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History Didactics and Historical Culture

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In my previous university teaching degree program, I had already become acquainted with the historical didactic principle of controversy in a previous module. However, this was only superficially addressed, as there was no time for in-depth exploration. Therefore, Professor Dr. Klausmeier's seminar offered a suitable opportunity to delve deeper into what had already been learned.

As my previous history studies and my schooling were very Eurocentric, we first had to engage with the history of South Africa in the seminar. Some key points such as colonialism, apartheid, or the figure of Nelson Mandela were already familiar, but I only knew other historical events such as the Boer Wars by hearsay. Therefore, this part of our preparation was very beneficial for me. Additionally, we extensively examined the South African curriculum for the subject of history. This was already highly interesting to me, as I had only been familiar with German history curricula, especially the Saxon curriculum for high schools. It was very intriguing for me to see that the South African curriculum better addresses topics and events on different continents. At this point, I felt that the Saxon curriculum could improve in this regard. While discussing the definition of controversy in German-speaking history didactics by Klaus Bergmann and our personal experiences in dealing with controversy in history teaching, it was also very helpful to read Johan Wassermann and Denise Benvotato's essay on controversy in South African history teaching and the experiences of South African history students. I noticed that controversial topics in German history teaching often arose in the treatment of World War II, the Holocaust, and German division and reunification, while in South African history teaching, this often occurred in the treatment of apartheid. In both countries, it is important to note that these topics are also reflected in students' own family histories, and students may already have strong opinions on a particular issue from home. Wassermann and Benvotato's essay highlighted how this affects interactions with teacher trainees during internships. At that time, I had not yet completed my teaching internship for history. However, my dedicated mentor encouraged me to address controversial topics in class. On the other hand, some fellow students reported being discouraged from addressing certain topics or that little room was left for controversy in the history classes they observed. Another important

aspect for us German students is the so-called Beutelsbacher consensus, which outlines the opportunities for teachers to express their political views.

To prepare for the exchange with South African students, we were divided into small groups, each tasked with preparing and discussing a different topic. Collaborating with the assigned South African students went smoothly through the formation of a WhatsApp group. Unfortunately, two South African group members did not participate in the group work. However, this was not dramatic as the six of us worked productively together. We had a video conference to prepare for the major meeting on November 14, which greatly facilitated preparation. I found it very enriching to exchange views with the two South African students, Zoe and La-Tavia. Our topic was how the subject knowledge of the teacher - or lack thereof - influences the ability to present controversial topics in history class. We concluded that the subject knowledge of the teacher is crucial for being able to present controversy in the classroom. It is not only necessary to provide a multiperspective approach to certain topics but also to be able to factually address and, if necessary, contradict controversial statements made by students. Subject knowledge is important for understanding different perspectives on a topic and being able to teach it in a balanced manner in class. It is also important for presenting controversial topics sensitively and empathetically, especially when these topics are highly emotionally charged. This also applies to teachers' ability to analyze a topic and their own biases critically. This is important for teaching students these skills as well.

The exchange in our group was very enriching for me. Through our productive preparation, we also had the opportunity to discuss other topics with each other. While we discovered some differences in the organization of teacher education in our countries, we also found many commonalities. We were able to identify many similarities in our daily lives at university - whether in Leipzig or Pretoria. We also learned about each other's national characteristics.

The big presentation on November 14 went very well for our group. However, I had some difficulties following the conversation in the subsequent presentation as some participants spoke English very quickly. The language barrier likely also caused some of my classmates to hesitate in participating in the discussion. Nevertheless, it was very interesting to see the results that the other groups had achieved. The subsequent exchange with Johan Wassermann and Denise Bentrovato was also very interesting, as it gave me a deeper insight into the South African school system. Overall, the seminar and the opportunity to interact with South African students have greatly helped me in my personal development. It was a good opportunity to use my English again, as my second subject is German, which has

not been the case in university so far. Additionally, the seminar with Prof. Dr. Klausmeier helped me become more aware of controversial topics in history education. It also gave me confidence for my upcoming internship during the semester break. I believe this experience has encouraged me to address controversial topics in class and discuss them with students. Overall, the seminar not only deepened my knowledge of historical didactic concepts but also allowed me to gain new intercultural experiences.