

A. THE UNITY OF PEDAGOGICS: DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVE*

F. van der Stoep

In considering a matter such as the unity of pedagogics it is reasonable to ask if one is not involved with the obvious. Understandably, the notion of "obvious" is strange to the world of science because science is attuned precisely to expressing reality, however evident it might be. Therefore, if one substitutes the concept "obvious" with "conspicuously evident" one still faces the problem that even the "conspicuously evident" does not necessarily manifest itself in thought because, for example, thinking implies an amplification of a particular phenomenon or experience, as such. In such a case, should the thinking as well as the phenomenon or experience be exceeded, this implies that the word (theory) has an "excessive" character that, in its turn, leads one to notice that fundamental concepts such as "phenomenon" and "experience", in relation to the word or science, are not concepts with the power of conveying identical meaning. Therefore, the unity of which there is talk in evident reality is not necessarily reflected in the science; hence, this particular area of study deserves consideration. I am the first to admit that these introductory remarks regarding the relation between evidence and science are a gross over-simplification, but they open a way for further reflection--especially from a particular perspective on the subject area with the aim of acknowledging the practice of science implied in this evening's theme.

Beyond any doubt, pedagogics is an experiential science because its practice and effect is evident in experience, i.e., in the involvement of persons in an evident reality. A science (in this case pedagogics) exceeds experience itself in that it formulates what is essential to it, it describes a practice in its essentials and establishes criteria in terms of which such a practice can or should be constituted. The postulates of pedagogics cannot be anything other than the formulation of evidence given in reality, while the explication mentioned in science, as noted above, is situation-exceeding with far-reaching consequences for pedagogic practice. To give but one example: it is on this basis that an institution such as a school is

* *South African Journal of Pedagogy* (1979) Vol. 13, No. 1, 159-164.

possible. The implication of this for practicing a sub-discipline of pedagogics such as didactics not only is far-reaching but is literally at the root of didactic structures in so far as there is mention of pedagogical study. As we know, reality is the first source of knowledge and is diverse or multi-formed, which immediately creates the possibility of putting aside formulating the unity that is evident in it. Therefore, the unity of a science, e.g., that of educating, is not obvious. This again leads one to the realization that evidence from reality is not necessarily reflected in the explanations or descriptions of it. Thus, for example, a science, as a logical construction, should not simply claim a continued progress or a continuity of evidence such as what it has disclosed in the phenomenon itself.

In addition, the history of pedagogical thought provides sufficient proof for the validity of the above discussion that even makes it possible to assert categorically that this history of the pedagogical indeed does not reflect the unity of its practice.

I have written previously¹ that it is important to keep in mind that in its origin, the terrain of the pedagogic is a unity. The reason is that there is only one educating, only one educative reality and, therefore, there can be only one science of educating. If this sounds *a prioristic*, it has to be epistemologically unraveled on the basis of the immediate evidence from the phenomenon as it becomes known within the effects of one's actions. However, this is a separate problem that I leave at that. Also, I have already written that educating is actualized in teaching and that the meaning of teaching primarily is in educating.² With this, a particular perspective on the reality of educating is discernible, namely, that of teaching. The pronouncement made here is fundamental in nature, particularly regarding the unity of this view of teaching in relation to that of educating. Any explication of the unity of the pedagogical that does not take this into consideration does not account for the fact that a didactic perspective on the matter creates good possibilities for promoting or disturbing the unity of the pedagogical.

The most important deduction to be made from this is that teaching is the area or terrain for realizing the structures of the other part disciplines [of pedagogics] and this fact has to be reflected in any

¹ Die Stand van die Pedagogiekstudie in die moderne tyd (Pedagogiekstudies No. 69).

² Didaktiese Grondvorme.

authentic didactic explanation. In addition, the essentials of teaching have to be brought into balance with respect to educating, and the teacher is confronted with the imperative to preserve this unity in his pedagogic work. In other words, the practical application of all pedagogical essentials and structures has to be actualized in didactic practice. Outside of this perspective, teaching, as such, is hypostatized and, therefore, disconnected from its educative origin. This is a matter to be returned to later. Examples of the actualization of educating in a teaching situation are abundant and the work of (to mention only a few) Professors Landman, Sonnekus, Van Zyl and Botha are well known. Consider the matters of fundamental pedagogical structures in the course of classroom practice, the relation of fundamental pedagogical essences and the essentials of the lesson structure, the essentials of the lesson structure and the essentials of learning, etc.

