

## **History Text Books in the Formation of the Finnish National Identity**

To what extent were the history text books used to promote patriotism  
in the Finnish education in the 1920s?

Säde-Tuulia Utoslahti  
International Baccalaureate  
Oulun Lyseon lukio  
Subject: History

## Abstract

As the declaration of the Finnish independence drew closer in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Finnish national character was being built up in a determined manner. Stepping into a new decade after the independence brought along even more ambitious aims concerning the reaching of a strong patriotic feeling among the nation. The objective was a unique national identity that would distinguish between young independent Finland and the firm surrounding nations.

Education played an important role in the creation and maintenance of this national feeling. Since one's identity has roots deep in the past, also the formation of Finnish national identity through education was largely based on history. History of centuries long subordination to neighbouring powers seldom fulfills what such a desired national image requires especially when young generations are involved. This leads to an obvious issue of justification of historical revisionism in education. This issue of the representation of the past is the starting point of this investigation about the Finnish history text books used in the 1920s. Due to the factual nature of the investigated topic, the actual history text books were the primary sources used. In addition several more recently published researches were used to provide fresh points of view for comparison.

Evidently the commitment to protect Finland's national image led to certain aspects of history being largely discussed in the history text books in a way that was suitable to the desired image. Therefore the complex issue of the significance of this action in the formation of the Finnish identity and its comparability to propaganda is formulated as the research question of this essay: "To what extent were the history text books used to promote patriotism in the Finnish education in the 1920s?"

## Table of Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	4
1.1 Importance of the education in Finland in the 1920s.....	4
1.2 Investigation of history text books.....	5
<b>2 Patriotism and History in the Finnish Curriculum</b> .....	6
2.1 Ideological starting points of the organised education.....	6
2.2 Nature of the history studies.....	7
<b>3 History Text Books and the National Image</b> .....	8
3.1 The extent of history text books.....	8
3.2 History text books and patriotism.....	9
3.3 The mode of representation.....	11
<b>4 The Swedish Example</b> .....	12
4.1 Finnish weakness vs. Swedish strength.....	12
4.2 The Swedish- Finnish Kingdom.....	14
<b>5 Conclusion</b>	
5.1 Patriotism in the Finnish history text books –a form of propaganda?.....	17
<b>6 Bibliography</b> .....	19
<b>7 Acknowledgements</b> .....	21

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Importance of the education in Finland in the 1920s

At the turn of the 1920s Finland was encountering a new phase in its short history as an independent country. For the previous centuries it had been under the rule of the neighbouring Powers: first as a part of the Swedish Kingdom, then under the rule of the Russian Tsarist Empire. Both of the Powers had an age-old tradition of being a notable empire whereas Finland was not recognised as a fully independent country earlier than in January 1918. The shift into the new decade brought a lot of requirements for the new European country with a president and a parliament at the top instead of the foreign powers. Assuring the stability of its position was based on constructing the Finnish national identity, the aim for which education was viewed as one of the central measures. By the Decree of Compulsory Education in 1921 the construction was focused on the young Finnish generations through the enlarging of the education to apply to all the children between 7 and 15 years of age instead of the former principle of voluntariness.<sup>1</sup> For the first time in Finland it was possible to create an own educational system grounded on an independent idea of existence as a state.

Due to the high extent to which the decree of 1921 left the study courses without exact definitions, it can be reasonably claimed that text books had a central role. Given that the role of history grew in importance and in particular the use of text books gained space in the Finnish comprehensive education in the 1920s, the importance of history text books in the incitement of patriotic feeling in Finland becomes an issue. To what extent was the combination of history and didactic literature used in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Kuikka, Martti T. *Suomalaisen koulutuksen vaiheet* (Helsinki: Otava, 1992), 87

formation of the Finnish national image in the 1920s? Significance of the issue is increased by the fact that promotion of the Finland's national image clearly required careful presenting of Finland's past as a territory with little importance under the neighbouring powers. This particular side is approached in this essay in a form of a wide practical example: the presentation of Finland under the Swedish Kingdom in the Finnish history text books in the 1920s. As a whole, the issue of formation of the Finnish national identity through the use of historical material in education is worthy of being studied because nationalists and historians do not belong together if the actual past does not strengthen the image of a country as a glorious state.

