

CHAPTER V

ACTUALIZING CATEGORICAL FORMING AND REDUCING THE LEARNING CONTENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

A teacher who has something to teach is immediately confronted with a problem, namely, "How do I bring this (required) content within the child's horizon of questions?" How do I present this content so it will become a question, a problem that he wants to answer or solve? (H. Roth in Klafki, 1964, p 435). The success of teaching is largely determined by how clearly the **content** is presented to the **pupil** as a question or problem. To be able to do this, the teacher needs to understand thoroughly where the child "is", i.e., what he really knows, what his style of learning is and what regarding a particular topic will (or will not) interest him.

2. REDUCING THE CONTENT TO ITS ELEMENTALS

In his analysis of the particular content to be taught, the expert teacher is aware of those aspects of the content that will best represent the whole. He has to reduce this content to a level that, in its essentials, is understandable to a child. This unambiguous (essential) form in which the content is presented is called an **elemental**, and in didactic pedagogics, the teacher's activity is described as reducing the content to the elemental (to its essentials). It is around this simplified content that the problematic question is woven during the course of the lesson.

3. ESTABLISHING A QUESTIONING ATTITUDE

If the elemental (content made accessible) first is determined, the unlocking (presenting) activity can be launched by continuing to build on the questioning attitude awakened in the child. The questioning attitude arises in terms of content that has caught his interest. Thus, there is a fusion of the objective content and the

subject or person. This simultaneous or double unlocking is the real beginning of the child's forming.

The content offered as an elemental awakens the child's interest and motivates him to want to know more about the whole matter. To be involved in the content is to be involved in reality. Sufficient interest awakens this questioning attitude and a resulting willingness by the child to nullify existing ideas that previously were considered obvious or even commonplace to him. As for other opportunities, the unexpected also is responsible for arousing a questioning attitude. Anything about which the child begins to wonder arouses his curiosity and spurs him on to want to know more.

In whatever ways a questioning attitude arises, the fact remains that a really problematic question, to a greater or lesser degree, always gives rise to tension in the child. The realization that he does not know makes him feel insecure for a moment but he is ready to search for an answer--although this also requires effort. This is the moment the teacher watches for with great patience. Van der Merwe (M. Ed. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1977) views this moment in the course of a lesson as a **fruitful moment**; this is in contrast to Copei and Klafki who assert that the questioning attitude **emanates** from a fruitful moment. Be that as it may, the teacher tries to be prepared so he can begin the real activities of unlocking the content when this moment arises.

4. THE UNLOCKING ACTIVITIES

The unlocking occurs in terms of objectified content (content made object). The content that is raised in the course of a lesson is not the matter itself but a representation, reproduction, example or exemplar of it. For example, the Leaning Tower of Pisa is a concrete reality located in Pisa, Italy. However, if a lesson is to be given about the Leaning Tower, the explication occurs in accordance with a representation, a print, a recording, etc.

A particular characteristic of the tower comes to the fore, namely, that this tower is leaning and follows certain natural laws (gravitational pull) in an exciting, provocative way. In this case, the elemental is in the particular aspect of this tower (that leans) in contrast to other towers that are upright (the general). When the general and the particular are present in the same case, didactically this is called a representative case. In the case of the Leaning Tower,

the elemental is in the particular and the general (all structures have to be perpendicular) falls outside of it (Glogauer, 1967, p 135).

The unlocking activities are attuned either to a sudden moment of clear insight or to the child gradually finding an answer(s) to his problematic question(s). Copei (1950, p 115) calls this moment when insight breaks through a fruitful moment. Van der Merwe refers to it as the "aha-experience". Many people place the two poles of the unlocking activities one after the other (namely, the fruitful beginning and the fruitful implementing of these activities). As a result, they do not allow that the way to clear insights also requires challenging and difficult input from both the child and the teacher (Klafki, 1964, p 416).

When the insights dawn on the child, it is the first time he really has discovered, understood and perceived the elemental. The content that is made as easy and as accessible as possible for the learner now is understood by him.

5. THE ELEMENTALS AND THE FUNDAMENTALS

By mastering the contents (or the elementals) the child acquires new insights. These new insights are called fundamentals. In fact, the perception of the bare elemental in all of its consequences brings about the beginning of the fundamental.

The child has become enriched with new insights. He understands something which, moments before, he had not. We say that this event is **formative** because what he has newly acquired "forms" or becomes part of his entire being as a person. If it is a comparison that he can make, in the future he also can make other comparisons. For example, if the insight is that oppressing people can lead to revolution, from then on, he can think about the causes and effects of oppressing people. So also, the important principle of $1 + 1 = 2$ is the foundation on which the whole system of $n + 1$ later is based.

The child has mastered a new insight because he has not concentrated merely on its content or personal aspects but rather he has personally encountered the matter itself in a unique, individual way. These results are described as **categorical forming**. Essentially, the lesson structure has to be attuned to bringing about the simultaneous opening up of the matter and of the

person (the so-called double unlocking) to achieve the desired result, namely, forming.

Finally, in the lesson structure, opportunities have to be provided for the further application of the fundamentals (the formative insights). This means that the learner has to use these acquired insights by applying them to all sorts of circumstances. Therefore, in the lesson structure, the child uses these fundamental insights to show that under certain circumstances he can provide particular answers. This is the end phase that is known as evaluation and that really is a test of the success of categorical forming.

6. REFERENCES

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