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To cite this article: Bjorn G. J. Wansink, Sanne F. Akkerman & Brianna L. Kennedy (2021) How conflicting perspectives lead a history teacher to epistemic, epistemological, moral and temporal switching: a case study of teaching about the holocaust in the Netherlands, *Intercultural Education*, 32:4, 430-445, DOI: [10.1080/14675986.2021.1889986](https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2021.1889986)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2021.1889986>



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Published online: 11 Mar 2021.



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How conflicting perspectives lead a history teacher to epistemic, epistemological, moral and temporal switching: a case study of teaching about the holocaust in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

This case study reports on a history teacher in a multicultural classroom in the Netherlands who is confronted with students' conflicting perspectives on a sensitive topic, namely the Holocaust. We have used Dialogical Self Theory in combination with the historical multiperspectivity framework to make sense of the teacher's considerations and instructional responses. Informed by interactions between three inner-voices (i.e. history teacher, caring teacher, and political citizen) and two inner-other voices (i.e. Jews as victims and 'the resistant boys'), the teacher switches from a temporal focus on the past to a temporal focus on the present. The epistemic, epistemological, and moral consequences of this temporal switching are discussed.


ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 21 January 2021
Accepted 10 February 2021

KEYWORDS

Multiperspectivity; dialogical Self; temporality; holocaust; multicultural education

History teachers can face challenges teaching about sensitive topics, especially in multicultural classrooms (Goldberg and Savenije 2018; Wansink, Akkerman, and Wubbels 2017b). History is not a neutral subject in classrooms since any history curriculum comes with particular teaching aims, already reflecting specific cultural and epistemic positions (Barton and Levstik 2004; Milligan, Gibson, and Peck 2018). Classroom discussions about sensitive topics can easily prompt students' emotional responses since students are more likely to identify with such a topic in some way (Hess and McAvoy 2014; Wansink et al. 2018). Disagreement among students from different cultural and ethnic groups about the significance of a historical topic can fuel classroom conflicts. Teachers face instructional challenges when students have strong reactions to a historical topic and the teacher has not anticipated such a reaction (e.g. when students' and teachers' different cultural backgrounds cause different reactions to curricular content). In such cases, teachers must decide whether and how to address their own, as well as their students', epistemological, and associated

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

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social and cultural, positions. This case study describes a case in which a history teacher is confronted by diverse student perspectives about the Holocaust. We use our previously described historical framework of multiperspectivity (Wansink et al. 2018), in combination with Dialogical Self Theory (DST) (Hermans 2001), as a theoretical approach to make sense of the teacher's considerations underlying her teaching strategies. We point out the consequences of these strategies for what seems an unintended form of temporal switching.

Perspective taking in history education

The word *perspective* has a Latin root '*perspectus*', meaning 'to look through' or 'to perceive', usually referring to the way a subject sees an object, and accordingly, where this object is always relative to the vantage point of the viewer (Cambridge Online Dictionary 2021). In history education, the teacher's intended object for students to learn about typically concerns a historical period of time, event and/or figures, hence objects situated in the past. By definition, therefore, history education concerns not single- but multiperspectivity; what is to be known *from* the past depends already on how the object and information about it have been captured in and after the considered past (e.g. by historicists), and bring perspectives of others with them. Yet, current society, including teachers and students in classrooms, as subjects, naturally also take on their own perspectives, reinterpreting these historical periods, figures or events, in light of their diverse positions, conditions and concerns. It is in these ways that history education involves multiple subjects' views on a particular object *in and across* various temporal layers (Grever and van Boxtel 2014; Stradling 2003; Wansink et al. 2019). Along with a shared disciplinary assumption that understanding history involves perspective, many history curricula have included epistemology,¹ that is, how historical knowledge is produced by actors with certain perspectives, as a key meta-level topic for students to learn about (Fallace and Neem 2005). In West-European countries, institutions such as the Council of Europe expect teachers to teach perspective-taking. In order to conceptualise multiperspectivity in history education, we have proposed a model with three different temporal layers, each with a specific function and epistemic aim (Wansink et al. 2018). The first temporal layer is 'in the past', which includes the perspectives of any subjects who lived in the same period as the historical figure or event. For example, a document from the 16th century describing the perspective of William of Orange regarding the revolt of Dutch nobles against Spain would belong to the temporal layer 'in the past' because it presents the perspective of someone living at the time describing an event about that same period of time. This temporal layer is related to the function of historical perspective-taking, which refers to learning how historical actors may

have had different perspectives on a certain event depending on their cultural positions (Endacott and Sturtz 2014).