## 1.2 Investigation of history text books

The actual history text books used in the Finnish schools in the 1920s form the basis of the research as valuable primary sources. Because of the limited availability of the genuine editions used in the 1920s, also a few of the later editions are included in the research as far as their forewords affirm their unchangingness after the 1920s. Otherwise they are in the same form as they were in the investigated period, the 1920s. They are used in this essay using the classical method *testis unus, testis nullus*, that is to discover each fact from at least two sources that are independent of each other to avoid wrong generalisations based on a single inconvenient source. One limitation of these primary sources is caused by an immediate weakness in the Finnish school system in the 1920s: The decisions over which text books were used were made by school inspectors and teachers.<sup>2</sup> This led to the use of varying text books in different parts of Finland, which prevented the Finnish education system from overall

---

<sup>2</sup> Halila, Aimo. *Suomen kansakoululaitoksen historia IV osa* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1949), 141

standardisation. Thus even the most reasonable conclusions drawn from the text books of the 1920s can not be viewed as perfectly applying to whole Finland, but instead as comprehensive generalisations applying to the major parts of the Finnish education system in the 1920s.

## 2 Patriotism and History in the Finnish Curriculum

### 2.1 Ideological starting points of the organised education

The basic ideology of the Finnish pedagogy in the early phases of the Finnish educational system laid in the Finnish culture and Christian humanism. The concepts of home, religion and the native land became increasingly essential pedagogical values. The so-called conscious patriotism, i.e. determined attempt to create national patriotism, had begun in Finland as early as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the feeling of strong Swedish influence: Already in the 1820s a radical Finnish historian A.I.Arvidsson pronounced the whole Finnish culture to be adopted from Sweden and thus being only borrowed property.<sup>3</sup> Dependence on the surrounding politics however restricted the extent of nationalism in the Finnish pedagogic literature and the main focus could be openly turned to the national element first after the independence.

After the declaration of independence the main mission was seen to be the tightening of national feeling, which explains the lack of wide international aspects in the curriculum. Mikael Soininen, Minister of Education in 1919-1920, supported the Herbatian pedagogic philosophy<sup>4</sup> which held that

---

<sup>3</sup> Syväjärvi, Hannu. *Kansakoulu – suomalaisten kasvattaja. Perussivistystä koko kansalle 1866-1977* (Juva: PS-kustannus, 2004), 188

<sup>4</sup> Herbart, Johann Friedrich (1776-1841), German philosopher and educator

the educational goals were highly moral. After referring to one's increasing knowledge of his native country due to education, Soininen states in his guide for pedagogics that one *'must learn to love all this, to feel it his own and to understand that only in this environment he can, with the full power of his being, serve the shared interest of the humanity'*. In accordance to this, the didactic material had to be chosen so that it can *'in the best possible way teach one to know and love the fatherland; the teaching element must be patriotic'*.<sup>5</sup> The national Curriculum of the Rural Elementary School (1925) that followed these guidelines in each separate subject was in use until 1952.<sup>6</sup> It had *'love for fatherland'* specifically mentioned as one of the moral ideals in the *'social-ethical area'*.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 Nature of the history studies

In 1907 Oskari Mantere criticised the education that idealised only the national values and *'a citizen who forms a link, almost an involuntary, nonpersonal link in the chain of society'*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, twenty years later the harmony between individuality and attempts for national unity had not been reached in this meaning. Objectives in e.g. history teaching were highly concerned with defined standards. The foreword of at that time widely used text book *Historiaa kansakouluille I* states in reference to the newly granted independence: *'Our new position however obliges us to increase the historical material - - about our own nation and land in the curriculum of the elementary school. Therefore the reduction must be done in the field of general historical material.'* The foreword goes

