



Mentoring novices' teaching of historical reasoning: Opportunities for pedagogical content knowledge development through mentor-facilitated practice



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Mentoring can promote novices' teaching of historical reasoning aligned with reforms.
- Conceptual and practical representations, approximations of practice key to mentoring.
- Content mentors diagnose and develop novices' pedagogical content knowledge level.
- Mentors' bi-level pedagogical content knowledge targets novice and student learning.

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ABSTRACT

While worldwide policy attention turns to mentoring to develop new teachers' practice, researchers have not investigated mentoring exchanges that support novices' teaching of historical reasoning and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) development. Drawing on case studies of U.S. mentor–novice pairs, authors ask: How, if at all, is the teaching of history represented in mentoring conversations? How, if at all, do mentoring exchanges support novices' teaching of historical reasoning? Authors illustrate how mentoring conversations can support PCK elements through guided conceptual and practical representations of disciplinary history instruction; and reveal a form of mentor PCK for diagnosing and supporting novices' PCK development.

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We are in the midst of a worldwide change in supporting new teachers. Rather than view the first years in the profession as a test of “sink or swim,” educators are beginning to approach early career teaching as a phase that requires support in order to both retain teachers and develop them into quality professionals who impact student learning (Achinstein & Athanases, 2010; Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012; Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999). Such thinking has spurred the development of teacher induction and mentoring programs. Mentoring pairs the novice with an expert, veteran teacher focused on supporting the novice's professional development in his or her first few years of full time teaching.

Interest in new teacher induction and mentoring has grown worldwide. For example, China, France, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Japan have well-funded induction support for two or more years addressing ambitious learning goals for new teachers (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003). In China, new teachers receive subject-specific mentoring and give public lessons that teachers, researchers, and administrators collaboratively examine (Wang, 2001; Wang & Paine, 2003). In France, new teachers in induction programs write professional memoirs, conduct action research with a mentor, and observe at other school sites (Britton et al., 2003). In New Zealand, school administrators convene beginning teachers in biweekly, facilitated peer support, and in Switzerland, mentors oversee practice groups of new teachers from multiple districts (Britton et al., 2003). The Ministry of Education and Culture funds induction and mentor development in Israel (Orland, 2001), while in the United States, 91% of novices participate in some form of induction program (Ingersoll, 2013).

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Despite such international interest, mentoring and induction programs often do not hold robust ideas about subject-specific mentoring. This is particularly the case in the United States. Research on U.S. mentoring conversations identifies a lack of attention to subject matter (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Paine & Schwillie, 2010; Strong & Baron, 2004; Wang & Odell, 2002; Wang, Strong, & Odell, 2004). Wang et al. (2004) found that U.S. mentoring conversations, in comparison with Chinese mentoring exchanges, had few subject matter topics, and tended to address teaching, students, or subject matter in isolation. Strong and Baron (2004) found only 2% of mentor suggestions focused on subject matter. Instead, studies report the dominant U.S. mentoring modes are socio-emotional support for novices to address practice shock, socialization support for adapting to the profession and school policies, and technical support of generic teaching strategies (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wang & Odell, 2002).

Yet, research reports that subject-specific mentoring impacts novices' teaching. Such mentoring can promote deeper understanding of disciplinary epistemologies, support classroom representations of content (Grossman & Davis, 2012; Luft, 2009; Wang et al., 2004), and lead to increased student achievement (Rockoff, 2008). Developing subject matter knowledge is a common objective in pre-service teacher education programs. However, given the short period of pre-service and the complex and contextualized work of learning to teach, more teachers are entering the profession lacking content knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) and knowledge of how to teach specific subject matter to the diverse groups of students in their classrooms.

