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THE DIDACTIC FORMS AS THEORETICAL STRUCTURE FOR SUBJECT DIDACTIC CONSTRUCTIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

To do justice to the academic stature of such a person as F. van der Stoep within the framework of a brief article is not feasible. His contributions, especially to the founding and theorizing of didactic pedagogics, enjoy general recognition in academic as well as teaching circles.

Thus, the aim of this article primarily is to show the significance and value of the concept of fundamental didactic forms (Van der Stoep, 1969) for the practice of teaching from a subject didactic perspective. Even this aim is too comprehensive for a single article, but an attempt is made to show the value of the concept of didactic forms as established by Van der Stoep for subject didactic constructions (lesson designs).

In 1969, Van der Stoep described the concept fundamental didactic forms within didactic theorizing with a thorough founding of the didactic act and an essential viewing of teaching. The concept fundamental didactic forms is of great value for bringing about any subject didactic construction.

A subject didactic construction, however, should not be viewed merely as a lesson design; it is any theoretical construction that is able to realize teaching aims in practice.

Subject didactic theorizing thus branches off from a well-founded didactic pedagogic framework by particularizing it in order to make such constructions (lessons) possible for the practice of teaching. It is in this connection that the significance and value of the concept didactic form, as a theoretical structure for subject didactic constructions, is treated briefly.

The task of didactic pedagogics and subject didactics is, through a well founded theory, to contribute to reducing the tension between teaching theory and practice. In the following sections, special attention is given to the contributions of the concept didactic form, as established by Van der Stoep (1969), to designing meaningful lessons for the practice of teaching.

2. THE TENSION BETWEEN TEACHING THEORY AND PRACTICE

The tension between teaching theory and practice is as old as the reality of the phenomenon itself (Van Dyk, 1973: 2). The bridge that has to be built here is between the thoughts about teaching practice (subject didactic theory) and its actualization in the form of structured teaching and learning activities with reference to subject contents directed by teaching aims. This structuring of teaching activities can take the form of a lesson or of other typical constructions in the practice of teaching.

In reflecting theoretically on practice, Van der Stoep (1969: 6) takes as his point of departure the phenomenon teaching in the spontaneous life world of humans. He emphasizes the fact that educating is carried out by and is enlivened by teaching. From this point of departure, he establishes didactic categories and criteria for a didactic situation. He formulates the connection between categories and criteria as follows:

“While didactic categories are attuned to revealing the phenomenon as knowable and scientifically describable, it is the function of didactic criteria to provide particular yard sticks in terms of which a situation described as didactic can be recognized and, if necessary, repeated” (Van der Stoep, 1969: 11).

In order to maintain a clear perspective on the nature and scope of the didactic event, the event of categorical forming, as discussed by Klafki and also by Van der Stoep (1969: 11) as a perspective-giving beacon, is described:

“In the event of forming, reality is unlocked for a person and also a person unlocks or opens himself for reality. These two facets of the

event do not have separate identities but jointly constitute what we know as forming, also as forming in teaching”.

In this regard, Van Dyk (1973a: 29) emphasizes that categorical forming overcomes the dualism between objectivism and subjectivism. He stresses the double nature of the event of forming, namely, the unlocking of objective reality for a child through the educator’s intervention while simultaneously a child also has to open himself to reality. An extremely important implication of categorical forming as an aim within a teaching relationship is that the pupil’s becoming is elevated within the delimited learning aims (Van Dyk, 1973b: 6).

With this basic foundation of the didactic pedagogic situation, Van der Stoep (1969: 45-82) has distinguished the primary forms of expression of the learning intention and the ways of intervening by teaching.

3. FORMS OF EXPRESSION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING WITHIN THE TEACHING SITUATION

The concept “forms of expression” that Van der Stoep (1969: 56) uses to identify the teaching and learning activities in primary life situations has laid the basis for constituting the fundamental didactic forms. He emphasizes that the search for the forms of expression of the pupil’s learning intention and the adult’s teaching intention must primarily be sought in how each actualizes certain activities.

The following forms of expression of the learning intention are distinguished by Van der Stoep (1969: 56): observing, playing, talking, imitating, fantasizing, working and repeating. In addition, he has identified certain activities of the adult as forms of expression of their teaching interventions with a child. The following are such activities: pointing out, showing how, prompting, demonstrating by exemplifying, narrating, giving assignments (instructions) and spontaneously repeating.

What is conspicuously missing in this grounding is that Van der Stoep does not explicitly elucidate the relationship between the

concept “form” (in this case called ‘form of expression’) and activity. He implicitly assumes that there is a close connection between teaching and learning activities and the constitution of a particular form of expression of teaching and learning. The fact that in the repetition of particular actions, a pattern of activity is identified that then is called a form, is not explicitly stated. Indeed, he identifies variations of activities within a particular form of expression, e.g., the variations of prompting mentioned are:

- * answering questions;
- * giving explanations;
- * differentiating objects;
- * expressing appreciation;
- * explaining matters

Further, he has identified five factors that primarily influence the didactic forms (Van der Stoep, 1969: 95): language, skills, social discipline, expression and intentionality.

