, textbooks and teachers focus on the knowledge and techniques that the Western Christian civilisation had drawn from exchanges with Muslims. Furthermore the presentation of this civilisation emphasized techniques, medicine and sciences, the achievements which are known to converge with the common meaning of progress in 'our' society, and, at most, briefly mentioned poetry, law, and philosophy that are of core importance in the Islamic culture. The point of view in the textbooks is clearly Eurocentric (Baquès & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008). This means that there is often a lapse from past civilisations to present society. And this lapse might as well stress the supposedly "alien" character of some people from non-Western civilisations (Bonafous,De Cock-Pierrepont, & Falaize, 2007). Furthermore the public controversy about the place allotted to the history of non-westerners (a debate in which the opponents exaggerate largely this place), and the use of the same arguments since decades ("our children don't know our history any more", see Mycock in this volume) might reduce the effective teaching fo such topics.

In fact, the issue of "opening up to others" is neither simple nor unequivocal. Defining who we will consider as "others" in the curricula and courses would be a first step – and suggests the first difficulties. Would it mean other than French? Then any topic about European history or Western history has to be taken in account. This option is not really convincing. In the first place, since the nineties, the ministries of education in the European union have stressed the importance of teaching a European history as a self-history for new European generations. Even if in some states such a supranational frame means exceeding national history (Fernandez Bittencourt, 2007) the focus is on an expanded "us". Secondly, France has taken an active part in what might be called the European political, cultural and economical history, and for some period in Western history as well. Teaching about Europe – or about Western history – is also teaching about France. Thirdly, Europe is not a reality, but a social construct, as was nation: its history recycles former canons.

If we consider "others" as non-Western, then they were introduced in the secondary history education during the sixties[8], and had been sporadically present in different curricula ever since (De Cock & Picard, 2009). The Chinese and African civilisations, for example, had been prescribed contents for 2nd grade from 1976 to 1985 and are now prescribed for 6th and 5th grades. In the present curricula for *collège,* the part of non-Western history represents 17% of the time and 15% of the topics. But when colonisation is at issue, must we take it as Western or non Western? An example of the new contents for 2nd grade demonstrates the ambiguity: the topic "enlarging the [European] world, 15th-16th centuries", articulates a European navigator, a European port, Constantinople-Istanbul, a pre-Columbian city facing colonization, and Peking. Now is the case of Istanbul and of the American city focused on "others" or not? They might be – as they might make a larger place to European merchants or soldiers: only a close study of the textbooks or of the effective teaching would allow to decide if the focus is on "them" or on "us"... Others analysis of recent textbooks show that in the chapters addressing colonial conquests and

colonial societies, only the European have agency: the local peoples are only victims and anonymous, striped from their own culture and social organisation that are not mentioned (Tutiaux-Guillon, 2006, 2016).

Furthermore some topics correspond to a projection in the past of present issues in French society. The main example is the Islamic civilisation. Since 1977, Islam is a topic of the curriculum for 5th grade, firstly focused on the political aspects of the Muslim and Arab Medieval age, then on the civilisation. The parallel with the importance of a so-called Muslim immigration in France is clear: between 1962 and 1982 the migrant population coming from North Africa grew from 407000 to 1430000[9]. Now, Islam is the second religion in France. From 1995 till 2009, the French pupils had to study the medieval Islam, including an historical narrative of the religious development, in primary school, in 5th grade and in 2nd grade; presently it is still present in 5th grade and in 2nd grade they study Istanbul. In 1995, the Koran became a “heritage document” that all students had to know as historical source and as meaningful for humanity. Its study is still prescribed in the 2008 curricula. The date of the Hegira is ranked as compulsory knowledge. But most textbooks during the years 1990 and 2000 selected the documents on Jihad[10], sometimes on Sharia and on women's status. These aspects of Islamic civilization are debated in French society and emphasise otherness (Baquès & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008). On the other hand teachers seemed to avoid what could stir cultural conflicts in the classroom, and chose a consensual content – omitting the sensitive issues. Here also the main perspective is that of progress, of tolerance and human rights