At the same time, a rich body of research on history education has developed over the past two decades. This work identifies constructs of pedagogical content knowledge for unique, disciplinary approaches to teaching and learning history (Lee, 2005; Seixas, 1998; Wilson, 2001; Wineburg, 2001) and has influenced calls around the world for more authentic forms of history instruction focused on critical historical reasoning skills. Little research, however, has examined how to develop new teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) for ambitious history teaching that engages students in historical thinking. Further, research has largely overlooked the roles of and knowledge base needed by mentors in supporting novice history teachers in developing disciplinary forms of history instruction. Most of the work on subject-specific mentoring is in mathematics and science, which hold unique sets of disciplinary concepts and constructs distinct from history instruction. For example, science mentors must focus novices on instructional strategies that illustrate scientific models and phenomena, and address students' misconceptions related to specific domains in science (Luft, Neakrase, Adams, Foreston, & Bang, 2010). Mentors across different fields examine different types of representation and misconceptions related to subject-specific domains and phenomenon (Grossman & Davis, 2012). And, while research from China, France, and Japan foregrounds how mentors immerse novices in a disciplinary culture of teaching, highlighting subject lesson planning and study, the findings do not address history instruction nor the specifics of historical reasoning skills (Britton et al., 2003; Wang & Paine, 2003).

The lack of focus on subject-specific mentoring in history teaching is at odds with calls for more authentic, disciplinary forms of teaching and learning history around the world. As described in the literature, we understand disciplinary history education to include investigating historical questions and artifacts, engaging in conceptual analysis, and evaluating and constructing evidence-based claims (Bain & Mirel, 2006; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2007; Levstik & Barton, 2005; Seixas & Peck, 2004; Wineburg, 2001).

History education scholars, advocates, and policy makers from Australia to Holland, Chile to Spain, England, Belgium, Canada, and the United States, advocate for such disciplinary teaching yet identify the resilience of more traditional types of history instruction, where classrooms focus on memorizing long lists of nationally significant figures, events, and narratives (Carretero, Asensio, & Rodriguez-Moneo, 2012; Symcox & Wilschut, 2009). Thus, exploring what is involved in mentoring novices' teaching for critical historical reasoning skills is paramount for promoting the types of disciplinary history teaching that educators wish to see in classrooms across international borders.

1. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this article is to fill a gap in the literature on mentor knowledge and practices to develop novice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) for teaching historical reasoning. We do this through asking: 1. How, if at all, is the teaching of history represented in mentoring conversations? 2. How, if at all, do mentoring exchanges support novices' teaching of historical reasoning?

We begin with a framework that includes literatures on mentoring for novices' PCK development, PCK for history teaching, and pedagogies of practice for teacher learning. After introducing methods, we report results on representations of history in mentoring conversations and how mentoring exchanges can support novices in developing elements of PCK for history instruction. Our discussion foregrounds two themes: (a) portraits of mentoring conversations that develop novices' teaching of historical reasoning through the use of conceptual and practical representations and approximations of practice; and (b) a complex mentor pedagogical content knowledge base for diagnosing novices' level of PCK development and differentiated mentoring approaches focused on supporting novices in ambitious forms of history instruction.

2. Framework and related literature

Our framework builds on the emerging understandings of knowledge and practices for subject-specific mentoring and PCK for teaching historical reasoning. We also extend Grossman et al.'s (2009) conceptions of decomposition and approximation of instructional practice to frame mentor and novice conversations and identify mentoring moves that may support novice PCK development.

2.1. Mentor knowledge and practices for novices' PCK development

Mentors are often selected because they are quality teachers (Porter, Youngs, & Odden, 2001). We know little, however, about what mentors need to know and be able to do to help novices develop into expert teachers of history. Some direction is provided by the knowledge and practice base for teaching, which among other elements, includes pedagogical content knowledge (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Shulman, 1987). We understand PCK as an amalgam of pedagogy and subject matter, reflecting how disciplinary topics, concepts, and skills are organized and adapted for particular student learners situated within specific learning contexts (Shulman, 1987). However, identifying a knowledge and practice base for subject-specific mentors is inherently more complex. In a review of the research, for example, Wang and Odell (2002) concluded that mentors need to not only develop deep subject matter understanding and connect that to different student contexts, but also know how to engage novices in developing understandings of subject, students, and the relationships between them. Indeed, mentors must hold a complicated bi-level focus on

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