

CHAPTER I

FROM REALITY TO SCIENCE

1. REALITY AS POINT OF DEPARTURE

Educating has been and always will be a part of a person's lifeworld. Along with the mandate to reign over the world, a person also has the charge of reigning over the phenomenon of educating as a part of reality. This confronts the educationist with the task of making a penetrating investigation of this part of reality in order to know and master it.

In life reality, **educating** comes to the fore in **everything** that occurs between adults and children and **that has a child's becoming adult as its aim**. There is no doubt that educating is a comprehensive and complex phenomenon. Therefore, the first question of concern that a scientist encounters regards a **method** that will allow him to penetrate and describe this phenomenon in its essentials.

Educating is a **human** affair that is found with people of all races and cultures, although its flavor and content might differ. Educating is activities emanating from an adult (parent) that are directed to making a child a full-fledged member of his society. Through educating an adult helps, supports and accompanies a child so that eventually he can reach adulthood himself. The newborn baby is completely and entirely dependent on his parents (adults) and therefore his educating begins with their physical caring of him and extends through his life as a child until eventually he can accept responsibility for his entire existence. Thus, educating clearly extends over a broad area and over many years and occurs in lots of situations.

The following are some examples of educating as it might appear in different situations:

*A four year-old boy is in the store with his mother. When she refuses to buy him a toy that he wants, he lies on the floor and kicks and screams. She picks him up and explains that this is not an acceptable way of behaving.

*A family is sitting together watching a television program. It is a story about drug addiction. The father uses the story as a basis for explaining to his children the dangers and detrimental effects of drugs.

*A girl in 10th grade asks her sewing teacher for help with her sewing project. The teacher explains and demonstrates how to do it. In this way, the teacher helps her improve her skills and compliments her on the preciseness of her work.

One can continue to give examples of educative situations and eventually it will appear that no two are identical. In this connection, what should the task of the educationist be? Mainly, it is to search for what is **necessary** or **essential** to educating and that appears in each such situation.

To bring to light what is fundamental or essential to educating, the educationist is expected to engage in research or scientific work because only then can he disclose the **order** of educative reality (De Wet, et al., 1981, p 5). Although it is not his task to describe every possible educative situation, he can do nothing less than take into consideration as many situations as possible in order to highlight their common essentials. Thus, the educationist should take the **reality of educating** as his **point of departure** and **area of study** for his research.

To do research in an accountable way, the educationist should ascertain whether the procedures (methods) he will use are suitable for unlocking those aspects of reality he wants to investigate (Landman, 1980, p 6). Therefore, he should be knowledgeable about the different scientific research procedures available. Only in this way can he contribute to education or pedagogics as the science that investigates the phenomenon of educating.

2. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

The educationist has the task of fathoming, reflecting on, ordering, systematizing and describing the reality of educating (Sonnekus, 1971, p 11). To do this he needs a method to fathom the persons and their activities in an educative situation, disclose the essentials of educating and then express them in words.

Since **phenomenology** is a scientific activity directed to disclosing and verifying essentials (Landman, 1980, p 3), it is a method that

clearly is appropriate for use by an educationist. Nel (1968, p 1) indicates that from the beginning of this century it was evident that the phenomenological method is the most effective for fathoming being human. Also, Landman and Roos (1973, pp 14-15) say that it is only through a phenomenological attitude that being human can be understood in its totality. According to them, an authentic pedagogical perspective on reality is only possible if it is a phenomenological one. It is only when the educationist is prepared to clarify the **reality of educating** by taking it as his point of departure and also is ready to perceive, describe and explain that **reality** as what it essentially is that the scientific and autonomous character of pedagogics emerges as a possibility.

Phenomenology is a method for describing the phenomenon of reality studied as near as possible to what the phenomenon itself would describe if it could do so (Landman and Gous, 1969, p 25). For this reason, phenomenology is directed to the primordial appearance in reality of the object of study. For the educationist this means that he has to take as his **point of departure** the **phenomenon of educating** as this occurs in everyday reality.