Another key concern for school history is to foster social cohesion, and it has been increasing since the nineties (Tutiaux-Guillon, 2007) Young people have to be educated as members of a same society and a same political community: sharing cultural references, values and interpretations of the past, useful for living together, important for understanding each other, and necessary for understanding present times and imagining a future. Ten history teachers who were interviewed in 2003, unanimously declared that their objective was to integrate everyone, especially the children of migrants, in one common culture. Some identified this common culture as French, others opted for European, or even Mediterranean. All of them wanted to provide the pupils with intellectual resources to understand present French society. But, even though they favoured national identity over sub-cultural community identities, they rated individual identity higher than national identity (Tutiaux-Guillon, Boyer, Ogier, & Vercueil-Simion, 2004). Now the youth are intended to learn how to make sense of their own history (Delacroix & Garcia, 1999). Fostering social cohesion means also, for policy makers and often for teachers, providing the youth with non-European ancestry some glimpses at their supposed cultural roots. This raises questions about both the young people's identities and on the educators' representation of these identities.

4 – The difficult issue of the youths' collective identities

We have not a lot of informations on the relations between the youth's collective identities and their conception of the past. Some teachers testified that they feared to teach about Shoah and about Israel (even about Antique Jews), about women's history or about Islam, even if the incidents are scarce (Falaize, 2009). These teachers react often spontaneously, sometimes without caution and subtleness[11]. They rely on a widespread discourse

stigmatizing young suburban males as Arabs, thus as Muslim, and therefore as sexist, violent, anti-Semitic, anti-West. The international context from 2000 onwards has stirred up both this discourse and this fear. But these are no reliable data on the students' attitudes. Regarding the issues of sensitive memories, the researchers pointed that the main publications deal with prescriptions or with teaching, but not usually with *learning* (Bonafous, De Cock-Pierrepont, & Falaize, 2007; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008). The inquiries among students are still to be developed (Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008). Suburban youth cannot be defined plainly as "Muslims", "Arabs", "*Maghrébins"* (= North-Africans), "African" etc. Most are born in France, where also most of their parents have grown up. The supposed link with the so-called "native culture" is very weak. We must remind that most students in France have never lived and never really known (except on some holidays) the country from which their ancestors came away one, two or three generations before: there is a deep generation gap between the foreign family and the youth. It is also well-known in sociology that this native culture is re-constructed in the context of migrations, both by adaptation to the dominant culture and by mythologising the origins. And the process is set in a complex relations between generations and might answer stigmatization and alienation. As pointed by Von Borries (2006), becoming an heir means also the possibility to denounce and resign the imposed heritage.

As a rule, in France, the students who have migrant ancestry do not ask for ethnically tailored history lessons. Their familial history has few to do with medieval Islam or with the black kingdoms of the past, however prestigious. When such young people are asked about their identity, they declare themselves "French", because they are born there and live there, as do other young people whatever their ancestry (Tutiaux-Guillon, 2000).Furthermore, the familial memories are not always passed on and not always focused on sensitive historical issues as colonialism and French domination (Lepoutre, 2005; De Cock-Pierrepont, 2007). When these youths claim an ethnic identity, it is mostly to contest the demands of the authorities, or to protest against injustice and discrimination, but their living culture is a mixed, creative and fast-changing one in which ethnicity is weak (Lorcerie, 2003). Moreover, their claims rather refer to the conception of French citizenship as universal, abstract and as setting apart the private interests and identities (Grever & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008; Grever & Ribbens 2007; Lorcerie, 2003; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2000). But from a 2006 research (Grever and Ribbens, 2007; Grever & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008), some disturbing figures arise. Of the youth from French descent 12,9% grant God historical influence; the majority conforms to the secular politics in France and the ideal of *laïcité*. Of the youth from migrant descent 32,3% adheres to the proposal that "History shows what are God's intentions for the people and the world": quite contradictory to French civic (and historical) tradition. This might point at a divide between school history and some young believers.The study should be extended either to a larger number of students or to a qualitative enquiry; nevertheless the sample, however short – 200 – has been selected in a region where immigration is a key feature since late 19th century, and where successive streams (mainly Belgian then Polish then Moroccan and Algerian migrants...) have settled mostly as ill-paid industrial workers. A region where youth protest close to riots took place on 2005 and where the sensitive issue of illegal migrants in Calais makes frequently the news since 1995. The results are suggestive.

