

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical basis of Empirical Education

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education is a universal phenomenon. It is found among people of all cultures. The adult educates the child for whom he is responsible in order that the child may become a worthy participant in his particular society. This activity in which the adult helps the child, supports and accompanies him, is called the education phenomenon.

The education phenomenon manifests itself as an event that *takes place among people, and among people only*. As a result of this stance *the possibility of directly applying the results of experiments with animals to some or other aspect of education is immediately excluded*. The phenomenon of education can only exist where there is already some association between an adult and a child. Since this association is a prerequisite for education, it follows that not all association between adults and children, or between teachers and children imply education. To quote Van Praag (1950, p. 2): "He who educates continually, does not educate at all." There is much free and spontaneous association among parents and children that is not education. This *association* may turn to education as soon as the situation demands (Gunter 1964, p. 4). Therefore we must agree with Langeveld (1957, p. 27) when he says that togetherness is the "pedagogic pre-formed ground". As soon as an educational act has taken place, the educational relationship once again turns into a relationship of pedagogic togetherness. The education phenomenon is vested in an associational relationship. To a great extent the relationship of togetherness is characterised by self-realisation rather than educational support.

It must also be stressed that not all influence exerted by an adult on a child is education. Educational action is aimed at exercising a positive influence on the child, at developing his responsibility, at assisting him in equipping himself for the proper and independent execution of his

task (Gunter). To teach a child to steal or to keep him dependent on his parents is to influence him, but it is no education.

For the genesis and course of the educational phenomenon there must be an *encounter* between educator and educand. The mentally and morally independent adult feels himself attracted to the dependent child in need of help and accepts responsibility for his becoming independent. The encounter between educator and educand takes place in a concrete situation where person meets person. The child needs help and guidance even though he cannot consciously determine the nature of it. The educator who knows the child and studies his actions, can interpret the child's behaviour and *render the assistance needed*. This means that, to a great extent, the adult is responsible for what happens to the child. The adult can therefore be taken to task; for he plays a major role in the mental maturation of the child. This responsibility results in the adult's *wanting to make himself redundant*. As the child grows older, *he will withhold his support more and more*. It can also be said that the educator's responsible accompanying of the child exists by virtue of withholding help where the child is *capable of helping himself*. Two persons can therefore be identified in the educational phenomenon. These two persons are of cardinal importance to Empirical Education.

Like the educator, *the child is also a person*. It is he who has to grow, mature and reach self-realisation. Educational help is offered judiciously, but the child has to accept it in order to come to *self-actualisation*. The tendency towards self-maintenance in the child – as in all other living creatures – is unmistakably present. *Self-maintenance also includes self-actualisation and self-enhancement*. It is a common phenomenon that the child moves in the direction of greater independence and responsibility. The small child wishes to eat by himself, walk by himself, put his clothes on by himself; be able to read by himself, etc.

Rogers (1965, p. 490) describes how he reached the following conclusion by means of clinical experimentation: "I find that the urge for a greater degree of independence, the desire for a self-determined integration, the tendency to strive, even through much pain, toward a socialized maturity, is as strong as – no, stronger than – the desire for comfortable dependence, the need to rely upon external authority for assurance . . . when all the elements are clearly perceived the balance seems invariably in the direction of the painful but ultimately rewarding path of self-actualization . . ." *This desire towards independence is inherent to man*. It is stronger than the mishaps, pain and humiliation the child may sometimes experience. Without this it would not be possible for the blind child to learn to read Braille, for the deaf child to learn to speak or for the motor handicapped child to learn to use an electric typewriter. *The maturation of the child is realised through the constant interaction be-*

tween educational help and independent self-determination; the former is gradually diminished and the latter gradually increased.

Education is the science which has as its field of knowledge the scientific investigation and reflection concerning the educational phenomenon and the problems it poses (Gunter). Owing to the scope and versatility of problems related to the educational phenomenon, there are various pedagogic disciplines, each focussing on one facet of the phenomenon. Attention will be given to Empirical Education without considering the aims of the other disciplines.

1.2 EMPIRICAL EDUCATION

1.2.1 Introduction

Like the other disciplines, Empirical Education is founded on the education phenomenon. Empirical Education is primarily concerned with *who* the participants in the educational situation are: educator and educand. Secondly, it is concerned with the *what* of the persons involved. This discipline aims at describing *facts* concerning the adult as educator and *the child as educand*. It is concerned with the *perceptible, descriptive, experimental* and the *measurable*. It is a body of facts; the study of a reality that is, i.e. the developing child as a person with inherent needs, possibilities and limitations in a specific historically-formed cultural milieu: a world in which he lives, where he continually finds himself in concrete situations of life. Apart from the facts concerning child development with educational aid, the facts concerning the educator as helper and companion of the child are also studied in Empirical Education.

In this book attention is focussed on the child in the educational situation. Reference to the educator will only be made in passing. This topic will be discussed later.

The facts concerning the child, collected by means of empirical methods, must be structured on the grounds of pedagogical categories. There can be no arbitrary, unsystematised collection of facts. The *guiding principle* comprises significance attribution, involvement, experience, self-concept and self-actualisation. These will be discussed at length later on. By way of an example it may be mentioned that the empirical fact that a three-year-old knows a certain number of words is pedagogically of little value. The meaning of these words to him is, however, highly significant for his becoming.

When studying a child, the culture into which he was born is of initial importance. The home, furniture, clothes, toys, care and education are all *culturally determined*. All these factors will necessarily influence the

child. Each culture makes its own demands with respect to the standards of conduct that the maturing child will have to meet. Whiting (1963) distinguishes the following aspects: educational help, feeding, confidence, self-control, aggression, responsibility, obedience, joviality and achievement. As a result of these and other factors that all have direct educational implications it is for instance not possible to apply a standardised intelligence test, designed for European children, to Sotho children and to compare the results. Even within a given culture there are sub-cultural emphases that have differing effects upon the education of the child. Because of cultural differences, sub-cultural emphases and particular practices, sociopedagogic enquiry is necessary into the possible effects these factors may have on the education of the child. The relation between the quality of family life and growing affluence, or the relation between the quality of family life and the working mother could, for example, be studied empirically. This example stresses the fact that child studies are always studies of *children in a particular environment*.

When studying *the child*, albeit *a particular child*, *a group of ten-year-olds* or the developmental features of *primary school children*, we always encounter certain *aspects* of a more psycho-pedagogical nature. It is possible to investigate the mental, affective, linguistic and volitional features of a child but these features can only be observed in actual situations where the child knows, feels, communicates and wills something. *Since the child cannot be observed in a vacuum, we always see him in his relationship to himself, to others, to things and to his God*. For example: A child's acceptance by his peers may enhance his self-esteem which, in turn, may affect his interest and diligence for schoolwork positively or adversely, depending on the attitude of the peer group towards academic achievement.

