

THE ADULT-CHILD EDUCATIVE RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURES AND LEARNING*

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1. INTRODUCTION

My purpose is to show the essential connections between the structures of an adult-child relationship and a child's actualization of his/her modes of learning within a situation of educating or upbringing (also referred to as a pedagogical situation). After I describe three structures of an adult-child educative relationship, i.e., trust, understanding, and authority (which amount to the affective, the cognitive, and the normative guidance or accompaniment of a child), I explicate seven modes or ways of learning, i.e., sensing, attending, perceiving, thinking, imagining/fantasizing, and remembering. Then, I show that the quality of the structure of trust (affective accompaniment) directly influences the quality of sensing and indirectly the other modes of learning, that the quality of the structure of understanding (cognitive accompaniment) is related to the quality of actualizing the cognitive modes of learning (e.g., perceiving, thinking), and that the quality of the pedagogical relationship structure of authority (normative accompaniment) is concerned with a child's appropriate actualization of the modes of learning in terms of norms and values by which aspects of the lifeworld, as learning contents, are experienced, e.g., as meaningful, valuable, useful, accurate, or not.

My perspective is a psychopedagogical one. That is, I approach the situation of educating/upbringing from within the human science of educating known as pedagogics, and my particular concern is with *how* the actualization of a child's range of potentialities occurs and, thus, with the actualization of his/her psychic life in such situations.

The following comments point to the philosophical anthropology on which psychopedagogics rests:

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(a) a human being is a psycho-physical-spiritual (existential) unity (Frankl, 1969); because of his/her spirituality, a human being is a person, and this spirituality makes educating both necessary and possible (De Vries, 1986; Gunter, 1974; Nel, 1974). I reject the incomplete natural science view that a human being is only a psycho-physical organism. My reason is that there are no self-conscious beings or persons without this spiritual dimension (Royce, 1969);

(b) a human being is always in a situation. (Here this “in” is not merely a spatial relationship; it means an in-volved being-there (e.g., Luijpen, 1969). A child on the way to adulthood is in a pedagogical situation (Langeveld, 1968). To know and assist him/her educatively, I must go to that situation where he/she is as an educand, i.e., as a being who can be and must be educated;

(c) learning is given with being human and it is one way in which he/she displays his/her psychic life (Sonnekus & Ferreira, 1979). In other words, the modes of learning are ways of going out to the world and of carrying on a dialogue by which one learns to know that world. As an act of intentionality, learning is a search for meaning, and this implies that, as something is learned, its meaning for the learner is changed as is the learner him/herself. Indeed, as a child learns, especially when accompanied by an educator (adult), the level of this dialogue is elevated, and he/she gradually behaves more as an adult. When a child becomes an autonomous, morally responsible person (i.e., an adult), the aim of educating/upbringing has been attained and a pedagogical relationship between adult and child is now an andragogical relationship between adults (e.g., Yonge, 1985).

2. THE STRUCTURES OF AN ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP WITHIN A PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION

As mentioned, to know or understand a learning child-in-education, my point of departure must be a pedagogic situation. Such a situation is constituted when an adult and a child establish a pedagogic relationship for the purpose of assisting the child to become an adult. Furthermore, the quality of the educative activities within such a situation depends on the quality of this relationship, which also is the interpersonal context within which any genuinely educative event occurs. Hence, the nature of this pedagogical relationship is my first focus.

Trust, understanding, and authority, as essential structures or moments of this or any educative relationship, are fundamental pedagogical categories (see Landman, Kilian, Swanepoel & Bodenstien, 1982).

(a) Trust

To become adult, a child must turn to and explore his/her lifeworld and come to know it. If he/she does not feel confident and secure, he/she becomes reluctant to venture into the unknown and his/her learning tends to stagnate. This confidence and security are experienced by the child when an adult accepts him/her as he/she is in his/her equal

dignity, and he/she trusts and accepts an adult as a guide to and as an image of his/her own future. This resulting sense of confidence and of security promotes a child's readiness and willingness to explore and learn.

From the above, trust is markedly pathic/affective in nature. It is primarily within this relationship structure that a trusted adult accompanies a trusting child and provides emotional support. As is seen in the section on learning, the quality of trust or affective accompaniment is directly related to the quality of a child's learning.