---

<sup>5</sup> Soininen, Mikael. *Opetusoppi 1-2* (Helsinki: Otava, 1923), 65

<sup>6</sup> Lampinen, Osmo. *Suomen koulutusjärjestelmän kehitys* (Tampere: Gaudeamus, 2003), 42

<sup>7</sup> Launonen, Leevi. *Eettinen kasvatusajattelu suomalaisen koulun pedagogisissa teksteissä 1860-luvulta 1990-luvulle* (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2000), 186

<sup>8</sup> Mantere, Oskari. *Historianopetuksesta erittäin silmällä pitäen oppikouluja* (Helsinki: Helsingin uusi kirjapaino-osakeyhtiö, 1907), 100

further explaining the purpose to be to represent the great events of history as much as possible from the point of view of the Finnish nation because *'history, as a so called disposition-forming subject, must aim to clarify the meaning of the fatherland to its growing citizens and by inciting love for the fatherland to lay basis for the formation of a real sociality.'*<sup>9</sup> Material relating to the Finnish history was dominative.

### 3 History Text Books and the National Image

#### 3.1 The extent of history text books

The 1920s – and especially the latter part of the decade – are in the didactical context often held as a climax of the text book publishing. As an illustration of this, in 1928 the limit of twenty new text books was easily exceeded whereas earlier the annual amount lay stably between 5 and 10 books.<sup>10</sup> There were separate text books for the study of general history and the Finnish history with comparatively rare exceptions. As justified in the previous sections, the history teaching was being to a large extent restricted to the different areas of the Finnish history, which covered everything between political and cultural history. According to the orders set in 1899 by the new Committee for Text Books only the books that were approved by the government could be used in teaching.<sup>11</sup> This obviously meant that the text material used in teaching was basically controlled by the governmental bodies and after this stage teachers' personal choices of history text books determined the rest. Thus the history text books were standard works used nationally in Finland with variations within regulated limits. The main function of

---

<sup>9</sup> Hainari, O.A. and Laitakari A.V. *Historiaa kansakoululle I* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus Oy, 1927), 3,4.

<sup>10</sup> Halila, Aimo. *Suomen kansakoululaitoksen historia IV osa* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1949), 138

<sup>11</sup> Hästesko, F.A. *Piirteitä Suomen kansakoululaitoksen historiasta* (Helsinki: Kansanvalistusseura, 1916), 204

the history text books can be sensed from the way in which history was called “a disposition-forming subject” for several times in pedagogic literature of the 1920s. Undoubtedly they had a remarkable impact as opinion formative elements that directed the orientation of the students in the desired way. The patriotic tendencies of the pedagogic history literature were further intensified by clear instructions from the higher elements of the national bodies. These can be observed both in the choices of their contents and the manner of presenting it.

### 3.2 History text books and patriotism

In terms of contents, the amount of national history was increased at the expense of foreign history. Basis of the text books were the native regions in all aspects – starting from one’s close communal surroundings and broadening into the national scale – in accordance with Mikael Soininen’s curriculum along the Herbartian lines in his guide for pedagogics *Opetusoppi 1-2*. This organising is illustrated in Figure 1 below. The international material was focused on the Finnish kinship relations and ideologies

**Figure 1**

Religious-historical subject group:  
General historical and patriotic historical material <sup>12</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> school years	Level of personal and family life ✓ fairy tales (Robinson) ✓ presentation of the kindred of own nation
3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> school years	Level of social and national formation ✓ Medieval phases ✓ E.g. a presentation of Crusades in Finland and Engelbrekt Engelbrekt’s son
5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> school years	Level of freedom, autonomy and social interest ✓ the era of Reformation ✓ (Luther and Gustaf II Adolf) ✓ history of the Finnish nation in the XIX century

<sup>12</sup> Soininen, Mikael. *Opetusoppi 1-2* (Helsinki: Otava, 1923), 110 a table

that Finland and Finnish-related nations had in common. Due to the general nature of the history studies, only the aspects of international course of history that were essential for the patriotic ends were thus included in the text books. General international history was blended with the Finnish history as far as it assisted understanding of the native history. This covered primarily parts of the Western European cultural history and phases of Finnish-related or Finnish-sympathising small nations. The latter aspects were mostly references to fraternal nations, namely to Estonia, Karelia, Livonia and Lapp.

