The potential of a dialogic classroom

Iara Maria Mora Longhini[1], Jaime Pacheco da Silva Filho[2].

ABSTRACT

University Council Resolution (CONSUN) No. 32/2017 provides for Interdisciplinary Projects (PROINTER), which aim to enable the exchange of experiences and reflection on the peculiarities of teaching (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA, 2017). These projects aim to reflect on teaching, permeated by the practical experience brought by undergraduate students, university professors and basic education teachers. Educational practice is not a simple task, as it is not possible to foresee every possible occurrence in this environment. Therefore, with a view to providing teachers with experiences on which they can draw, the aim is to problematize situations typical of this environment and provide them with a theoretical and practical framework capable of guiding their future actions. This establishes a commitment to the training process which, if it didn't happen, would be compromised by the incompleteness of not being able to combine theory and practice.

Keywords: Teacher training, Educational reflection, Interdisciplinary projects.

INTRODUCTION

University Council Resolution (CONSUN) No. 32/2017 provides for Interdisciplinary Projects (PROINTER), which aim to enable the exchange of experiences and reflection on the peculiarities of teaching (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA, 2017). These projects aim to reflect on teaching, permeated by the practical experience brought by undergraduate students, university professors and basic education teachers. Educational practice is not a simple task, as it is not possible to foresee every possible occurrence in this environment. Therefore, with a view to providing teachers with experiences on which they can draw, the aim is to problematize situations typical of this environment and provide them with a theoretical and practical framework capable of guiding their future actions. This establishes a commitment to the training process which, if it didn't happen, would be compromised by the incompleteness of not being able to combine theory and practice.

In order to comply with the above, the following curricular components are compulsory on the Biological Sciences degree course at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU): PROINTER I - Introduction to the Biological Sciences Course, PROINTER II - Sciences and Media, PROINTER III - Biology and Culture and PROINTER IV - Education and Society. The purpose of the Institutional Undergraduate Seminar (SEILIC) curricular component is to reflect on an experience in a curricular

---

[1] Prof. Dr. Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) – Minas Gerais
[2] Undergraduate student in Biological Sciences Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) – Minas Gerais

component that is part of PROINTER. So I selected an experience from PROINTER II - Science and Media, which consisted of a lesson on the use of stereotypes in the social context.

This particular activity marked my career as a student and future teacher, as it provided an environment for conflict and confrontation of ideas. The topic of stereotypes was approached from the social perspective of fostering prejudice, based on the concept found in Portuguese language dictionaries.

> A pattern established by common sense and based on a lack of knowledge about the subject in question. A conception based on preconceived ideas about something or someone, without their real knowledge, usually prejudiced or full of general statements and untruths. Something unoriginal and full of clichés. Behaviour that lacks originality and adequacy to the present situation, and is characterized by the automatic repetition of a previous, anonymous or impersonal model (STEREOTYPE, 2023).

In this activity, the teacher introduced the topic through a scientific article. After reading the article and giving a brief explanation, we moved on to the debate phase. At this point, the teacher defended the idea that the use of stereotypes should be banned from the social context, because it leads to a series of structural prejudices. The teacher made her particular position clear, an aspect that denotes her freedom of expression and politics, which affects everyone, without distinction. According to Melo (2010), Max Weber defended the neutrality of the chair in education. It is important to emphasize that there is no neutrality in education due to the inseparability of the subjects, citizen and teacher, involved in the educational process and political beings that they are. However, given the impossibility of neutrality, impartiality must be pursued, promoting student autonomy.

> In fact, it has already been said that one of the skills needed by university lecturers is to be able to promote situations in which students can develop intellectual autonomy, and therefore not be authoritarian by imposing their own opinions. When students are presented with scientific problems, they must appropriate them in their own way, which also derives from the teacher's performance in this regard. (MELO, 2010, p. 26)

During the debate, I presented my disagreement with the position defended by the teacher, an aspect that awakened in me the possibility of autonomous thinking and the development of a critical sense. There is a process of exchanging experiences between teacher and student, because knowledge does not flow unidirectionally. In addition, this dynamism must be permeated by free thinking, articulation between theory and practice and a critical reading of reality, which are essential aspects for giving students autonomy (BRAHIM, 2007). The disagreement spurred me on in my quest to broaden my understanding of the subject. So, in order to gain a better understanding, I read some articles related to the topic and wrote a text that I shared with the teacher. This text became the subject of the next meeting. In the following sessions, I will clarify the arguments that permeated this discussion.

