Teacher Education for Transformative Agency

Critical perspectives
on design, content
and pedagogy

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Teaching educational psychology: Creating an epistemological disposition

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Introduction

The discipline of educational psychology is one of the core areas of interest in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) offered by the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University, and is deemed essential for understanding the processes of learning, supporting and teaching, especially in the context of adolescence.

The revised *Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* (DHET, 2015) refers to five types of learning associated with the acquisition, integration and application of knowledge for teaching purposes. These types of learning underpin the design of programmes leading to teacher education qualifications (see section 3.4 of the revised policy, 2015). One of these types of learning, namely disciplinary learning, is vital for positioning educational psychology as a significant foundation of education. The policy defines disciplinary learning as: “disciplinary knowledge which can be presented

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in the study of education and its foundations, including but not limited to the philosophy, psychology, politics, economics, sociology and history of education” (DHET, 2015:11). Educational psychology is an indispensable disciplinary means of accessing knowledge and understanding of the relational or connected nature of being and acting in the world. It provides the kind of disciplinary insight that penetrates to the socio-emotional core of human development, which in turn forms the foundation of a child’s capacity to learn and a teacher’s conscious capacity to be sensitively responsive to processes of learning, reflecting and understanding.

Although the minimum qualification required for entry to the PGCE programme is a bachelor’s degree, admission seldom requires a deep understanding of the disciplinary knowledge associated with developmental psychology. It may be assumed that many candidate teacher students are not academically experienced in deep content pertaining to human development, such as attachment or affectional bonding, interpersonal trust, motivation and self-regulation, to name but a few of the psychological matters that underlie the process of learning.

In this chapter, I attempt to organise some of the main theoretical dimensions and principles that constitute my own epistemological foundation. This foundation evolved from my formal studies and experience in the disciplines and practice of teaching and psychology. To encourage students to delve into the delicate and respectful craft of mediated learning, I have to map some of the central and linking aspects underlying the learning relationship. I explain these aspects, including emotional security (trust), healthy psychological boundaries, interconnectedness and individuation, as well as the role teachers can play as ad hoc attachment figures¹ in simulating attachment security. Prominent researchers in the field of attachment theory have pointed out that the function of a secure affectional bond is to ensure a flourishing and individuated² sense of self. This in turn leads to the trusting relationship between adult and child, including that between teacher and learner, which is

1 Researchers in the field of attachment, including Kennedy and Kennedy (2004), regard teachers as ad hoc attachment figures because the teacher-child attachment, unlike the child-primary caregiver attachment, is relatively short-lived and a less exclusive emotional investment.

2 Individuation refers to the gradual process of integrating opposite archetypal functions and elements, such as chaos and order, creation and destruction, death and rebirth, growth and regression, good and evil, anima and animus, individuality and collectivity. In the Jungian tradition, the process of individuation serves to maintain a healthy tension between ambivalent content from which vitality and creativity (growth) can spring. In the words of Carl Jung: “The ego keeps its integrity only if it does not identify with one of the opposites, and if it understands how to hold the balance between them. This is possible only if it remains conscious of both at once” (1960:para 425).

critically important for human growth and learning. It appears that a tapestry of disciplinary insight into human development and the process of learning is indispensable for ethical education praxis. Such an interpretation framework should therefore be included in the PGCE teacher education and training curriculum as part of a core module that emphasises educational psychology.

Contributing to the science of teacher education

Educational psychology is considered a branch of the broader field of psychology and is mainly concerned with the process of human learning in various educational settings (Swart & Eloff, 2019:2-3). It typically spans dimensions of the scientific study of learning challenges and educational interventions, as well as the associated role of psychosocial factors. The contribution of educational psychology to education is also found in its strong links with other social sciences relevant to education, such as philosophy, psychology and, of course, education itself (Norwich, 2002).

The discipline of educational psychology draws from other core disciplines, such as psychology, education and philosophy, to deal with a number of critical developmental and educational matters. With regard to teaching and training, these matters include high-school educators' insight into the different developmental dimensions of adolescent learning (such as neurology, cognition, motivation, personality and socio-emotional development), and the promotion of supportive and nourishing learning environments. The focus would therefore be on certain human characteristics, for example intelligence, cognitive development, affect (emotions, feelings, and mood), motivation and self-regulation, as well as academic self-concept and its role in learning.