The international material was more concerned with the West than it was with the East; this was possibly due to the freshness of the Russian domination in the memory of the nation. As Hannu Syväoja notes in his review of the Finnish Elementary School, the history text books had a nature of upbringing *'their readers into - - the understanding of the Western European culture'*.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, there can be observed a tendency to draw Finland away from neighbouring Scandinavian nations in any inconvenient context. As an example of this the text book *Kansakoulun historian oppikirja* from 1926 can be quoted: *'The Scandinavians, i.e. The Swedes, the Norwegians and the Danes, were warlike nations that were divided into small clans fighting with one another.'*<sup>14</sup> Finland was obviously positioned into a role that kept her apart from participation in any actions that would not fit the desired national image of Finland. Even demonstrable facts were discussed in this specific manner, which naturally best suited the patriotic purposes, as the example of the Swedish period later shows.

The use of individual persons as examples in history text books was typically far developed. The national Curriculum of the Rural Elementary School in 1925 highlighted the function of *'historical*

---

<sup>13</sup> Syväjärvi, Hannu. *Kansakoulu – suomalaisten kasvattaja. Perussivistystä koko kansalle 1866-1977* (Juva: PS-kustannus, 2004), 203

<sup>14</sup> Hainari, O.A. and Laitakari, A.V. *Kansakoulun historian oppikirja* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1926), 47

*fiction` as a tool to emotional learning.<sup>15</sup> Fiction was however only a part of the descriptions of exciting individuals. The basic skeleton was often based on actual history, while the frame of it was shined so that it would stir the young reader's imagination. Mikael Soininen's suggestion in *Opetusoppi 1-2* was the example from Finnish and Swedish history provided by Engelbrekt Engelbrekt's son, as Figure 1 shows. In connection to national heroes of the kind that advance the development of one's nature, he described `Engelbrekt's great, heroic, thoroughly sympathy and admiration arousing personality'. This was to be presented a form of the story's `illustrative, lively and mainly historical features`.<sup>16</sup> Stories about these heroes who were once born in one's own fatherland and fought loyally for it apparently had an impact on the children who not yet had such a unified picture of the country after growing in the time of war and poverty. This led to a popular method of using examples as a stimulus of national sense.*

### 3.3 The mode of representation

Neither did the mode of representation remain outside the sphere of influence of the idealised goals of education. The language used in the history text books of the 1920s clearly had an emotional tone. To a certain extent this is a natural cause of archaism of the Finnish language used way back almost hundred years ago but in another sense it is also a cause of the function of history as "a disposition-forming subject". The attempts to create a harmony in the patriotic purposes both at individual and social level were combined in the pedagogics, and became even tighter in the field of history as already discussed. In terms of psychology it was all possible that history would succeed in its function as an incitement of

---

<sup>15</sup> Syväoja, Hannu. *Kansakoulu – suomalaisten kasvattaja. Perussivistystä koko kansalle 1866-1977* (Juva: PS-kustannus, 2004), 201

<sup>16</sup> Soininen, Mikael. *Opetusoppi 1-2* (Juva: PS-kustannus, 2004), 96

the patriotic feeling. It had been accepted several years before the Finnish independence and had brought about growth in the nationally defensive spirit.

