

# GROUP DISCUSSION IN VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL•

R. A. Coetzee  
University of Pretoria

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the development of his/her vocational choice, an appeal is directed to the pupil to actualize his/her personal potentialities on the highest level possible. This sometimes requires choices which have far reaching significance for vocational choice, such as choice of school, of a course of study (major), of subject matter and choice with respect to further training/schooling. Research has shown that many pupils are not ready to make such choices when they are confronted with this problem.<sup>(2: 82-86; 16:33)</sup>

In this connection, Myers<sup>(12:864)</sup> asserts: “The decision making implications of such a system are enormous, especially since many decisions are required of youths quite early in their lives, before their experience prepares them for making choices of such consequence.”

Because of their great number, it is not possible to guide all pupils individually, and it is necessary that this guidance be done in a group context. Orientation in a group context is an acknowledged part of the practice of vocational orientation. The value of group work is attested by many researchers such as Bilovsky, McMasters, Shorr and Singer<sup>(12:868)</sup> who find no differences in realistic vocational choices when individual or group methods are used. In South Africa, Alberts<sup>(1: 113-123)</sup> and Garbers<sup>(5: 55)</sup> indicate the value of group discussions. Moreover, in a national study<sup>(14: 22)</sup> it was established that 64% of those studied attributed the same value to the

---

• Die groeepsbespreking in beroepsoriëntering op die sekondêre skool. From C. J. Joubert (Ed.) Beroepsvoorligting op skool. University of Pretoria, **Nuwe Reeks No. 159**, 1980, pp. 21-46. Edited November 2022.

contribution of individual conferences and class discussions for their vocational choices.

As an additional example, the 1968 research by Pilato<sup>(12: 870)</sup> is noted: groups of pupils were given intelligence and interest test. Before, immediately after, and 55 days after the administration of the tests, they had to make a self-evaluation of their interests and intellectual potentialities, as well as indicate their vocational preferences. In a group (class) context, the following treatments were given: after the administration of the tests, one group was provided only information about the accuracy of their self-knowledge; a second group only was provided information about vocational structures; and a third group received the first two methods combined. Pilato found that the group only receiving information about the accuracy of their self-knowledge more adequately adjusted their vocational preferences to an attainable level of actualization. The group receiving only vocational information showed no improvement in adjusting their vocational preferences. The group which received information about their own self-knowledge as well as vocational information showed the greatest improvement regarding the adequacy of vocational preferences and choices. It was found that improvements were with respect to the level of actualization and not the area of a vocational field. This increase in the adequacy of choices was maintained 55 days later.

This research by Pilato confirms that:

- (a) group work contributes to making realistic vocational choices;
- (b) self-knowledge and relevant vocational knowledge are necessary requisites for actualizing authentic vocational choices.

According to considerations from overseas, group work can be subdivided into “group guidance” and “group counseling”. “Group guidance” maintains a connection with an orientation program which is **content-directed**, and such group-conducted activities include offering vocational and orientational programs and group testing. “Group counseling” is seen as a group activity where the emphasis is on ‘matters of personality’ rather than on the presentation and discussion of orientational contents. Alberts<sup>(1: 113)</sup>

follows this approach and speaks of **group guidance** and **group deliberation**, respectively. The emphasis of such action falls strongly on the **content** and on the actions of the **group leader**, while the self-orienting involvement of the pupil is not elucidated. Where “testing” is used, the usual procedure is: (a) discussion of the **tests** and what they “measure” or (b) self-estimation – testing – self-estimation, and the difference between the first and second self-estimation is viewed as an indication of the increase in self-knowledge.

Beukes<sup>(2: 85)</sup> finds that introducing “test results” without discussing them is of little value. Joubert<sup>(7: 60, 61)</sup> holds the view that exploratory media (questionnaires and tests) lead to greater pupil insight if preceded by group discussions especially directed to self-knowledge. The implication of this for vocational orientation practice is that harmony must be brought about between the content and the form of the group discussion so that the pupil will participate in **self-orientation**.

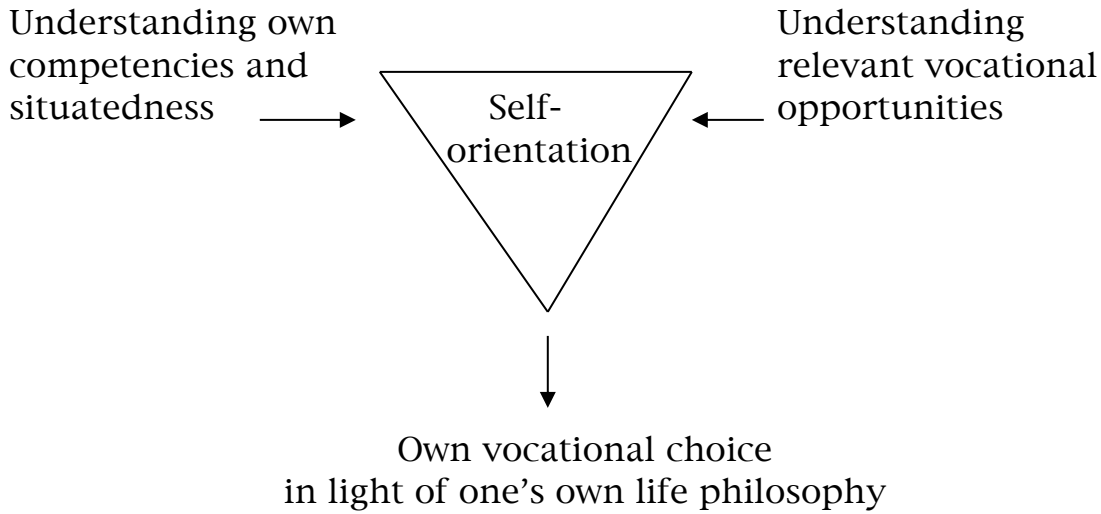
To ensure guidance to self-orientation, and ultimately to vocational adulthood, means that all pedagogical principles, but especially vocational-orientation pedagogical and didactic-pedagogical principles, must be actualized through the planning and execution of a group discussion. Thus, a group discussion can be actualized in no other way than as a lesson situation, but because of the design of its content and form, it shows a unique nature which differentiates it from other types of lesson.