The French inquiries on learning history focus more on intellectual abilities than on collective identities: this issue is somehow intellectually suspect. The core distinction, proposed by Lautier (1997) and corroborated by the *Youth and History* inquiry (Tutiaux-Guillon & Mousseau, 1998), has been that some students make sense of history for themselves and their lives (Lautier (1997) named them "internal" to history), some do not

(“external” to history, roughly 1/3 of students). The first display more commitment to values, while the last are from lower classes and fail more often in school. In France the question about the relations between ethnic identities, views of the past and school history has become a legitimate one for researchers only recently. In the comparative inquiry developed by Grever and Ribbens (2007), the students from migrant ancestry in northern France were more committed to the history of the Nation State than the ones living in England or Netherlands. Could we directly attribute this result to the French curricula? The same inquiry showed that both the French students from “French” descent and the students from migrant descent considered that “the migrants' history is part of French history” (respectively 57.6% and 81%, often more than other youth: respectively 62.5% and 52.6% in England and 41.6% and 52.8% in the Netherlands). But, at the time, migrant history was not a part of school history, and not taught except by a few innovative teachers. The topic has been introduced the recent curricula: in 2008 for *collège* and 2009 for *lycée*. And whatever the curriculum, in several quantitative and comparative inquiries, the French youth ranked among other European youth as the *less* committed to their national identity and the *most* committed to the importance of history (Grever & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2008; Tutiaux-Guillon & Mousseau, 1998; Tutiaux-Guillon, 2000).

What is complicated is that we cannot assume that the curricula have a direct effect on the youth's historical culture. Public opinion and politicians seem to assume naively (?) that the school is the main medium for (legitimate) historical culture, and do not always separate historical knowledge and social memory. The underlying equation (social memory = result of learning history in school = result of teaching history = prescribed contents) is not validated through researches in history didactics (Lautier, 1997; Tutiaux-Guillon & Mousseau, 1998: Tutiaux-Guillon, 1998, 2000). Most information passed on in school is also passed on elsewhere in society, by social intercourses and by media (music, television, cinema, video-games, comics, novels, role-play etc.). In France at least political argumentation and communication, advertisement, tourism, entertainment and the press use and sometimes abuse historical images, or representations and interpretations of the past. This contributes, as much or more than school, to the shared historical culture. And this historical information, however biased regarding the historians' works, is weighted as reliable and true to the past, as much as what is learnt in school. The research focused on social representations of the past has stated how any type of knowledge might combine, and combine with values and affective views of it (Cariou, 2012; Lautier, 1997; Tutiaux-Guillon & Mousseau, 1998; Tutiaux-Guillon, 1998). We do not have enough reliable information on the possible effects of French school history on young attitudes and understanding of themselves, of the society and of the past, or on their identities, at least since the late nineties.

