

# MODERN PEDAGOGICS AS A FORM OF SCIENCE\*

W. A. Landman

## (a) Introduction

The earliest interpersonal relationship has its real expression in the primordial function of being a person, namely, educating.

Educating is an interpersonal event. It is an activity where one person (an adult) places himself in a particular relationship with another person (a not-yet adult). This activity that is actualized in the practice of educating can be reflected on. Thinking about educating is in contrast to the activity of educating itself. In other words, theory and practice are differentiated. Thus, Education or Pedagogics is both a theoretical and a practical discipline; however, theory and practice are not isolated from each other. Practice is what the theory studies and the theory has practical consequences. Pedagogic theory is verified by the everyday practice of educating and is the result of observing and reflecting on that practice. A theory divorced from practice cannot exercise a meaningful influence on the latter. This does not mean that theory must and can provide a recipe for practice, but rather theory ought to give an indication of pedagogically acceptable guidelines for practice and a clarification of what this practice essentially is.

## (b) A more specific description

The practice of educating exists in a multiplicity of educative situations and is described more specifically as the place where educating appears. In other words, it is the place where the phenomenon of educating itself is observable.

The area studied by Pedagogics, then, is the phenomenon of educating itself as it arises in educative situations. The phenomenon of educating is a facet of life itself. The nature and structure of this phenomenon, as a particular life-reality of the human lifeworld, is systematically analyzed and thoughtfully-reflectively described by Theoretical Pedagogics (i.e., Fundamental

---

\* **South African Journal of Pedagogy** (1967), 1: 1, 2-10. English translation available at: <http://www.landmanwa.co.za/funpedsc.htm>

Pedagogics). Fathoming and understanding the phenomenon of educating, which leads to theory forming, requires taking the phenomenon itself as the point of departure as it takes shape in situations of educating. Fundamental Pedagogics, as the core of Pedagogics, the scientific study of educating is a totality of knowledge resulting from a description of the essences of the educative relationships that appear in real educative situations. In other words, Fundamental Pedagogics or Pedagogics or a theory of the situation of educating is the result of analyzing and reflecting on the practice of educating.

The primary task of a theory of educating, as a theory of the activity of educating, is to learn to know this phenomenon that is found only among persons and is one of the most primordial expressions of being human. The phenomenon of educating, in all of its components and moments, its deeper connections and facets, has to be brought to light so the pedagogue can determine what is pedagogically acceptable and what is not. This means that Fundamental Pedagogics, which is the result of reflecting on the situation of educating, has possibilities of application in practice. When pedagogues, as scientists or students of Pedagogics, as persons with knowledge of the structure of the educative situation become involved with practice, they are able to address the situation in terms of their investigation of the phenomenon of educating and to apply what has been indicated as pedagogically allowable and necessary. In other words, they make a personal decision to use that which reflective thinking has revealed during their analyses of the situation. Knowledge that rests on an analysis of the situation itself acquires practical significance<sup>(3: 148)</sup>. By "practical" is meant a science that has its origin in a situation of action and that studies phenomena found in practice. The deeper meaning of "practical", however, is that here a phenomenon is studied that is connected with the practical nature of being human. This means that we humans are the only beings who can bring about particular changes in conscious ways. In other words, we can consciously and purposefully intervene and change the particular ins and outs of a matter to bring about a desired result. "To make changes" means that there have to be acts<sup>(8: 54 et seq.)</sup> and such actions take place in real educative situations.

Every act of educating furthers a child's becoming a person or it doesn't. The former is valued and the latter is not. Thus, here there is valuation, that is, a particular value preference because the one

outcome is preferred over the other. Pedagogics, therefore, is involved with phenomena by which there always has to be action in terms of relative preferences of values. These activities occur in educative situations and, therefore, it can be expected that the Fundamental Pedagogue, in his reflections on the structure of educative activities will involve himself with viewing this structure.