The fundamental didactic form of group discussion is the conversation or discussion. Essentially, this is a discussion by which the orienting events of exploring, discovering, evaluating, understanding and accepting are actualized and by which the pupils are supported to self-orientation.

## **2. Self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-orientation**

In essence, accountable vocational orientation means orienting to self-orientation. This amounts to **knowing** one’s own competencies and situatedness, as well as the relevant vocational opportunities, and integrating them into a vocational choice in terms of one’s own

philosophy of life and of work. This is represented by the following triad:



From a vocational orientation perspective, one's own competencies refer to one's authentic **personal "equipment"** where **personal** refers to one's unique human individualness and individuality. These competencies (equipment) must become known by the pupil, i.e., he/she must arrive at self-understanding or an understanding of him/herself as a unique person.

A person's situatedness refers to the total meaningful involvement to which he/she is related and in terms of which he/she must choose.

Vocational opportunities refer to the opportunities in the vocational world which are relevant to a person's equipment and from which he/she can make choices. Opportunities of actualizing refer to opportunities within which a pupil's positive potentialities can be actualized through effort and which contribute to his/her personal becoming, and ultimately to his/her vocational competence.

The vocational orientation program at school aims to support youths to a realistic self-orientation regarding their own competencies (self-understanding), after which guidance to responsible self-orientation regarding vocational reality can proceed.

## 2.1 Self-knowledge and self-understanding

The self is the total unique personal competencies which are co-defined by one's own ways of existence, intentionality, confrontedness, responsiveness, communication, bodiliness, intellectuality, etc. in terms of which a person comes to an understanding, i.e., to know or understand the total self.<sup>(8: 27)</sup>

To **know** means to acquire and have at his/her disposal knowledge or proficiencies, of a notion of reality which serves to clarify his/her situatedness in the world. Knowing intensifies into **understanding** when the essence of a matter is penetrated and insightful knowledge becomes broadened, which contribute to a better understanding of any related matter which might surface. Understanding also refers to knowledge which, in the light of the demands of propriety, norms and values,<sup>(10: 21-22)</sup> directs the modes or ways of self-actualization.

## 2.2 Self-orientation

Self-orientation, as vocational choice orientation, assumes an orientation regarding one's personal potentialities, one's opportunities for actualizing them, as well as one's level of self-actualization (including the actualization of vocational choice) as these are meaningfully related as viewed in terms of values. Self-orientation is grounded in authentic self-knowledge and self-understanding. The significant aspects of one's selfhood are the self as **mystery**, as **individualness** and **individuality**, as **potentiality** and as **situatedness**.

To experience the self as a mystery implies that a person always is more than what he/she knows, and this makes self-discovery a life long event; the discovery of one's own individuality and individualness makes possible an understanding of one's own potentialities by which one can proceed to an anticipated world-design as a vocational choice design. However, a person is always situated; this means that he/she finds him/herself in relation to a total world and his/her Creator. Thus, his/her self-actualization is formed and tempered by the possibilities and limitations of his/her unique personal abilities. Also, he/she must give evidence of an

answer to his/her being appealed to, and by this answer he/she acknowledges obligatory and demanding life values.

### **3. The formal design of the group discussion**

In terms of the orientation aim which the counselor has in mind, he/she will choose the form of orientation which will create a relationship between the pupil and the orientation content. When group work involves orientation essences, as elementals, a subject-object relationship prevails and the activities are focused on the factual nature of the orientation content. When this is so, the basic form of orientation can be play or assignment. There can be discussion, as a basic form, only when the meaning of the orientation content is discussed, argued, debated, etc. in terms of one's own experiences, i.e., when the essences are implicated as fundamentals of the orientation content. Essentially, discussion is a subject-subject relationship, the essence of which is the dialogue. Discussion in vocational orientation is a nuance of discussion as a fundamental didactic form.

The counselor chooses discussion as form because it is the best and most fruitful way to introduce the orientation content, and it also offers the greatest certainty that the pupil will proceed to self-orientation. The counselor also must reflect on the didactic (lesson) modalities which set the orientation event in motion, and on the orientation aids he/she will use to improve the quality of his/her actions and the quality of the pupil's self-orientation.

### **4. Aims in the group discussion**

Because group discussion in vocational orientation is a matter of educating, the aim structures of educating will be pursued in the group discussion. Accordingly, the aims are to strive to make the child more adult, independent, responsible, etc. The counselor cannot state these aims (which are categories [essences] of vocational orientation) as aims for a particular group discussion for the simple reason that vocational orientation itself cannot exist without them. Thus, the counselor must look past these general aims and formulate aims in terms of content.

### **5. Orientation aims and goals**

In the group discussion a distinction is made between an **orientation aim** and a **knowing aim**. The **orientation aim** refers to the share assumed by the counselor to make the content available in the most efficient way. The **knowing aim** refers to the pupil's share in actualizing his/her self-orientation. Actualizing the knowing aim (self-orientation) assumes a thorough knowledge of the orientation content. The orientation and knowing aims are made meaningful by the orientation content. If orientation succeeds the aim is attained, i.e., there has been self-orientation and self-activity.

Based on a theme or topic announced in the syllabus, the counselor will state an aim for him/herself which really is still an unformulated idea, thought or plan, e.g., "to bring the pupils to an understanding of their own intellectual potentialities." On this basis, **stating the orientation aim** is formulated more clearly. This aim is an overarching concept or idea within which that which is deemed relevant is visualized for a particular group of pupils, and in terms of which a series of orientation aims is formulated. The orientation aim always ought to be stated as an operation; i.e., it ought always to begin with a particular skill such as **classifying** the essences of ... or **distinguishing** between ...

By reducing the theme of the syllabus, the counselor selects the essences (elementals) for a particular group and formulates and orders them as a series of successive orientation aims. In any orientation aim, it must be indicated beforehand what orientation activity the pupils must carry out to attain it.