Thus the teachers might act more from their own social representation of the students than from exact information regarding the links between familial origins, identities and attitudes towards school history. And the students/young people might react against the stigmatizing stereotypes by expressing strongly their distrust and their exasperation. This could induce them, in history lessons, to criticize vehemently the contradiction between the French ambition (or pretence?) to support universal values and the fact that French people or State have acted in the past against the same values. Is this attitude adherence to collective French identity or anti-nationalism? The most sensitive issues of young people's collective identity do not mainly revolve around nationality and around common French or European history. The attitudes of some students regarding particular contents of school history seem to be supported by political opposition against the USA and Israel, meaning that the world perspective, however biased, is prevalent. But, in most cases, the attitudes

opposed to established school history are generally anti-establishment, and more likely a matter of erratic disorientation, of poverty and unstructured social context and gang affiliation than a matter of historical consciousness (Ernst, 2008). In such a context, it seems right that State and teachers aim at a shared heritage and at a common identity: the school has also to introduce the new generation into the society, especially when other supports for social integration and social self-structuring are lacking. Perhaps the interest for history, including both common history and critical history of the dark pages that the French students displayed, whatever their origin, allows us to be a little optimistic (Grever & Ribbens, 2007). Also, we have to keep in mind the complexity of the process involved in self-identification, especially during adolescence.

Conclusion

The French curriculum for secondary education is partly contradictory. It fits with a tradition more keen on universalism and on human progress than on national identity. This focus provides opportunities to include topics about Europe and about Others without disturbing traditional narratives. Since the sixties, the curricular contents have included, although sporadically, glimpses at other civilizations. This has been renewed in the recent curricula (2008 & 2009) for secondary school. But the underlying trend is still focussed on France This is not what the teachers attempt to do, at least if the results of several inquiries might be generalized. We have to keep in mind that school history is more a matter of effective teaching than of prescriptions. Probably present history teachers in France do not aim at any collective identity, except perhaps when they teach to students displaying a large cultural diversity[13]. The aim of fostering social cohesion and passing on a “common” culture (this does not mean a nationalistic one) is shared between institution and teachers, and seems a legitimate way to deal with the young students socially at a loss. It might be also, as stated by Ernst (2008) that the teachers' preoccupation is on practices and not on contents. That is on discipline in the classroom, especially when they work in a social context where a lot of students drop out of school and where there is a large distance between familial cultures and school culture. If the teacher has to “open the lessons up to a range of interpretations, controversial discussions about ethnic or religious identities, or ‘burning questions’ related to present-day society, the familiar routines of teaching will no longer work, and teaching will become a harder job” (Tutiaux-Guillon, 2007).

In France, research on historical consciousness of the youth or on the links between what is learnt in school and identities is scarce. It is perhaps partly out-of-date (the context has changed since the nineties), and, when it deals with ethnic/cultural identities, suspect of stirring social conflicts and *communautarisme.* The strength of the French model of citizenship – presently threatened but still a basis for school and politics – might explain this blank. In fact there is no right answer to the question: what must we teach for our culturally mixed present youth. A global history set in the frame of universalism? An ethnocentric history empowering them to adhere to their close society? A multiperspective history letting them choose their own interpretation? A puzzle of different national history

depending on the supposed origins of the class' families? And with this, which citizen do we intend to educate? Do we stick to a modern citizen, whose identity is structured by institutions and cultural tradition, confronting others in order to become a more adult and conscious “self”? Or do we prioritize a post-modern citizen whose multiple identities are linked to immediate interactions, whose values result from personal election, and who resent others as potentially alienating? The answer might change drastically the history curriculum.

This means of course investigating the teachers' attitudes and priorities, the links they perceive and/or assert in the classroom between their conception of citizenship, the cultural identities of “their” students and the way they organise the work on history topics and the contents. And this means also a reciprocal enquiry among students. The common demonstrations after the *Charlie hebdo* and *Hyper Casher* attacks showed a large adherence to democratic values, shared whatever the personal culture, even if a minority of youth justified the terrorist murders. And among those last, how much did it from provocation, from distrust in the social reality of these values – and how much from refusal of French citizenship and identity? It seems that, dealing with a multicultural situation – in which global culture plays also a role – the teaching of a narrative of democratic progress, however imperfect, of a citizenship overcoming particularism, and of a common identity based on universalistic values might help to face such crisis. But we need enquiries to investigate how it does take place in the history classroom, and how it could be associated with a larger place allotted to social and cultural diversity as an historical fact since Antiquity. We need also to enlarge the scope to other school subjects (citizenship education of course, social sciences or geography, but also literature, philosophy etc.) that convey also values and identities and openness to others. Only such enquiries might provide information on the students' expectations, on the teachers' need and on the acceptable and desirable changes in curricula for them both. That the ministries should listen to them and to researchers is another story !

