TEACHING PORTRAYALS OF THE NATION: POSTWAR HISTORY EDUCATION IN JAPAN AND THE GERMANY'S

This dissertation analyzes portrayals of the nation in officially sanctioned middle school teaching materials in Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic from 1945 to 1995. I develop an institutional model to explain shifts in the substantive orientation of history education. This model identifies two critical components: the dominant actors within educational policy-making regimes, and the legitimated models these actors look to in making decisions. These elements determine the historiographical perspective of teaching materials and they also serve as transmitters of global trends toward more “rationalized” accounts of nationhood in education. I counter the conventional wisdom that focuses on essential differences between Germany and Japan or on the recent past as the predominant dynamic elements in portrayals of history.

The occupation period was crucial in institutionalizing the policy-making regime as well as the source of models of actors’ historiographical perspective in all three countries.

The East German party leadership, as the dominant actor, looked to discourses of national particularism in the Soviet Bloc as legitimated models for portrayals of the nation. Narratives were dominated by materialist historiography, but in the 1970s the party leadership ushered in a significant shift toward more particularist, national history and a renewed emphasis of the German historical heritage.

(West) German teachers capitalized on their status as academics to bolster their legitimacy in controlling educational content and to transmit academic paradigms to secondary schools. They changed the overall historiographical perspective of teaching
materials from grand national narratives to more socio-structural historiography in the
1960s and 70s following a paradigm shift in academic historiography.

In skirmishes with the U.S. occupation and the domestic opposition, bureaucrats of
the Japanese Ministry of Education emerged as the dominant actor in policy-making.
Relying on the legitimacy of self-representations as neutral administrators, these
administrators implemented an empiricist historiography that focused on historical
chronologies and avoided questions of causality and nationhood.

The dissertation contributes to the literatures on the construction of national
identity generally, on collective memory in Germany and Japan specifically, and on
global trends in the content of education.