## 6. Reduction of orientation content

Here the counselor must disclose the essential facts which are meaningful for understanding the problem raised by the theme. This means he/she must illuminate the core facts of a matter which support an insight into them. To do this, interpretations, opinions, deductions, etc. are temporarily put aside. It must be emphasized that the matter is not analyzed into its elements; only those aspects which show the essences of the matter must be identified. This requires that the counselor thoroughly know the subject content. In

addition, he/she must select those essences which will be meaningful to the particular group on the basis of their experiences, their phase of becoming, their potentialities, etc. Thus, the essences of **intellectual potentialities** for one group might be **sensing**, **perceiving** and **thinking**, for another **imagining** and **fantasizing**, and yet for another **evaluating**, **convergent** and **divergent thinking**.

Because of the dangers of generalizing, an exhaustive handbook only can have limited value. Two additional requirements regarding the reduction of the content are that the essences must be formulated so the pupils can acquire a clear, meaningful and coherent image of the theme as such, and that the essences in relation can provide a solution to the problem, i.e., that they can make self-orientation and self-activity possible.<sup>(17: 33-37)</sup>

The content by which the counselor is going to center on these essences can be chosen from several sources such as an encyclopedia, biographies, newspaper reports and journal articles.

In terms of the essences of the orientation content and their refinement, the counselor can construct questionnaires to facilitate self-evaluation.

## **7. The didactic modalities in the group discussion**

Since the didactic modalities are what set into motion a lesson as well as a group discussion, and by which the different phases of the course of the orientation can be differentiated, it is necessary that the principles of actualization, the modes of learning (as ways of knowing) and the teaching aids (orientation aids) be clarified from a vocational orientation perspective.

### **7.1 General principles of actualization**<sup>(18: 202-203)</sup>

Actualization is closely related to the orientation and knowing aims because, based on his/her activities, a pupil proceeds to self-exploration, self-discovery, self-evaluation, self-understanding and self-acceptance to engage in self-actualization. In a group discussion there is guided activity (guided orientation) and self-activity (self-orientation).



The **principle of individualization**<sup>(18: 203)</sup> refers, in group discussion, to the pupil's own share in the group discussion. There are few other types of lesson in which the principle of individualization is so prominent as in a group discussion.

In a group discussion, the pupil is supported in actualizing the orientation event, in establishing his/her own individualness and individuality, and self-actualization is made possible by understanding the pupil's own unique personal competencies and opportunities for actualizing them. The pupil's freedom of responsible self-actualization is acknowledged since no one can choose for him/her. Self-individualization serves self-discovery<sup>(18: 207)</sup> and emancipation regarding one's world of vocational choice with which his/her entire lifeworld is co-involved.

The **principle of socialization**,<sup>(18: 203)</sup> in connection with the group discussion, means that the pupil finds him/herself in relation to and in co-involvement with others.<sup>(10: 83)</sup> Socialization means encounter, communication and identification. Through identification the pupil can identify him/herself with, e.g., the parent and counselor as representatives of the image of vocational adulthood. Socialization makes possible the actualization of shared values<sup>(7: 6)</sup> since the rendering of services and self-actualization, also to the advantage of others, is emphasized.

The didactic modalities are meaningful because they initiate and direct the pupils' actions. **Tempo differentiation** is an important matter in a group discussion. That is, because a group discussion is not a matter of giving a lesson, and formal "tests" and examinations do not take place, the pupils can follow their **own tempo** in assimilating the orientation content. By actualizing the principle of tempo differentiation, the child is supported to evaluate his/her own personal competencies and opportunities for actualizing them so that an orientation effect can be assured. The counselor should control the tempo such that it is not determined primarily or exclusively by the adult (counselor) or the group, but in such a way that each individual is given the opportunity of differentiation so that meaningful self-evaluation is possible.

## 7.2 The modes of learning<sup>(18: 193-197; 17: 94-101)</sup>

The modes of learning are **one** of the structural aspects of the didactic modalities (along with the above general principles and teaching and learning aids) out of which a “type of lesson” is allowed to crystallize.<sup>(18: 193)</sup> Thus, on the basis of the modes of learning actualized in a particular lesson, a valuing, experimenting, demonstrating, explicating, drill or practice lesson can be differentiated. The modes of learning distinguished here are **sensing, perceiving, thinking and remembering**. Since there is no learning effect facilitated in a group discussion, but rather a **knowing effect** (self-orientation), the modes of learning are actualized in a group discussion, and they serve directly to actualize the essences of knowing. Thus, in planning a group discussion, the counselor cannot omit one or a few of the modes of learning which are going to figure prominently in that discussion.

**Sensing**, as a personal, affective experiencing,<sup>(18: 195)</sup> is closely connected with wondering about the self as a **mystery** by which **knowing**, as an **intuitive foreknowing**, through questioning and venturing, deepens into the exploration and discovery of, e.g., one’s own personal competencies.

**Perceiving** essentially is a reduction, an activity by which the essential (the real) becomes manifest.<sup>(18: 195)</sup> Through perceiving, **knowing** as understanding is possible and there can be, e.g., delimitation, clarification and appropriation. Perceiving and knowing, as understanding, make possible knowing the **self** as **individuality** and **individualness** by which one’s identity and uniqueness continually become clarified.

**Thinking** makes synthesizing possible whereby the meaningful relations among concepts (essences) are brought into relief and can be appropriated. Thinking makes possible knowing, as **being oriented**, whereby the **self, as potentiality**, can be understood. Knowing one’s own personal competencies and opportunities makes possible an understanding of one’s own situatedness, as a result of which one can proceed to self-actualization as a world designed through vocational choice. Such objectification and anticipation are in essence matters of structured knowing or **thinking**.

**Remembering** implies calling up already acquired insights and thought structures.<sup>(18: 195)</sup> It is closely connected with knowing the **self as situatedness** and with an understanding of the **responses** already given to one's being appealed to, i.e., responses given in the light of values. Remembering is related to **knowing as a response** in terms of an understanding the sense and meaning ascribed to self-actualization.

### 7.3 Orientation aids

In the practice of vocational orientation connected with the school, a distinction is made between **group exploratory aids** (exploratory media) and **orientation aids**. Aids for group exploration are, e.g., group exploratory media (standardized group tests) which are implemented for the sake of forming a person image.<sup>(15: 101-102)</sup>

**Orientation aids** serve to make the counselor's guidance (orienting) and the self-orienting of the pupils as effective as possible. Orientation aids which can make the counselor's actions more effective are, e.g., a blackboard, transparencies, films, prints and tape recordings.