Angvik, M., & Von Borries, B. (1997) *Youth and History, A Comparative European Survey on Historical Consciousness and Political Attitudes among Adolescents,* Hamburg: Korber-Stiftung

Baquès, M.-C., & Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2008). Los Arabes, el islam y los turcos en la enseñanza de la historia en el sistema educativo francès contemporaneo: entre la tradicion educativa y el contexto sensible (The Arabs, Islam and the Turks in school history in the present educational system: between educational tradition and sensitive context), in L. Cajiani (Ed.), *Conociendo al otro. El Islam y Europa en sus manuales de historia (knowing the Other. Islam and Europe in school textbooks)*, Fundacion Atman y Santillana, España. pp. 123-172

Bonafous, C., De Cock-Pierrepont, L., & Falaize, B. (2007). *Mémoires et histoire à l'Ecole de la Republique, quels enjeux? (Memories and history in Republican school: which stakes?)* Paris: Armand Colin.

Bruter, A. (2005). Les créations successives de l'enseignement de l'histoire au cours du premier XIXe siècle. (The successive creations of history teaching during the first 19th century). In P. Caspard, J.-N.l. Luc & P. Savoie (Eds.), *Lycées, lycéens, lycéennes. Deux siècles d'histoire*. (*high school students. Two centuries of history)* Lyon: INRP, pp. 177-197.

Cariou, D. (2012). *Ecrire l'histoire scolaire (Writing school history).* Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes

Carretero, M., Rosa, A., & Gonzalez M.-F. (eds) (2007a). *Ensino da Historia e Memoria Coletiva ,(history teaching and collective memory).* Porto Alegre: Artmed

Carretero, M., Rosa, A., & Gonzalez M.-F. (2007b). Ensinar historia em tempos de memoria, in Carretero, M., Rosa, A., Gonzalez M.-F. *Ensino da Historia e Memoria Coletiva ,(history teaching and collective memory).* Porto Alegre: Artmed, pp. 13-32

Chervel, A. (1998). *La culture scolaire - une approche historique (School culture: an historical approach).* Paris: Belin.

De Cock-Pierrepont, L. (2007). Enseigner la controverse au miroir des questionnements épistémologiques, socioculturels et didactiques, l'exemple du fait colonial (Teaching controversial issues: epistemological, sociocultural, didactic questions: the exemple of colonisation), *Le Cartable De Clio*, n°7, pp.196-206

De Cock, L., & Picard E. (eds) (2009). *La fabrique scolaire de l'histoire (when school makes history)* Marseille: Agone.

Delacroix C., & Garcia P. (1998). L'inflexion patrimoniale: l'enseignement de l'histoire au risque de l'identité (a patrimonial turn: teaching history at the risk of identity), *EspacesTemps,* n° 65/66, pp.111-136, retrieved (october 2014) <http://www.espacestemps.net/index.html>

Durpaire, F. (2002). *Enseignement de l'histoire et diversité culturelle, « nos ancêtres ne sont pas les Gaulois » (School history and cultural diversity: "our ancestors are not the Gauls")*. Paris: CNDP, Hachette éducation.

Ernst, S. (2003). L'école et les mémoires de l'immigration, au milieu du gué (School and

memories of immigration in the middle of the ford). In F. Lorcerie (ed) , *L'école et le défi ethnique, éducation et intégration (School and ethnic challenge, education and integration)* Paris: INRP, ESF, pp.245-260.

Ernst S. (2008) (ed) *Quand les mémoires déstabilisent l'école. Mémoire de la Shoah et enseignement*. *(When memories unsettle school, Memory of Shoah and teaching)* Lyon: INRP.