(b) Understanding

In wanting to be someone (Langeveld, 1968), a child also wants to and needs to know and understand. For a child to adequately actualize this cognitive directedness/openness (intentionality), he/she depends on the accompaniment or guidance of a trustworthy as well as understanding adult. This accompaniment toward increasing knowledge and understanding not only requires that an educator generally understands the nature of children and the role of educating in their becoming, but also the uniqueness of each child in his/her actuality and potentiality. This understanding should also reflect a respect for the dignity of an individual child.

On the other hand, a child's receptiveness for such accompaniment stems from his/her belief and trust in an adult as someone who offers advice and knowledge worth following. This means a child experiences an adult as someone who really understands him/her and as someone who is there for his/her benefit. A child wants to be grown up and, thus, has an intuitive understanding that he/she is directed toward adulthood. This provides the inherent motive for a child's willingness to explore and learn to understand the lifeworld as learning contents. This wanting to be grown up, as motive, is what allows Langeveld (1968) to say that a human child is a being who is committed to education/upbringing.

In a fundamental sense, this structure revolves around the mutual, though not equivalent, interpersonal understanding of adult and child; however, it also includes understanding for the sake of grasping aspects of the lifeworld. In this latter respect, the structure of understanding implies a relationship of exploration within a pedagogic situation. Thus, it is also the task of an educator to support a child in his/her exploration toward knowing the lifeworld as learning contents. This structure of the relationship becomes salient when one takes a didactic-pedagogical or teaching perspective on educating.

Thus, a pedagogical mode of understanding has a strong cognitive flavor. The essential purpose of this structure is for an adult to assist (intervene) and accompany a child to the self-actualization of his/her cognitive potentialities (i.e., cognitive modes of learning) with respect to the contents presented by an adult.

(c) Authority

Initially, most of the lifeworld is unknown and inaccessible to a child. An educator must gradually present aspects of the lifeworld which have been reduced to their essential core

such that a child can grasp and learn to know these contents. Also, it is clear to an educator that, within the society into which a child is being educated, there are important and unimportant aspects of the lifeworld as well as hierarchies of acceptable and unacceptable meanings and behaviors. Thus, the issue of responsibly giving and receiving meaning becomes evident. That is, giving and experiencing meaning are always matters of norms and values. Since an adult already understands and lives these norms and values, he/she has something to “show and tell” a child regarding them. But this showing and telling must take place within a dialogue between adult and child about reality and not be a monologue directed at a child by an adult. If the relationship structures of trust and understanding have been adequately actualized, an adult can appeal to a child to listen to and respond to the authority of these norms and values. At the same time, a child, through his/her helplessness, is appealing to an adult for normative guidance.

It is important to note that the source of pedagogical authority is *not* an adult as such, but rather the norms and values to which an adult is committed, and which are exemplified to a child in an adult’s words and deeds. When an adult accompanies a child in a trusting, understanding way within the structure of authority, he/she experiences what in pedagogics is called sympathetic, authoritative guidance. From this guidance, a child is increasingly able to give meaning him/herself, but to give it responsibly in terms of the norms and values represented to him/her by an adult. In this connection, I emphasize that the aim here is to assist a child to become committed to but not enslaved by these norms and values (Schmidt, 1973). When upbringing or educating has succeeded, a child’s response to authority is no longer to the person of his/her educator, the mere representative of authority, but rather to the authority of the values and norms themselves.

I bring this section to a close by emphasizing that the above structures of the fundamental pedagogical relationship are actualized as a totality and, thus, there is one relationship with three intertwined moments or structures. For example, the relationship structure of understanding offers a child the opportunity to obtain a grasp of the world and of life by exploring them. However, for this to happen effectively, a child must reach for and find security within a pedagogical relationship structure of trust and, in response to the appeal of an educator, chooses to follow the authority of the emulated norms and values. This latter implies an adult-child educative relationship that includes a structure of authority, which presupposes a structure of trust within which a child securely, confidently, and willingly responds to the pedagogical authority presented by as well as represented by an adult. It is within this adult-child pedagogic relationship which a child attempts to anchor and orient him/herself in terms of norms and values in a world into which he/she has been born.

These three structures of a pedagogical relationship constitute a pedagogical situation within which an adult assists a child to adequately actualize his/her modes of learning. I now address these modes of learning from a psychopedagogical perspective.