Educational psychology is concerned with the way development, learning, teaching and environment intersect with one another to promote or inhibit educational growth and thriving. The goals, therefore, are to gain critical insight into the teaching and learning processes in everyday situations, such as general living, schooling, studying and working, and to improve them (Norwich, 2002). The prominent place the module occupies in the PGCE programme puts it in an excellent position to expose students to some of the key dimensions underlying the processes of learning and teaching in secondary education, such as adolescent development, motivation, mediation, self-efficacy, self-regulation, cognitive strategies, intervention and support, as well as social, emotional and behavioural challenges in the classroom. These dimensions are knitted together to form the module content and serve as an

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essential psychoeducational foundation for the aspiring secondary-phase education student. However, to preserve the epistemological significance of curriculum knowledge, the teaching approach followed in such a module is important. Any teaching approach, including thinking and making choices about the composition and facilitation of the curriculum, implies a preceding epistemological disposition. An epistemological disposition refers to the possible character of knowledge and consists of certain core theoretical insights and philosophical views that serve as the framework for understanding and arguing specific curriculum knowledge. I have over the last few years endeavoured to develop an initial, integrated epistemological disposition which serves to be the foundation of my approach to teaching educational psychology to PGCE students.

Teaching educational psychology: Framing language, disciplinary insights and theoretical views

The rationale or basis of an intellectual position or practice often is a particular thought framework. Such a framework usually comprises certain paradigmatic viewpoints, philosophical orientations and theoretical principles that open up ways of understanding discourses, problems and phenomena. Moss (2019:28) explains: “Paradigms affect our thinking about everything, including ontology (What is reality?), epistemology (How do you know something?) and methodology (How do you go about finding out?)”. My view of humanity and the phenomena of development and learning precede what and how I teach. This view is informed by related disciplinary knowledge and theoretical orientations in the broader field of psychology and education. The particular assemblage of ideas provides the guiding principle on the basis of which an intellectually grounding tapestry of curriculum knowledge can be carefully woven. It also anchors a module that focuses on educational psychology as part of the offering of a professional teacher education programme such as PGCE. Although this process is continuously evolving, I have tried to weave a tapestry that may become a grounding for this particular module and includes the theoretical aspects of attachment, care, interconnectedness and individuation.

The following section presents my preliminary synthesis of some of the core disciplinary insights and theoretical principles that underlie the module I teach (see Figure 3.1). Through logical argumentation, the insights and principles are merged into a particular pattern of thought that functions potentially as an epistemological disposition for teaching educational psychology.

Figure 3.1 Preliminary synthesis of some of the core disciplinary insights and theoretical principles underlying the educational psychology module in the PGCE at Stellenbosch University

The unifying principle

The Jungian understanding of human development, based on the revolutionary work of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), reflects a gnostic orientation that views everything and everyone as inherently interconnected and part of a larger whole. The relevance of such a unifying principle does not depend on whether or not it is credible in a religion – in other words, a belief in a larger cosmic coherence. It rather proposes decentring the human being as an exceptional and independent ruling entity. A unified view, characterised by implied interdependence and relational embeddedness, disputes such an anthropocentric notion of being human. For Jung (1958/2002) this means, for example, that when human beings harm any aspect of the natural world, they harm a part of their larger selves (33–34). The notion of human exceptionality corresponds to the Cartesian ideal of human immortality that can only be attained through a self-indulgent consumerist approach driven by ceaseless *amor concupiscentiae* (devouring desires, power, status, money, etc.). Marthinus Versfeld (1982), a South African philosopher who wrote movingly

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about the ontological nature of being human, was convinced that such an instrumentalist ethos is followed at the expense of the innate need for an intimate connection with that which lies in the realm of human experience and beyond. To develop such an ontological nature is of particular significance in this era of unbridled, ever-expanding digital consumerism characterised by fragmentation, over-stimulation, utility and immediacy. Without an embedded view of humankind and the world, individuals and communities will become mere ungrounded functionaries of the prevailing societal zeitgeist that emphasises thoughtless pursuit of power, products and pleasure. Such a person “does not live with himself, but *for* himself” (Versfeld, 1982:61) [my translation]. The poet Charles Bernstein (1986) echoed the same sentiment in his writings, namely that humankind’s problem is that people constantly set up issues against each other, which results in ‘schismatic’ or dualistic thinking. The unifying principle holds, therefore, that ultimate creativity and freedom lie in a larger and relational coherence, rather than in entities of conformist reasoning.