Falaize, B. (2009). Esquisse d'une histoire des génocides à l'école (outline of the history of genocides in school) In De Cock, L., & Picard, E. (eds) , *La fabrique scolaire de l'histoire*. *(when school makes history)* Marseille: Agone, pp.127-146.

Fernandez Bittencourt C.M. (2007). Identitades e ensino de historia no Brasil (identities and history teaching in Brazil), in Carretero, M., Rosa, A., & Gonzalez M.-F. *Ensino da Historia e Memoria Coletiva ,(history teaching and collective memory).* Porto Alegre: Artmed, pp. 33-52

Garcia, P., & Leduc, J. (2003). *L'enseignement de l'histoire en France de l'Ancien Régime à nos jours. (History teaching in France from Ancien regime to present days)* Paris: A. Colin.

Grever, M., & Ribbens, K. (2007). *Nationale identiteit en meervoudig verleden (National identity in a plural history*) (WRR Verkenning nr. 17), Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Grever, M., & Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2008). Insegnamento della storia, pluralità culturale e coscienza storica: approci teorici e ricerca empirica (teachinf history, cultural diversity and historical consciousness: theoretical approach and empirical researches), *Mundus, rivista di didactica della storia*, *2*, 59-73Palerme: Palumbo & C. editore.

Jacquet-Francillon, F. (2008). Le discours de la mémoire (the speech of memory), *Revue Française De Pédagogie, n°165*, pp.5-15.

Lantheaume, F. (2006). Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire: le lien Algérie-France dans les programmes d'histoire, les manuels et l'enseignement en France (a difficult school issue: the links between France and Algeria in the history curriculum, the texbooks and the effective teaching). *Colloque Pour une histoire critique et citoyenne (Conference For a critical and civic history),* INRP-ENS, retrieved (october 2014) <http://colloque-algerie.ens-lyon.fr/communication.php3?id_article=208>

Lantheaume, F. (2009). Enseignement du fait colonial et politique de la reconnaissance (Teaching the colonisation and political acknowledgement). In De Cock, L., & Picard, E., (eds) , *La fabrique scolaire de l'histoire (when school makes history)*. Marseille: Agone, pp. 111-126.

Lautier, N. (1997). *Á la rencontre de l'histoire (Meeting history)*, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Septentrion.

Lautier, N (2001) *Psychosociologie de l'éducation, regards sur les situations d'enseignement (social psychology of education. Surveying teaching situations)*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Legardez, A., & Simonneaux, L. (eds) (2006) , *l'école à l'épreuve de l'actualité, enseigner les questions vives,* Issy-les-Moulineaux: ESF

Legris P. (2014) *Qui écrit les programmes d'histoire (Who writes the history curriculum?).* Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Lepoutre, D. (2005). *Souvenirs de familles d'immigrés* (*Remembrances of migrant families)*. Paris: Odile Jacob.

Lopez Facal, R. (2001). Enseñanza de la historia y formación de la identidad nacional, in Estepa Gimenez, J., Friera Suarez, F. & Pineiro Peleteiro, R. (eds) *Identidades y territorios, un redo para la didactica de les Ciencias Sociales.* Oviedo: KRK ediciones, pp.145-170

Lorcerie, F. (ed) (2003). *L'école et le défi ethnique, éducation et intégration*. (*School and ethnic challenge, education and integration)* Paris: INRP, ESF.

Mousseau, M.-J., Jakob P., & Cremieux, C. (1994). Regard didactique sur les productions scolaires en histoire-géographie (a didactic survey of school productions in history-geography), *Revue Française de Pédagogie, 106*, pp. 47-54.