The pre-school child continually tries to understand his immediate environment. He handles, manipulates, takes apart and asks: "Why?" As he discovers and *assigns meaning he improves his orientation in his life-world*. Assigning meaning is not entirely a cognitive process. Manipulation and effective experience (e.g. fear of a dog or intense enjoyment at a swimming pool) may add to the quality of meaning and thus to the orientation towards dogs and swimming pools. By assigning meaning or attributing significance the child establishes a relation between himself and the person, animal or object. These relations, and especially the quality of these relations are indicative of what the child has assigned meaning to on his way to adulthood.

The child is continually trying to understand the things in his environment or to assign meaning to them. Thus he orientates himself towards people, things and ideas and learns how to act towards them. This is in-

dispensable for his maturation. Through the assignment of meaning he learns and orientates himself. He learns throughout life and while he is learning, he is maturing and becoming independent. He learns how to walk and talk, how to throw a ball, how to do arithmetic and write essays, etc. Man learns his way through life. *He learns while maturing and matures while learning.* Learning is not a long, slow, tedious struggle. Steep rises and plateaus are found intermittently. The peak of such a rise constitutes *the successful mastery of a developmental task.* Between the ages of five and ten, for instance, the child laboriously *learns to write.* Once this skill is mastered, it becomes an automatism. Attention is then given to the content of the writing. The child also learns the attitudes and behaviour that are valued in the particular culture. Growing up and learning are inherent to humanity. *These two basic tasks (growing up and learning) do not develop independently or parallel to one another. They interact and are always mutually dependent on one another.*

Although the phenomenon of learning cannot be separated from development (or becoming), it can be distinguished and described. The phenomenon of learning is demarcated by the following boundaries: *I know not or I cannot and I know or I can.* All *conscious, purposeful learning* takes place between these poles. Such learning takes place in a particular manner and various stages or steps can be distinguished. *Because these steps follow a logical sequence, we speak of the learning process.*

The learning process

The following steps can be distinguished:

- (a) In this course we emphasise conscious, deliberate learning, which never occurs if the learner does not wish to learn. The first step is therefore *the will to learn*; sometimes called *motivation*.
- (b) In his involvement in a specific learning task, this *will* must be directed in a particular manner. The second step is therefore the method, the manner, or *type of learning*.
- (c) The learner must experience success. *Insight* must be obtained and the learner must experience the correctness of his attempt.
- (d) This initial solution must be *reinforced* by repetition, use or application. Whatever the case, this fourth step is characterised by the establishment of the solution.
- (e) The internalised, assimilated knowledge must be remembered. It should be possible to *recall* or to *actualise* this knowledge.
- (f) Besides being able to reproduce assimilated knowledge, the learner should also be able to use this knowledge in new related situations: *transfer* must take place.

These steps are either explicitly or implicitly present in all conscious, deliberate acts of learning.

It may be that a learner may not be particularly aware of a certain step, but it is possible for the empirical educationist, who observes from a distance, to discern the various steps in the set of events known as the learning process.

At each step in the learning process the learner may encounter problems and obstacles. The obstacles may result from developmental hindrances or from didactic hindrances. The learner may then be referred to the orthodidactic educationist or the pediatrician or the orthopedagogue.

In Empirical Education relevant empirical events are seen in a pedagogical perspective. The empirical educationist takes a pedagogical view of the concrete empirical reality as represented by the growing child engaged in self-actualisation. It is true that education is the anthropological or authentically human involvement of an adult with a child, but it must always be more rather than less empirical. Its concern is with the child in totality who builds up his own life-world within the framework of his abilities, limitations and expectations which exist in his situation and culture. This life-world can only be realised with educational assistance. We come to understand the child as he gives proof of competence in attributing meaning (by showing a fair understanding of mathematics or some other subject). He is seen as someone who possesses innate ability and who manages to attribute meaning because he has assimilated effective exposition and guidance by a teacher. But even with the necessary ability a child may not succeed because the explanations and guidance he needed were not forthcoming and perhaps because he has internalised constant accusations of 'you are stupid' and has come to believe them. *Our focus is always empirical, that is on the real specific child in his life-world.* His constituting of a meaningful life-world, essential to his self-actualisation, depends upon his internalisation of educational assistance. As the empirical and the educational components of our view can never be separated, we retain an empirical-educational perspective on the phenomenon of education.

1.2.2 Presuppositions of Empirical Education

1.2.2.1 Basic orientational questions

Like the other pedagogical disciplines, empirical pedagogics focuses on the educational phenomenon and specifically on the participants in the

educational act. The participants in this act are child and adult – more specifically, in the pedagogical context, educand and educator. In this situation all the implied pedagogical essences are taken for granted. The educand is seen as an embodiment of educational involvement. Empirical pedagogics is built around the following basic questions, which give meaning to the whole scientific endeavour:

HOW DOES THE EDUCAND BECOME AN ADULT?

and WHAT IS THE ADULT'S ROLE AS AN EDUCATOR?

Seen from the pedagogical perspective, the child will clearly not become the complete adult he is meant to be unless he receives effective help and support from an adult whom he values and who accepts responsibility for him. Only on this basis can the child be an educand and the adult an educator.

This book concerns the educand and to a lesser extent the educator. We shall try to answer the first question, even if we can answer it only in part. To place it in context, we must take a closer look at the concepts of which it is made up. In a later chapter attention will be given to the educator.

- (a) *Adult*: People are considered adult when they have reached a certain chronological age. Since the human race is time-bound, biological growth to maturity is inevitable. But our concern here is with the quality of this maturity – shown in moral acceptance of various norms, the willingness to take responsibility for one's choices and to live by them. We need not go into this concept of adulthood in detail. The child who strains toward maturity is always motivated by a specific achievement, either physical or mental, which is valued by his community. These components of being grownup are perceived by the child as essential to him for his becoming in the specific culture. A specific achievement – whether feeding himself, reading, solving a mathematical problem single-handed or driving a car – is the educand's symbol of maturity at that instant. Maturity is not reached at a specific age or academic level. Growth towards maturity is glimpsed in developmental or independent tasks which in themselves are mere indications that the educand is in fact on his way to overall, but never final, maturity.
- (b) *Educand*: The educand is a child and also a person. The vital aspects of being an educand are discussed later.
- (c) *Becoming*: We must be clear at this stage as to what we mean by 'become', or 'becoming'. Unless we are, we cannot distinguish effectively between becoming and development.