**(c) The structure of the educative situation:**

From the above, it is sufficient to view Pedagogics as the science of the educative situation. In order to acquire a better insight into the structure of this science it is necessary to analyze more closely the structure of the situation of educating. There where a person really is present and in authentic communication and involvement with things and persons around him, he creates particular relationships with things and persons, and he also is in a position to act with respect to them. Such particulars to be dealt with are called situations and are his entire [momentary] personal world. A person also sustains these situations because he has to meaningfully actualize them. This means he is responsible for his situations and his life history. He continually chooses and decides, and his experiencing and behaving, in connection with his situations, as well as his actions, are motivated by particular meanings that in his actions are confirmed as values<sup>(8: 247-253)</sup>.

The situation of educating (pedagogic situation) is one in which a not-yet adult enters into real communication with a world in which persons, as educators, enter into educative relationships and out of which educative activities flow. These activities occur with the aim of promoting a child's course of and involvement with life reality. It is obvious that here a particular educator and educand involvement is found; it is a relationship between two persons where the person of the educator represents a selection from the world as this is and ought to be. The educative acts of the educator exist so the educand can be referred through him to this world with its demands of propriety, and demands to perform tasks and accept responsibility. In this encounter there is an appeal to a child: the mature, responsible, morally independent and authoritative educator calls the not-yet mature, not-yet responsible, morally dependent, authority-seeking child to adulthood<sup>4: 29, 34, 42; 11: 82-83)</sup>.

In this situation of educating, the educator has to accept the educand as a support seeking being, as a "not-yet", and the latter

has to accept the support offered him by the educator who is co-responsible for the unfolding of the positive human potentialities of the educand who is becoming adult. Thus, the educand has to be willing to be supported in order to bring about an authentic encounter within which he is able to become the person that he ought to be. The encounter within which educative influencing occurs always points to the future and appeals to the not-yet adult to participate in and identify with what the adult makes known, namely, the approval and acceptance of the demand-making character of life<sup>(9: 1-2)</sup>.

Acceptance of support by the educand presupposes that his relationship of encounter with the educator in the educative situation is a **trusting relationship**. Educating requires a sphere of trust in which a child is accepted by an educator as a person and in which his dignity is respected. This implies an acceptance of a child as he is as well as an acceptance of what he will and must become<sup>(10: 21-51)</sup>. The relationship of trust makes two other relationships possible and, in turn, is made possible by them, namely, the relationships of understanding and authority.

The acceptance of a child by an educator requires a being-with that presupposes a **relationship of understanding**. This means the educator has to have knowledge of the essence of child-being and a child's destination (adulthood)<sup>(1: 31)</sup>. To provide appropriate support it is necessary that the educator know the child. He can obtain this knowledge through a study of child [philosophical] anthropology in order to understand him as a person, i.e., understand his child-ness **independent** of his aims with him<sup>(5: 3)</sup>. Further, he must study **Psychopedagogics** in order to understand what is meant when mention is made of the lived-experiencing, willing, thinking, becoming child, etc. Through such study he acquires insight into the structure of a child's lifeworld, the role educating plays in the development of a child, essential activities, discoveries and attributions of meaning by a child in his being on the way to adulthood, etc. Through the study of **Didactic Pedagogics** he encounters the learning child, and clarified for him are the meaning and place of educative and formative tasks of the school, etc. The relationship of understanding between educator and educand can be strengthened further by his study of **Historical Pedagogics** by which he acquires an idea of the image of the child and educative aims through the centuries and by which he can evaluate the contemporary child against this background. A further

strengthening of the relationship of understanding can be brought about if the educator acquires knowledge of social-pedagogic criteria of adulthood--knowledge which he gets by studying **Sociopedagogics**. The nature of the relationship of understanding with physically handicapped or behaviorally disturbed children is enlightened by **Orthopedagogics**, and by studying the methods of theory forming in **Pedagogic Research** he himself can contribute to pedagogic thought by doing research, e.g., in connection with this relationship of understanding.