Osandon Millavil L. (2001) Les tensiones de una identidad y una ciudadanía democrática en América Latina. Una perspectiva desde la reforma curricular chilena en el area de historia y Ciencias Sociales (the tensions between identity and democratic citizenship in Latin America. Perspective from the curricular reform in Chili regarding history and social sciences), in Estepa Gimenez, J., Friera Suarez, F., & Pineiro Peleteiro, R. (eds) *Identidades y territorios, un redo para la didactica de les Ciencias Sociales.* Oviedo: KRK ediciones, pp.229-242

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2000). *L'enseignement et la compréhension de l'histoire sociale au collège et au lycée, l'exemple de la société d'Ancien régime et de la société du XIXe siècle (Teaching and understanding social history in secondary school: the examples of Ancien regime society and of 19th century society)*. Lille: thèses à la carte (thèse, université de Paris 7 – Denis Diderot, 1998)

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (ed) (2000) *l'Europe entre projet politique et objet scolaire (Europe between political project and school topic)*. Paris: INRP.

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2001), Teaching and understanding history : a matter of identity, in Pellens K. *et alii* éd., *historical consciousness and history teaching in a globalizing society,* Frankfurt, Peter Lang, pp.169-174

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2004). *L'enseignement de l'histoire-géographie dans le secondaire, analyses didactiques d'une inertie scolaire. (Teaching history-geography in secondary school, didactic analysis of a school inertia)* mémoire pour l'Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, Université Lyon 2-Lumière.

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2005a), Do history and geography teaching develop adolescents' historical and territorial consciousness?, in Fulop M.& Ross A., (eds) , *growing in Europe today: developing identities among adolescents,* London, Trentham books, pp.103-120

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2005b), La enseñanza de la historia y la alteridad en Francia. Algunas perspectivas para la reflexión y la investigacion (teaching history and otherness in France, some perspectives for reflexion and research), in Carretero M., Rosa A., & Gonzalez M.F. (eds) , *ensenanza de la historia y memoria colectiva (teaching history and collective memory)*, Buenos Aires, Paidos educator, pp.347-366

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2006). Altérité et enseignement de l'histoire: quelques pistes de réflexions et de recherche à partir de la situation française. (Otherness and school history: some trails for reflecting and researching, from French situation) In Hassani Idrissi M. (ed.), *Rencontre de l'histoire et rencontre de l'autre, l'enseignement de l'histoire comme dialogue interculturel (Meeting history and meeting Other. School history as a cross-cultural dialogue).* Rabat: presses de l'université Mohamed V, pp.257-274.

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2007). French school history confronts multiculturalism. In M. Grever & S. Stuurman (eds) . *Beyond the canon, history for the 21st century.* London: Palgrave-Macmilan, pp.173-187.

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2008a). Mémoires et histoire scolaire en France: quelques interrogations didactiques (Memories and school history in France: some didactic questions). *Revue Française De Pédagogie*, *165*, 31-42.

Tutiaux-Guillon, N., (2008b), Histoire et mémoire, questions à l'histoire scolaire ordinaire (history and memory, questioning usual school history), in Ernst S. (ed), *Quand les mémoires déstabilisent l'école, mémoire de la Shoah et de son enseignement,* (When memories disturb school, teaching the memory of Shoah) Lyon, INRP, pp.289-308

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2012), A traditional frame for global history : the narrative of Modernity in French secondary school, in Carretero M., Asencio M., & Rodriguez-Moneo M. (eds) , *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, Charlotte (NC): Information Age Publishing, pp.105-124

Tutiaux-Guillon, N. (2016 in press). Questions socialement vives et recomposition disciplinaire de l'histoire-géographie: entre opportunités et résistances (social acute questions and reconstruction of history-geography as school subject: between opportunities and resistances), in Audigier F., Sgard A., & Tutiaux-Guillon N. (eds.), *sciences de la nature et sciences de la société, recompositions disciplinaires pour un monde en mutation (sciences of nature and sciences of society, reconstructing school subjects for a changing world)*. Bruxelles: De Boeck, pp.139-150

Tutiaux-Guillon, N., & Mousseau, M.-J. (1998). *Les jeunes et l'histoire, identités, mémoires, conscience historique (Youth and history, identities memories, historical consciousness)*, Paris: INRP.