The relational principle

The caring, receptive disposition begins with the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings. The human condition is therefore one of connectedness and interdependence in which we experience ourselves in relation to others but do not dismiss individual psychological and social boundaries. The evolutionary function of human beings to elicit care from primary others is called attachment. This function starts to develop even before birth and before any other learning can take place. Secure attachments, that is, affectional bonds, are formed when caregivers are deeply and sensitively attuned to a child’s need for physical safety, psychological security, proximity, comfort, care, warmth and loving interaction. Such attachments result in a sense of being grounded, characterised by familiarity and predictability, which in turn encourage responsible risk-taking, exploration and creativity. The pioneering attachment researchers John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (cited in Van der Horst, 2011) theorised that early experiences with primary caregivers are particularly important for the development of secure attachment relationships and the formation of a person’s own future attachment (including parenting or teaching) style. Noteworthy is the sentiment of embodiment, which means the internal working model or schema of a relationship is initially grounded in a physical or sensory experience of being in the world.

Infants' expressed desire for proximity is dependent on caregivers' past responses to them (Geddes, 2006). If caregivers' responding styles are mainly characterised by rigid, cold and distant or laissez-faire behaviour, children will eventually learn that adults will not take care of or comfort them. Infants are born with a propensity to direct attachment behaviours such as crying, clinging and looking at the caregivers who are most likely to respond. These behaviours elicit caregiving and bring the caregiver into close proximity with the infant, ensuring protection from environmental dangers and a sense of security (evolutionary function). Over time, infants begin to direct these responses primarily to one or a few caregivers, and at around seven to eight months of age, infants show attachment to caregivers by protesting their leaving and grieving for them during their absence (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Geddes, 2006). During this time, young children form an internal working model of the attachment relationships which serves as an internal representation of the self, others and relationships (e.g. self as competent and worthy of respect; others as guiding, supportive, helpful) (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004).

A secure base depends on the child's internal working model of caregivers as trustworthy, sensitive, accessible and responsive to their needs. Since children's behaviour and intentions often reflect their relationship history and strategies for coping with stress and relatedness, it is essential that attachment security be established through deliberate education and nurturance (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Geddes, 2006). Close emotional relationships can also exist beyond the child-parent or child-primary caregiver attachment, e.g. the teacher-child relationship, in which teachers are regarded as ad hoc attachment figures. In such a case, the teacher-child relationship may allow for exploration from a secure base and for a safe haven in stressful situations. In this way the relationship will have a positive influence on socio-emotional development (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004).

Social development precedes emotional development

Socio-emotional development is typically seen as a complicated and gradual process, driven by the a priori phenomenon of attachment – the innate need to establish intimate connections with others and the world in which one exists. This includes matters such as emotional regulation (having insight into one's own and others' emotional reactions), empathy and the development of personal identity. Furthermore, there is a significant link between cognitive and social development in the sense that a person's cognitive skills and capacities cannot be fully engaged unless the need for intimate bonding and emotional security (trust) is nurtured. Secure attachment relationships correlate strongly

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with higher academic attainment, socio-emotional insight and competence, including empathy and self-regulation (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Geddes, 2006). It is not for nothing that the distinguished psychologist Donald Winnicott repeatedly made a powerful case for the delicate, fundamental mechanism of the child-caretaker bond, which forms the basis for interdependent behaviour that is characterised by an awareness and recognition of the simultaneous nature of one's individual autonomy (freedom) and one's embeddedness in the collective world of everything.