'*Become/becoming*' means to come to be something or in some

state (Oxford). **Becoming** presupposes a purposeful action. All becoming is thus purposeful. In an educational sense becoming refers to the transition towards adulthood.

Becoming can also signify to come into being (Oxford). There is no implication that prior to a given moment a child was something totally different. He is a child, a person, in the fullest sense of the word. Becoming refers to his progress towards unfolding adulthood. It is not a natural, inevitable process like biological growth under favourable conditions; the purpose of becoming is complex, comprehensive and never completely defined. Hence, when we talk about becoming, we assume that the educand is a person with strivings, longings and aspirations, psychological vitality, initiative, will, decisiveness and purpose – it thus implies his intentionality. The term becoming refers to the total involvement of an individual purposefully moving towards adulthood. Becoming is always purposeful. In this case the purpose is contained in the ever receding, ever more complex relationships existing in the unfolding life world. Becoming is the incentive when the child insists *on feeding himself, walking or reading by himself*, or whatever at that stage symbolises adulthood for him. In this becoming the educand needs educational help. The specific norm of adulthood must be exemplified or explained. The child needs encouragement and support if he is to choose the best way to make effective progress towards adulthood.

- (d) *Development* may be described as gradual unfolding; a fuller working out of the details of anything; the developed result or product (Oxford). It therefore refers to a gradual process of taking shape or *a gradual, perceptible improvement*.

As a complement to becoming, where an individual progresses towards the specific objective namely adulthood, development refers to the empirical manifestations of becoming. The emphasis is on recognising the degrees of improvement on the way to a specific objective. For instant, 'linguistic development' refers to an improvement in vocabulary and the functional use of language that can be perceived according to specific standards. In the same way we can speak of thought development or of cognitive or affective development – or, for that matter, the development of muscular co-ordination and physical skills. Development, then, indicates the empirical manifestations of the independence tasks as mile-stones on the road towards the realisation of the goals of becoming.

In the pedagogical context, becoming and development are inseparable. The empirical educationist is particularly concerned with the developmental manifestations of the child in the process of becoming.

This tells us that becoming and development are not synonyms but closely related concepts. The empirical educationist takes a lively interest in developmental tasks, because these indicate that the child is making progress towards adulthood. This progress is shown by his development, i.e. the improvement in his physical and psychological abilities.

- (e) *How*: Empirical education is vitally concerned with the question of *how*, in other words with the totality of differential aspects of becoming and development. This question cannot be tackled as a whole. The relevant data concerning the educand's self-actualisation, in so far as it is a guided process, are purposefully collected and structured, so that the reply to our basic question ('how does the educand become an adult') is presented as a structured and integrated Gestalt - the subject empirical education. This structure is dynamic. It changes and develops: the discipline never reaches completion.

1.2.2.2 *The educand*

A child is a human being, a person. He is born weak, unable to help himself, but he has a great deal of potential for maturity. To mature in a specific culture, the child needs to be educated. He is born with a wide range of hereditary characteristics that link him to his ancestry, mainly in biological ways: genetically determined characteristics like build and hair, skin and eye colour. Even these physical factors are, however, influenced by the culture in which the child matures.

The child as a person is isolated within his own identity from all other entities. Each individual is unique; he cannot assume or appropriate another self. His welfare therefore depends on his acceptance of his own uniqueness (May, R, 1967, pp. 57, 61). As the years go by, the child changes and matures. There is a vast difference between the child of five and the adult of thirty-five, and yet he remains aware of himself as the same *I*, sure of his *own identity*. He remains the same person, even if he should lose some of his faculties, like Helen Keller, or be maimed in an accident. He cannot be or become anything else. He is a person - a subject, an existential self that corresponds to the unique individual, the 'really me' (Tiryakian in Gordon & Gergen, 1968, p. 77), which is only conceivable if other persons or subjects exist. As Gordon says (1968, p. 115), '... the very genesis of the self is to be found in the process of communicative interaction'. *Only in a human community can the child become the human adult he is destined to be*. On his own he cannot actualise his potential so as to become an independent, responsible, decent person capable of living a worthwhile life as human being (Gunter 1969,

p. 80). For this reason he needs and longs for help, support, teaching, control and guidance from an adult. Oberholzer (1968, p. 48) calls this *the existential need for an adult*. The educator and more particularly the parent should help, guide and teach the child with sincere affection so that he can mature as he should.

The child is born into a world of people and objects in which he *must orient* himself by attributing meaning. Binswanger speaks of an 'Umwelt', the environment, a world of objects to which we must physically orient ourselves and in which we must act. He also distinguishes a 'Mitwelt', the world of interpersonal relations; and finally an 'Eigenwelt' or own world – the world of one's relationship with self. In his progress towards maturity the child will initiate relations (Buitendijk) and *form relationships* with the objects *in his Umwelt*, with the important (to him) people *in his Mitwelt* and with himself, thereby establishing an *Eigenwelt*, also called a *self-concept*. In the process he constructs a life-world as the Gestalt of meaningful relationships with people, objects and ideas and with himself. The child can get to know his own self or identity and also other people and objects because he is consciousness. *Consciousness* presupposes awareness of objects, other selves and his own self by means of all the ideas, concepts and imaginings that can be distinguished as media of thought. These states of being aware of something, thinking of something, desiring or appreciating something, etc., are defined by the concept intentionality (Meyer 1967, p. 38). Consciousness is only consciousness when it directs itself to an object. It is not a passive orientation. *Intentionality* concerns the directedness, purposiveness, intentional tendency of the consciousness on the object of its attention by which essential qualities are assigned so that the object can be understood by synthesis (Meyer 1967, p. 41). This *involvement* of the subject means *to understand*. Being aware of the object of my understanding at all times comprises more than the data. What I hear is not just a sound but *something to which I have attributed meaning*, e.g. a clock that strikes, a passing Volkswagen or Mirage jet. The purpose of my involvement is to understand the object to which my consciousness is directed. May (1975, pp. 223, 225) calls intentionality the structure that gives meaning to our experience and enables us to understand our surroundings; but he also speaks of it as 'a dimension which cuts across and includes both conscious and unconscious, both cognition and conation'.