The encounter between educator and educand, which is a trusting and understanding one, further demands a **relationship of authority** because a child has a yearning for authority and sympathetic, authoritative guidance. Always, where there are two persons dealing with each other and one is in need of support while the other is in a position to provide it, a relationship of authority is demanded. Because of his not-yet being adult, authority is of fundamental significance for the educand: the obligation for obedience has a central place in his moral life<sup>(3: Ch 2)</sup>. Only when the educator can sympathetically, authoritatively guide can he awaken trust in an educand. On the other hand, he will not be able to exercise authoritative guidance if he does not understand and accept the educand in his essence and destination (adulthood).

Langeveld explains that educating to moral independence is educating to an authentic acknowledgment of authority. This acknowledgment includes obedience to the obligation of personal responsibility to the extent that this is possible for the child on the basis of his abilities, age, milieu, schooling, etc.<sup>(3: Ch 2)</sup>. In this connection, **Psychopedagogics** sheds light on the striving life of a child-in-education and his relation to morality, volitional life and its connections with dispositions, authority figures in a child's experiential world, etc. **Didactic Pedagogics**, in this connection, is involved with matters such as ordering contents, the teaching situation as a means of educating, the learning-conscience of a child, etc. **Sociopedagogics**, in this connection, emphasizes matters such as the pedagogic meaning of conflict, the personal responsibility of the educators, etc. **Orthopedagogics**, as far as this relationship of authority is concerned, reflects on such matters as pedagogic neglect<sup>(See 7)</sup>.

The immediate aim of the above is not to give an introductory list with which the different disciplines of Pedagogics concern

themselves, but rather to show that Fundamental Pedagogics primarily is concerned with forming a theory regarding the structure of educating itself and that the pedagogic disciplines (Psychopedagogics, Didactic Pedagogics, Sociopedagogics, Historical Pedagogics, Orthopedagogics, etc.) further clarify delimited aspects of this structure. The disciplines of Pedagogics all are found to be interwoven in a situation of educating. This means that these disciplines continually interact with each other. The nature of this interaction cannot be described in this article but to illustrate it a few themes are mentioned from which it can be seen that such interactions will and must occur: the didactician and his knowledge of a child's family life; child psychology in didactics; preconditions that developmental psychology has to fulfill to be pedagogically acceptable; group life (Sociopedagogics) in puberty (Psychopedagogics); the structure of the learning situation (Didactic Pedagogics), transfer and motivation (Psychopedagogics); etc.

#### **(d) The course of the educative event**

In the above analysis of the structure of a situation of educating it was emphasized that the educative involvement between educator and educand is not merely a pure being-with but that it involves the three fundamental relationships of trust, understanding and authority. Also, it was indicated how the structure of Pedagogics as a scientific system is connected with them. The scientific structure of Pedagogics now can be illuminated further by reviewing how educating, made possible by these three fundamental relationships, proceeds.

Everywhere an adult and a child are with each other in communication or involvement, there is a pre-formed field (an opportunity) for a situation of educating<sup>(3: 34)</sup>. In other words, they communicate in a situation of association within which no deeds of educating yet occur but which is a beginning or precondition for educating. However, a general controlling and direction-giving influencing of a child already occurs here by virtue of the fact that everywhere an adult and a not-yet adult are in communication, a relationship of authority is included and, thus, a situation of educating is constituted<sup>(7: 14)</sup>. The real deed of educating, however, is possible only in a more intimate involvement called an encounter. Such an encounter creates a state of mind, a possibility, an atmosphere for the beginning moment of educating; e.g., an opportunity arises in which the educator can help a child

distinguish between good and evil. The situation of encounter creates the atmosphere and opportunity for real educative influencing and/or activities to proceed. In this sense educating is not an uninterrupted event but it occurs at certain times within an encounter.