However, the basic classification of the fundamental didactic forms is founded in the forms of expression of spontaneous teaching and learning activities the occur between an adult and a child. On this basis, four basic fundamental forms are distinguished.

3.1 Fundamental didactic forms

3.1.1 Play as a form of living with the following activities: showing how, dramatizing, free playing, restricted playing, individual playing, group playing.

3.1.2 Conversation as a form of living whenever language is implemented. Some activities are narrating, naming, questioning, answering requests, listening.

3.1.3 Example as a form of living which can involve, e.g., using real examples, typical cases, representations.

3.1.4 By giving assignments the adult has the responsibility to actualize specific teaching aims.

The close connection among the fundamental didactic forms and methodology also is expounded by him. Van der Stoep emphasizes this connection as follows:

“The fundamental forms do not have to do with the fact that teaching is given but rather how teaching acquires form in the practice of living. For this reason thoughts about the fundamental forms refer directly to “method” (way) and build the bridge between the problematic of what “didaskhein” really is, and how this “didaskhein” creates a new life reality to which each person acts in terms of an appeal from reality”.

By a thorough analysis the fundamental didactic forms (forms of living) and the correlated teaching methods provide a basis for purposeful and meaningful teaching. In collaboration with other co-workers such as Van Dyk, Louw and Swart (1973), this connection is extended to the concept lesson form which is now be briefly considered.

3.2 LESSON FORM AS BASIS FOR DESIGNING A LESSON

Various persons have made outstanding contributions to the concept “lesson form” as a basis for refining and describing a lesson design in its different variations. In this connection, especially Van Dyk (1973, 1977) in collaboration with Van der Stoep has contributed greatly to describing this concept regarding its variations and possibilities of application to the practice of teaching.

However, the subject didactician has to be able to design a teaching practice from an accountable theory. He needs to be able to design a meaningful lesson form for a particular situation that, practically speaking, implies the following:

(1) Variations of teaching activities need to be ordered to give rise to a particular “pattern” or form that most meaningfully will unlock the concept (content) for the pupil. This “pattern” or form of teaching is the joint result of a great many possible variations of teaching activities based on:

* Conversation, play, example, assignment

- * Inductively inferring a rule
- * Deductively elucidating a rule
- * Ordering subject contents and teaching activities
- * Purposefully following particular methods

(2) Variations of learning activities have to be ordered to give rise to a particular “pattern” or form by which the pupils can acquire a cognitive grasp of reality in the most meaningful way. This “pattern” or form of learning is the joint result of a great many possible variations of learning based on the following:

- * Sensing with looking, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting as variations, and it has a strong affective foundation.
- * Perceiving with seeing, listening, feeling, sniffing and savoring as variations and it has a strong cognitive foundation.
- * Thinking with, e.g., applying, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, logical reasoning, induction and deduction as variations. Problem solving can be used here as a criterion.
- * Remembering with spontaneous and structured repeating, reconsidering, practicing, saying again, doing again, etc. as variations.

These variations of learning also are purposefully and spontaneously repeated and in the repetition a form of learning is observable by which learning effects are attained.

From the above it is clear that forms of teaching and learning can be recognized in teaching practice because specific activities (teaching and learning) are repeated giving rise to the form of teaching (teaching and learning forms). The great variety of possible modes (nuances) of teaching and learning necessarily place the concepts of didactic modality and lesson modality in the foreground.

3.3 ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPT LESSON MODALITY

In a lecture before the Work Community for the Advancement of Pedagogy as a Science, Van Dyk (1973c) for the first time clearly formulated the concept didactic modality within a didactic pedagogic perspective. In his founding of the concept, Van Dyk emphasizes that the total structure of the modality revolves around concepts such as dynamics, movement, acting, activities and doing. The central discussion and founding of the concept revolves around four general principles, i.e., activity, individualization, socialization and tempo differentiation.

The actualization of specific variations of teaching and learning within a particular teaching relationship are the basis for creating a lesson modality. Swart (1977) differentiates three basic relationships, i.e., language dialoguing, seeking and demonstrating [that correspond to conversation, play and example, three of the fundamental didactic forms]. Basson (1978: 85), within this classification of relationships, has described for teaching practice variations of teaching and learning. By actualizing these variations of teaching and learning in particular ways, the following classification of activities within a teaching relationship is made (Basson, 1983: 36):

- * Accompanied (guided) activity
- * Joint activity
- * Self activity

In summary, a lesson modality can be described as the actualization of a teaching relationship by correlated teaching and learning activities, supported by teaching media, carried out in order to actualize teaching aims. However, in order to design a lesson (subject didactic construction), the concept lesson modality has to be further operationalized into teaching and learning modalities:

- * Learning modality: This is the execution of a particular learning activity or variation of learning supported by a learning aid by which learning aims are achieved.
- * Teaching modality: This is the execution of a particular

teaching activity or variation of teaching supported by a teaching aid by which teaching aims are achieved.