In this connection we agree with Frankl, who sees the spirit as the central zone of both the conscious and the unconscious. The spiritual and the physical are not two distinct layers of consciousness. There is also a spiritual unconscious which can, in logotherapy, be made conscious (Ghysbrecht 1971, p. 132). *The spiritual aspect of a human being – the unconscious as well as the conscious – is always directed towards the*

meaning of life. This spiritual dimension can also be called the 'I' which, according to Jung (Edinger 1972, p. 3) is the energy source and therefore the centre of organisation of all psychological activity. In the phrase of Kuypers (1963, p. 257), the I lies hidden behind all phenomena, but its rays penetrate all the domains of the psychological. Conscious activities such as observation, thinking and feeling are, according to Kuypers, concentrated in this I. The I can be described as the individual's spiritual dimension, which exists only in so far as it is integrated with other dimensions of personality (Vrey 1974, p. 60). If this is so – that the I is a spiritual entity which can never, as such, be made into an object and known – *then the 'self' is the person as he knows himself.* There is some question here of a psychophysiological entity that can be seen as an object; of awareness, as the self's awareness of the body, thoughts, feelings, emotions, ideals – of everything one can speak of as one's own. While the self is the object of awareness, an interaction takes place between the I and the self in the incarnation whereby the I is at one with the stream of consciousness. Because of this interaction we can accept that the self as a self is also a subject, since it is the core of the personality and the initiator of various constellations of actions and functions of consciousness (Vrey 1974, p. 67). *The individual's self is the Gestalt of what he can call his own. It includes his system of ideas, attitudes, values and whatever he commits himself to.* The self is the individual's total subjective environment, the centre of experience and of meaning (Vrey 1974, p. 78).

When the consciousness is directed to one's self, one gets to know that self and to form a concept or image of one's body and of one's psychological activities. This understanding of my self or my own identity always includes evaluation on the basis of subjective norms, and gives rise to my *self-concept* which can be described as that configuration of convictions concerning myself and attitudes toward myself that is dynamic and of which I normally am aware or can become aware (Vrey 1974, p. 95).

One becomes strongly aware of a child's progress, achieved with educational help, when one considers how he grows physically, solves progressively more difficult cognitive problems and achieves increasing control of his emotions. We speak of this progress as *self-actualisation* or self-realisation. This self-actualisation is not to be seen as the natural realisation of potential achieved by the individual in isolation. May (Reeves 1977, p. 34) decisively rejects this, and we agree: 'May rejects the reductionist efficient causality and determinism of Freud and the rationalistic faith of Adler and Rousseau that man, if unobstructed, will grow naturally toward a state of perfection.' It is in the company of other people (important to him) that the person/child creates and discovers meaning. 'In itself, then, the goal of self-realisation depends both

on a strong individuality and on a mature responsibility to one's world' (Reeves 1977, p. 33). This requires an *integrated interaction between 'individuation and participation'*. It takes conscious effort to live decently with other people. According to Bollnow, Van Zyl (1967, p. 75) points out that the support needed to overcome self-doubt and loneliness and to find oneself 'ist der lebendige andre Mensch, ist das Du, das ihm menschlich nahetretende brüderliche Du'. The basic Ich-Du attitude (Buber) remains, and in education it is vital to see that *the child can actualise himself only with educational help*.

It is a fairly general scientific principle that complex phenomena are explained in terms of simpler ones that are relevant. In a human being it works the other way round. I as a person am hungry or tired, or I long for a mate; I express my needs and longings within a given structure of norms. This helps us to understand the child who actualises himself by attributing meaning, and we agree with May (Reeves 1977, p. 27) that *'the simple is to be understood in terms of the complex'*. *Meaning is assigned to simple facts on the basis of his intentionality, self-concept and hierarchy of values*. This applies to his instincts, his vocabulary at the age of three, his motor clumsiness during puberty, his class position, laziness, aberrated behaviour – every single empirical fact is grasped in terms of the dynamic interrelations by which the child seeks to orient, assert and realise himself and to be accepted by others. Our accumulation of empirical facts about the actual child as an educand is determined by such anthropological properties as these: the child is a person, has potential, he is progressively and responsibly actualising himself with educational help.

Some of these aspects call for closer study: concepts such as self-actualisation, life-world, relationships, perception and self-identity.

1.2.2.3 *The child in his life-world*

The child exists not so much in a geographical world as in what we might call his life-world. This includes everything – also the geographical world in which he is involved or which he understands. Attribution of meaning is based on the totality of an individual's experience. Such meaning is not only cognitive but also affective and conative and includes both experience and expectation. It is always the person in his totality who assigns meaning.

An individual's life-world can be represented as a network of relationships with objects, people, ideas, himself, etc. These are often interdependent and interactive, so that the person's relationships are dynamic: the nature and horizons of his life-world are never static. *This Gestalt of meaningful relationships makes up the individual life-world*. Each observa-

tion of a child must, both quantitatively and qualitatively, be interpreted within the framework – and against the background – of his life-world. The idea of factual objectivity in relation to a child is sterile and meaningless unless it is related to the child's life-world (Frank, 1939).

We must differentiate between reality, world and life-world. *Reality* comprises the entire cosmos. The Christian defines it as the whole of the reality or cosmos created by God. *World* is that part of reality to which people, through their involvement with it, have come to attribute meaning. It includes both nature and man-made culture. The child is born into a *world*. Its meanings have been assigned by people. To the child, these meanings are as yet hidden.

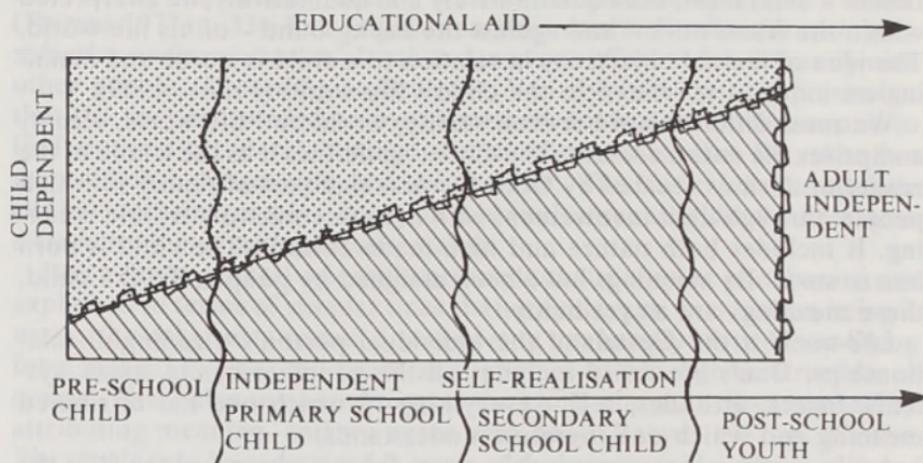
Life-world is the Gestalt of the individual person's meaningful relationships. One's life-world includes all the people, objects, ideas, systems, forces, attitudes, self – everything to which one has attributed meaning and which one therefore understands.