Emotional development is not a natural developmental occurrence; it occurs only with deliberate and optimal nurturance and education. If the emotional development of children is neglected, they often become adults that struggle to build loving long-term relationships (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). The way in which parents as primary caregivers, and other attachment figures such as teachers, initially and over time respond to children's needs largely guides their emotional development. Researchers in the field of child development agree that the emotional caring style (e.g. rigid, cold, warm, laissez-faire, authoritative, democratic, stable) of the adult precedes the child's own developing emotional repertoire. If the adult's emotional caring style is characterised by unconditional acceptance, consistency and predictability, recognition and love, it forms the foundation of a trusting attachment between the child and the caregiver. It should be noted that love in this sense is not of a sentimental nature, but rather an uninhibited and generous way of being open and attuned – being unquestionably present – to the needs of the developing child. When the emotional caring style of an adult is instead characterised by inconsistency and conditionality, it creates enormous confusion and uncertainty in any child. In essence, this kind of behaviour by adults towards children signifies the violation of an important psychosocial boundary, namely that between the adult as the carer and the child as the care-recipient. While it is expected of the adult to be the caregiver, the child, because of his or her natural (developmental) vulnerability, is allowed to expect proper care from an adult.

When children's innate developmental vulnerability and trusting nature are manipulated and exploited by an uncaring and unresponsive society, they are robbed of a sense of security. What such children learn is that relationships are mainly good in so far as one gets something out of them for one's own advancement and survival. In turn, such a distorted orientation towards relationships has the potential to lead to manipulation and exploitation by the child. Consequently, such a child's own emotional repertoire will over time be characterised predominantly by fear, suspicion, distrust and repressed anger.

This limited emotional repertoire, which rests on an inadequate attachment with primary caregivers, will continue to play itself out by being projected on to other relationships in the form of resistant, avoidant or disorganised (chaotic) behaviour. It is this kind of expressed behaviour by both adult (including the teacher student) and child that often is observed in school classrooms and lecture halls. One can come to understand and intervene in this attachment phenomenon by means of a combination of attachment theory and general systems thinking, as well as the principles of gestalt and Jungian analytical psychology.

In the following sections, I describe how this cluster of theoretical orientations may be applied to establish further the relational argument and the rest of the proposed epistemological disposition.

The principle of healthy psychological boundaries

In the context of systems thinking and according to the principles of pioneering gestalt and Jungian analytical psychology, it is in the interest of the natural integrity of human beings to constantly cultivate preservative and functional boundaries. This would mean that the individual and the collective – as interconnected and complex self-organising systems or environments, each made up of different processes, characteristics, events and circumstances – continuously strive to maintain equilibrium. Donella Meadows (2008) is renowned for her work in the field of systems thinking, and uses this approach to understand phenomena pertaining to the human condition. She considers that the capacity for self-correction and self-support of any system implies the focus should be on the enhancement of wholeness and integration. Jung's view of the self, as a fundamental psychic ordering principle essential for self-regulation, is similar (1916/1960). Even before any learning takes place, the human endeavour is to become psychologically grounded. To achieve this, it is essential to satisfy especially the primordial psychic need for personal relationships, group belonging, recognition, new experiences, self-efficacy and spiritual connections, as extensively described by the psychoanalysts John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth and Donald Winnicott (cited in Van der Horst, 2011).

Arising from the above is the capacity, attributed to proximal and more indirect relationships and interactions of both an intra- and interpersonal nature, to gain awareness of how influences are related to the current state of affairs, difficulties or the contemporary zeitgeist. This focus on one's autonomy and

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understanding oneself as simultaneously apart from and part of the external world, is one of the basic assumptions in gestalt psychology. Underlying this assumption is perhaps the human instinct to learn (survive), which in turn is driven by one's need to have one's own identity and be accepted by others. This gives rise to the question: Where do I start and where do I end? In the context of healthy emotional and social development, the sense of the differentiated self (a sense of self) is achieved through understanding and applying clearly defined psychological boundaries. Because of their developmental level, characterised by natural receptiveness and openness to explore, children and adolescents are more vulnerable to the manipulation and violation of their own boundaries.