A **phenomenological study** of the reality of educating means that a number of **steps** are followed (Landman and Gous, 1969, pp 31-33; Landman and Kilian, 1972, pp 83-90): After he delimits this phenomenon within the total of reality as his point of departure and area of study, he begins a search for (1) **general essential characteristics** (essences) of the phenomenon, as what always holds true anywhere and anytime. To do this, he has to (in thought) penetrate as large a variety of educative situations as possible and describe the seeming essentials that he discovers. Then he has to (2) determine whether these tentative essentials he describes are **necessarily true** (valid) for each educative situation. Finally, he also needs to (3) determine the **relationships** among the different essentials in order to clarify their educative significance.

Essentially, the phenomenological method is a number of **reductive steps**, i.e., **phenomenological, eidetic and transcendental reductions** (for a full discussion see Landman, 1980, pp 12-25) and each of them is carried out as a number of **steps of thought** to disclose the **structure** of the phenomenon of educating and describe it as such. After this, practice or educative reality can be returned to and improved in light of these scientific findings.

3. PEDAGOGICS AS SCIENCE

Educating as a human activity comes to the fore in a series of situations within which an adult presents and demonstrates to a child norms, values, codes of behavior, dispositions and skills as content so that he will learn them and eventually live in terms of them. In essence, all educative situations consist of an **adult**, a **child** (or children) and **educative contents** with the help of which the adult educates him and in terms of which he becomes adult. Thus, the **entirety of the educative event**, as it originates in the relationship between adult and child, is the **area of study of pedagogics** as a science.

By studying the educative phenomenon and its essentials phenomenologically, its complexity, multi-faceted nature and broad scope become very clear. Thus, to be able to study this phenomenon in its totality, it is necessary that it be illuminated from **different angles** (perspectives). This has led to contemporary pedagogics developing into a number of different **pedagogic disciplines** such as fundamental pedagogics, didactic pedagogics, psychopedagogics, sociopedagogics, orthopedagogics and others. Each of these part disciplines, in fact, studies the **total phenomenon** of educating but each asks its own **questions** and in doing so creates its own **perspective** on it. Thus, although different pedagogic part disciplines exist, eventually they all merge into the one science of pedagogics (Van der Stoep, 1975, p xiii). Hence, within pedagogics there is not only a search for the essentials and their relationships as disclosed by each perspective, but there also is a search for the connections among the findings of the different part disciplines themselves. In this way, the complex phenomenon of educating is studied and described in its totality by these different part perspectives.

As already mentioned, educating is a **human** activity that comes to the fore in everything that occurs between adult and child **and** that has as its aim the child's becoming adult. In light of this and in terms of the above, **pedagogics is the science that studies everything regarding educating as what appears and is actualized between adults and children and that reveals and describes what is essential to it.**

3.1 The underlying anthropology

Before the particular perspective that this work deals with is reflected on, namely psychopedagogics, first there is a brief indication of the **philosophical anthropology** or **child anthropology** underlying pedagogics and thus also psychopedagogics.

When there is a question of the essentials of educating, necessarily there also is a query about the essentials of being human.

Therefore, as a human science, pedagogics is closely involved with **philosophical anthropology** since this anthropology **queries and thinks about the essentials of being human**.

Accordingly, being human is described in its essentials and with concepts suitable for this. Philosophical anthropology views a person as more than the sum of his different characteristics and he is seen as a person in his totality (Landman and Roos, 1973, p 5).

Since psychopedagogics focuses on a person and in particular a child in an educative situation (see further on), it is clear that the primary scientific findings of psychopedagogics also are anchored in its underlying philosophical anthropology.

In the first place, the existential phenomenological philosophical anthropology that underlies pedagogics and all of its part disciplines views a person as **person-in-the-world** (Dasein) (see Engelbrecht et al., 1982, pp 10-18; Nel, 1968, pp 12-20; Nel et al., 1965, pp 102-116). Person and world are not thought of as separate from each other. It is in his world that a child comes to full development just because of his **involvement** with it. In the world, he also is **in relationship** with others (Mitsein) and it is especially through **communicating** with others that he actualizes his potentialities. The world, as it were, invites him to be involved and thus he is not **isolated** from but is in continual **dialogue** with the world.

