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Teaching and learning in a globalized classroom - a concept for university didactics

Introduction and background information

In this paper, a concept will be outlined that was developed in the context of the JMC-FrEE project¹ in Freiburg. The aim was to show possible perspectives on how teacher education can find answers to the outlined challenges.

Future teachers have to learn how to create a "globalized classroom." This means they have to

- view the diversity of learners as a resource. Their socio-cultural background, their religious and ethical orientation, their gender, and the ability and willingness to learn have to be valued and didactically integrated when creating a teaching environment;
- develop some form of classroom management, i.e., conflicts have to be viewed in the context of a value-based teaching culture in order to find ways that help learning and development;
- support pupils with specific needs (linguistically, psychologically, concerning the content, etc.) in the classroom through relevant measures on the school level;
- offer integrated language education for all subjects by which all pupils are guided to learn the required age-appropriate technical language skills. It will contribute to learners' competencies in the language of schooling, which is the basic foundation to succeed in education;
- view "school in the world community" (Lang-Wojtasik 2008) as a curricular challenge. Therefore, teaching programs based on nation-states have to be changed to discover and encourage intercultural and global perspectives;
- start from the individual perception and processing patterns of the pupils: How to deal with the experience of ambivalence becomes an integral part of the didactic planning related to the individual preconditions for learning.

More than ever for future teachers, the development of a scientific mind, relevant empirical qualifications, and a general state of curiosity are of fundamental importance, especially regarding

- the evaluation of the learning environment of individual pupils,
- the didactic transformation, i. e. the modeling of learning tasks. This should enable faster and slower pupils to realize their potential simultaneously and develop the desire to learn and achieve. They should become able to acquire step by step and "expansively" (Holzkamp) new competencies. In short, Teaching should be viewed from the perspective of the learners;
- the evaluation of the teaching results;
- the development of a professional self, i.e., to acquire the necessary basic knowledge to reflect the motives for choosing a teaching career and to communicate possible and necessary ways to become more professional.

In the field of university didactics, lecturers are confronted with this question:

How can they motivate students to turn their studies into personal and professional development?

If we want to encourage future teachers to view teaching from the learners' perspective, this should start at the university level. This means there has to be space for learning and experiencing by formulating stimulating tasks as a challenge to achieve expansive learning.

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The concept

This didactic concept will expand the cultural-historical and ethnological foundation of intercultural education. This should avoid narrowing our look at migration questions and allow for discovering and strengthening intercultural perspectives in all subjects. Connecting general and subject didactic questions and widening the scope of didactic framework concepts (i.e., learning about sustainable developments, global learning, global citizenship education) allows an interdisciplinary approach and contextualizes individual teaching topics from a global perspective. The didactic concept for three seminars supports the development of a scientific mind and a generally inquiring atmosphere. It also enables students to create an individual focus.

Content of the seminars²

Seminar "Culture of eating (Esskulturen)" (winter term 2020/21, summer term 2021)

- Cultural history of a particular food in the historical context of conquest and colonialism.
- Abundance and hunger in the context of the European (and global) migration history.
- "Immigrated" food (spaghetti, kebab, tomatoes, potatoes, etc.) / "recipes travel"
- Looking for everyday elements: diversity, differences, and similarities in everyday life internationally (food, drinks, food taboos, housing, gender relations, family and social relations, special feasts, etc.)
- Constructing identity: What is "typical German," "French," "Turkish,"... cuisine? What are clichés and stereotypes? How flexible are "borders" and overlapping elements? What is being lost if you focus on the "typical" elements?
- Language images define our awareness: "Culture/s" as an object of inquiry/problems of the term "culture."

Seminar "'Far away and yet in contact' Travelling as intercultural encounter" (winter term 2021/22)

- Cultural history of traveling (discover, conquer, measure)
- Border experiences (travel interests, the self and the other, intercultural contacts)
- Travel literature (history, present, hermeneutics of understanding foreignness, travel stories: encountering strangers (communication-psychological perspective))
- Images of foreignness
 - travel photography
 - "aliens" (Science-Fiction films)
 - the foreign in the media (media analysis)
- Educational perspectives
 - School exchanges as an intercultural encounter, international work camps, youth travel: "sustainable traveling"?