Orientation aids implemented to support pupils to self-orientation are, e.g., **self-evaluation scales** relevant to one's own personal competencies<sup>(15: 116-132)</sup> and **vocational study memoranda**<sup>(4: 92-100)</sup> connected with vocational opportunities.

## 8. The relation between the course of orientation and the phases of a group discussion

### 8.1 The course of orientation\*

#### Self-knowledge through exploring

Exploring means investigating or studying life reality phenomena whose essentials are still unknown and concealed. Modes of

---

\* Professor C. J. Joubert was the first to postulate the essences of the course of orientation. This view of the course of orientation constitutes both the point of departure and focal point for many additional research themes in Vocational Orientation Pedagogics.

exploring are, e.g., **questioning, expecting, venturing, breaking away and attentively staying with.**

In a group discussion perspective, this means the pupil experiences him/herself in the group discussion as a mystery, but that his/her intuitive foreknowledge, through the activity of questioning (which arises from his/her inherent wondering about reality), also about his/her personal potentialities, deepens into an attentive remaining with one's own competencies so they can be perceived. By breaking away from self-satisfaction, and by a willingness to enter the unknown, the expectation arises that the level of actualization of self-knowledge will be elevated through self-discovery.

### **Self-knowledge through discovery**

When the previously unknown is discovered through exploration, the essences of selfhood become evident, and insight and perspective regarding self-being are consequently mastered. Among others, the essences of discovery are **perceiving, identifying, recognizing and becoming acquainted with.**

Discovery, as “dis-cover”, results in the person perceiving and recognizing his/her own selfhood as individuality and individualness. Consequently, he/she can identify him/herself as subjectivity, as different and as unique. Because he/she gradually understands him/herself, he/she can become familiar with and appropriate his/her own personal competencies in their possibilities and limitations. Understanding what (who) one is capable of being leads to the emancipation of the being-someone-oneself within each opportunity for self-actualization.

### **Self-knowledge through evaluating**

Evaluating refers to the level of value or quality of the discovered essences and their actualization. Among others, the essences of evaluating are **deliberating, interpreting, considering and questioning.**

From a group discussion perspective, this means that discovering the essences of self-being increasingly must be evaluated in terms of

opportunities for their actualization so the meaningful relations between self-knowing and knowledge of opportunities becomes clarified. On the basis of gnostic-cognitive knowing, as **deliberating**, the opportunity is offered for evaluating the design and establishment of a world through **interpreting** one's own personal potentialities in the light of opportunities for actualizing them. The self, as anticipating potentiality, can represent one's own being-able to be, as optimal self-actualizing, and thus arrive at taking a position and acquiring a perspective. In essence, evaluating is the meaningful **consideration** of one's own person structure in terms of values. Knowledge from **questioning** one's own fellow person's talents compel one to give a meaningful **answer**, as a level of actualization.

### Self-knowledge through understanding

Understanding means acquiring a perspective on the meaningful relations among the essentials. Among others, the essential activities of understanding are **unlocking**, **having insight** and **knowing**. Knowledge and insight are the results of the unlocking, on the level of actualization capable of the person as total person structure. Understanding what is and can be means an **appreciative** knowing of self and world. Understanding is the natural outcome of the experiences and achievements by which the flexibility of the opportunities for actualization are discovered. Flexibility also implies a knowledge of limitations, which inevitably brings up the issues of **acceptance** and of giving meaning.

### Self-knowledge through acceptance

Acceptance means a readiness to proceed to self-actualization as the essences of selfhood are **accepted**. In this way, one's limitations can be conquered through their acceptance as a real **encounter** between one's limited equipment and the relevant opportunities for actualizing them which the person **chooses** and by which he/she is chosen.

Through acceptance, the **situatedness** of the self is given meaning by which the person's freedom toward responsibility is preserved,

his/her initiative of relationships is sustained and he/she is not delivered over to his/her own facticity.

### Self-knowledge through actualization

Self-actualization means implementing what is essentially meaningful in each opportunity for self-actualization by a willingness to work. Among others, the essences of actualization are **implementing, designing, accepting responsibility, actualizing meaning and emancipating.**

Through actualization, self-knowing becomes the person's answer to his/her being appealed to, and he/she proceeds to give sense and meaning to the implementation of his/her personal competencies during the opportunities for their actualization. This means to allow the **acceptance of responsibility for realizing meaning to emancipation** in work to flourish. From a group discussion perspective, this means that actualization is the crowning of the orientation event because through optimal self-knowledge the youth can penetrate to the meaningful relations among his/her own equipment and the achievable level of actualization within the opportunities available to him/her.

#### 8.2 The actualization of the course of orientation within the phases of the group discussion

Just as lesson phases can be distinguished during the course of a lesson<sup>(18: 232-238)</sup> so can phases be differentiated in the group discussion. It was indicated that the essences of actualization, namely, exploring, discovering, evaluating, understanding and accepting are elevated in level during the group discussion.

Below, the relations among the orientation event and the phases of the group discussion are explained with particular reference to **self-knowledge through orientation.**

As an introduction, it is shown that group discussion, in the current lesson (orientation), differs with respect to unlocking new content, evaluating and functionalizing.

**Unlocking new content** occurs by introducing the pupils, under the control of the counselor, to the content for which they have been prepared. Thus, a greater demand for preparation is placed on the pupils for a group discussion than for an ordinary lesson. By **evaluating**, the concern is not only with knowledge of the subject content, but more particularly with self-orientation in the light of the essences of the content. The essences of evaluating, such as deliberating, interpreting, considering and questioning, must be actualized. **Functionalizing** is involved especially with the self-orientation of the pupils through understanding the relations among one's own competencies and opportunities for their actualization, especially the relevant vocational opportunities. In the group discussion, the learning event is secondary to the orientation event where self-orientation is primary. Just as does the subject matter teacher, the counselor fulfills the task of an expert and must be trained as an expert.