Executing the correlated teaching and learning activities within a lesson always has to be purposefully done within a particular course (of the lesson). Aims of the course of a lesson that, as teaching aims, can be striven for by the teacher within the course of a lesson contribute to establishing a final lesson form. In this connection, in the next section attention is given to the aims of the course of a lesson.

3.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE AIMS OF THE COURSE OF A LESSON TO THE DIDACTIC FORM

A particular pattern of teaching aims that can be striven for by the teacher during the course of teaching was first formally described by Oosthuizen (1971: 28-48). He described these aims of the course of a lesson within the unique nature of the subject content of mathematics. These aims of the course of a lesson that direct the teaching activity of the teacher are fully described in connection with subject didactics by Van Dyk (1977: 182) with variations of activities that need to be actualized in order to attain the aims.

During the course of a lesson, aims such as the following are actualized:

- * pupil's foreknowledge;
- * experiencing a problem by the pupil;
- * exposing and controlling the new concepts;
- * functionalizing the pupil's insights; and
- * evaluating the pupil's insights

This can be altered by following a particular pattern, not necessarily in the same sequence, in order to strive for the greatest teaching and correlated learning effect.

On the basis of the order in which the aims of the course of the lesson are actualized, a "pattern" or form can be recognized. This form that becomes visible on the basis of actualizing these aims contributes to the whole of the didactic form of the lesson.

The teacher (subject didactician) in designing his lesson needs to carefully plan the aims of the course of the lesson. The correct choice of teaching activities that actualize particular learning activities has to be actualized for each aim of the course of the lesson. However, for a comprehensive overview of all of the aspects that separately and jointly contribute to the didactic form, a theoretical model is created in the following section.

4. A MODEL TO ILLUSTRATE THE DIDACTIC FORM AS A THEORETICAL STRUCTURE

This model is a theoretical construction of teaching activities in a teaching relationship that can be classified and recognized as a form (patterns of activity). These didactic forms are expressed in words by didacticians and subject didacticians that show a particular level of abstraction. Van der Stoep has eminently differentiated among creative expressions in language, fundamental form, principle, category and methods as theoretical structures for constructing a didactic and subject didactic theory.

It is especially the subject didactician's task to identify and take stock, through analysis, of the modalities of teaching and learning. This describing of the variations of teaching and learning in connection with the nature of the subject are also linguistically formulated but really have to be practical in nature. The following theoretical model organizes concepts of didacticians and subject didacticians in their interrelatedness. The aim of the model is to demonstrate especially the connections among lesson content, the course of the lesson, lesson modality and lesson form as a theoretical structure in connection with variations in teaching and learning.

SOME EXPLANATORY REMARKS ABOUT THE MODEL*

* Reality as first experience is ordered into subject areas.

* The graphic representation of the model is not presented. It is a complex figure. G. Y.

- * This ordering into subject areas within a school curriculum must make reality accessible for pupils and elevate the quality of their command of it.
- * Subject didacticians need to identify and take stock of teaching and learning modalities in the practice of teaching. These variations must be scientifically classified and described so that a meaningful teaching practice can be planned and actualized.
- * Subject didacticians have to do research regarding the modes of learning and teaching with reference to themes, concepts, laws, rules and principles in a particular subject area. In the model this aspect is demonstrated by the variations of teaching and learning that are delimited by the didactic modality as a theoretical structure. Necessarily, only a few variations are mentioned in the model.
- * This research can be directed in particular to identifying learning approaches and strategies in subject teaching. Variations in learning of, e.g., deep and superficial learners can be analyzed and classified with the aim of designing an effective lesson for each of them.
- * The model clearly shows that the didactic form (fundamental forms, methods, principles) constitutes a more general or theoretical classification in the model. Thus, structurally it constitutes the theoretical structure.
- * The connection among the didactic form and theoretical structure and variations of teaching and learning must be purposefully investigated by subject didacticians. Understanding and purposeful interpretation of these connections have to contribute to improving practice.
- * While designing a lesson, things are particularized by making choices between variations in teaching and learning that need to be actualized to attain learning aims. A teaching practice is brought into motion primarily on the basis of these activities and in this way the form of the

lesson becomes visible. The basis for a meaningful lesson form is to effectively unlock subject contents for the pupils.

5. References

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