Generally, various types of boundaries can be identified, such as individual, intergenerational and family boundaries, each characterised by certain states, ranging from too strong (rigid), to healthy (flexible) to too weak (diffuse) (Friel & Friel, 1988). Human beings' primordial need for acceptance by others has already been mentioned. It is perhaps not surprising that "the underlying reason that individuals can't set healthy limits is that they are desperately afraid that they will be abandoned if they say *no*" (Friel & Friel, 1988:59). The principle of confluence, a key term in gestalt psychology, refers to a boundless state. Violet Oaklander (cited in Campbell, 1993:59), an expert child therapist, explains this as:

[...] not having a good sense of self, when someone doesn't have a sense of who they are without knowing what the other thinks of them or children who seem to be very enmeshed with their parents, or are overly eager to please.

When the lines between adults and children, and between individuals and groups, become vague or even violated through projection, guilt, isolation and manipulation, the individual is robbed of a sense of safety and learns that they will not be cared for. As a result, children and young people start either to block their own emotions or to display emotionally irrational behaviour. This in turn inhibits contact, another key gestalt term, which Oaklander (cited in Campbell, 1993:58) explains as the ability to be aware of "what one feels, being congruent with what one is feeling, and using the intellect, speaking and expressing through the intellect as part of making contact". The principle of healthy psychological boundaries is summarised in Figure 3.2.

Cultivating a healthy psychological fence

Figure 3.2 The principle of healthy psychological boundaries

Promoting and stimulating nurturing rituals and rhythms characterised by a contemplative orientation, silence and consistency allows for circumstantial movement (without using defence mechanisms) between psychological and social boundaries. In modern society, communication is characterised by broadcasting, utility and immediacy, a mass human machine where nothing ever really stops or starts, begins or ends. Healthy boundaries are threatened even more. In such circumstances, the inherent developmental vulnerability of children and adolescents may lead to them finding it difficult not to overflow (loss of individual autonomy or personal integrity) or wither within their own boundaries (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017). To counter this challenge, classrooms and teaching practices can imitate healthy boundaries and attachments to stimulate and promote optimal emotional, and therefore social, development. However, it requires that teachers (and student teachers) consider the psychic life of the developing child, as well as their own relational histories in an intellectual and analytical manner. The specific boundary states described are presented in Figure 3.3.

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Figure 3.3 Boundary states (adapted from Friel & Friel, 1988)

Teachers, schools and communities have to provide a sense of psychological safety, that is, emotional security, as opposed to engendering insecure, anxious feelings. A secure base is needed for healthy risk-taking and exploration. Setting appropriate and clear boundaries in a consistent and predictable manner is a way of being empathic and aids the establishment of emotional security. Regular rituals and repetitive routines (healthy rhythms) are grounding by nature and can lay the foundation for proper self-regulation, intellectual development, inner calmness and control, identity and values. These are routines that are not too rigid or strict, rather adaptable and spontaneous, and can include regular reading and writing hours, conversation circles, visits to museums, the theatre and art galleries, strolls in botanical gardens and hiking. At the core of these physical and sensory actions lies the potential of a more conscious connection with oneself, allowing one to gain better insight into one's own embedded nature and place in the larger cosmos.

The creative principle

In my view, the creative principle serves as the intersection of all the other theoretical viewpoints and is inferred from the Jungian principle of individuation. Individuation, in Jungian terms, refers to the innate human potential for creating a state of psychological equilibrium by integrating manifold inner contradictions into a unified totality. It means to seek out actively (to recognise), and become aware of, opposite elements (e.g. feelings, thoughts, orientations, urges and needs), and to discover how they all form part of a unitary and integrated cosmos beyond mere binaries, hierarchies and independent entities. Individuation is a lifelong process during which the human psyche attempts naturally to maintain and preserve the delicate balance between simultaneous and conflicting possibilities of an ontological nature, such as life and death, destruction and creation, masculinity and femininity, inclusion and exclusion, individual and culture, and order and chaos. The Jungian view is that vitality, imagination and creativity spring from the incongruity of opposite elements, developing wholeness. At the core of my theoretical disposition is the strong conviction that the human psyche is naturally directed at continuously developing greater psychological consciousness, that is, the constant integration of psychic opposites into a meaningful entirety.