3. MODES OF LEARNING

As a child turns to the lifeworld and participates in it by experiencing some content and explicitly (i.e., willingly) gives meaning to it by lived experiencing it, he/she is actualizing his/her psychic life by learning to know that content. In the psychopedagogical literature (Sonnekus & Ferreira, 1979), learning is differentiated into seven modes, i.e., sensing, attending, perceiving, thinking, imagining/fantasizing, and remembering.

These modes of learning cannot be separated since their actualization is always a totality-in-function (Sonnekus, 1974). Also, learning is essentially pathic/affective in nature in that all modes of learning, even the most cognitive, are always accompanied and facilitated (or impeded) by the quality of a learner's emotional life (stable or labile, respectively).

(a) Accompanying modes of learning

1) Sensing

Following Straus (1963), and Sonnekus (1974), sensing is viewed as a mode of being by which a person is in communication with his/her world. In contrast to the usual understanding of sensing, it is not limited to receiving impressions or sensations via the senses. Indeed, sensing occurs through "sensory channels", but it is more than this; sensing is a mode of being and experiencing by which we establish and sustain our primary bodily-emotional relationship and contact with the world. The reception of sensory impressions occurs within this *already existing* primordial relationship.

Sensing is the beginning of all learning. It is the first dawning awareness of the learning contents which a child is encountering. This awareness is not yet knowing or understanding. That is, it is pre-cognitive; a child merely has a vague, diffuse, intuitive, unstructured something of a still implicit "type".

Sensing is the precondition and ground for the occurrence of the more cognitive modes. Sensing, as our primary relationship to the world, is called an accompanying mode of learning because it is the ever-present bedrock on which attending, perceiving, thinking, imagining, fantasizing, and remembering are supported.

A stable sensing is reflective of a stable emotional life and promotes effective learning. Labile or changeable sensing is symptomatic of feelings of anxiety, tension, uncertainty, etc. Such sensing interferes with attending and thus hinders adequate perceiving, thinking, and the other cognitive modes of learning. Thus, sensing is first and foremost a pathic/affective mode, and it influences the quality of the further course of learning on a cognitive level.

2) Attending

Attending is also a precondition for cognitive learning. Since a child can learn adequately only when he/she attends, it necessarily accompanies the other modes of learning.

Where sensing is the first involvement with the learning contents, attending is a willingness and readiness to remain involved with these contents. In attending, a child *decides* to pay attention to something; it is not automatic, and this decision is essential. But what of a loud, sudden noise which "catches my attention"? Is there a decision here? From a

psychopedagogical view, the answer is “no” because this is not yet true attending. It is a turning to something which is almost exclusively on the pathic level of sensing. A loud noise can momentarily distract me from what I am attending to, but if I do not decide to pay attention to that distraction, it becomes a past sensed distraction to which I have been drawn but to which I have chosen not to attend.

Attending is a movement from a pathic/affective sensing, as a concretely present sensual beginning, to the cognitive. When sensing is labile, attending fluctuates and has the character of a mere turning to something; deciding or willing to pay attention becomes weak or virtually nonexistent. As a child attends, the horizon of sensing is broken through, i.e., there is now a distancing from this concrete beginning to the cognitive and the cognitive modes of learning are now *directed to* the learning contents. This is an indication that a child has actualized his/her willingness to master the contents (i.e., he/she is *motivated* to learn).

An implication of the above comments regarding the accompanying modes of learning is that an adult (teacher) has the important task of stabilizing a child’s sensing and, in doing so, he/she can direct his/her attending. This enables a child, with appropriate guidance, to adequately actualize the cognitive modes of learning.

(b) Cognitive modes of learning

The cognitive modes of learning, sustained and accompanied by a stable sensing and a sharpened attending, are the conditions for a child’s cognitive learning activities in that they allow him/her to distance him/herself from the concrete-sensory and enter a more knowing relationship with the learning contents.

1) Perceiving

Perceiving is not a stimulus-response process but rather is a means by which a human being becomes involved in the world. It is always a perceiving of something, of meanings.

Straus (1963), and Sonnekus (1974) call sensing the first seeing and perceiving the second seeing. That is, perceiving is a more distanced, objective mode of world involvement than is our original sensing of something. Perceiving is directed to the universal, the generally valid, and the factual as is found in objects or contents of learning.

The vague, unclear, and incipient structure experienced on the level of sensing is, during perceiving, now clearer and more ordered. As a cognitive mode, the functions of perceiving are directed to global identifying, analyzing, synthesizing, comparing, and ordering of the perceived matter at hand. A learning child willfully directs him/herself to the nature of what is being perceived; a perceiver wants to be aware, to know, to grasp, to understand.