Seminar "Images of foreignness and oneself" (summer term 2022; winter term 2022/23)

- Europe discovers and defines itself - renaissance: fears, awareness of crises, and patterns to deal with it,
- Antisemitism and racism in European history,
- Phantasies about the orient: positive "counter"-images,
- Racism in the media (e.g., stereotypes about Islam),
- Categories of identity construction: Personal and collective sense of belonging,
- Language. Power. Reality (framing, language images),

² Download of the study texts „Culture of eating“ and „Travelling as an intercultural encounter“ (in German): https://alfred-holzbrecher.jimdofree.com/schreibwerkstatt/bzw.https://www.ph-freiburg.de/fileadmin/shares/Institute/EW/Bildungsforschung/JMC-FrEE/Seminarplaene/Holzbrecher_Reisen.Gesamttext.web.erg.pdf und https://www.ph-freiburg.de/fileadmin/shares/Institute/EW/Bildungsforschung/JMC-FrEE/Seminarplaene/Holzbrecher_Esskulturen.Gesamttext.pdf The two texts "Reisen" and "Bilder vom Fremden" will be published in a study book (in German).

- SelfImages/BodyImages/WorldImages: perspectives of an intercultural didactic in the context of a global education,
- Create perceptions: education value of imagination/potential of intercultural education.

The seminars were held online during the COVID-19 pandemic, but where possible on a regular weekly basis "in person" with generally some 20 students. All seminars were part of the central evaluation process.

Didactic principles

Learner orientation

Teaching from the learners' perspective includes the development of a didactic concept that focuses on the age-specific situation of the pupils. Children and youth strive to develop a sense of personal and social identity. Students develop their professional identity by considering their choice of profession and their general view of the future. A learner-oriented didactic concept looks at the learner's general social and economic situation, including the relevant "power structures" and the images of oneself and the world in general.

The "Inter" matters

Intercultural learning should not be limited to migration or pupils with a migration history. Creating a model that hooks up with didactic framework concepts such as learning about sustainable developments, global learning, or global citizenship education is necessary. This concept focuses on the "Inter" – i.e., the dynamic space between oneself and the "foreign world." Reflecting on this offers the opportunity to become aware of one's perceptions of foreignness. This process of self-reflection is a central precondition for developing pedagogic professionalism (on the part of the students) and acquiring relevant intercultural competencies. This "Inter" can refer to foreign food and tastes (see "Culture of eating"). It can also refer to literature from authors of the global south and, of course, to the (inter)personal encounters with other people. The key is the reflection of the contact situation that can show itself as an actual conflict: In the teaching process, these critical incidents, i.e., conflict cases, are good learning opportunities because they deal with the space between teacher and pupil in all its dynamic, its multilayered background and the possible interpretation options (see below).

Habitus of "approaching"/"Approaching" as a mindset

University education is characterized by learning how to deal with complex matters, topics, and social problems methodically, using empirical examinations. In all this, the researcher/student must factor himself or herself into the equation as an observer. The concept of "researching teaching and learning" is valid for university education and later on when working as a teacher – as has been explained above. "Approaching" as a mindset is, in fact, a lifelong development task in intercultural encounters – no matter whether you are traveling, taking pictures, or trying to understand the way of living and thinking of the learners. Intercultural learning turns into a search, opening up new horizons of knowledge and understanding. At the same time, you understand better your perception patterns.

Cultural-historical and ethnological foundation

Looking for scapegoats, conspiracy theories and racist or antisemitic views has long been the European tradition. They accompany the search for identity in Europe, and their patterns are still influential today. They are embedded in our collective subconscious. These deeply embedded "frames" can only be tackled by becoming conscious by choosing a cultural-historical perspective. An ethnological perspective trains the eye to observe the relativity of how we view ourselves and the world around us. Intercultural and internationally comparative approaches enable us to show respect for other life designs and "foreign" ways of perceiving the world. They liberate the mind by showing that not only "foreign" but also our ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting are "relative." They always reflect the individual life experiences and are, therefore, artificial constructs that can be changed.

The form of learning defines the content

How we learn influences considerably how sustainable and personally important the learned matter will be. Does it make you curious or independent enough (self-regulating, expansive, or generative) to reach out for new horizons of knowledge and understanding? Suppose the learning environment and the didactic arrangements enable the learner to feel empowered in an appreciative learning culture. In that case, this desire to learn and achieve will become a lifelong habit. If learning is connected to pressure, fear, and punishment, then a habit of being curious is unlikely to develop. You are blocking out everything "new" because it will be regarded as potentially threatening.

Beyond traditional school and university didactics, other methods like creative writing, theatre and play pedagogy, and the use of media can increase the desire and willingness to learn. It can also turn learning into a creative search process. Suppose you want to get a clearer idea of your "images of foreignness and yourself" and to overcome ethnocentric and racist perceptions. In that case, the process of learning is always accompanied by emotions of fear that are deeply embedded in your psyche. Hence, it is all the more important to use teaching/learning methods that enable you to deal with these often diffuse perceptions. It would be best if you could articulate yourself, communicate with others, and develop new images.