According to the Jungian point of view, a free society depends on the increased consciousness of the individuals that make up that society. As Jung puts it: “[I]f the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption” (1958/2002:40). An ethical endeavour would therefore be to nurture the a priori potential for development and growth that resides in individuals and eventually in communities, and at the same time to refute the dogmatic mass-mindedness that sees the individual as a mere function of society.

The aesthetic orientation as an underlying transcendental function of education

Closely associated with the creative principle is the aesthetic orientation, which suggests a certain quality of experience – a heightened sensory awareness and hence a change of consciousness. Aesthetics refers to the Greek understanding of *aesthēsis*, which alludes to a sharpened ability to distinguish between subtle changes and to observe interrelated possibilities, unexpected influences and the simultaneousness of everything. It can be argued that, besides the cognitive dimension, the quality of that which is comprehended depends

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on the sensory and affective dimensions of understanding. Research has confirmed that the quality of our thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, imagination, initiative and emotional and social insight originates from the physical or bodily experience (Johnson, 1987; Krantz, 1994). Emerson, who wrote magnificently about aesthetics, states that beauty can be seen as: “the virtue which constitutes a thing beautiful,” that is, “a certain cosmical quality, or, a power to suggest relation to the whole world, and so lifts the object out of a pitiful individuality” (1983:1110-1111). In contrast to individualism is the Jungian concept of individuation, that is, self-transformation or the process of becoming who you are. Individuation refers to a visceral awareness of human fellowship and the interdependence of all events, objects and creatures. The aesthetic orientation provides an antidote to what Stiegler (cited in Ieven, 2012) refers to as the hyper-industrialised society. This term denotes the increasing marketability and commodification of everything. In light of this view, it can be argued that the aesthetic orientation, characterised by contemplative silence, sharpened attentiveness, patience and imagination, contributes to a deeper and renewed (transformed) experience of understanding (knowing) and being in the world.

Module outcome and content

On completion of this module, the intention is that pre-service teachers should have gained critical insight into the developmental phase of adolescence and how developmental dimensions interact with the learning process and influence teaching practice, including effective mediation and support of diverse learning abilities. Based on the rationale and outcome of this module the curriculum consists of the following themes and foci:

1. Educational psychology explained as the intersection of Psychology, Philosophy and Education;
2. The adolescent developmental phase and implications for the classroom. (Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model as a way of understanding human development in terms of a multitude of reciprocal influences, variables and processes; physical and neurological development in the adolescent developmental phase; cognitive development and psychosocial development);
3. The experience of learning as an embedded process (Various learning theories, discourses and teaching dispositions, including artful teaching; learning preferences and strategies; and complex cognitive strategies, including critical thinking, problem-solving, meta-learning and self-regulated learning);
4. The teacher as mediator of embedded learning experiences (Mediation of learning; teaching modalities and strategies; creating aesthetic learning experiences and environments; motivation);

5. Inclusive education and learning support (Defining inclusive education; assessing for learning support; specific learning barriers; educational intervention); and
6. Social, emotional and behavioural challenges in the classroom (Definition, nature and types of social, emotional and behavioural challenges; supporting such challenges through preventative care and empathic intervention).

The educational meaningfulness of the discipline-specific content listed above is based on the epistemological theorems which I have explained earlier. As student teachers gradually immerse themselves in the module content over the course of the year, I urge them to try to identify some important psychoeducational principles from each of the above-mentioned themes. This requires students to formulate and substantiate various succinct fundamental rules, laws or propositions derived from the themes concerned. Finally, they need to describe in practical terms how the different principles can be applied in the learning and teaching environment. Such an assignment does not only assess students' knowledge and understanding of the content, but also stimulates the emergence of an integrated network of connected discipline-specific insights that can act as a theoretical framework.

Challenges and affordances closely associated with teaching educational psychology in the PGCE programme

Teaching educational psychology to pre-service high school teachers affords the opportunity to place learning and support against the backdrop of human development, specifically adolescence, and to highlight very specific implications for learning and teaching in contemporary educational settings. Teaching educational psychology affords an inside track into understanding students' own psychological challenges and needs, and the opportunity to provide support where possible. In fact, the curriculum often unintentionally addresses some of the challenges and needs that occur by applying cognitive strategies more effectively, and identifying and evaluating unhelpful, that is, rigid or intellectually immature, mental schemas, amongst other things.