For a point of comparison, Oskari Mantere stated in the guide *Historianopetuksesta erittäin silmällä pitäen oppikouluja* already in 1907 as follows: *Without doubt the patriotic way of thinking can be strengthened in a pupil through properly organized education.* The guide continues saying that there is no valid justification for forbidding this patriotic purpose. This argument is however immediately followed by a notation that the truth should never be violated. A comprehensive definition about the moral justification of historical revision for any purpose can be summarized as Mantere's statement follows: *Even the smallest deviation of the historical truth in the name of patriotism – whether it occurs so that the history of own fatherland is embellished or the history of a foreign nation is abased – is bought at a too dear price.*<sup>17</sup> By the 1920s this principle was probably not entirely buried –but at least compromised in the history text books, which can be seen in their discriminating inclusion of the past realities.

## 4 The Swedish Example

### 4.1 Finnish weakness vs. Swedish strength

The Finnish patriotic attitude that was increasingly obvious in the text books after the independence was neither purely hostile nor affectionate towards Sweden. As the generalisation of Finland's position

---

<sup>17</sup> Mantere, Oskari. *Historianopetuksesta erittäin silmällä pitäen oppikouluja* (Helsinki: Otava, 1923), 157

in the intersection of the West and the East seemed to be a must, it was done in a way that Sweden equaled to the West and Russia equaled to the East, which led to the preference of children being rather directed towards the Western life than the Eastern life. This explains the comparatively mild approach to the Swedish domination of Finland in the history text books. Relations between Finland and Sweden were represented both in a peaceful and a warlike sense. Probably the most frequently used term in describing Sweden in the Finnish history text books as a whole was the term *neighbour*. Despite of its political neutrality, the term communicates about an existing boundary between the two *neighbours*. Therefore the countries are suggested to be separate of each other and to occur as equal next to each other. In general the approach to the hate-and-love relations stresses the confederational feeling between the two countries.

The strength of both the neighbouring powers, i.e. Sweden and Russia, compared to Finland between them was explained in the text books to be a result of Finland's weakness against her will. Sweden and Russia *'got earlier than Finland into contact with civilised countries that were at a higher level of development'*. At the same time as Sweden and Russia were notable kingdoms, Finland was in the first stage of arranging her jurisdictional and provincial districts. This slow social organising was commonly reasoned in the text books to be an effect of *'constant expansion of dwelling area that was happening in the form of settlement movement'* in Finland. <sup>18</sup>

A common feature of the history text books was to connect another reason for the Finnish weakness to the adoption of Christianity. It was suggested for example in the text book *Historian oppikirja*

---

<sup>18</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille I. Vanha- ja keskiaika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 184

*keskikouluille I* that since the neighbouring powers turned to Christianity before Finland, they won the support of remarkable Christian organisations. This is indeed reasonable because the power of the most influential of them – which were mentioned in the same text book to be the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church – had been recognised already for hundreds of years. It was further explained that therefore they could offer, among the others, the Swedish Kingdom stability and support that made Sweden a powerful nation next to the Finnish backwardness.<sup>19</sup>

A demonstration of the Swedish indifference of the Finnish vulnerability is presented in each text book in a specific section on the Crusades. The forceful baptising that begun around the 1154 was partly meant to make an end to the continuous Finnish robbery on the Swedish coasts. Not long after this most of the population had adopted Christianity and welcomed the Swedish arrival. After the last devastations, the Treaty of Pähkinäsaari in 1323 annexed the major parts of Finland into the Swedish Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> In reality, this treaty was an agreement between Sweden and Russia, both of which had played with Finland for centuries. During the era of Swedish Folkung rulers the process of annexing Finland to Sweden was finished. In February 1362 *Finland was conclusively declared an equal part of the Swedish Kingdom*.<sup>21</sup>

## 4.2 The Swedish-Finnish Kingdom

The geographical area of the Swedish Kingdom covered the modern Sweden and Finland as illustrated in the map (Figure 2) on next page. The division of the kingdom in this map is represented correctly,

---

<sup>19</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar, *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille I. Vanha- ja keskiaika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 184,185

<sup>20</sup> Lindeqvist, K.O. *Keskiajan historian oppikirja* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1954), 109

<sup>21</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille I. Vanha- ja keskiaika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 220

i.e. Sweden (marked in the map as Ruotsi) covers the continent all the way to the boundary of the Russian Empire (Moskovan ruhtinaskunta). Finland (Suomi) is specifically mentioned, but is obviously a part of Sweden. It is noteworthy that the other provinces besides Finland are neither named nor mentioned.