That the event of educating proceeds as described above is established by viewing and reflecting on the phenomenon of educating as it arises in real situations. This thinking/reflecting is the task of Fundamental Pedagogics that uses the phenomenological method for this. This means that to penetrate and understand the phenomenon of educating there is no more appropriate point of departure than the phenomenon of educating itself since its task is grounded in the fundamental fact that universally a human being educates, is educated, commits<sup>(3:41)</sup> himself to educating and lends himself to it<sup>(8: 3)</sup>. The sub-disciplines of Pedagogics also primarily use the phenomenological method, supplemented by other approaches, to further bring particular facets of the event of educating to light. To illustrate this fact further and once again to show how the structure of modern Pedagogics appears in that respect, the following are presented:

Modern Fundamental Pedagogics has arrived at the following axioms, among others, through its reflective work:

- (i) Educating is possible because a child is not born as an adult but as a not-yet adult who can not-yet give expression to the idea of human adulthood;
- (ii) Being-human begins with being a child and his not-yet adulthood confirms the possibility of educating as a human phenomenon: he must be educated gradually to become aware of the demands of human adulthood and gradually to give expression to them;
- (iii) The dependence of a child, as not-yet adult, and the responsibility of an educator, as adult, is emphasized. The pedagogic exists only as a **possibility** where seeking and giving support are fulfilled;
- (iv) The child is possibility-in-becoming and, therefore, the pedagogic is possible. As he becomes so will his communication with his meaningful world and himself continually be discovered and interpreted differently; he is involved in formulating his

dialogue with the world while it continually changes. This modification of dialogue, with pedagogic support, is a long road<sup>(11: Ch 5)</sup>.

(v) One of the fundamental facts regarding the **possibility** of educating is in the essence of the educand who wants-to-be-someone himself (Langeveld) on the basis of his ought to be someone (Oberholzer). Ultimately, it is the educand who, in his yearning for adulthood, has to make choices and to be co-responsible for his becoming adult;

(vi) Whenever one person purposefully intervenes in the life of another with the aim of bringing about change, such intervention has to be guided by a hierarchy of values. Thus, a precondition for the **possibility** of the pedagogic is that the educator, as representative of the normative, intervenes in the pedagogic event to change its course. In his intervention he is guided by a hierarchy of preferred values<sup>(2: 14 footnote 5)</sup>;

(vii) When adulthood, as moral independence, is attained, the possibility of educating ceases to exist<sup>(12: 20)</sup>.

A discipline such as **Sociopedagogics** gives further attention to problems such as, e.g., the influence of hurried modern life on the relationships of association and encounter in the family; social-pedagogic criteria for evaluating a child's position on the path he must take to adulthood; the responsibility of society in supporting a child to attain adulthood; the nature of the social-pedagogic tasks a child needs to learn to help himself; etc. **Psychopedagogics** asks and investigates problems such as what and how a child lived experiences his being-on-the-way-to-adulthood; what affective (emotional) contact is and what its relationship is to encountering and identifying with his educators; what are the most effective methods for perceiving a child in his development; etc. **Didactic Pedagogics**, in this connection, focuses on matters such as the nature and essence of the pedagogic guidance of a child to attain full-fledged adulthood in his search for knowledge, his acquisition of insight into his own learning situation as an anticipation of future life situations, the educator's role in the didactic situation, etc. **Historical Pedagogics** ought to provide an image of the very laborious path covered before educators progressed far enough to think in categories appropriate to a child as a human being with the emphasis on the fact that a human begins as a child. Such



illumination from history can lead to insight into the meaningfulness of the way in which modern pedagogics is practiced. **Orthopedagogics**, as a theory of educative activities to aid a child who is limited in his educability assumes as fundamental data that which is disclosed by Fundamental Pedagogics as being essentially pedagogic.

### **Concluding remarks:**

1. In the preceding pages an attempt was made to show that Fundamental Pedagogics is involved with theory forming about the phenomenon of educating which arises in educative situations. In addition, it was indicated that all of the part-disciplines of Pedagogics are embedded in educative situations and their origin and meaning are to be found there.
2. An aspect not explicitly addressed is the connection between Fundamental Pedagogics and philosophical anthropology. In this respect, reference is made to the articles by Professors P. van Zyl and H. Spiegelberg in this issue.

### **SUMMARY\***

Pedagogics is a science of educating; it is a theoretical matter that embodies the results of systematically exploring educative practice. The results obtained provide an opportunity to shape in a more deliberative and effective manner those educative events that occur on an exclusively human level. The implication is that pedagogics is a science embracing possibilities of application.