One of the challenges in teaching educational psychology is that the discipline itself regularly holds up a mirror to students. This often causes socially and emotionally immature students, or students with unresolved disappointments and psychological issues, to project possible inadequate past experiences onto their current learning and teaching situation. Such reactions often reflect students' longstanding and unresolved past experiences, taking the form of inflexible thinking, excessive emotional outbursts, intolerance of disciplinary knowledge and extrinsic blaming and shaming. Over time, such circumstances

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may unfortunately give rise to an attitude characterised mainly by distrust and suspicion, to which the student reverts by default in stressful times. Such a debilitating orientation holds serious negative consequences for the student's ability to be receptive to new learning experiences and opportunities. It should perhaps also be kept in mind that the initial learning approach of students in the developmental stage of early adulthood is normally characterised by reactivity and the mere repetition of existing ways of thinking (Taylor, 2000:157-158). The continuous process of learning and meaning-making implies regular adjustment, change and re-creation (transformation) of what is currently believed or known. This is perhaps best done by way of critical and thoughtful reflection.

The sociologist and educator Jack Mezirow (2000), in his theoretical views on transformative learning, emphasises the process of reflective thinking and reconsideration of existing thinking schemes and discourses through critical evaluation and reformulation. For Mezirow, it is mainly about development of a critical awareness of the way in which environmental influences work together to transform one's own assumptions and beliefs over time into a specific meaning scheme or world view. That world view usually influences one's behaviour and actions, and the way one evaluates and makes sense of the self, others and the world of which one forms part. Transformative learning assumes that limiting thinking frameworks can be adapted, modified and expanded through deliberate reflection and elaboration to include alternative insights. This process of perspective transformation further presupposes that the intellectual (thinking) function is thoroughly interwoven with the function of the affective (emotion, feeling, motivation and intentionality), and indicates the totality of the meaning of an experience.

Transformative learning implies reformulation and involves a reflective process, in other words, critical reflection on an experience as a whole. It therefore includes thoughts, ideas, sensations, feelings, reactions, decisions and actions. Characteristic prerequisites of the reflective process include the ability to be open to all aspects of an experience, the application of *epoché* (a Greek philosophical term referring to the temporary suspension of a validation or judgement), association formation and the eventual synthesis of different views. One can agree with David Boud (cited in Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985), therefore, when he remarks: "Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate. It is this working with experience that is important in learning" (1985:19). Transformative learning, however, is a sophisticated and continuous

deployment process that includes intellectual (abstract and multiple thinking) and affective (ability for openness, empathy and maintaining relationships with others) maturity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to reflect on the questions: How do I approach the teaching of my PGCE module in educational psychology? And, why do I choose this way? This reflection included describing what educational psychology entails in the context of teaching, as well as an exposition of how the module content is organised according to themes and associated foci. Reflecting on the question about a specific approach is prompted by the need to explain and map the significance of educational psychology in understanding the delicate mediating relationship between teacher and learner. Becoming a teacher who seeks to enter the learning relationship in an attentive and sensitively responsive manner demands an understanding of the development of secure attachment relationships. In countries such as South Africa, where relationships are often characterised by fear, suspicion, distrust and repressed anger, this may be even more necessary. I should like to believe that educational psychology is in an excellent position to heed this call because of its ability to illuminate essential dimensions of human development and the process of learning. Thinking in this way has led me to synthesise some key theoretical principles and disciplinary insights, which resulted in an initial epistemological disposition. This continuously evolving locus forms the foundation of my teaching of educational psychology to students who want to be teachers. The importance of an initial epistemological disposition is perhaps twofold. Synthesising related theoretical principles and disciplinary insights is a way of promoting a more nuanced and thoughtful educational psychology curriculum that would include conscious awareness of the challenges and affordances closely associated with teaching this particular module. It can also serve as a basis for continued improvement and refinement of the curriculum as part of the greater pedagogical quest characterised by scientific and scholarly endeavours aimed at transcendental goodness, beauty and truth.

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