#### 8.2.1 Actualizing foreknowledge<sup>(18: 233)</sup>

Under the counselor's guidance, the pupils are expected to call to awareness (remember) knowledge at their disposal which is connected with a particular theme. The meaningful relations among the existing (possessed) knowledge and the new knowledge must be explicated. The course of orientation begins with **exploration**, and self-knowledge is a consequence. The pupil enters the group discussion situation with the essences of his/her personal competencies and relevant opportunities for actualizing the still concealed or undiscovered such that he/she experiences him/herself as a **mystery**. For example, through **perceiving**, **effort** and **breaking away** from the unknown, his/her **intuitive foreknowing** can proceed to an **active staying with (attending to)** the reality being presented so that its essentials can be unlocked.

#### 8.2.2 Stating the problem<sup>(18: 234)</sup>

Stating the problem allows them to function in the group discussion as something meaningful, stimulating and questionable.<sup>(17: 40)</sup> This allows the pupils to become aware of the inadequacy of their knowledge and motivates them to achieve the knowing aim (**self-orientation aim**).<sup>(18: 234)</sup> Stating the problem provides an additional

progression in the elevation of the level of **self-knowing**, the essential aspects of which are, e.g., **questioning, expecting and striving**.

From a vocational orientation perspective, stating the problem must be meaningful, be on the pupils' level of readiness and be realistic so that it motivates them to strive for self-orientation. Stating the problem also must be functional so the pupils can experience that their additional self-knowledge can lead to a meaningful self-actualization.

### 8.2.3 Unlocking new content<sup>(18: 235-237)</sup>

Self-knowledge through exploring is elevated in level to **self-knowledge through discovery**, the essences of which are, e.g., **recognizing, identifying and becoming acquainted with**. The offering of the content occurs by the pupils having been thoroughly prepared for it. Unlocking the essences occurs by the counselor, in his/her preparation, reducing the content to its essences. Self-knowledge through discovery is possible in terms of these essences. Perceiving and **recognizing** one's own individuality and individualness become possible. To an increasing degree, it becomes possible for the pupil to **identify** his/her own uniqueness and singularity.<sup>(6: 34-36)</sup>

Unlocking the content makes self-knowledge through discovery possible, which is a precondition for **self-knowledge through evaluating**. It is possible that self-knowledge through evaluating will already begin during the unlocking phase by means of **deliberating**, but this will only be actualized with optimal significance during the evaluating phase.

### 8.2.4 Evaluating

Evaluating serves the pupils to arrive at self-understanding and self-acceptance through self-judgment and taking a position. In essence, this means that the pupil comes to understand him/herself as **possibility**. The essences of evaluating are **deliberating, interpreting, considering and questioning**.



Exploration through actualizing foreknowledge and discovery through unlocking the new content serve to reduce the orientation contents to their elementals or essentials. With this, the first aim of categorical forming is actualized.<sup>(20: 29)</sup>

The most important task of the counselor is to ensure that the content is understood correctly, i.e., that mistakes and misunderstandings regarding the orientation content are eliminated so the pupils accurately and insightfully appropriate it. In this way, the counselor helps the pupils **actualize** the orientation content.

However, the pupils must assimilate the orientation content into their own insights, which means they must be able to do something in terms of them. Thus, the elementals must be changed to **fundamentals**. Kruger<sup>(9: 47)</sup> states this as follows: “where the elementals offer the possibility of entering into, accepting and possessing the content, the fundamentals concern the mastered content and, ultimately, what the child can do with that content.”

Evaluating means self-judgment by **interpreting, considering and questioning** one’s own personal competencies and opportunities for actualizing them in terms of the essences which become clarified. Evaluating makes it possible for a child to come to an understanding of him/herself as **situatedness** because he/she must answer the appeal to evaluate his/her personal competencies and opportunities in terms of definitive values and proceed, in accordance with them, to self-actualization (also vocational choice).

It is important and relevant to say that the above is not a matter of **self-estimation**, the most important shortcoming of which is a subjective judgment based on faulty knowledge as was indicated by Nel and Sonnekus.<sup>(13: 66-67)</sup>

From a group discussion perspective, evaluating is essentially criterion-directed and formative because it (i) occurs in terms of the orientation content, and (ii) it indicates the extent to which the pupils have appropriated the orientation content such that self-acceptance and self-understanding have occurred.

Orientation aids can be used to facilitate, systematize and accelerate self-evaluation. Self-orientation aids, however, must satisfy the demands of validity, reliability and usability, and the point of departure must be criterion-referenced\* and not norm-referenced evaluation.

### 8.2.5 Functionalizing<sup>(18: 237-239)</sup>

From a vocational orientation perspective, functionalizing refers to the understanding and **actualization** of meaningful relations. As stated, self-evaluation makes self-understanding and self-acceptance possible.

The essentials of understanding and acceptance include **acquiring insight, appropriating, conquering, giving meaning and choosing**. Self-evaluation involves an insight into one's own competencies and opportunities for actualizing them. Appropriation occurs by giving meaning to one's potentialities and limitations by which a person can choose in accordance with the level of his/her self-actualization. Understanding and acceptance make knowing oneself as situatedness possible. [The situation the pupil finds him/herself in is constituted by relationships: the relationship with the creator from whom he/she hears his/her being appealed to and to which he/she must answer, and the relationship with his/her potentialities (and also limitations) which call to be conquered and controlled].