OBJECTIVE

Federal universities are, among other things, important centers for professional training and preparation for the exercise of full citizenship. In professional practice and in positioning oneself as a citizen aware of one's rights and duties, it is necessary to support autonomy and free thinking, with a certain degree of criticality. Thus, educational institutions, as places where various skills, abilities and knowledge are instrumentalized, aim to provide students with these tools so that they can use them when the need arises.

Therefore, the aim is to investigate the use of the dialogic classroom as a tool for developing critical thinking and autonomous thinking, assessing its potential in teaching. In addition, to highlight the use of this didactic-pedagogical resource in teaching.

METHODOLOGY

The concept of stereotype, in itself, explicitly denotes something harmful and bad for life in society. The concept of stereotype found in dictionaries and popularly disseminated, in addition to being reductionist, is pejorative and suggests that it is something harmful and bad for people. However, contrary to the dictionary definition, it is important to highlight the concept coined by Pereira and collaborators, which, according to the researchers themselves, is provisional and incomplete.

> [...] socially shared belief systems that refer to common patterns of conduct or homogeneity among members of a social entity and that are elaborated on the basis of theories that are supported by intentional reasoning or causal explanatory theories. (PEREIRA *et al*., 2012, p. 218)

According to this, the stereotyped image meets the needs of a certain audience, as it is part of a culture and is engraved in the collective unconscious (PEREIRA *et al*., 2012). In this way, trying to break with the formation of stereotypes, to the point of abolishing them from the social context, would make civilization as we know it chaotic, people would not understand each other, communication would be impaired and social groups would fall apart, since the references that support and guide the relationship between people would disappear (CARDOZO, 2004). Benchmarks serve as supports and starting points for the formation of collective consciousness.

Stereotypes are also forms of externalization of the archetypes investigated by Jung (MARK; PEARSON, 2011). Archetypes are understood as "contents of the collective unconscious that have never been in consciousness and therefore have not been acquired individually, which owe their existence only to heredity." (JUNG, 1976). (JUNG, 1976) They present themselves as ignored forces that influence our "formation". Archetypes, which are part of the collective unconscious, with their universal values and meanings, vary only in the way they are expressed depending on the culture of each people, since they

derive from it (ANAZ, 2020). Archetypes are "forms or molds"; like cake molds, primordial molds that are the instruments for creating everything that exists on the material plane.

Stereotypes and archetypes, in turn, can be seen as closely related to the theory of social representations, because "Like social representation, the stereotype allows for understanding, manipulation and internalization, linking it to values, ideas and theories that are already assimilated, pre-existing and accepted by society." (PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO, 2023). This search constitutes an important process of objectifying the reality that permeates us and, with this, extinguishing the duality that separates the concrete from the abstract. Social representations are defined by one:

> [...] a set of articulated concepts that originate in social practices and group diversities whose function is to give meaning to social reality, produce identities, organize communications and guide conduct. [...] Four functions stand out: Function of knowledge: social representations help us to explain, understand and make sense of social reality. [...] Orientation function: social representations are guides to behavior. They guide social practices (to the extent that they precede the development of action). [...] Identity function: by sharing a social representation, a group can be defined and differentiated from another group. Thus, social representation enables group identity and, consequently, group differentiation. [...] Guiding function: social representations serve as justifying references for behavior. Since social representations are socially shared guides to behavior, [...] (SANTOS; ALMEIDA, 2005, p. 34).

Hannah Arendt, a Jewish refugee in the United States during the Second World War, discussed the particularities of thought and its implications. In approaching this theme, it becomes clear that "opinion and thought are not static, but are part of an endless process of reflection that culminates in the elaboration of a statement that will be enunciated and at another time re-evaluated and re-elaborated" (CUSTÓDIO, 2015).

The thinking subject's thought is marked by ambiguity and by its split into *two-in-one*. According to the author, thought is not what unifies the thinking being, but what constitutes it, and in this dual aspect, free thinking occurs and stems from it. Aiming to give meaning to thought, Hannah Arendt (2004) makes the following statement: "If I disagree with other people, I can walk away; but I cannot walk away from myself, so it is better that I first try to agree with myself before taking everyone else into consideration". In this sense, he takes Socrates as the archetype of the thinking model, that is, he is the model that expresses the activity of thought, by establishing an internal dialog with himself, which splits in two, examines a question until it is clarified (CUSTÓDIO, 2015).

Thus, we will treat education as a process of initiating certain knowledge and transmitting an accumulated historical and cultural background with the aim of offering different perspectives on the world. Thinking, on the other hand, is only possible through dialog, words, opinions or individual internal conceptions of oneself.

It's important to emphasize that the baggage of knowledge that the other person brings with them should never be disregarded, but rather taken into account. This is the dynamic of knowledge production, of the evolution of thought and knowledge. It is in this environment of confrontation of ideas, debate, study and research that knowledge is built.

