

Pedagogical and Didactical Strategies in Multicultural Classes - A Historical-Didactical Approach on Dealing with Stereotypes in Class

Intellectual Output 2, Unit VIII



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

| Version No. | Author, institution | Date/Last Update |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | <i>Felix Petzold (University of Augsburg)</i> | 13/11/2018 |

8.1 The historic perspective on stereotypes in class

Once again recalling the long-term global objective of SORAPS in terms of teaching, the actual wording was:

“The lessons should...seek to give pupils and future citizens knowledge and analytical skills enabling a reflexive and self-critical approach to their own proto- and stereotypes.”¹

What can now be the particular intentions and effects of the historic perspective in this regard?

The historic perspective enables students to rid stereotypes of their ahistoric nature by looking at them in their full diachronic depth. Consequentially, they are now understood in the context of their development. Within this mode of learning, students can now acquire specific competences:

- Students realise that stereotypes are by no means universally and ahistorically valid monoliths, but much rather overgeneralised, dynamic and (usually) historically developed constructs with limited claim to truth, having different significance throughout the decades and centuries (solidification to bogeymen, flattening to clichés).
- Students become aware of outlasting functions of stereotypes and mechanisms of their use and effect: so they begin to identify stereotypes as a main factor in individually and collectively creating and solidifying identity by constructing alterity. Stereotypes are in-group stabilisers and out-group ostracisers. They define and point out those who are not part of a ‘we’-group and also give alleged justifications (which may be socially, culturally, religiously, ethnically and/or socio-economically substantiated).
- Students understand that stereotypes are tools of both instrumentalisation and misuse.

How should lessons be designed if they are supposed to extrapolate stereotypes in a historic perspective?

There are both selective and synthetic historic approaches:

Selective:

- Presenting a current stereotype in class, contextualising it historically. E.g. the poisoning of wells as an anti-Judean stereotype: from the Middle Ages (pest pogroms) to

1 Jensen, Tim et al. (2017): Guidelines on Prejudices and Stereotypes in Religions, S. 9.

the present (e. g. Mahmud Abbas's speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on June 23rd 2016)

- In-class examination of an actual historic event regarding operative stereotyping. E. g. trial of Jews in Sternberg (1492) (host desecration), the Kielce pogrom (July 4th 1946, Poland) (legend of blood libel) and many more.

Synthetic:

- Having students produce or work on a synthetic presentation, which represents the history of externally ascribed stereotypes (so called heterostereotyping), in the context of one particular religion. E.g. heterostereotyping of Jews from the 1st to the 20th century (c. f. Guidelines on Prejudices and Stereotypes in Religions, pp. 60 – 65).

Where does implementing the aforementioned historic approach currently work best in class?

Implementing the aforementioned historic approaches in classrooms currently works best in the realm of anti-Judean and antisemitic stereotypes, for – at least as far as Germany is concerned – there is already a fair amount of diachronically periodising historiographic accounts on local, regional and national levels. Besides that, there is also a rich pool of resources, with which a resource-based approach of learning can be sustained, and also a multitude of handouts and materials offered free of charge by educational institutes (e.g. Federal Agency for Civic Education - Germany).