A life-world is not conceivable apart from a person, since it is the totality of meanings discovered or assigned by a person. No two people (not even twins) can have the same life-world. In the same way, a child without a life-world is inconceivable. The empirical educationist is concerned with an educand who is always constituting a life-world by his involvements, attributions of meaning and experiences. To constitute this life-world he uses his genetic potential, instincts, passions, psychological abilities, etc., in a particular cultural world, his norms and values being aligned with his ideals and expectations, all constituted as one dynamic, interacting whole in which he is involved and to which he assigns meaning.

1.2.2.4 *The relation between educational aid and independent self-realisation*

It has already been emphasised that the child is a person. He is the initiator of relations with all things to which he assigns meaning. He has to assign meaning to and orientate himself towards people, things, concepts, values, attitudes, etc. The child wants to be grown up; he wants to do things on his own: eat, walk, dress, write, etc. – often long before his psycho-motor development makes this possible. We see the child *engaged in self-actualisation*.

However, he cannot do everything alone. He needs the support, guidance, care and help of the adult in order to become what he ought to become. The mutual dependence and interaction can be illustrated by means of the following diagram.



The child is dependent upon his parents and other educators. The nature of educational aid is such that the child becomes less dependent and acts more independently. In the course of events the norm for decency ostensibly represented by the parents moves towards the norm that is valid for the particular culture. The child no longer does *what* the parents command and *because* they command, but because it *ought* to be done.

Educational aid changes gradually. At first it is physical care, cuddling and example. Later on the educational aid consists of the parents' deliberately withholding help because the child needs practice in order to develop the ability of acting independently in accordance with the norm.

The two aspects of authentic self-realisation are:

- (a) individuation which means developing a strong individuality; and
- (b) participation or social integration requiring mature responsibility to his world.

May (Reeves 1977, p. 32) stresses this co-existence of individuation and social integration; which is not mere adjustment. For instance, the egocentric individual is not free – he overemphasises individuality and risks isolation. Because man's potential is indeterminate, no one achieves final self-realisation.

In Empirical Education the focus is on the self-determining, self-actualising child. He has by now *assimilated* the preceding *educational aid* to such an extent that it appears as if he is spontaneously engaged in

growing self-realisation. While studying the growing child, the empirical educationist remains aware of the fact that the child could only have become what he is through educational aid. The converse is also true. The child with developmental problems developed such problems *inter alia* as a result of a lack of supportive educational aid.

In order to come to grips with the problems of the developing child, we distinguish the three main periods in child development, viz the pre-school, primary school and secondary school periods. Practically all children in our culture go through these three stages. We also add a fourth one: the post-school phase, the youth. In spite of individual differences there will therefore be a wealth of common factors and circumstances from which we may draw a profile of the primary school child.

1.2.2.5 *The orientation of the child in his world*

A child cannot remain a child. The child has to grow up, become an adult. Everyone expects of the child to aim at becoming independent. For this reason the developing child is studied. *It is not the developmental aspects as such that are of primary importance, but the child on a particular level of development.*

The child finds himself in a complex world from the very beginning. He has to orientate himself in his world towards physical objects, people and concepts. This is only possible inasmuch as he *assigns meaning* to these matters. Initial meaning leads to initial orientation which in turn increases his involvement. In his widening world his need to shift orientational boundaries becomes greater. By means of the continued assignment of meaning more relations are formed and the intensity and quality of existing relations are enhanced. In this manner the basic need, i.e. orientation, is satisfied. The *need for orientation* is, however, never fully satisfied; consequently it remains an *important incentive* throughout the life of man. Man always finds himself in some kind of situation. It often happens that some new situation may contain components towards which the person has not yet orientated himself. The child will have to orientate himself increasingly towards the complex technocratic western society. This society reflects the nature of the culture of the people who make up this society.

During this orientation the child has to give meaning to information: meanings are assimilated this way. Simultaneously he has to undergo certain changes in order to be able to assimilate the knowledge (Piaget: accommodation and assimilation). *Differentiation* of experience is probably the most important initial orientational task. He differentiates his experiences as *pleasant* and *unpleasant*. Later on he distinguishes *mamma*

and *non-mamma*, *I and non-I*, *mine and not-mine*, etc. Thus differentiated experiences are categorised, e.g. all the *my* experiences are integrated. He may painstakingly guard his possessions and refuse to allow other children to play with them. This would remove the toy from the category *mine* to the category *not-mine*.

In this process of assigning meaning the child needs *anchorage points* in order to continue his differentiation and integration. Eventually there will be many such anchorage points, but basically the child is orientated towards his *own body*, his *mother* (or her substitute) and towards the *objects* in his immediate environment. Even the most rudimentary differentiation and integration demand certain psychological functions such as cognition, observation, memorising, recollection, recognition, the formation of images as well as certain motor functions and emotional experience.

It is the life-work of every child (and adult) to constitute a life-world in which he orientates himself towards people, objects, ideas, etc. by forming meaningful relations.

1.2.2.6 Perception

Towards the end of the previous century writers like Ernst Mach (1838-1916) and Christian von Ehrenfels (1859-1932) paved the way for a new approach to psychology, viz. Gestalt psychology. Their experiments with regard to observation led them to distinguish between the physical reality and the observer's observation of that reality. For example: a series of dots may be observed as a triangle. They termed the non-physical component of observation the "awareness of relations". This pattern of relations is called "Gestaltqualität".

Wertheimer, Koffka and Köhler (Langeveld 1961) formulated the basic principles of this approach. The laws of observation which they formulated were those of proximity, correspondence, reticence, continuity, common movement and symmetry. Experiments were conducted to investigate Gestalt formation in visual observation. Köhler (1929) experimented with chimpanzees on the island Tannerife. The concept of *insight/discernment*, the mutual relations between components in any discovery or intellectual achievement, followed from this (Köhler 1929, p. 373). The whole that is observed is more than the sum of its parts. Gestalt formation was explained in neurological terms such as isomorphism and unification which meant that any order in space, time and totality observed as such, was structurally identical to the functional order of the underlying brain processes (Köhler 1929, pp. 61-63).

Gradually more evidence became available supporting the fact that

observation of the relations of components to the whole was a psychological phenomenon. Wertheimer (1959) and Lewin (1951) further developed the Gestalt principle and incorporated it into their psychological field. As a result of this integration of concepts Gestalt field psychologists claim that a person will seldom become aware of an object unless it were to some extent meaningful to him prior to the observation. They define perception as "... a unitary process, in which sensation hinges on meaning and meaning on sensation, and sensing and finding meaning occur simultaneously" (Bigge and Hunt 1962, p. 276). When an object is observed it is *seen* as a relation in a field consisting of the object, the observer and a complex back-ground which incorporates the observer's aims and previous experience.