The second temporal layer is conceptualised as 'between past and present', and refers to the perspectives of historical actors who succeeded the object in time, but that still orient to the historical object and its interpretation. This could be for example a Spanish historian living in the 19th century writing a book about the perspective of William of Orange regarding the Dutch revolt against Spain. Within this temporal layer, students must take into account multiple geographical and historical contexts (i.e. the Netherlands in the 16th century and Spain in the 19th century).

The third temporal layer is conceptualised as 'in the present', referring to subjects who live in the present and take a position towards a historical object based on contemporary events or circumstances. In the classroom, both the teacher and the students are subjects who take perspective on the historical object. To continue the example, current teachers and students in the Netherlands from both dominant and nondominant backgrounds might evaluate and discuss the 19th century Spanish historian's account of William of Orange's description of the Dutch revolt against Spain. Certainly, the teachers' and students' own backgrounds and contexts shape their perspectives of both the event itself as well as the historian's portrayal of it.

In this study, we further develop our historical framework of multiperspectivity, by establishing how Dialogical Self Theory (DST) (Akkerman, Admiraal, and Simons 2012; Hermans 2001) can help to understand a teacher's epistemic and relational decision-making during lessons about controversial historical topics. DST asserts that a person's identity or 'Self' is typically shaped by different subject positions (also referred as I-positions) by which a person's voice, whether to oneself or others, takes various perspectives. As multi-voiced agents or dialogical selves, persons can also shift between their I-positions and associated perspectives, depending on what is appropriate or becomes relevant in a certain context. For example, a teacher might be expected to have a position and particular inner-voice as a teacher but might also have a position and voice as a father, as a football fan or as a European citizen, that might pop up and become relevant while teaching. The positions and perspectives that a person can voice typically originate and develop from a person's interpersonal relationships and settings (i.e. the teacher position in relation to students, classrooms, the school), social groups (i.e. the football scene) or broader cultural contexts and traditions (i.e. European culture). In this study we distinguish two types of positions or 'voices': first, identity positions and voices with which a person is familiar to act and speak, the so-called 'inner-voices', such as the aforementioned examples. The second type of voice concerns positions or voices attributed to and taken up from others to which the person relates, the so-called 'inner-other voices'. In the case of an inner-other voice, a person imagines and speaks from, or on behalf of, the position

and perspective of another person or group of persons. The teacher, for example, might imagine a position and perspective of a certain student, or students. Over time, positions and perspectives of (generalised) others might become part of one's own identity (e.g. as oftentimes occurs for parents and partners).

DST stresses how inner and inner-other voices within the self can be in dialogue, where people might also hybridise positions and perspectives, but also where one position and perspective might dominate in favour of another position and perspective. Similar to what happens in society at large, power might be involved in what is being centred in the individual. In this article, we use the DST as an analytical approach focused on the roles of voices within the self to help us understand how one teacher makes various decisions and shifts in perspective during the teaching of a controversial topic in a multicultural classroom. This lens allows us to see how different voices of the self also have brought forward different temporal foci.

Multiperspectivity and the holocaust in history education

Our initial historical framework of multiperspectivity characterises how teachers can deliberately focus on different temporal layers in their curricular and instructional objectives (Wansink et al. 2018). When teaching sensitive historical topics, it is very plausible that teachers come to focus more on the temporal layer 'in the present', simply because students and the teacher emotionally relate the historical topic to its contemporary meaning. When a historical event is still meaningful in the present, it requires the teacher to anticipate how students' sociocultural positions and personal histories may matter for how they make sense of the historical object focused on in the lesson (Goldberg and Savenije 2018; Wansink et al. 2017a). Researchers have already shown that in the case of hot history, many teachers tend to be uncomfortable discussing conflicting perspectives in class, since exploring or supporting specific narratives of one group of students may simultaneously threaten the narrative of other students or the teacher (Goldberg 2017; Wansink et al. 2019).