A didactic concept for seminars

The study texts (see above) give an overview and are meant to introduce the topics. If internet sources were used when writing the texts, the students could turn to the learning platform used at our university to deal with those aspects and texts that seemed to be most interesting to them. In the seminar lessons, the relevant chapters were regarded as being read. Some aspects, which the students usually chose, were discussed in greater detail. This happened, if possible, by using creativity-supporting methods from the sphere of youth and adult education outside school: "Written discussion" on posters, symbolizing a thought (painting/drawing a symbol), commenting reading, picture analysis, exchange of personal experiences, creative writing about a picture or cartoon, cluster/mindmap to structure a complex topic, communication-psychological analysis of a critical incident, method "future workshop," etc.

Parallel to the seminar work, the students worked in small groups on "didactic dossiers." In the seminar "eating culture," they chose products from a supermarket (from pineapples to soja and tomatoes). They then collected relevant texts, pictures, and learning methods for the classroom. Hence, they didactically processed the seminar content (cultural history, world market context, nutritional science, sustainable farming, ...) and looked for new teaching/learning forms. In the seminar "Travelling as an Intercultural Encounter," some aspects of the topic (as detailed in the study text) were didactically processed for the dossiers. All participants could then use these dossiers. They were evaluated by criteria that were developed together. In the seminar "Images of foreignness and oneself," the students created critical incidents for schools that were then discussed in the seminar.

The overall good or very good feedback from the students of all seminars confirmed the validity of the seminar concept which is presented here. An important factor was that theoretical work, creative seminar methods, and project- or product-oriented work were linked. Very positive was the feedback concerning the use of critical incidents. In the final evaluation talk, several elements were highlighted:

- Critical incidents are concrete examples of conflicts in your later job, for which you must find practical solutions. Therefore, there is a high degree of applicability.
- At the same time, the central conflicting areas of the teaching profession became obvious: between closeness and distance, working on a relationship but being confined by (structural) obligations, learner and topic orientation, and especially between the universal claim of the state institution school and individual expectations of individual pupils and their communities. Teacher education can, therefore, never aim for unambiguity along a "right-wrong-scale." Instead, they must develop their individually founded position within the debated area. Teachers who act professionally can use a wide-ranging analysis toolkit that enables them to examine a conflict appropriately and establish its possible background. This will lead to the development of a wide range of options for action.

- A lot of critical incidents focus on communicative misunderstandings. It would be best to establish several different ways of reading the situation here. This should counterbalance the more mainstream "culturalistic" interpretations: conflicts and misunderstandings can have individual reasons (developmental psychology). They can also stem from experiences in a pupil's personal and social environment – or they can have their origin in the relevant peer groups. The form of the teacher-pupil interaction can also be a factor, as are individual communication styles. The communication-psychological concept of Friedemann Schulz von Thun (1981 ff; see Fuchs 2022) has shown to be an excellent and differentiated analysis toolkit to make the speaker and listener better aware of the different levels of what was being said and meant.

Conclusion: University didactics for the university of tomorrow

Teachers' self-image as learning facilitators, helpers, critical partners, and challengers has yet to develop. The above-mentioned didactic principles are helpful and necessary in university didactics and (further) teacher training. In a seminar on the analysis of teacher training systems in an international but mainly European comparison³, it was shown that in-service training for teachers is archaic not only in Germany but also in many other European countries. Teacher trainers still present knowledge, and questions of the participants remain on the surface. The power imbalance "expert–novice" is usually very dominant. There can be another way. In a survey (ZELF 2016) conducted at our university a few years ago, teachers voted to make further training more extensive and long-term. A single, usually two-hour-long information event is still the standard for further teacher training, even if it is unsatisfactory from the participants' point of view.

They instead wish to have teacher training programs according to the didactic principle of *approchement*, where teachers and researchers meet in professional learning communities at eye level as experts with different orientations. Learners should not be seen as a problem, but they should get the space to work together on the issues at hand. Professional learning communities can offer the protected space in which a *habitus* of *approchement* between teachers and researchers can be developed. Therefore, universities shall open up for teachers through joint courses for students and school teachers. Thereby, a *habitus* of scientific working can develop in a meaningful way.

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³ Blumschein, Patrick: Lehrerfortbildungssysteme im europäischen Vergleich (winter term 2021/22 & summer term 2022)