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## THE DIDACTIC FORMS AS THEORETICAL STRUCTURE FOR SUBJECT DIDACTIC CONSTRUCTIONS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. THE TENSION BETWEEN TEACHING THEORY AND PRACTICE

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

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

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

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

"In the event of forming, reality is unlocked for a person, and a person unlocks or opens himself for reality. These two facets of the event do not have separate identities, but jointly constitute what we know as forming, also as forming in teaching".

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

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

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

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

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

What is conspicuously missing in this grounding is that Van der Stoep does not explicitly elucidate the relationship between the concept "form" (in this case called 'form of expression') and activity. He implicitly assumes that there is a close connection between teaching and learning activities, and the constitution of a form of expression of teaching and learning. The fact that, in the **repetition** of actions, a **pattern of activity** is identified, which then is called a form, is not explicitly stated. Indeed, he identifies variations of

activities within a specific form of expression, e.g., the variations of **prompting** mentioned are:

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

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

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

### **3.1 Fundamental didactic forms [ground forms]**

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

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

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

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

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

"The fundamental forms do not have to do with the fact that teaching is given, but rather how teaching acquires form in the practice of living. For this reason, thoughts about the fundamental forms refer directly to "method" (way) and build the bridge between the problematic of what "didaskhein" [teaching] really is, and **how**

this "didaskhein" creates a new life reality to which each person acts in terms of an appeal from reality".

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

### 3.2 LESSON FORM AS BASIS FOR DESIGNING A LESSON

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

However, a subject didactician must be able to design a teaching practice from an accountable theory. He/she must be able to design a meaningful lesson form for a situation which, practically speaking, implies the following:

(1) Variations of teaching activities must be ordered to give rise to a "pattern" or form which will meaningfully unlock a concept (content) for a pupil. This "pattern" or form of teaching is the joint result of several possible variations of teaching activities based on:

- \* Conversation, play, example, assignment
- \* Inductively inferring a rule
- \* Deductively elucidating a rule
- \* Ordering subject contents, and teaching activities
- \* Purposefully following specific methods

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

\* Sensing with looking, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, as variations, and sensing has an affective foundation.

\* Perceiving, with seeing, listening, feeling, sniffing and savoring as variations, and it has a cognitive foundation.

\* Thinking with, e.g., applying, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, logical reasoning, induction, and deduction as variations. Problem solving can be used here as a criterion.

\* Remembering with spontaneous and structured repeating, reconsidering, practicing, saying again, doing again, etc. as variations.

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

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

### **3.3 ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPT LESSON MODALITY**

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

The actualization of specific variations of teaching and learning, within a teaching relationship are the basis for creating a lesson modality. Swart (1977) differentiates three basic relationships, i.e.,

language dialoguing, seeking, and demonstrating [which correspond to conversation, play, and example, three of the fundamental didactic forms]. Basson (1978: 85), within this classification of relationships, has described for teaching practice variations of teaching and learning. By actualizing these variations of teaching and learning in specific ways, the following classification of activities within a teaching relationship is made (Basson, 1983: 36):

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

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

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

\* **Teaching modality:** This is the execution of a teaching activity, or variation of teaching supported by a teaching aid, by which teaching aims are achieved.

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

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

A particular pattern of teaching aims which can be striven for by a teacher within the course of teaching, is first formally described by Oosthuizen (1971: 28-48). He describes these aims of the course of a lesson within the unique nature of the subject content of mathematics. These aims of the course of a lesson, which direct the teaching activity of a teacher are fully described in connection with

subject didactics by Van Dyk (1977: 182), with variations of activities, which must be actualized to attain the aims.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is especially the subject didactician's task to identify and take stock, through analysis, of the modalities of teaching and learning. This describing of the variations of teaching and learning, in



connection with the nature of the subject are also linguistically formulated, but must be specific. The following theoretical model organizes concepts of didacticians and subject didacticians in their interrelatedness. The aim of the model is to demonstrate especially the connections among lesson content, the course of the lesson, lesson modality, and lesson form as a theoretical structure in connection with variations in teaching and learning.

### **SOME EXPLANATORY REMARKS ABOUT THE MODEL\***

\* Reality, as first experience, is ordered into subject areas.

\* This ordering into subject areas within a school curriculum must make reality accessible for pupils, and elevate the quality of their command of it.

\* Subject didacticians must identify and take stock of teaching and learning modalities in the practice of teaching. These variations must be scientifically classified and described so a meaningful teaching practice can be planned and actualized.

\* Subject didacticians must do research regarding the modes of learning and teaching with reference to themes, concepts, laws, rules, and principles in a subject area. In the model, this aspect is demonstrated by the variations of teaching and learning which are delimited by the didactic modality, as a theoretical structure. Necessarily, only a few variations are mentioned in the model.

\* This research can be directed, particularly, to identifying learning approaches and strategies in subject teaching. Variations in learning of, e.g., deep, and superficial learners can be analyzed and classified with the aim of designing an effective lesson for each of them.

\* The model clearly shows that the didactic form (fundamental forms, methods, principles) constitutes a more general or theoretical classification in the model. Thus, structurally, it constitutes the theoretical structure.

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

\* The connection among the didactic form and theoretical Structure, and variations of teaching and learning must be purposefully investigated by subject didacticians. Understanding and purposeful interpretation of these connections must contribute to improving practice.

\* While designing a lesson, things are particularized by making choices between variations in teaching and learning, which must be actualized to attain learning aims. A teaching practice is brought into motion primarily by these activities and, in this way, the form of the lesson becomes visible. The basis for a meaningful lesson form is to effectively unlock subject contents for the pupils.

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