**Figure 2**

Europe in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in a Finnish history text book.<sup>22</sup>  
Note the Swedish Kingdom (Ruotsi) and Finland (Suomi) as a part of it.



The verbal definition of Sweden and Finland in the history text books turns out to be more questionable. Every single history text book called the kingdom as *the Swedish-Finnish Kingdom* or more often simply *Sweden-Finland* for example in the following ways:

<sup>22</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikoululle I. Vanha- ja keskiaika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 284

*^ - the influence of the nobility in Sweden-Finland became great - - ^23*

*^ - the position as a superpower, to which Sweden-Finland had risen in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, by being at many wars, arouse jealousy in the neighbouring countries. ^24*

The Finnish position under the Swedish Kingdom was in reality entirely dominated by the Swedish Folkung rulers. The actual extent of the influence of Finland was the same as that of all the other fiefdoms of Sweden. They all had certain defined rights, e.g. voting in the presidential elections. The Finnish district court sessions could decide on local judgments but the Swedish king equaled to the highest level of all jurisdiction. The noblemen, in whose possession the castles in Finland were, did not have personal power but served the Swedish king. Gratifyingly there were also many Finnish history text books that recognised this superiority of Sweden compared to its subordinate Finland as the following three extracts show:

*^ - [Finland] came to belong to the power sphere of Sweden. ^25*

*^ - let us firstly mention here from our own history the introduction of Christianity and the Swedish power in Finland - - ^26*

*^Our forefathers who were annexed to the connection of Sweden came to be in the happiest position out of the nations that got under foreign power, because the nation that had conquered our land, lived too far away, and the Swedish kingdom was too weak to burden the Finnish in the way as the other conquering powers did.^27*

Although the general atmosphere was obviously strict towards any national concessions made in

---

<sup>23</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille I. Vanha- ja keskiaika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 231

<sup>24</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille II. Uusi ja uusin aika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 151

<sup>25</sup> Hainari, O.A. and Laitakari, A.V. *Kansakoulun historian oppikirja* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1926), 64

<sup>26</sup> Soininen, Mikael. *Opetusoppi 1-2* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 95 footnote

<sup>27</sup> Hainari, O.A. and Laitakari, A.V. *Historiaa kansakouluille I* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus Oy, 1927), 98

didactic history literature, some text books presented the delicate subject in a politically correct way without imposing patriotically charged theories of a mutual rulership. However, in terms of contents the text books had in common their tendency to focus on autonomical rights granted to Finland, e.g. some regional fur taxation; heroic individuals who took a leading position in Finland at the time when Sweden otherwise tyrannised Finland and deprived her autonomical rights, e.g. bishop Maunu; the Fennophiles who defended Finland with great enthusiasm<sup>28</sup>; and the independence movement that was created in order to detach Finland from the Swedish Kingdom and to create an independent country under the auspices of Russia.<sup>29</sup> This strengthened the picture of Finland being strong enough to rise to rebellion and being able to become fully independent.

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Patriotism in the Finnish history text books –a form of propaganda?