> [...] For a long time, popular knowledge was silenced at school. According to Moscovici, every society is permeated by this knowledge, which he called social representation. Is school a place for pure scientific knowledge? We're sure not. Teachers and students, as actors in a society on the move, carry with them knowledge that is built up on a daily basis, both socially, in the family and professionally. And this knowledge they bring to school. Identifying elements of this knowledge and establishing relationships with scientific knowledge, the specific object of school "transmission", seems to us to be an important step towards understanding the obstacles and deviations that we observe in everyday school life (MAIA, 2001, p. 85 *apud* CRUSOÉ, 2004, p. 9).

But in addition to the baggage we already have, which is a product of the environment, when we are exposed to different environments, our molds tend to change. Our "formation" is the result of what the environment offers us and what we adhere to. Everything that is available around us, within our reach, shapes our concepts and preconceptions, conceptions, beliefs, in other words, it polishes our conduct, instills "values" and worldview.

> Man's relationship with the environment is one of mutual transformation and the social circumstances of his existence strongly influence human evolution. The environment is understood as an indispensable complement to the human being. For this author, interactions are fundamental to the construction of both the subject and knowledge, and occur throughout development according to organic, motor, affective, intellectual and socio-cultural conditions (WALLON, 1968, p. 36 *apud* BASTOS, 2010, p. 3).

DEVELOPMENT

As explained above, disagreement gave rise to the possibility of building knowledge and thinking, which are distinct objects. It is important to encourage thinking, through discursive lectures, exhibitions and group work, in order to contribute to the formative phase, development of critical vision and autonomy of undergraduate students who will become teachers in the near future. This proposal sought to provoke reflection to guide teaching practice, in order to promote critical thinking and reflective autonomy in students.

Based on the activity carried out in Science and Media, this proposal was drawn up with the aim, through dialogicity, of promoting the development of critical thinking and autonomous thinking among university students, with the theme being the formation of stereotypes. The classroom intervention proposal aims, more specifically, to allow students to reflect on the different concepts of stereotypes, debate and structure an opinion on the subject, based on dialogic mediation. The planned teaching

intervention was proposed to be developed in intercommunicating and distinct moments, as described below.

The practical activity was applied to a group of Psychology students at the University of Uberaba (UNIUBE), located at Avenida Afonso Pena, nº 1177, Centro - Uberlândia MG. The Psychology class consisted of twenty-seven students, nineteen women and eight men, with an average age of 25.

At first, we presented four sets of images (Figure 1), projected via Datashow, and asked the students to choose the one they liked best. The aim of the activity was to gauge each participant's particular judgment of the projected images and to make inferences about their judgment.

Figure 1 - Various images

Source: The author himself, adapted from Google

The free choices were noted on the board, taking into account the expression of each member of the class who raised their hand at the time of the question. The tabulation of the free choices aimed to assess the social representations that the students made of the images presented. According to the results presented, the representations that bring us closer together and those that distance us from each other were noted, thus creating a group identity. The data collected points to a tendency to identify with the original peoples of South America who made us up (indigenous people), and with the people who are the result of the process of miscegenation that took place on the continent. It can be seen that no adherence was proposed for the set of figures in group 3, despite the fact that this group is also made up of native peoples (aborigines), but natives of Oceania (Australia).

RESULTS OBTAINED			
Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
07	01	00	18

Source: The author himself.

At the end of this first frame, a question was posed that would remain unanswered until the fourth moment. Are stereotypes good or bad for our life in society? The answer to this question would be

constructed intimately by each of the students at the end of the debate, without the need for externalization.

Secondly, we presented the definition of stereotype in line with the dictionary. The concept was presented on a slide and the printed concept was distributed at the same time with the following sequential questions: Does the concept refer to something bad for the individual and society? If stereotypes are considered bad, should they be abolished from society? The second question was reworked at the end of the lesson. The results of the answers indicate that the dictionary concept brings with it a pejorative denotation for the conceptualization of stereotypes. As such, it becomes inductive for making a decision, albeit a provisional one.

RESULTS OBTAINED	
Question 01 - Does the concept refer to something bad for the individual and for society?	
Yes	No
20	07

Source: The author himself.

The teacher of the psychology class explained at the beginning of the lesson that she had finished working on stereotypes with that class. Therefore, it was to be expected, as shown, that the result of the data collection for the second question would be influenced by the level of knowledge the students had about the subject.

RESULTS OBTAINED	
Question 02 - If stereotypes are considered bad, should they be abolished from society?	
Yes	No
10	17

Source: The author himself.