#### Relations Between the Course of Orientation and the Phases of the Group Discussion

COURSE OF ORIENTATION	PHASES OF GROUP DISCUSSION
<b>Exploring:</b> sensing	<b>Actualizing foreknowledge</b> <b>Stating the problem</b>
<p>* Criterion-referenced evaluating indicates whether the operationalized orientation aims are actualized, and by using these criteria the counselor can., e.g., judge, according to the pupil's profiles, (a) whether they can <b>differentiate</b> among their own potentialities, and (b) whether the pupils show a reliable value preference in their interests, etc. (Norm-referenced evaluating involves testing and examining for the purpose of grading and promotion.</p>	

perceiving effort breaking away attentive staying with questioning expecting striving	
<hr/> <b>Discovering:</b> recognizing identifying becoming acquainted with	<hr/> <b>Unlocking new content</b> (counselor and pupils) <b>Actualizing new content</b> (counselor guides pupils)
<hr/> <b>Evaluating:</b> deliberating interpreting considering questioning	<hr/> <b>Evaluating</b> (self-evaluating)
<hr/> <b>Understanding and accepting:</b> insight appropriating conquering giving meaning choosing <b>Actualizing:</b> implementing designing assuming responsibility actualizing meaning emancipating	<hr/> <b>Functionalizing</b> (in all opportunities for actualization)

The essences of actualization are **implementing, designing, accepting responsibility, actualizing meaning and emancipating**. Actualization is the pupil's answer to his/her being appealed to; from a group discussion perspective. this means that the pupil's positive competencies will be actualized in terms of relevant existing opportunities, as well as in terms of future opportunities. This implies that functionalizing will not only occur in the group

discussion situation but in every situation of self-actualization. Accepting responsibility makes meaningful self-actualization possible, and this leads to increased emancipation until vocational adulthood eventually is reached.

## **9. Orientation content for group discussion\***

As stated, orientation content is selected with the purpose of actualizing an aim, i.e., a knowing-aim and a self-actualization aim. The orientation event only can be actualized in terms of content. Understanding one's own competencies in connection with one's own opportunities must be actualized as a level of self-actualization. The orientation task of group discussion lies precisely in the fact that all the personal competencies and opportunities must result in a positive work and vocational disposition [so the pupil finally practices his/her vocation as a calling which is of benefit to him/herself, fellow persons and his/her Creator].

### **9.1 Authentic personal equipment as content of self-orientation**

A distinction is made among: bodiliness, intellectuality, sociability and spirituality.

### **9.2 Opportunities for actualization as content**

Opportunities for actualization are all the opportunities within which a pupil finds him/herself and in which he/she ought to actualize his/her given potentialities by means of effort and work. From an early age a child finds him/herself in particular situations which can be typified as opportunities for actualization which have a significance for vocational choice. Such situations are family life, school life, church life, political life, community life and vocational life.

### **9.3 Level of vocational choice as content**

---

\* The orientation content is explained in great detail in the previous paper by C. J. Joubert. For the sake of completeness, this is referred to briefly here.

Responsible, optimal, meaningful, suitable, authentic vocational choice.

#### **9.4 Philosophy of life as content**

Christian, national.

#### **9.5 Work values from the perspective of a Christian philosophy of life as content**

Religious, self-actualization, social, thankfulness, material values.

### **10. Preconditions for the effective course of a group discussion**

- (a) Thorough planning by the counselor, which includes determining the orientation aims and reducing the orientation content to its essences.
- (b) Thorough preparation by the designated pupils.
- (c) The availability, systematizing and unlocking of orientation sources such as library materials, brochures, etc.
- (d) Ensuring that all participants in the group discussion are treated similarly so all can freely participate in it.
- (e) Creating opportunities for sharing ideas, chiming in and deliberating.
- (f) Thorough control by the counselor so the focus is on the theme and the level of discussion is authentic.
- (g) Thorough selecting and ordering the orientation essences so that self-evaluation can occur.

### **11. Benefits of a group discussion**

- (a) Many pupils can be guided to self-orientation by means of a group discussion.
- (b) Pupil participation ensures that the interests of all of the pupils are maintained where a one-sided presentation by the counselor can result in boredom and moralizing.
- (c) Group participation ensures an elevation in the level of understanding of the orientation content and the actualization of the orientation essences as the pupils'

skillfulness in obtaining and correlating information as well as formulating and reaching conclusions is cultivated.

- (d) Group discussion has the advantage of group activity and through deliberating, reasoning, etc. with others, self-knowledge is facilitated.
- (e) Both the gifted and less gifted pupils can participate in the discussion.
- (f) Group discussion provides the opportunity for identifying pupils who need individual assistance.

## **12. Demands placed on the counselor**<sup>(19: 48-56; 7: 29)</sup>

- (a) A fundamental knowledge of pedagogics, in general, and of vocational orientation pedagogics, in particular.
- (b) Knowledge of the level of becoming and the possessed knowledge of the pupils so the beginning (entry) level of the group discussion allows all pupils to participate.
- (c) The effective handling of the group discussion so that role reversal (speaker and listener), format and procedures are used to advantage.
- (d) The tactful correction of word usage, reasoning, pronunciation, assertions, formulations, etc., so the group discussion gives evidence of relevant, logical considerations.
- (e) The effective influencing of the emotional climate of the group discussion so that affective stability is insured without dampening initiative.
- (f) “Fruitful moments” must be noticed and used by the counselor in the group discussion.
- (g) The counselor must possess the insight and skill to identify, order and formulate the essences of the orientation content brought to light during the group discussion so the pupils can proceed to self-orientation with respect to that content.

## **13. Factors which can allow the group discussion to fail**

- (a) Degeneration of the group discussion into a dispute, chatting, etc.
- (b) Demanding too much with respect to completeness, precise formulation, etc.

- (c) Conduct or attitude of the counselor which smothers the pupil's readiness to participate.
- (d) The attitudes of the pupils themselves such as over-sensitivity, experiences of inferiority, ignorance, differences in conviction, etc.
- (e) Inadequate reduction of the orientation content.
- (f) Poor judgment regarding the different states of becoming and the possessed experiences of the various groups and individuals.

#### 14. Criteria for judging the level of self-actualization

Knowing one's own competencies and relevant opportunities makes self-actualization possible in terms of values. The criteria for judging the level of self-actualization are stated as questions.

- (a) Has the pupil arrived at authentic self-discovery, self-evaluation, self-understanding and self-acceptance and a **readiness** to actualize his own competencies and relevant opportunities?
- (b) Is the pupil convinced that he/she must never damage his/her own **human dignity** or attack that of another by self-actualization? Attacking the human dignity of another is possible, e.g., by reducing personal competencies to mere quantitative numbers, profiles, etc.
- (c) Does the pupil's level of self-actualization attest to an authentic, intense and lasting **accountability** and **responsibility**? From a self-actualization perspective, accountability means actualizing one's competencies as talents, and responsibility means this is done in correspondence with the level of actualization achievable.
- (d) Has the pupil arrived at his/her own, independent **norm identification** as the appropriation of a basic philosophy of work? [From a self-actualization perspective, this means the pupil will use competencies in accordance with the mandate of God and in the service of fellow humans].
- (e) Has an elevation in level occurred in the pupil's self-actualization, especially in terms of what competencies allow him/her to do?