Further, a person is viewed as **openness** which implies that he stands open to the world. He does not merely react to the things in his world but he **answers** by making choices, discovering new values, and especially by attributing **sense and meaning** to his world. He also is **intentionality** which has his **openness** as one pole and his **directedness** to his world as the other pole. On the basis of his intentionality he goes out to reality and is actively involved with it and thus comes to know more of it. To be able to direct himself to his world implies that he also is **potentiality**

(possibility). Nel (1968, p 13) says a person continually manifests himself in new forms and therefore he is **not finalized** but rather is continually **changing**. He is incomplete, unfinished and unpredictable (Sonnekus, 1973, p 5). Indeed, he enters the world as potentiality and to become adult, the totality of his potentialities has to be actualized.

To actualize his potentialities, he needs to be involved with reality. He can be involved because he lives in the world through his **body** which also is the **center** from which he lived-experiences the world around him. Thus, a child is **corporeality** since he actualizes his potentialities in and through his body. However, he is not completely controlled by or surrendered to his physical being. The real driving-power behind his bodily involvement in reality is his **personal core** (Nel, 1968, p 19). To the question **who** and **what** is a human being, it is answered that he is a **person** (Van Niekerk, 1976, p 25). In his deepest being, a person is a **spiritual** being which implies that he has a **spiritual core** out of which personal actualization takes place. Thus, the concept person points to this core of being human and, besides being corporeality, he also is **spirituality**. Without entering a penetrating discussion of this matter, it is said that person indicates that a human being is a "**someone**" and not merely an "**it**" (a thing) (Engelbrecht et al., 1982, p 16). A child is born a person but at birth his being a person is present as **potentiality** (Nel, 1968, p 19) and it is especially through his parents' intervention and his own involvement in his becoming adult that person-forming thrives. Consequently he, as person, transcends the merely physical. However, bodiliness, psychic life (see further on) and spirituality are closely intertwined. A child directs himself as a **totality** to his world and thus personal actualization implies an act that involves **all** of his potentialities. Here totality does not refer to the sum total of body, psyche and spirit but it refers to being human in the broadest sense of the word such as his **relationship** to his world. It is especially on the basis of this totality that educating is at all possible because it provides the opportunity for an **educative relationship** between adult and child.

To really understand a child in his relationship to his world, he also should be viewed as an **existential** being. Since a human is a spiritual being, has a personal or spiritual core and therefore is a person, he is existence. This implies that he is **conscious** and also **self-conscious** (Nel et al., 1965, pp 114-115). Because he is self-

conscious he can distance himself from himself and thus view and judge himself. He can step outside of himself and be with what he directs himself to because of his intentionality. In this way he also is able to determine his relationship to himself and the world (Nel, 1968, p 17). This means that **over the course of time** he builds up relationships with himself and his world. Thus, he is **historicity**. His past stays with him and everything he says, thinks or does is co-defined by the history of his world relationships (Nel et al., 1965, pp 111-112). From his historicity, a child also extends himself to what lies in the future and therefore he also is **futurity**. Because he is potentiality, he can design and actualize his future. This last point has particular implications for educating since his future is closely intertwined with his becoming adult. In this connection, the anthropological views of Langeveld take on particular significance, namely, "**a child is someone who himself wants to be someone**" and "**a child is someone who is committed to education**".

Viewed in the light of the above discussion, investigating the essentials of child-being culminates in his striving for adulthood and its achievement, neither of which should be considered apart from his own involvement in his education. Philosophical anthropology and pedagogics (and also psychopedagogics) are closely intertwined. It is clear that these sciences modify each other and are drawn together on the basis of the pedagogic question of the meaning of being human and because a person can become what he ought to be only through education (Poggeler, 1966, p 11).

3.2 Psychopedagogics: an introductory orientation

As already mentioned, pedagogics, along with its different part perspectives, has its point of departure and area of study in the phenomenon of educating that occurs within the reality of educating. Each of the part disciplines projects its own perspective on this reality. Or stated otherwise, each directs its own particular **questions** to the educative phenomenon which it then tries to answer through a phenomenological study of the reality of educating. Thus, for example, **fundamental pedagogics** asks about the **essentials of and preconditions for educating** and **didactic pedagogics** about the **essentials of teaching** in an educative situation while **orthopedagogics** is directed to **disharmonious educative events** and the correlated **restrained becoming adult** of a child. Without in any sense elaborating on

the terrain or perspective of the other part disciplines, subsequently, attention is given to the particular perspective of or questions asked by psychopedagogics.