A critical sensitive topic in current Dutch curricula is the Holocaust (Sijbers et al. 2015). As a historical topic, the Holocaust already elicits strong emotions in students and teachers due to the level of destruction of an entire community of people who were systematically attacked, marginalised, and murdered (Boersema and Schimmel 2008; Hondius 2010). The sensitivity of the Holocaust, however, also resides in the particular meaning and relevance of this history for various students in the present, which we know can be the case, for example, for students with Jewish or with other Middle Eastern backgrounds; with personal or family connections related to Nazi ideology; or who are related to Germany or contemporary Israel more generally in some way. Previous research in the Netherlands and other European countries has shown that recent conflicts among students related to lessons about the Holocaust mostly

occurred in classes with students with Middle-Eastern family backgrounds (Jikeli and Allouche-Benayoun 2012; Short 2013). It has been found that students with Middle-Eastern backgrounds may associate Jews with the current situation in the Middle East based on which they can view Jews as oppressors of Palestine more than as historical victims. Some students have been found to also connect the topic of marginalisation to their own current social position in Dutch society, seeing themselves as having marginal positions caused or perpetuated by geopolitical alliances in which Israel, the United States, and Western Europe dominate (Ensel and Stremmelaar 2013; Gryglewski 2010; Wagenaar and Dinsbach 2013). In this case study, we apply our theoretical framework in order to make sense of the strategies a teacher uses when confronted with students' conflicting perspectives related to the oppressor versus victim position of Jewish people during a lesson about the Holocaust in a multicultural classroom.

Methods

Participant and context

This case study focuses on Kate (pseudonym), a White female teacher born in the Netherlands. As a child, she received her education in a Christian school, but she reports she is no longer active in church. She holds two master degrees from a Dutch university, and has 17 years of experience as a history teacher in general and pre-university secondary education. She works at a public, Protestant school in a large city in the Netherlands. At the time of this study, Kate's teaching assignment included two classes of fourth year general secondary education (i.e. students are between the ages of 15 and 17), which we focus on. According to Kate, around 90% of students enrolled at the school have Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds, with most of their families identifying themselves as Muslim. Kate often referred to some of her male students from these ethnic backgrounds as one group of 'Muslim boys', perhaps reflecting her own lack of experience with a diverse group of peers when she herself was a student

Design procedure, instruments, and data collection

We have selected Kate as a relevant case for in-depth study out of fifteen history teachers. As reported in various articles (Wansink, Akkerman, and Wubbels 2016, 2017b; Wansink et al. 2018), we originally interviewed and observed all fifteen teachers in their lessons to conceptualise multiperspectivity and related dilemmas. We have selected Kate for this paper because she reported struggling with teaching about the Holocaust in her multicultural classes. This paper is based on five previously conducted interviews and three classroom observations, all of

which addressed Kate's teaching about the Holocaust. All recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Classroom observations provided important context information but were not the focus of the analysis.

Analysis

In our analysis, we followed the approach for analysing multivoicedness, as described by Aveling, Gillespie, and Cornish (2015). We first identified the inner voices by looking for first person pronouns, such as 'I', or 'me'. Then we coded the segments into clusters, which we described as a common voice. We assigned each coherent group a specific inner-voice label, with reference to its particular temporal focus. An example of an utterance is, 'then I thought we as historians ...'. In this utterance, Kate's inner voice reflects the position of historian and history teacher. In relation to the inner-other voices, we followed the same procedure, but we coded the sentences with named others, either individuals or groups. First, we identified voices that the teacher explicitly mentions and attributes, which are quotations like 'these Muslim boys, who ...'. Identifying the different voices was an iterative process in which the first and second author frequently discussed how the teacher positioned herself and others during the interview and observed lessons. After identifying the most prominent inner and inner-other voices the researchers discussed how the different voices within the self interacted and led to conflicts and asymmetries. To set the scene, we first give an overview of how Kate described her teaching experiences in relation to her lessons about the Holocaust more generally. In the next part of the results section, we refer to this description and analyse the case study using Dialogical Self Theory in relation to our historical multiperspectivity framework.