Tutiaux-Guillon, N., & Nourrisson, D. (eds) (2003) *identités, mémoires, conscience historique (identities, memories, historical consciousness)*, Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne

Tutiaux-Guillon, N., Boyer, G., Ogier, A., & Vercueil-Simion, C. (2004). *Enseignement et apprentissage de l'histoire et de la géographie en CM1/CM2 et en 6e/5e: la prise en compte des finalités civiques et culturelles (Teaching and learning history and geography in primary and secondary school: taking in account the civic and cultural aims)*. The research conclusions were published online on <www.lyon.iufm.f/recherche.htmlr>, but are

no more available.

Von Borries, B. (2006). Qué nos importa vuestra historia! Enseñanza de historia en una sociedad de immigración (your history does not matter for us! Teaching history in a society of immigration), *Iber,* n°47, *Construcción de identidades y enseñanza de las ciencias sociales,* (construction of identites and teaching social sciences), pp.64-80

---

i Usually in France and in school, one does say “Shoah” and not “Holocaust” because the last has a meaning of holy sacrifice that is quite out of line for the extermination of the European Jews. The Hebrew word Shoah means “*catastrophe*” and is sometimes substituted by the more general concept of “*genocide*” especially when the lesson deals also with the extermination of the Romani.

i The resulting historical perspective might be rather mythical. See for example the analysis developed by Mari Carmen Rodriguez (2009), Al-Andalus, "l’Orient de l’Occident"? Autour d’une approche nuancée d’al-Andalus au-delà de ses représentations mythiques (Al Andalus, the Est of the West? For a qualified approach of Al Andalus, beyond mythical representations), *Le cartable de Clio, 9*, pp.57-68, editions Antipodes

i See the website of the professional association *historiens et géographes*, <www.aphg.fr> and specifically the column <http://www.aphg.fr/Actualites.htm> or the website for teachers <http://www.cafepedagogique.org/disci/histoire.php>; see also for example the rubrics on <http://www.snes.edu/-Enseignant-.html> (a trade union website).

i On this specific content, the paragraph 4 of the law voted on 02/23/2005 has been abrogated by the French president (02/15/2006).

[i] M. Ivernel, dir. 2010, *Histoire-Géographie (History-Geography), 5e*, Paris: Hatier

[i] It is often said that this was the innovation implemented by the so-called “programme Braudel” for terminal grade, because of the historian's involvement in 1962. But some information on history and civilization of non-Western people were developed in the French geography textbooks since the early 20th century.

[i] This is partly due to the demand of workers in industry and partly to the option of accepting not only the workers but their family. In the same period, the Portuguese immigration grew too and comparatively faster.

[i] Near always defined only as struggle to convert or submit the non-Muslim; the inner struggle against the believer's tendency to act against God's will and the effort for becoming a better Muslim is scarce in the textbooks.

[i] Representative of these rough and abusively generalized statements, is the book edited by Emmanuel BRENNER, *Les territoires perdus de la République: Milieu scolaire, antisémitisme, sexisme*, (*the lost territories of Republic, school environment, antisemitism, sexism*) Paris: Fayard-Mille et Une Nuits, 2002 (republished 2004)

[i] It is not usual in France to speak of “ethnic diversity”. Statistically and legally, ethnicity has no visibility. In the language of the state, migrant children who receive French nationality, are just ‘French’ asothers; the correct wording is “visible minorities”. Ethnic labelling could be taken as a discreet form of racism, a reason to ‘sort out’ the (bad) students, a sense of guilt, or, worse, a claim for communitarianism. “Ethnicity” is also a trap because there is no ethnicity as “suburban youth”! In the context, ethnicity is

more an argument than a fact, more a social construct than a legacy and more a fictive identity, useful for supporting claims, than a cultural heritage (Lorcerie, 2003).