*It can be said with full reasons that the patriotism and the defensive will expressed by the Finnish nation during the independence are largely based on the history teaching of the elementary school.*<sup>30</sup>

When using history in construction of a national identity as in Finland, its comparability to propaganda inevitably becomes an issue. In the critical stage of the formation of Finnish identity in the 1920s, the history text books evidently compromised in their presentation of the reality. The events were

---

<sup>28</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikoululle II. Uusi ja uusin aika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 160

<sup>29</sup> Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikoululle II. Uusi ja uusin aika* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), 240

<sup>30</sup> Halila, Aimo. *Suomen kansakoululaitoksen historia IV*, 182

frequently fitted into a scale that protected the Finland's national image in the best possible way and led to the conclusions that were consistent with the desired image. This is where the nationalists and the historians unavoidably clashed also in the case of promoting the Finnish national identity: The historians are obliged to question and to assess the course of history although not all the historical realities necessarily end up to be favourable for their personal interest. The encyclopedic meaning of the word `propaganda` includes the idea of *`information, rumours, etc., deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.*<sup>31</sup> In this sense also any deliberate presentation of national history in didactic literature can be claimed to go beyond the moral duty of educating children.

Patriotism in the history text books right after the Finnish independence made history one of the most influential attitude-shaping subjects in the Finnish curriculum. As the children grew older, this attitude-shaping resulted to further patriotism and, when necessary, to the extent of national sacrifices. The purpose was to construct a strong national identity by making use of something that is generally experienced unchanging: the past. With ethical justification some higher values were however ignored and conclusions were too many times based on what the national image was still lacking. An example of this sort of revisionism that might seem comparatively insignificant is the Swedish issue, in which the tendency to stress the own national position at the expense of picture of another involved nation is seen. In terms of morality and duties of a historian, however, even the smallest revision of the past is degrading.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*; propaganda

## 6 Bibliography

Hainari, O.A. and Laitakari, A.V. *Kansakoulun historian oppikirja*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1926.

Hainari, O.A. and Laitakari, A.V. *Historiaa kansakouluille I*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1927.

Halila, Aimo. *Suomen kansakoululaitoksen historia. IV osa*. Porvoo: WSOY, 1949.

Hästesko, F.A. *Piirteitä Suomen kansakoululaitoksen historiasta*. Helsinki: Raittiuskansan Kirjapaino Osakeyhtiö. Kansanvalistusseura, 1916.

Kuikka, Martti T. *Suomalaisen koulutuksen vaiheet*. Helsinki: Otava, 1992.

Lampinen, Osmo. *Suomen koulutusjärjestelmän kehitys*. Tampere: Gaudeamus, 2003.

Launonen, Leevi. *Eettinen kasvatuseräytelmä suomalaisen koulun pedagogisissa teksteissä 1860-luvulta 1990-luvulle*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House, 2000.

Lindeqvist, K.O. *Vanhan ajan historian oppikirja*. Porvoo: WSOY, 1952.

Lindeqvist, K.O. *Keskiajan historian oppikirja*. Porvoo: WSOY, 1954.

Mantere, Oskari. *Historianopetuksesta erittäin silmällä pitäen oppikouluja*. Helsinki: Helsingin uusi kirjapaino-osakeyhtiö, 1907.

Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille I. Vanha- ja keskiaika*. Porvoo: WSOY, 1964.

Mantere, Oskari and Sarva, Gunnar. *Historian oppikirja keskikouluille II. Uusi ja uusin aika*. Porvoo: WSOY, 1964.

Soininen, Mikael. *Opetusoppi 1-2*. Helsinki: Otava, 1923.

Syvöja, Hannu. *Kansakoulu – suomalaisten kasvattaja. Perussivistystä koko kansalle 1866-1977*. Juva: PS-kustannus, 2004.

## 7 Acknowledgements

The process of accomplishing this essay was coloured with the support of several persons. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Mr Maury Johnson, for his valuable encouragement and patient advice throughout the process. I would also like to express my huge gratitude for the understanding and support of my parents who made the process much warmer. Great thanks to Mr Tuomo Utoslahti for his practical help that enabled the typing process and to Mr Tommi Utoslahti for his support despite the long distance. Finally, I would like to thank Mr Sakke Laukka and Miss Hanna Häkkinen for their cheering and the lightening discussions we had.

*Big hearts deserve big hugs.*