- (f) Has the youth gained an insight into the **meaningful relationships** among him/herself, fellow humans and related matters connected with self-actualization, and is a meaningful and adequate level of actualization shown in this regard?
- (g) Do expectations and hopes express a view of reality (realistic) in terms of own competencies and opportunities, and does this serve to increasingly clarify a meaningful vocational future perspective?

## EXAMPLE OF A GROUP DISCUSSION

### Syllabus theme 2.8.3 (grade nine)

- 2.8 The relation between personal competencies and vocational fields.
  - i. Social competence.

## THE TEACHING AIM

- (a) **The lesson aim (orientation aim)**
  - To orient the pupils in terms of the concept fellow humanness.
- (b) **The learning aim (knowing aim)**
  - Pupils must arrive at **self-orientation** regarding own social abilities.
  - Pupils must arrive at an understanding of the level of actualization of their social abilities.
  - Pupils must **discover, understand** and **accept** the vocational significance of their social abilities.

## STATING THE PROBLEM

- (a) **Formulating the problem**
  - By **actualizing foreknowledge** and **stating the problem**, the pupils are guided to formulate the problem for themselves, namely, “what does fellow humanness (sociability) mean, what demands does it require of me and what is the vocational significance of this?”
- (b) **Problem solution**
  - During the group discussion phase of **exposing (presenting) the new content**, the following descriptions of the reduced



essences of the orientation content appear on the chalkboard so the pupils can proceed to self-exploration and self-discovery:

### **Social (co-human) abilities**

#### **1. Communication potentiality**

The ability to establish relationships with others, communicate ideas and concepts, feelings and convictions and to be able to bring another to a particular opinion.

#### **2. Propriety and justness**

To enter suitable, fitting and just ways so everyone's rights and privileges are respected.

#### **3. Helpfulness, tolerance, patience**

A readiness to assist another, to accept another's shortcomings, and to be able to continue to provide service without getting frustrated or dejected.

#### **4. Compassion and tact**

Behaving with reasonable consideration and in observance of another's feelings, attitudes and opinions.

## **THE COURSE (PHASES) OF THE GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Actualizing foreknowledge**

This theme was already begun in grade eight (Themes 2.4.3, 2.8.4, 2.9.1, etc.). Thus, the pupils have at their disposal knowledge that can be recalled. Introductory questions also are asked such as "who already took part in the debate competition?", "Who has helped a person in need?"

### **Stating the problem**

From the relevant foreknowledge the pupils are guided to experience a defect in their knowledge of what sociability (co-existentiality) precisely is, how it can be differentiated and what vocational meaning it contains. Thus, the pupils, e.g., arrive at the following questions: "What is meant by (co-existential) social competence, what demands are posed by this and what is its vocational meaning?"

### **Unlocking and controlling the orientation content**

Pupils who have prepared themselves initiate the discussion. They place in their midst the content by means of the vocational description of four pre-selected vocations, namely, policeman, lawyer, geologist and pastoral psychologist. During the presentation (unlocking), the counselor writes the essences of the orientation content on the chalkboard.\* By further questioning, discussion and deliberation, additional essences are brought out, clarified, ordered and formulated.

The actualization of the content occurs under the guidance of the counselor who ascertains that the pupils' insights into and actualization of the essences are accurate. For example, he makes sure that the pupils know precisely what communication potentialities, etc. are, that the pupils correctly understand the relationship between communication potentialities and vocational choice.

### **Evaluating**

Self-evaluation in terms of a questionnaire and profile:

(a) **A self-evaluation questionnaire** in terms of the mentioned reduction of the orientation content and by means of questions regarding the child's world of experience.

The pupils' task is to "estimate your own ability to communicate, to practice justice, to provide assistance and to show compassion." The following questions are provided:

### **EVALUATE YOURSELF REGARDING THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL (CO-EXISTENTIAL) COMPETENCIES:**

---

\* In introducing the essences, the counselor can use the inductive, deductive or a combination of the two methods as follows:

- (i) He can introduce the core concepts that come to light during the presentation and/or discussion on the chalkboard and then, with the class, proceed to a formulation (inductive)
- (ii) He can introduce the essences on the chalkboard as headings and then place the core concepts under the headings and then proceed to a formulation (deductive);
- (iii) He can fully describe or formulate the essences beforehand and provide them to the class so they, during the presentation, can themselves classify the particulars under the headings (provisional classification).

Circle the appropriate numbers:

1 = always; 2 = often; 3 = sometimes; 4 = actually never.

**1. Communication potentialities**

Do you make friends easily? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to chat with strangers? 1 2 3 4

Do you easily take part in discussions? 1 2 3 4

Can you clearly state your position in a class discussion? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to persuade others to accept your opinions? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to formulate an idea or thought so others easily understand it? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to convey your real feelings during a discussion? 1 2 3 4

**2. Propriety and justice**

Are you inclined to respect each person's point of view? 1 2 3 4

Are you inclined to see another person's side of the matter? 1 2 3 4

Can you easily settle a difference in opinion with another? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to be fair under difficult circumstances? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to be objective in a dispute? 1 2 3 4

**3. Helpfulness, tolerance and patience**

Are you inclined to care for a sick person? 1 2 3 4

Are you inclined to be patient with someone who experiences many difficulties or is sickly? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to have patience with old persons? 1 2 3 4