As a part discipline of pedagogics, **everything** regarding educating falls within the domain of psychopedagogics--as is true with all of the other part disciplines. Thus, psychopedagogics, as a part discipline of pedagogics, cannot delimit its terrain outside of the reality of educating. Also, psychopedagogics roots itself in the reality of educating and its particular question asked of this part of reality is: "**How does a child become adult?**" From a phenomenological perspective the task of psychopedagogics is to reflect on everything in an educative situation that is essential for a child's becoming adult. In particular, psychopedagogics is interested in the **way** becoming adult takes place. By answering this question psychopedagogics can make statements about the **dynamics** or **movement** of a child in his becoming adult as well as about what occurs between adult and child.

Since an educative situation consists of an **adult**, a **child** and **educative contents**, the above discussion implies that psychopedagogics should direct itself to each of these **constituents** in order to determine what is essential to each and **how** they influence a child's becoming adult.

It is self-evident that the **adult** (parent) as educator plays an important role in educating and thus also in a child's personal actualization. Without educating, a child cannot become a proper adult and therefore it is a necessary supplement of personal actualization (Sonnekus and Ferreira, 1987, p 33). The question that psychopedagogics should be concerned with in this connection is not so much the essentials of educating but rather **how** educating or **accompanying** should be actualized so that a child is allowed to prosper into a full-fledged person. Thus, the domain of psychopedagogics includes ascertaining **how** an educator's **accompaniment** should be carried out so that the essentials of educating are allowed to **function**.

As one of the constituents of the educative situation, a child himself necessarily also has a share in his personal actualization. In agreement with Langeveld, Engelbrecht et al. (1982, p 10), say in this respect that a child **himself** is the most important pilot of his own growing up. Surely, it is always a child in an educative

situation who has to become adult and, from an anthropological view, he has the potentialities to gradually change from a child into an adult. However, psychopedagogics wants to know **how** he actualizes his potentialities, **how** he changes, **how** he acts, **how** he responds to the accompaniment of the adults, etc. Thus, there is a search for the **essentials of personal actualization** in order to obtain an image of how becoming adult occurs.

Phenomenologically, it is found that the child's share largely resides in the fact that, under adult accompaniment, he **gives sense and meaning** to his being educated and in this way he **actualizes** his **potentialities**. Hence, he changes or his **becoming** takes place. Consequently, **giving meaning** is at the foundation of a child's own share in his personal actualization and, therefore, it is clear that psychopedagogics is particularly interested in **how** personal actualization occurs by a child giving meaning within an educative situation.

Educating and personal actualization cannot occur if there are no **contents** in terms of which they can take place. Here reference to contents means educative contents because not all contents are suitable for bringing a child nearer to adulthood. For example, when a child learns to be dishonest it merely thwarts the educative aim. **How** the contents appear, i.e., their normative nature, also is of utmost importance for his becoming adult. When the topic of contents is raised, thoughts of subject matter contents and thus teaching in school necessarily spring up. Consequently, psychopedagogics has to ask particular questions especially about the **ways** school teaching contributes to adequate personal actualization.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that **accompanying** (educating, teaching), **contents**, **learning** and **becoming** are interconnected. Therefore, it is the task of psychopedagogics to indicate these interconnections and especially to point out **how** they influence a child's **personal actualization**.

4. PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

In the above discussion, an attempt was made to give a concise overview of the primary method used to scientifically study educating. As indicated, this approach has its point of departure in the **reality of educating** and, especially with the help of the **phenomenological method**, this reality is investigated in order to disclose and **describe** its structure and in doing so this gives rise to

a science of education or pedagogics. Pedagogics itself is further refined by a number of part disciplines of which psychopedagogics is one.