Madison (1969, p. 234), like the Gestalt psychologists, Wertheimer, Köhler and Duncker, also stresses the influence of previous experience on perception. The observer is not conscious of his previous experience and remains completely unaware of the fact that he is adding something to what is *objectively there*. The observer has the impression that the total quality of his observation comes from the object before him. In his development of this concept Madison (1969, p. 237) introduces the term *reintegration*. This label is used to denote the process whereby (incoming) sensory stimuli localise and interact with traces of previous experience. Conscious perception is the product of integration of the stimulus situation and previous experience. Bruner (1973, p. 14) describes perception in terms of grouping in categories. He says, "... perception is a process of categorization . . . to go beyond the properties of the object or event perceived to a prediction of other properties of the object not yet tested . . . the inference is often an unconscious one."

Thus perception can be described as a unitary process in which sensation and significance attribution are mutually dependent.

Because of the reintegration of previous experience and the stimulus situation it appears to the observer as if the total integrated meaning comes from the sensation. "A Gestaltfield psychologist . . . does not separate sensation of an object from its meaning." (Bigge and Hunt 1962, p. 276).

We shall make use of the verb perceive.

May, too, denies that perception is a passive condition in which a person undergoes sensory stimulation. He says (1970, p. 236) '... perception is directed by intentionality'. One must thus be aware of the object one observes. One does not observe everything within one's field of perception. Choosing to observe an object requires the inner psychic process by which the relevant knowledge is mobilised or, in May's words, '... the inner process of conceiving the object so that I can perceive it'. *The whole personal involvement in perception occurs with the inten-*

tion to attribute meaning. Concepts are formed by language, and then perception can take place (May 1970, p. 236). Without perception no meaning could be assigned to people, objects or self and no life-world could be constituted. Orientation, like the assignment of meaning, relies on finely developed perception. One contacts the world by means of one's senses. *Perception relies on the efficacy of the senses, but it transcends them.* One's visual or auditory capacity may be above normal, but this does not ensure that one will perceive anything. We may distinguish the components of the perceptual act by saying that *the sensory function lies on the periphery of the perceptual act.* Once the cognitive awareness is focused on an object one enters into contact with it during perception through the medium of the senses (sight, hearing, etc.)

1.2.2.7 Forming relationships

(a) INTRODUCTION

The word 'relationship' or 'relation' refers to a connection between two referents. This may be an associative connection between two objects (say, horse and cart) or between an object and its properties (say, grass and green). There is an essential difference between the two types of connection. Grass is green but horse is not cart. The connection is defined in terms of questions such as 'What is the grass like?' or 'what kind of cart is it?' Clearly, relationships exist *for a comprehending person, one who has attributed meaning.* In discovering relationships between two objects, one also compares and recognises meaningful connections as represented in descriptions of relationships in terms of position (above-below), appearance (large-small), quality (durability), utility (usefulness), etc. To understand objects one must discover their mutual relationships by, inter alia, physical handling and thought. The relationships have objective existence; one does not create them. One of the scientist's tasks is to uncover interrelationships, for reality itself is logical and rational (Kuypers 1963). Whitehead (May 1970, p. 112) considers that the components of reality are not static but in dynamic motion, interacting between poles based on this interrelationship. May (1970, p. 112) agrees with Whitehead and Tillich that *all of reality, ontologically speaking, has a fundamentally polar structure.* This does not apply to nature only: the best example on the human level is maleness and femaleness. Man depends on woman and vice versa. Adler states that an individual in isolation cannot be investigated (Kuypers 1963, p. 340). The individual exists for society and society for the individual. According to Reeves (1977, p. 283): 'Personality cannot be understood apart from

its social setting' and 'self and world are correlates, each understandable only in terms of the other.' Society provides a world for the person without which personality would be meaningless. This natural interrelationship between objects, between people and between people and nature serves to stress how important it is to study relationships. These were highlighted by Einstein, who posited the interdependence of energy, space, time and matter. Man is aware of his own world within this essential connection between man and world. May (Reeves 1977, p. 230) sees this active dynamic awareness as 'Intentionality (which) contains both our knowing and our forming reality and these are inseparable from each other.'

If the child is to orient himself in his world – as he must in order to survive and mature – he must form relationships with this world. Buitendijk characterises this ontic phenomenon by saying that the child initiates relationships. The child's forming of relationships is so basic a task that we must take note of it. The child must understand in order to form relations; but understanding is improved by forming relations – not only the understanding of single referents but also of their place and function in a meaningful whole. *Relationships must be seen as a bipolar connection between the child as one pole and the significant other, or the object, as the other pole.* By forming relationships, the child constitutes a life-world that forms his psychological space and reality to which he is oriented.

Since we take relationships to mean the interaction between the child as one pole and a given section of reality as the other, we now have two components to study. One component is the *referents as poles* (e.g. child and mother) and the other is the *nature and quality of the relationship*. *Nature* refers to the *cognitive component* and *quality* to the *affective component*. Since a relationship is formed by understanding the other pole, this attribution of meaning can only take place by way of involvement with the referent and with the quality of meaning formed during involvement and experience. In the present context, the child forms one pole; all other referents to which the child could attribute meaning form the other pole. This other pole can be split up into the broad categories of other *people, objects either in nature or modified by culture, the child himself, and God*. Only when an individual has assigned meaning to a referent from his own frame of reference can we speak of such a bipolar relationship: it is always a question of dynamic interaction. Tillich and May (1970), amongst others, stress this concept of polarity. *The mutual interaction between the poles manifests itself in attraction or repulsion, acceptance or rejection, friendliness which draws them closer together or unfriendliness that pushes them apart.* Where the other pole is an object, it is a question

of usefulness, valency or attractiveness, or their opposites that lead to separation. If a pupil in a gymnastics class keeps falling off the bar, he feels humiliated and tends to avoid the bar (and perhaps everything connected with it). So one relationship influences other relationships. The attraction (pleasant) and repulsion (unpleasant) between the child as one pole and the various referents as the other poles are not always of equal magnitude. This depends *how it affects the self or how important it is to the self-concept*. Clearly, then, there is a constant evaluation of the meaning attributed and even of the act of attributing meaning (involvement) *so that it is experienced as pleasant, unpleasant or something in between*. This *effect of polarity* inherent in relationships and their formation can best be illustrated by the poles of a magnet. Depending on the force of the poles and the distance between them, the poles attract or repel each other. The force of the relationship between a child and, say, a friend from his peer group will depend on *their knowledge of one another and the psychological distance between them, i.e. how this affects the child's self as the core of his personality*.