Perceiving is actualized when a child attends to what he/she has become aware (e.g., hearing becomes listening, seeing becomes looking). Effective perceiving is accompanied by a stable sensing and is actualized by a sharpened attending.

The quality of a child's perceiving is directly related to the extent to which he/she succeeds in effectively attending, which, in its turn, is directly related to the stability of sensing.

2) Thinking

Thinking is a cognitive mode of learning which is complementary to the other modes, but especially to perceiving which it also completes. It is directed to ordering, to the abstract, symbolic, to the conceptual, and to the solution of problems. Thinking is initiated by a problem or question of some sort. This confrontation with the problematic compels a child to seek solutions by such actions as planning, analyzing, abstracting, comparing, and ordering. In comparison with perceiving, these thinking activities, e.g., ordering, occur on a more abstract, symbolic level— even more distanced from the sensory than is perceiving.

A thinking child is directed from his/her perceiving the lifeworld as factual presence, to the world of thought in which the objective, the conceptual, insight, and understanding prevail. Straus (1963), and Sonnekus (1974) emphasize that thinking is a mode of living directed to knowing things as they are. Thinking has the character of breaking-through and distancing from one's original sensing to a cognitive level on which one attentively tries to master the learning contents.

3 and 4) Imagining and fantasizing

To understand imagining as a cognitive mode of learning, it is necessary to show that it is different from but also connected with perceiving. Sonnekus (1974), and Sonnekus & Ferreira (1979) indicate that perceiving is a mode by which a child is directed to the "real" world. The perceived object is self-present and directs an appeal to a perceiving child. In contrast, an imagined object is not actually present but is, by an act of imagining, something represented. Imagining constitutes an irreal (imaginary) reality or a more distanced relationship to reality than perceiving. However, no matter how "unreal" imagining might be, it is necessarily connected with previous perceptions. This does not mean that imagining is always merely "reproductive"; it can also contain creative moments by going beyond the data of perception and contributing something new.

Also, imagining can be true to or foreign to the lifeworld depending on its connection with a child's fantasy-life. By imagining, a child can transcend, break through the lifeworld and enter the world of the irreal on a cognitive level. This transcending the lifeworld makes room for a creative intercourse with it. In this connection, although imagining is not thinking, it can give rise to and even initiate thinking.

Fantasizing is a mode of learning which is directed to an even more distanced relationship with the lifeworld. Fantasizing is a way of distancing oneself toward the unknown, to a future, to that which is not now real, and which may never become real.

If not supported by a stable sensing, fantasizing can be a means for a child to "escape" the demands of the lifeworld and become immersed in a pathic/affective world in which feelings, wishes, and desires are rampant. On the other hand, it also embraces the possibility for a predominantly cognitive directedness (intentionality) where creative thinking, understanding, and penetrating insights are possible.

Although imagining and fantasizing both have a strong emotional side, as far as the effective course of learning is concerned, both should be actualized on a predominantly cognitive level. Thus, the actualization of these two modes, during learning, are primarily directed to knowing, planning, creating, exploring, trying out, etc. In these respects, fantasizing allows a child to distance him/herself from the lifeworld and to break through it to a “new” world to understand and explore by creatively and productively thinking and working in it.

5) Remembering

Remembering is a mode of learning by which a child recalls, in the present, learning contents which have already been acquired in the past (Straus, 1963; Sonnekus & Ferreira, 1979). In remembering, a child “stimulates” relevant previous experiences so he/she can implement them in the present learning situation. This implementation allows him/her to find connections between what is already known and the new learning contents with which he/she is confronted.

Thus, viewed psychopedagogically, remembering also is an act by which a child willingly integrates new learning contents with his/her previous experiences. To the extent that learning is effective, a child’s possessed experience expands, broadens, and deepens. In this sense, remembering “crowns” the course of learning because, in relation to the other modes of learning, it enables a child to integrate new knowledge resulting from the actualization of those modes of learning with existing knowledge.

Although I have treated the above modes of learning separately, it is emphasized that they are actualized as a totality. What is more, this actualization requires a child’s initiative, but for the proper and responsible actualization of learning, a child is dependent on the educative support and guidance of an adult. The issue which I now address is how the quality of an adult-child educative relationship influences the quality of a child’s learning.