However, the question of concern here is what really is served by this scientific work called psychopedagogics? In a pragmatically established world an approach to knowing for the sake of knowing has long become passé. Therefore, it can be rightly asked if psychopedagogics can really say anything additionally new about **personal actualization, learning, and becoming adult** that has not already been said repeatedly.

As stated in the title, this is a textbook for student teachers and, therefore, it needs to be asked if psychopedagogics, as a **foundational** science of educating, really can make a contribution to teacher preparation. Can psychopedagogics show any relationships with the **applied** part disciplines of pedagogics (e.g., didactic pedagogics, subject didactics and orthopedagogics) and in doing so justify its findings for teacher preparation without overstepping its bounds?

Psychopedagogics, in itself, is not a science directed to practice. That is, for the most part it is a theoretical reflection on educating from a particular perspective. Thus, can psychopedagogics contribute over and beyond didactic pedagogics, subject didactics and orthopedagogics to improving teacher preparation? Is psychopedagogic knowledge useful for teacher preparation and, if so, in what ways?

To address the above questions, attention is given to the following matters:

- *The preconditions for personal actualization;
- *personal actualization by means of actualizing the psychic life and learning;
- *the results of personal actualization;
- *personal actualization and teaching practice;
- *personal actualization during the different periods of life.

With the above brief introductory comments, the scope of this study is indicated in broad strokes.

5. REFERENCES

- Behr, A.L. 1980 **Psychology and the school**. Second edition. Durban: Butterworths.
- De Wet, J.J., Montieth, J.L. de K., Steyn, H.S. and Venter, P.A. 1981 **Navorsingsmetodes in die opvoedkunde**. Durban: Butterworths.
- Engelbrecht, C.S., Kok, J.C. and Van Biljon, S.S. 1982 **Volwassewording**. Durban: Butterworths.
- Jacobs, L.J. and Vrey, J.D. 1982 **Selfkonsep, diagnose en terapie**. Pretoria: Academica.
- Kachelhoffer, P.M. 1983 Die verband tussen leerdoelwitte en evaluering. **UP-dosent**, vol. 4, no. 1.
- Landman, W.A. 1983 Leer gesien vanuit fundamenteel-pedagogiese perspektief. **Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Opvoedkunde**, vol. 3, no. 1. **English translation:** <http://www.georgeyonge.net/node/15>
- Landman, W.A. (Ed.). 1980 **Inleiding tot die opvoedkundige navorsingspraktyk**. Durban: Butterworths.
- Landman, W.A. and Gous, S.J. 1969 **Inleiding tot die fundamentele pedagogiek**. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel.
- Landman, W.A. and Kilian, C.J.G. 1972 **Leesboek vir die opvoedkunde student en onderwys**. Cape Town: Juta and Kie.
- Landman, W.A. and Roos, S.G. 1973 **Fundamentele pedagogiek en die opvoedingswerklikheid**. Durban: Butterworths. **English translation:** Ch. 1 <http://www.georgeyonge.net/node/113>
- Nel, B.F. 1968 **Fundamentele oriëntering in die psigologiese pedagogiek**. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers.
- Nel, B.F., Sonnekus, M.C.H. and Gerbers, J.G. 1965 **Grondslae van die psigologie**. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers.
- Poggeler, T. 1966 **De Mondige mens**. Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel.
- Sonnekus, M.C.H. 1971 Die verhoudingstrukture van die pedagogiese situasie in psigopedagogiese perspektief. Publication of the University of Pretoria, **Nuwe Reeks**, number 59.
- Sonnekus, M.C.H. (Ed.). 1973 **Psigopedagogiek: 'n inleidende oriëntering**. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers.
- Sonnekus, M.C.H. and Ferreira, G.V. 1987. **Die Psigiese lewe van die kind-in-opvoeding**. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers.
- Van der Stoep, F. 1975 Foreword to Sonnekus, M.C.H. **Onderwyser, les en kind**. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers.
- Van Niekerk, P.A. 1976 **Problematiese opvoedingsgebeure**. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers. **English translation:** <http://www.georgeyonge.net/node/132>.
- Vrey, J.D. 1979 **Die Opvoedeling in sy selfaktualisering**. Pretoria: University of South Africa.