(b) THE CHILD'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS (EDUCATORS)

Looking at the relations between a child and his parents as a relationship between two poles, we must determine what the bond is, how it is formed and what the implications are. The relationship is both cognitive and affective. Child and mother (poles) get to know each other and the relationship *is characterised as pleasant or unpleasant, affection, care, feeding or the neglect of these things*. As the child grows he experiences the activities composing this relationship as *acceptance or rejection (polarity)*. An example: A mother gets to know her child, starting with its mere identity and progressing until she knows the meaning of every gesture, groan or cry and even how much food the child needs. Each child is unique, so that the mother who has raised ten children has merely raised ten individuals. She becomes more experienced, but there is no question of generalising.

The child also *gets to know its mother*. He recognises her way of handling him when he is hungry or uncomfortable or needs changing. Her ways of feeding, cuddling and making him comfortable are recognised before her face becomes familiar or language is understood. As a result of consistent behaviour the child gets to know its mother and anticipates what will happen when it hears her footsteps. Knowledge grows along with its cognitive powers. The child hears, sees, and feels; memorises the visual image, voice and method of handling. Differentiation, integration and memory all improve and,

in time, also its command of language. *So the child knows its mother and understands what she means even when she says something else or remains silent.* The mother knows the child with all its behaviour patterns – joy or sadness when it is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, sick or well. Because of all this explicit and intuitive knowledge, neither can deceive the other about anything personal that is strongly experienced.

The *affective component* can be as clearly distinguished although it is tied up with the cognitive. Emotive experience supplements knowledge and supplies its quality. The mother experiences and gives love, and this determines the nature of her care. The child experiences affection, calm and security with its mother, often in physical modes as she pick him up, hugs or comforts him or simply plays or chats with him. Within this bond we can clearly distinguish a cognitive and an affective component which interact and cannot be separated. Knowledge often enhances love, as love demands greater knowledge. There is however, not necessarily a high positive correlation between knowledge and love. The cognitive component is determined by cognitive powers such as the senses, memory, recall, differentiation, integration, induction, deduction, etc. *The affective component consists of love, care, trust, respect, acceptance, security, etc.* This knowledge of and feeling for one another, or its absence, result in *polarisation expressed in acceptance and rejection, closeness and estrangement.* Of course, the positive and the negative – closeness and estrangement – are often present simultaneously; but it is the total effect which (if positive) motivates the child to exploration and the constitution of a life-world or (if negative) inhibits these activities. The child’s relations with its mother (parents), with its polarising effect, forms a vital anchorage point for its relations with other people – or with objects. The same types of relations are formed with other educators.

These attributes of the educand/educator relationship can occur in any relationship, and any one attribute can vary from strongly positive to strongly negative. A child’s relationships to various educators can differ profoundly.

The relationship (with its polarisation effect) is highly affective because of the way the attribution of meaning to one another (educand and educator as poles) is experienced. It is because of this affective evaluation that the intentional tendency develops from a feeling of attraction or repulsion into action. The polarisation effect determines the kind of involvement: *‘I want to come closer’* or *‘I don’t want to come closer’*. Consistent care, affection and support enable the child to anticipate both general and specific help and support. The child initiates the relationship, but its effectiveness depends on the

educators. *They must guide and support, and determine the quality of the relationship. When a child has educational and or developmental problems this relationship must be closely scrutinised.*

(c) THE CHILD'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIS PEERS

Within the family the child relates to parents, brothers and sisters. The relationship with the mother (or father) is the primary anchorage point for relationships with other people. The small child soon notices other children and wants to be noticed in return. He identifies with his playmates and evaluates his achievements against theirs (cf. Gordon 1975, pp. 169, 208 ff, Hamachek 1975, pp. 212 ff). These relationships with peers grow more and more intense until in adolescence they are stronger than the relationship with the parents.

The *polarisation effect of relationships with peers* is clear enough. The child is constantly involved in dynamic relations of *acceptance or rejection, attraction or repulsion, avoidance or being avoided, being sought out or not*. These relationships, too, depend on mutual knowledge. The better the parties know each other, the better the chances of authentic relations and of purging these relations of factors like supposed rejection. The cognitive component depends on effective communications. Positive polarisation displays the following characteristics in varying degrees of intensity:

- (i) Conformity of attitudes, behaviour, speech, dress, etc.
- (ii) Acceptance – preferring one playmate to another; the formation of cliques.
- (iii) Cooperation, playing together casually or in team sports.
- (iv) Trust. Acceptance means unconditional trust.
- (v) Erotic admiration. With puberty and adolescence come erotic admiration and sexual attraction, which develop into love but also continue to be components of love.

This relation to peer groups, with its quality of positive polarisation, is a *sine qua non* for a child's emancipation.

(d) THE CHILD'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OBJECTS

A child is always coming into contact with natural or cultural objects. To orient himself, he must get to know these objects by assigning meaning to them, and this requires involvement. Relations with objects are characterised by:

- (i) *Knowledge* leading to orientation. This comprises denotative as well as connotative knowledge. Connotative meaning is the most important dimension for the polarising effect. Examples: '*the flower is pretty, I'm afraid of the spider, I love my dog*', etc.

(ii) *Utility* as the usefulness of the object to the individual.

When meaning is assigned in this way, involvement is needed to discover utility: a pen is for writing with, a chair for sitting on, a house for living in, a ball is for kicking, etc. In this case, too, the polarising effect is clear: I like my doll, my car, bed, mug, etc., but the knife that cuts me, the fire that burns me and the bicycle I fell off are objects to shrink from. The negative polarisations can become positive only after better knowledge, greater involvement and therefore more effective orientation.

(e) THE CHILD'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIMSELF

Throughout this course we assume the existence of a psychological-physical self: a bodily self, and psychological abilities that can be known. The child will recognise himself on a photograph and also his own voice recorded on a tape. Knowledge of one's own identity consists in the first place of recognising and identifying it. Of course, this gives rise to that self-image that one can conjure up for oneself, and this self-identity is constantly evaluated by subjective standards. By comparing himself with his peers, with their achievements in handling natural or cultural objects, the child evaluates himself and his abilities in relation to the norms. This gives rise to *his self-concept as a relation to himself, with a clear polarisation effect of self-acceptance or self-rejection*. If the child does not like himself – love himself – he will not accept himself, and this self will have to be protected under all circumstances. All this has a disastrous effect on exploration and self-exposure in problem situations.

1.2.2.8 *The parent-child relation as the primary relation for Empirical Education*

Whatever the parent does to relieve the hankerings of the child, is meaningful to the child. As the child experiences meaningfulness, he will increase his ability to *assign meaning to the actions* of the parents (Oberholzer, 1972). By means of this loving care the child is introduced to the culture. Gradually he will reach greater self-realisation.

The question arises whether or not there is empirical support for the claim that the parent-child-relation is in fact the basic relation which is formed by the child.