Are you inclined to help others solve their problems? 1 2 3 4

Do you find it easy to remain tolerant in spite of how another acts? 1 2 3 4

**4. Compassion and tact**

Can you easily enter into another's situation? 1 2 3 4

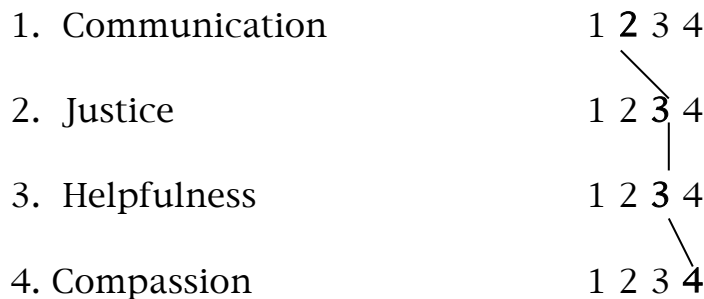
Can you enter another's situation such that you do not hurt the other's feelings? 1 2 3 4

Can you handle an uncomfortable situation diplomatically? 1 2 3 4  
 Can you tactfully inspire and spur another on? 1 2 3 4

(b) The pupils must compute their averages from the questionnaire and draw a graph or profile of their own (co-existential) social competencies, as is shown in the following example:

### SOCIABILITY (CO-EXISTENTIALITY) PROFILE

Name:\_\_\_\_\_ Class:\_\_\_\_\_



Vocation\_\_\_\_\_

(c) Then, as an example exercise, the group can discuss the profile(s) of one or two vocations.

(d) Then the pupils can reflect individually on the demands of the vocations they are considering and the profiles that correspond to their own.

(e) As an additional application, the group can carry out the following exercise:

“To what degree are social competencies necessary for the following persons in the successful practice of their vocations?” For each vocation, indicate the degree of sociability with 1, 2, 3, 4 (as above). [The values then should be 1, 1, 2, 2 instead of the following values—G.D.Y.]

VOCATION		SOCIAL COMPETENCIES		

	Communication	Justice	Helpfulness	Compassion
Lawyer	4	4	3	3
Pharmacist				
Archaeologist				
Forester				
Electrician				
Physician				
Financial adviser				
Surveyor				
Researcher				
Teacher				
Mathematician				
Accountant				
Traffic officer				
Nurse				
Veterinarian				
Machinist				

### Functionalizing

Because self-orientation is attained about their own social ability, the pupils can actualize their own social potentialities in a more goal-directed, meaningful way in terms of available opportunities.

## Summary

The group discussion is aimed exclusively at involving the pupils in ways of self-orientation by the orientation event. To be able to achieve this, the basic didactic form of conversation must be expertly refined to narration by which all the pupil's knowledge is brought up to standard and only then can one proceed to a discussion. The discussion must center on the essentials of the content, but much more. Not only must an inventory of content be compiled, the content also must be classified and ordered (organized). The aim of self-orientation can be actualized in terms of an effective synchronization of the form, content and course of the discussion.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>(1)</sup>ALBERTS, N. F.: **Kernelemente in voorligting. Inleiding tot teorie en praktyk.** J. L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1974.
- <sup>(2)</sup>BEUKES, J. H.: Vakkeusegeregheid na st. 7. **Pedagogic Studies No. 7**, University of Pretoria, 1974.
- <sup>(3)</sup>COETZEE, R. A.: **Die groepbespreking as oriënteringsgebeure tot selfkennis in die beroepsoriënteringspraktyk.** Unpublished M. Ed. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1978.
- <sup>(4)</sup>DE BEER, L. J.: **Verkenning van die beroepswerklikheid deur jeugdiges.** Unpublished M. Ed. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1976.
- <sup>(5)</sup>GARBERS, J. G.: **Beroepsbepaling pedagogies benader.** Series Verdiept Inzicht, Amsterdam, 1961.
- <sup>(6)</sup>GOUS, S. J.: **Verantwoording van die didakties-pedagogiese.** Perskor, Johannesburg, 1972.
- <sup>(7)</sup>JOUBERT, C. J., ET AL: **Jeugweerbaarheid.** Butterworths, Durban, 1975.
- <sup>(8)</sup>JOUBERT, C. J.: Verheldering van die begrip beroepsoriëntering as perspektief op die oriënteringsgebeure. **South African Journal of Pedagogy**, 7:1, 1973.
- <sup>(9)</sup>KRUGER, R. A.: Die betekenis van die begrippe elementare en fundamentele in die didactic teorie en praktyk. **Pedagogic Studies No. 86**, University of Pretoria, 1975.
- <sup>(10)</sup>LANDMAN, W. A.: **'n Antropologies-pedagogiese beskouing van beroepsoriëntering met spesiale verwysing na die personologies-etiese.** HAUM, Cape Town, 1961.
- <sup>(11)</sup>LANDMAN, W. A. ET AL: **Opvoedkunde en opvoedingsleer vir beginners.** University Publishers and Booksellers, Stellenbosch, 1975.
- <sup>(12)</sup>MYERS, R. A.: Research on educational and vocational counseling. In Bergin, A.E. and Garfield, S. L.: **Psychotherapy and behavior change.** John Wiley, New York, 1971.
- <sup>(13)</sup>NEL, B. F. AND SONNEKUS, M. C. H.: **Beroepsleiding in die middelbare skool in Suid-Afrika.** HAUM, Cape Town,

- 1959.
- (14)PIETERSE, J. E. (ED.): Verslag van jeugondersoek. **Part I: Jeug en Arbeid.** Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1967.
  - (15)SNYMAN, C. S.: **Pedagogies-verantwoorde oriënteering van die kind in die primere skool vanuit beroepskeuse-perspektief.** Unpublished M. Ed. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1976.
  - (16)SUPER, D. E. (ED.): **Career development: self-concept theory.** College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 1963.
  - (17)VAN DER STOEP, F. ET AL: **Die lesstruktuur.** McGraw-Hill, Johannesburg, 1973.
  - (18)VAN DER STOEP, F. AND LOUW, W.: **Inleiding tot die didaktiese pedagogiek.** Academica, Pretoria, 1976.
  - (19)VAN DER STOEP, F. AND VAN DYK, C. J.: **Inleiding in die vakdidaktiek.** Perskor, Johannesburg, 1977.
  - (20)VAN DYK, C. J.: Vanaf vorming (Bildung) tot eksemplariese onderrig en leer: 'n didakties-pedagogiese strukturering. **Pedagogic Studies No. 73,** University of Pretoria, 1973.