The only conclusion one can reach in this regard is that didactic pedagogics has to be considered along the entire range of findings of the other disciplines to be able to keep the practice to which one is directed in clear focus. However, this is not all. The recent history of teacher preparation clearly shows previously not mentioned nuances that flow from these relations and that have entered the field of vision. Disciplines such as fundamental pedagogics, psychopedagogics, sociopedagogics and comparative pedagogics still very recently are viewed as nothing more than of academic importance in teacher preparation. Although relatively recent, this matter has begun to change radically in the sense that these disciplines, in convincing ways and to an increasing degree, have demonstrated their claims by their effective implementation in teacher preparation programs. The importance of this observation is that this trend implies a movement that has not remained bogged down in one or another scientific claim but that has brought about an actual and demonstrable infusion into the training programs themselves. It is doubtful if there is anywhere more solid and irrefutable evidence for the unity of the pedagogical than precisely this.

In the course of events, even in the past few decades, in its nuances and emphases, didactic pedagogics has manifested the interesting tendency to focus on particular aspects. Even in the recent literature, which in general and in particular is of exceptional worth, one notices the same tendency. On the model of the general procedures of specialization, didactic pedagogics along the whole

line has shown this deficiency by, e.g., its focus on matters such as aims, formative theory, curriculum research, teaching techniques, learning psychology techniques and models, to mention but a few of the most important. It is only logical that by researching and formulating these important points of focus the didactic findings increasingly have lost their educative origins and with this the sense and integration of its practice by a general and comprehensive insight into educating. It is equally understandable that the direct effect of this only can be that the unity of didactic research with the pedagogical will be lost. It also is significant that many didacticians have reached back to different related or relevant areas of science such as psychology, cybernetics, rhetoric, cultural philosophy and even ethnography in order to anchor the meaning of their research and the nature of their practice. Perhaps it is meaningful to illustrate this matter in a two-fold manner. If didactic pedagogics is reduced to or conceptualized as a theory that is concerned only with teaching, this forces research to illuminate the teaching intention and activity, as such, and the entire theory is changed into a so-called teaching method with allocated effective teaching activities for the teacher with the aim of regulating practice following particular didactic-canonized principles. This matter ultimately results in a watered down set of assignments that one finds difficult to label as anything other than a set of good pointers for practice. On the other hand, if one reduces the didactic to a theory of learning, little else comes into focus than findings regarding learning intentions and spontaneity that really leads to accomplishing something that one just as well might call a psychodidactics. The way such an approach disturbs the unity of pedagogics speaks for itself if one merely takes into account the matter of aims.

The entire matter of the unity of didactics as a pedagogical particularity is very clear when one views it from the angle of what today generally is known as didactic analysis. The benefit of this, in my opinion, is in the fact that from the construction (i.e., from the thought construction and plan/design of teaching) a regressive perspective is acquired on the teaching practice as it functions secondarily. It also is all the more clear from the literature that those who involve themselves in didactic analysis with the aim of establishing adequate models and other forms of constructions increasingly are compelled to postulate definitive criteria in terms of which their views of the matter called "pedagogical work" have to be evaluated. The total confusion that exists in the didactic terrain

in this regard suddenly becomes clear in terms of the first, and according to my meaning, most authentic criterion, namely, terminological clarity. In other words, it is very clear that in one way or another all didactic theories result in the construction of a lesson structure or aspects of a lesson structure. The concretization that by implication is taken up in the theoretical explanation, however, is an indication that its formulation is not at all in agreement with what is meant by functional. Authentic research itself is infected with this, at least with respect to terminological confusion such that specialization, focus and one-sided nuances are brought to the fore such that the matter of the pedagogical is distorted to such an extent that it no longer is recognizable, as such. A most persuasive example of this perhaps is the so-called social science didactics that today in various respects constitutes the warp and woof of Western European didactic thought. The most important outgrowth and deficiency noted from this is that the syntheses that didactic pedagogics is forced to make prevent it from exercising its practical responsibility, which has a disturbing effect on all of the other aspects that serve as focal points of consideration in this regard, among which are the curriculum, lesson planning, teacher preparation, the school as a social institution and certainly, above all, the pedagogical as a science.

CHAIRMAN: The idea of a LIVED-EXPERIENCE OF UNITY by pedagogicians is of particular importance. This leads to the idea that:

1. methodology can create a bridge between the experience of evidence (real essentials) and making them logical in order to constitute the pedagogic;
2. unity can be created in a particular perspective. This means that each practice of a pedagogical perspective (discipline) has to try to create a unity in the pedagogical with its particular perspective on the reality of educating as its center;
3. unity can be actualized in practice.