4. THE ADULT-CHILD EDUCATIVE RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURES AND LEARNING

My aim here is to characterize a few of many connections between the three educative relationship structures (trust, understanding, authority) and a child’s modes of learning. Although learning is a personal act initiated by a learner, the quality and course of this learning are re influenced by the quality of these three interacting structures constituting any pedagogically accountable event of educating as upbringing.

It is primarily within a relationship of pedagogical trust, which is pathic/affective in nature, that an adult can directly influence the stability or lability of a child’s sensing, which also is essentially pathic/affective. The emphasis here is on the affective or emotional aspect or moment of educating a child. This involves an adult accompanying a child to a stable sensing, supported by stabilizing his/her emotional attunement to and communication with life. This is accomplished by an adult (e.g., parent or teacher) providing a child with a relaxed, supportive, and caring educative climate which promotes feelings of security, safety, and confidence, all of which contribute to mutual trust. From the resulting emotional stability, a child tends to show a readiness and willingness to learn.

With respect to the cognitive modes of learning, the mode of pedagogical understanding, for the sake of grasping aspects of the lifeworld, is strongly in the foreground. Even so, interpersonal understanding is also relevant because, if a child does not feel understood by an adult or understand that an adult is trying to guide him/her, trust can be weakened, which easily labializes a learner's emotions (sensing).

Also, if an adult does not understand a child in his/her actuality and potentiality, he/she may demand too much or expect too little from him/her, which also can labialize his/her sensing.

Within the structure of understanding, an adult directs a child's attending while accompanying and guiding his/her actualization of the cognitive modes of learning. This is done by answering a child's questions, by showing him/her how to answer these questions, by reducing and ordering the learning contents, e.g., by using teaching and learning aids. In other words, this amounts to teaching in accordance with the categories of didactic pedagogics (the theory and practice of educative teaching). See Van der Stoep & Louw (1984). Psychopedagogically, this accompaniment means that a child is supported and assisted to actualize his/her learning potential on a cognitive, ordered (logical, systematic) level of lived experiencing. All this is prepared for by stabilizing sensing and strengthening willing which enable him/her to lived experience on an affective, stable level being promoted by mutual trust and understanding.

The primary aim of the relationship of authority is to accompany and assist a child to increasingly live his/her life in terms of acceptable norms and values. At issue is conscience forming (Nel, 1974). This pedagogical relationship structure of authority is related to what is called normative education or accompaniment from a psychopedagogical perspective. Here an adult accompanies a child to the responsible actualization of the modes of learning in terms of norms and values by which the learning contents are experienced as meaningful, useful, valuable, correct, etc.

This responsible actualization of learning is accomplished by an adult's corrective or accepting guidance of a child's use of his/her modes of learning and of his/her appropriate grasp of the content being learned. In addition, an adult must exemplify the relevant values and norms of adulthood. But acceptance, correction, and exemplification are not enough. The appropriation of norms and values takes place mainly by means of a child's willingness to identify with the adult. The initiative for this identification remains with a child. Thus, without a child's willingness to identify with an adult, fostered by mutual trust and without a realistic exemplification of the acceptable, stemming from a realistic adult understanding of him/her, identifying and internalizing the exemplified values will probably occur with great difficulty if at all.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Even though a child can and does learn independently in a variety of life situations, a major implication of the above is that the educative guidance of a child to effectively learn is never an exclusively cognitive matter. The affective, cognitive, and normative

accompaniment of a child in terms of pedagogical trust, understanding, and authority is essential. In its turn, the actualization of the cognitive modes of learning rests on an affective foundation and finds its direction in terms of norms and values (the normative). Thus, the first two tasks of an adult (including a classroom teacher) are to stabilize a child's sensing, and to direct his/her attending so the cognitive modes of learning can be properly actualized and guided in accordance with the norms and values represented to a child by an adult.

A final point is that an adult, e.g., a teacher, in assessing the degree of learning, must continually monitor the learning of the cognitive contents, the structures of the educative relationship, and a child's emotional and normative life. If this is not done, instruction can easily degenerate into a narrow focus, say, on attaining the highest amount of measured achievement with the greatest efficiency. To the extent that the affective and normative aspects of a child-in- education are downplayed, this can contribute to the pedagogical neglect of a learner. A child is then surrendered to a false standard and the course of his/her educating/upbringing, in fact, is hampered in the very name of "scholastic excellence".

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