The point of departure for constructing pedagogics as a science is the phenomenon of educating itself. The task of Fundamental Pedagogics is to analyze this phenomenon phenomenologically in order to ascertain what are the constituent elements and moments in such a situation, to describe them and to attempt to understand them. Phenomenological analyses reveal that in every educative (pedagogical) situation an encounter takes place between an adult and a child. That is, an adult who is mature, morally independent, responsible, invested with authority and who wants to give aid and support to a child encounters him who is not-yet mature,

---

\* The author's English summary is edited slightly by me. G.D.Y.

independent and responsible and who accepts the adult's authority and who is in need of aid and support.

The educative activity is reciprocal between educator and educand (child-to-be-educated). The educator acts and the child responds. In this way a pedagogical togetherness is constituted by which a child can be guided towards responsible and independent adulthood. A primary need of the child in this respect is parental acceptance. The educative situation is a situation in which the child is accepted as he is with the intention to guide him towards what he should be, i.e., a worthy adult.

Another important factor in an educative situation is the relationship of authority. The educative situation is an authoritative one in which there is an adult who is invested with authority and a child who accepts this authority. This authority should be exercised when and where necessary as sympathetic, authoritative guidance. Educating (bringing up) a child primarily involves issues of moral disciplining, the inculcation of responsibility and the creation of a sense of values.

The educative situation also is a cognitive situation of understanding. Educating (bringing up) a child implies a knowing relationship between educator (pedagogue) and educand which means that the educator must have knowledge of the nature of the child as well as have a clear picture of the ultimate destination towards which he is pedagogically influencing the child.

Fundamental Pedagogics, as the nucleus of Pedagogics, as a scientific structure, is a theory built on the act of educating as described above. It is a theory resulting from a systematic reflection on the phenomenon of educating (bringing up, rearing). Pedagogics, however, is both a theoretical and a practical science. Every act of educating includes reflection but it also is the educator's (pedagogue's) task to devise pedagogically acceptable procedures that will serve the purpose of educating a child. The further explication of certain facets of the educative act is done by the pedagogical sciences that are part-perspectives of Pedagogics arising from the educative situation itself: Psychopedagogics describes the dialogue between a child and his world; Didactic Pedagogics investigates the world relationship of the learning child; Sociopedagogics reflects on the pedagogical situation as a social situation; Historical Pedagogics studies the historical background of

the pedagogic in order to grasp the problems of modern pedagogics in their true perspective; Orthopedagogics is a theory of the educative act in the service of the educatively restricted child; etc.

## References

1. De Klerk, L. (1956). **De grondsituatie der puberteitsopvoeding**. 2nd Edition. Groningen: J. B. Wolters.
2. Landman, W. A. (1966). **Enkele antropologies- ontologiese-momente van die eerste lewensjaar**. Publication Series No. 2. University of Port Elizabeth.
3. Langeveld, M. J. (1965). **Beknopte theoretische pedagogiek**. Groningen: J. B. Wolters.
4. Langeveld, M. J. (1963). **Die schule als weg des kindes**. Braunschweig: G. Westermann.
5. Langeveld, M. J. (1964). **Studien zur antropologie des kindes**. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer.
6. Linschoten, J. Nawoord. In Van den Berg, J. H. and Linschoten, J. (1956). **Persoon en wereld**. Utrecht: E. J. Bijleveld.
7. Nel, B. F. (1966). Pedagogiese verwaarlosing. **Opvoedkundige Studies No. 46**. University of Pretoria.
8. Oberholzer, C. K. (1954). **Inleiding in die prinsipiele opvoedkunde**. Pretoria: J. J. Moreau.
9. Oberholzer, C. K. (1960). **Die pedagogiese**. Reprinted by Extra Mura.
10. Prins, F. W. (1959). Opvoedkundige voordragte in verband met onderwysvernuwing. **Opvoedkundige Studies No. 25**. University of Pretoria.
11. Van den Berg, J. H. (1957). **Metabletica**. 5th Edition. Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach.
12. Van Zyl, P. (1963). **Die antropologies-personologiese opvattinge van F. W. Foerster**. Unpublished D. Ed. dissertation. University of Pretoria.