Results

The case study: Kate's description of her teaching about the Holocaust

We begin with a summary of the situation that Kate described during the interviews. Kate talked about the Holocaust as an unprecedented historical period in the past during which Jews became victims of the Nazi regime. Hence, Kate's main objectives in teaching about the Holocaust were for students to learn how the Holocaust unfolded historically along with its devastating impact on such a large group of people. However, during the interview, Kate expressed frustration that, in her words, some of the 'Muslim boys' did not want to hear about the Holocaust. She described the students' not listening or saying what they thought out loud as a form of mute resistance, and she stated that they sometimes also snickered at inappropriate times during the lesson. According to Kate, these resistant students interpreted information about the Holocaust in the past using a lens of current conflicts in the Middle East.

We observed two different teaching strategies that Kate used in reaction to these students whom she identified as resistant. First, in describing her response, we recognised a strategy in which Kate tried to confront and convince them that they were confusing the Holocaust in the past with events in the present. Kate stated that this strategy did not work since the boys continued to resist. In what Kate described to have done next, we can recognise a second instructional strategy, which was to focus on what she called the psychological mechanism of evilness. The underlying aim of this approach was to warn the students that this mechanism of evilness was not only present during the Holocaust but still is present in current society. According to Kate, the resistant students were more inclined to listen to her lesson about evilness than to her lessons about the Holocaust.

Making sense of Kate's considerations and teaching strategies using DST and historical multiperspectivity framework

We will now show how our theoretical framework integrating DST and temporality helps us to make sense of Kate's teaching strategy. We first identify which inner and inner-other voices within Kate were notable. Then, we analyse and discuss the two teaching strategies. Finally, we discuss the implications of Kate's decision making.

Five distinct voices within the self in situ

We distinguished three inner voices that appeared to represent aspects of Kate's identity and guided her sense- and decision-making, including a history teacher voice, a caring teacher voice, and a political citizen voice. We also identified two inner-other voices that appeared to represent Kate's perceptions of significant others and that also informed Kate's sense- and decision-making, including an inner-other voice of the resistant students (whom she refers to as the 'Muslim boys') and an inner-other voice of the Jews as victims. We describe each voice and its main temporal focus with regard to how it guided Kate to teach the history lesson.

First, the history teacher voice was reflected in those utterances in which the academic historical perspective was dominant. This voice came to the fore when Kate talked about her aims that students should be able to evaluate narratives of the past critically, or that historical narratives are subjective and evolve over time. For example, Kate said she taught the students that 'if you had been sitting in the 19th century in a classroom, then you would have learned different things'. Other important aims of Kate as a history teacher were that students should try to understand historical people within their own context (i.e. temporal layer in the past) and that students should learn that narratives about the past evolve over time (i.e. temporal layer between past and present).

The second inner voice, the caring teacher, was notable when Kate spoke about how she empathised with and cared for her students, particularly those whom she viewed as marginalised in Dutch society. She stated, 'Well, we have a lot of Muslims and you just notice that they suffer from how they are perceived in society'. The inner voice of the caring teacher focused on the temporal layer in the present, as this inner voice was concerned with the contemporary socio-cultural positions of the resistant students as perceived by Kate in society.

The third inner voice, the political citizen voice, was reflected in those utterances that were not directly related to Kate's position as a teacher, but that revealed something about her personal, political beliefs in relation to the global affairs. For example, Kate said that she had strong personal opinions about the current politics of Israel, but that she tried to separate this opinion from her being a teacher, suggesting a possible conflict between these two inner voices. The inner voice of the political citizen mainly focused on the temporal layer of the present.

We identified the fourth voice as the inner-other voice of the resistant students who, in Kate's interpretation, did not want to listen to her lessons about the Holocaust. She stated, 'But always [when] talking about the Holocaust and about Jews and things like that, [the Muslim boys] do not want to listen'. The inner-other voice of the resistant boys focused on the temporal layer in the present, since, in Kate's description, the boys connected the Holocaust with contemporary events and the resistance took place now in the classroom.