In the third part of the lesson, we presented broader definitions of stereotypes, which contrasted with the definitions given in dictionaries. Special emphasis was placed on exploring the applications, possibilities and potential for our life in society.

In the fourth moment, a debate was held to allow the students to express their points of view on the topic presented. At this point, the question was raised again: Should stereotypes be abolished from life in society? This moment aims to generate reflection on the topic after the presentation of the different views on a controversial content that has contradictory definitions. A printed questionnaire was used to raise this issue, with the aim of gauging whether there had been any changes in the students' initial position. The results obtained show that the students overwhelmingly adhered to a position contrary to the idea of abolition. The results show that there were nine (09) changes of opinion in the universe of ten (10) students who were initially in favor of abolishing stereotypes.

RESULTS OBTAINED	
Question 03 - Should stereotypes be abolished from life in society?	
Yes	No
01	26

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article sought to raise aspects that involve the potential of a dialogic class for the development of critical thinking and the construction of autonomous thinking, inspired by the divergence of positions in relation to abolishing stereotypes in social life, a position defended by a teacher in a class that took place at UFU.

The clashes of opinions generated in the classroom can only be resolved by taking a broad and unrestricted approach to the subject, so as not to hinder the possibility of synthesis. Synthesis is unique to each student, and it is not up to the teacher to induce students to draw conclusions, as these may be hasty.

The teacher's mission lies in the arduous task of enabling the student to approach the subject from different perspectives and find the contradictions, if they are present. The results obtained from the questionnaire administered to psychology students showed that broad exposure to the topic and the ensuing debate are important pedagogical tools for disseminating knowledge.

Although the psychology students were knowledgeable about the subject, the change in their way of thinking and their critical stance was remarkable. Of those who initially argued that stereotypes should be abolished, 90% changed their position after the broad approach, exposure of the conceptual contradiction and the debate on the subject, as they found the practical application of stereotypes to life in society.

Therefore, the choice of strategies, the selection of methods and the broader approach to the content lead to the effectiveness of the moment in which the intervention is intended to make it possible to build students' autonomy and critical thinking. It can be concluded that intervention through dialogic lessons is an efficient and effective tool for achieving the proposed objectives of building autonomy and critical thinking. In this way, it presents itself as an efficient didactic-pedagogical resource available to teachers in training.

REFERENCES

Anaz, S. A. L. (2020). Archetype theory and character construction in films and series. Revista Significação, 47(54), 251-270.

Arendt, H. (2004). The dignity of politics: Essays and conferences (Vol. 4, pp. 23-52). Editora Relume Dumará. Rio de Janeiro.

Bastos, A. B. B. I. (2010). The technique of operative groups in the light of Pichon-Rivière and Henri Wallon. Psicologia Infantil, 14(14).

Brahim, A. C. S. de M. (2007). Critical pedagogy, critical literacy and critical reading. Revista X, 1, 11-31.

Cardozo, M. L. (2004). The emotional construction of brands: The use of archetypes and stereotypes. Revista Imes, 5(9), 68-76. São Caetano do Sul.

Crusoé, N. M. de C. (2004). Moscovici's theory of social representations and its importance for educational research. APRENDER Caderno de Filosofia e Psicologia da Educação, II(2), 105-114. Vitória da Conquista.

Custódio, C. de O. (2015). Is it possible to teach thinking? Reflections on the conceptions of thought in Hanna Arendt. Cadernos de Educação, 50, 1-10.

Dicio. (2023). Stereotype. Retrieved September 30, 2023, from https://www.dicio.com.br/estereotipo/

Jung, C. G. (1976). Archetypes and the collective unconscious (Vol. 2, pp. 13-54). Vozes. Petrópolis.

Mark, M., & Pearson, C. S. (2011). The hero and the outlaw. Cultrix.

Melo, A. de. (2010). Around Max Weber: Subsidies for a discussion on the neutrality of teaching in higher education. Revista Inter-Ação, 35(1), 19-38. Goiânia.

Pereira, M. E., Modesto, J. G., & Matos, M. D. (2012). Towards a new definition of stereotypes: Empirical test of the model in a first experimental scenario. Revista Psicologia e Saber Social, 1, 201-220. Salvador.

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. (2019). Stereotypes: Social representations in advertising. Retrieved September 30, 2023, from https://www.dbd.puc-rio.br/pergamum/tesesabertas/1513142_2019_cap_4.pdf

Santos, M. de F. de S., & Almeida, L. M. de. (2005). Dialogues with the theory of social representations. Recife: Editora Universitária UFPE.

Federal University of Uberlândia. (2017). University Council. Resolution SEI no. 32/2017, of the University Council. Uberlândia: UFU.