The fifth voice, the inner-other voice of Jews as victims of the Holocaust, was more implicitly notable when Kate talked about teaching her first history lesson about the Holocaust after visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp. She said that while teaching, she constantly had in mind the horrible images of Jews in Auschwitz. She said that the images of the [Jewish] kids' clothes almost made her cry during the lesson. By its direct link to the Holocaust, this inner-other voice focused on the temporal layer in the past.

Applying DST and the historical multiperspectivity framework

DST can be used to identify different voices of a teacher. Investigating the ongoing dialogue and tensions between voices can help to understand how Kate made sense of her own teaching practise and of the different teaching strategies that emerged. To start, Kate's initial teaching goals reflected the voice of the history teacher with a focus on the temporal layer 'in the past'. In line with Kate's ideas about what a history teacher should do, she told the students a sufficient amount of detailed knowledge about the Holocaust to sketch the historical context. But she also wanted to make a clear point about the victimhood of Jews by providing empirical evidence about the number of Jews killed. She said, for example: 'Well, [students] really need to know the details about

what happened. So they have to know about Auschwitz, and the numbers, and the way, and well, what those men (i.e. Nazi's) were doing there'.

However, through the inner-other voice of the resistant students, Kate explained that some of the students did not want to accept this narrative of the Holocaust. According to Kate this group of resistant boys already had a particular perspective on the Holocaust by departing from a specific cultural frame of reference. When Kate voiced the perspectives of 'these resistant boys' she said that for them the Holocaust was related to the current position of the state of Israel in the Middle East. She stated, 'Those Muslim children are in such a strange knot that they see Jews as [those] who kill Muslims'. Here the framework of temporality helps us to understand the problem that Kate encountered in the classroom. On the one hand, initiated by the inner voice of the history teacher, Kate wanted to teach about the Holocaust, which is situated within the temporal layer in the past. However, she was confronted with a group of resistant students for whom the Holocaust was related to the present. Consequently, the temporal mismatch between how Kate as history teacher viewed the Holocaust and how the resistant students viewed it frustrated Kate's attempts to meet her initial goals for the lessons.

Kate's first teaching strategy to address this frustration was determined by the position of the history teacher. The history teacher voice invoked Kate's power as an institutional agent to restrict the perspectives of resistant students during the Holocaust lesson. For example, Kate explained her reaction to the boys' resistance: 'I said that your own opinion does not count for this topic'. As such, Kate pursued the goals of the history teacher voice to teach the facts of the past by squelching resistance. Kate did so by trying to convince the resistant students that they were temporally wrong, revoicing how she told them 'Well, you're confusing a few things' and explained to the students how they intermingled Jews as a victimised group by Nazis in the past with Jews as a victimising group of Palestinians in the current state of Israel. Regarding the effects of her strategy, Kate reflected '... [The] last lesson made me angry. And I thought, "There are those things, they do not dare to say out loud to me." I think that is how far we are now. I do not know if I'm intimidating them, but they do not dare to say aloud what they do not like'. Kate's confrontational coping strategy eventually made her sceptical and frustrated.

When looking at the data with the lens of DST we see that in addition to the restrictive voice of the history teacher, Kate also expresses the more empathetic inner voice of the caring teacher. This voice at least tried to understand the position of the resistant students. For example, Kate stated, 'I mean, I do understand that these children feel constantly pressed into a corner. I mean, that still happens and [in Dutch society] you can say anything about Muslims and you cannot say anything about Jews'.

Kate's second teaching strategy appeared to be informed by her frustration about the confrontational coping strategy and the position of the caring teacher who wanted to make contact with the resistant students. To resolve this conflict

within herself and between her and her students, Kate developed lessons that focused on the perpetrators of the Holocaust instead of focusing on the victimisation of the Jews. She said 'I prefer the perpetrators rather than the victims. And I think this works better with this audience', which she concluded because the positioning of Jews as victims triggered such strong emotions in the students. Kate explained that she was inspired by Hannah Arendt's work, the *Banality of Evil* (1963), and that she wanted to teach about the psychological mechanism of evilness. This evilness, according to Kate, exists inside every human in a timeless manner, independent of external events or group membership. She said that she wanted the students to know that 'You can [commit genocide] with large groups of people whether or not they are Jews. I mean, you can do it with Muslims too'. According to Kate, this teaching strategy was effective because the students were motivated to participate in the lessons. The students all wanted to know how this mechanism could be seen also in present time. However, Kate mentioned that she also introduced a level of insecurity for herself because this new direction required her to have different content knowledge about the mechanism of evil and different skills such as those of an 'amateur psychologist'.

When analysing this teaching strategy from a temporal perspective we see that Kate here switches to another object of orientation as well as switching temporal layers. Whereas her original curricular object was the Holocaust as a *historical* event and object position in the past, by shifting to another strategy she ends up making evilness the main object of orientation for students, a topic she frames as a timeless psychological mechanism that can be seen in both past and present. In making this shift, the inner voice of caring teacher seems to dominate. And with this inner voice, she also retrospectively assesses this teaching strategy as successful. It should be noted, however, how this shift also meant that she changed her initial teaching goals.

Finally, we noticed during the interviews that Kate had to balance between all the different inner voices that came to the fore during the conversation. We want to highlight one quote that shows important hierarchical friction between the position of the inner voice of the history teacher and the position of the inner voice of the caring teacher. Kate said at the end of the interview: 'You know what the risk is ... if you work at such a school for so long ... you get split yourself. There are so many things that you know about, and you want to tell this to the students. But I also always have a lot of heart for those children who are stuck with their story, their nationality, the things they hear. And then I think, "Who am I to completely mess up their entire worldview?" But of course I have to do that sometimes, because that is part of history, turning over worldviews, but something like that is hard ...' Kate's various inner voices cause friction and doubts. The quote starts with the inner-voice of the history teacher, claiming epistemic authority by stating how much she knew that the students did not know.

Then this voice was positioned against the voice of the empathetic teacher who felt responsible for engaging the resistant students. The caring voice also questioned to what extent it was Kate's task to correct the students' worldviews as those worldviews originate from their cultural backgrounds. In this specific quote, it is the voice of the history teacher that regained power and dominance over the caring teacher voice when Kate finally stated that it was her responsibility as a history teacher to confront students. This quote shows how Kate struggled to find a balance between the different inner voices.

Discussion

In this case study, we have provided an example of a teacher in a multicultural classroom who was confronted with students' different perspectives on the Holocaust and who struggled with how to respond. We used DST and historical multiperspectivity framework to see how different inner and inner-other voices shaped her instructional decision making.

Kate applied two different teaching strategies in reaction to the resistant students. The first teaching strategy was a confrontational one that demonstrated the motives of the voice of the history teacher to show the students that their perspective on the Holocaust was temporally wrong. We could understand this approach as a reflection of Kate's position as a history teacher who presented the culturally dominant narrative about the Holocaust. Kate viewed the students as resisting the facts about the Holocaust. Unfortunately, we do not know the students' reasons since we did not interview them. However, Gryglewski (2010) pointed out that 'many immigrant youths have the feeling that their personal family history stands in competition with the remembrance discourse of mainstream society' (p. 46). According to Gryglewski, this is because the majority population is not interested in the history of immigrant youth. Following Gryglewski's reasoning, it is possible to view the students' resistance as resistance to a larger social system represented by the dominant curricular narrative and not by the facts themselves.

The second teaching strategy no longer focused on the Holocaust in the past, but instead on the generic psychology of evilness of the perpetrators, which is still relevant in the present. The consequence of this teaching strategy is that Kate switched between temporal layers as she replaced a focus on the uniqueness of the Holocaust in the past with a general and timeless psychological phenomenon, evilness in the present. It appears that this teaching strategy allowed Kate to avoid confrontation with the students and search for common ground. However, Kate seemed unaware of her act of temporal switching, with the result that the position of the Jews in the past which she aimed to highlight initially was no longer taken into account, even to the extent of being avoided. In Kate's shift to a timeless topic of evilness, we also see a common risk described by Nieuwenhuys and Wils (2012): people, in this case students,

might start to make false comparisons between contemporary stereotyping in society and the mechanisms of state-sanctioned murder of a totalitarian regime that are of an entirely different nature.

There is much academic debate about the extent to which Holocaust curricula should be made 'practical for the present', serving contemporary moral and political goals instead of solely representing the unique historical events in the past (Kinloch 1998; Novick 2000; Short 2005). The two teaching strategies Kate used to respond to her diverse students relate to this broader and ongoing discussion in Holocaust education, which consists of two basic approaches (Russell 2006; Salmons 2003; van Driel 2003). One approach reflects a traditional, historicism-inspired perspective, focused on the temporal layer in the past, with the aim to teach students to place historical facts in their historical context and detach themselves from a 'presentist' view. The other approach asserts that history curricula should regard the past as a set of lessons that are mainly of concern for contemporary social life. In the case of the Holocaust, this second approach would advocate focusing on universal moral lessons as Kate did by focusing on evilness. This study showed how this dichotomy in the purpose of history education may not be so strict in teaching practice, simply because teachers may combine these two approaches while shifting between various positions, in close response to students.

Practical implications

When a teacher is confronted with different perspectives on a sensitive topic, classroom perspectives easily become morally loaded. For a teacher, this means that the central object of the lesson needs to be considered with regard to the teacher's and the students' socially and culturally informed positions because those positions might lead them to have different objects in mind. In this case, for example, there was a temporal mismatch between the teacher and the students whom she considered to resist the Holocaust narrative. A practical implication is that an open classroom discussion can help to create some form of intersubjectivity between the students and teacher about the object at stake. To have an effective discussion, the teacher has to allow for some openness regarding the identification of the central object of the lesson. Therefore, a teacher should start by trying to learn about the students' backgrounds and positions in society (Banks 2008; Kennedy 2011). Kate missed this opportunity and consequently the perspectives of the 'resistant Muslim boys' about the Holocaust largely remained unspoken.

If Kate had begun the lesson with an understanding of the students' positions and an active engagement with their resistance based on present-day circumstances, she might have been able to connect the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust to students' lives by 'bridging' between past and present and back again. Her unintentional temporal switching would then have been intentional and as such she might have avoided a complete switching of historical objects. This type of pedagogy, however, means that history teachers constantly have to consider

diverse students' positions. Teachers should become familiarised with students and their diverse contexts in order to anticipate students' potential perspectives. Such awareness also calls for teachers to consider their own positions in school and society, and how these positions might bring along additional perspectives towards the intended object of education.

Discussions about controversial historical topics are particularly difficult because they are still at stake in society, including power, position and moral issues, and therefore, may also relate to sensitive aspects in the Dialogical Selves of teachers and students. Therefore, collaboration and open discussion between teachers about teaching difficult histories also can help them to cope with their own emotions and to become more reflexive (Zembylas and Loukaidis 2021).

Further research

In conclusion, based on this case study DST and the historical multiperspectivity framework can help understand why particular shifting, even when concerning huge paradigmatic shifts in history education, make sense in the context of interpersonal classroom dynamics. In this case study, we see several kinds of paradigmatic shifts that deserve further research. These shifts included:

- Epistemic shifts: in relation to what is the topic of the lesson or object for students to orient to and learn about;
- Epistemological shifts in claiming absolute knowledge and teacher authority versus stressing multiperspectivity and intersubjectivity;
- Moral shifts, regarding what kind of sensitive issue is critical and deserves attention;
- And temporal shifts in relation to what temporal layer is considered in the classroom.

We suggest that further research focus on similar case studies of situations in which historical objects might appear neutral, but through interactions between teachers and students, bring to the fore personal, moral, and epistemological issues. Such studies would allow for further explanation of how and why teachers make paradigmatic shifts.

Note

1. The word epistemological literally means 'regarding a theory of knowledge'. In this paper the term refers to knowledge evaluation and beliefs about the nature of knowledge. *Epistemic* means 'regarding knowledge'. In this paper we use the term in relation to what one knows about the topic of discussion.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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