Empirical research data indicate that children testify to the importance of their relations with their parents as they experience them. Bealer, Willits and Maida (1964) found that among 506 secondary school children more than three quarters considered their parents the

most important *points of reference* in their lives. Lipset (1960) found that the *political attitudes* of teen-agers follow the voting pattern of the parents. Putney (1961) investigated the *religious views* of students at thirteen different colleges. He found that the views of the majority of the 1088 students coincided with those of their parents. According to Zunic (1972) girls are influenced significantly more by the *attitude of parents* than are boys.

Oberholzer (1972) draws attention to the fact that (viewed from a dialogue perspective) the I-you-relationship between educator and child forms the *prerequisite for the vertical I-Thou-relationship*.

The parent-child relationship can lead to *deviant behaviour* in the child. According to Sommers (1961) *maladjustment* among children is preceded by unsatisfactory relations between the parents at home. Gregory (1961) found that among *juvenile delinquents* there were histories of clashes and arguments between parents, divorces and the subsequent placing of children in children's homes where no meaningful relations towards a parent figure could be formed. Brooks (1963) established a significant correlation between *truancy* and the attitude of parents towards the school. Koch (1961) indicated the presence of a markedly higher degree of anxiety among pre-school children *from broken homes* in comparison to children from homes where both parents were present. Heinstein (1963) was able to establish a meaningful relation between the *warmth or aloofness* of the mother's attitude towards the child and the child's *adjustment or lack of adjustment*.

The above empirical data supply strong arguments in favour of the importance of sound pedagogical relations between child and parent as prerequisites for the constituting of other efficient relations, which, in turn, are indispensable for efficient self-actualisation. The child-parent relation will always affect the quality of the child's life-world, his mode of self-actualisation and his emancipation. In cases of delinquency the parent-child relation should necessarily be investigated first and foremost.

1.2.2.9 *Independence tasks as framework for empirical educational study*

The child who wishes to mature, is dependent on educational assistance. Our main object of investigation is the maturation of the child. We therefore endeavour to find points of progress whereby the level of attained adulthood can be ascertained. Such points of anchorage can best be found within the large categories, viz the pre-school child, the primary school child, the secondary school child and the youth. A child's

learning to walk can be ascribed mainly to biological growth. Learning to talk, to read and to associate with friends, however, depends on the interaction between educational assistance within a specific cultural milieu and self-actualisation. The recognition of individual differences leads us to the conviction that the exact age (in years and months) at which a child masters certain skills is not of primary importance. Of more importance are the sequence in which certain skills are acquired and the relation between one successfully mastered skill and the mastering of another developmental task. The obvious approach to the nature and sequence of developmental tasks would therefore be a nomothetic empirical approach.

In a particular culture the specific level of maturity of a child is highly valued. It can therefore be expected that the realisation of such standards will be set as educational and teaching goals. Witness the diligent encouragement with which the child is aided to walk, to talk, to learn to read, etc. It is obvious that each developmental task can only be accomplished on a threefold basis.

- (a) *The biological basis.* Walking, running, writing, reading, etc. depend on biological growth, myelination of the nerves and muscular co-ordination. Ample time and opportunities to practice these skills will be necessary.
- (b) *The psychological basis.* The child's psychological abilities enable him to assign meaning to the particular task. Intellectual ability, emotional control, ideals, expectations, etc. determine the degree of personal or psychological involvement required to attempt each task.
- (c) *The cultural basis.* The importance of certain skills are universally acknowledged but both the intensity and speedy realisation of such tasks as well as a wide variety of other tasks are culturally determined.

Development takes place on this threefold basis, but the children concerned reach self-realisation by means of the continuous assignment of meaning to those situations in which they are wholly involved. This involvement implies interaction in which each of these basic facets are represented. In this way each stage of development determines the nature of educational assistance appropriate to it.

Educational implications. Since education and teaching have a gradually upward tendency, the realisation of one task will render possible a following, more intricate task.

A developmental task can therefore be defined as a task that a child of a certain age or a certain phase can successfully execute. Such an accomplishment is praised by people who are important to him. Should he fail, he would feel unhappy. His community would

consider his failure disagreeable and he would have problems with the realisation of further tasks.

1.3 CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA OF EMPIRICAL EDUCATION

1.3.1 Introduction

We have seen that Empirical Education has its own perspective on the educational phenomenon. It is concerned with the participants in the educational act. This focused vision centres on the educand and the educator as individuals in a specific relationship with one another. When focused on the educand, it still embraces the educator and the educational process. This perspective enables the empirical educationist to *study the 'educand' rather than the child*. The educand may be engaged in any of the educational acts of the pedagogic sequence structures (Kilian). One can therefore focus on him during togetherness, encounter, engagement, intervention, a return to togetherness or periodical breaking away. The same is true of the educator; but we are here concerned with the educand. Empirical Education observes, collects and structures the empirical facts concerning the actual child in his empirical situation.

We need, then, to establish the *essential factors involved in being an educand* and to use these as categories of Empirical Education. We can describe these categories as illustrative modes of thought, milestones or fixation points that are essences which will ascertain that our information regarding the educand will be pedagogic. (Oberholzer, Landman, Van der Stoep and others have had a good deal to say about pedagogical categories.)

The educand is a child on his way to adulthood with educational help. He can *make progress* only if he recognises, knows, understands and is capable of action. This is why the *attribution of meaning* is seen as an empirical-pedagogical category. He may be in a meaningful world and receive the best possible illustrations or explanatory teaching but he must in the final analysis *himself understand* reality in the context of the functional knowledge he already has. Meaning cannot be passively 'taken over'. It must always be discovered by an active *assignment of meaning*.

The child cannot mature if his condition is one of passivity or apathy. It is his involvement with the world that gives rise to an involvement with objects, people and himself. Involvement is characterised by purposeful effort in order to achieve, to overcome obstacles and to solve problems. This conscious engagement in knowing and orienting himself

is what we mean by *involvement*. This can never be random or haphazard: he is helped, guided and supported by education, because his efforts must lead to progress towards adulthood. Involvement is therefore related to (to which we shall return) intentionality. Attribution of meaning and involvement have to do with the child's concern and relations with people, objects or events. We also need to consider how the child is personally affected by his involvement and his attribution of meaning: in other words, what does the educand experience within himself when he is accepted (or rejected), when he is given love, successfully comprehends something or is purposefully involved in a meaningful action? *What the educand experiences* subjectively during the process of becoming is also an empirical-educational category. These experiences determine whether the child esteems or despises, accepts or rejects himself. At birth he is passive but has tremendous potential: at the same time he is surrounded by obstacles to be overcome, even in his own body. For his eventual exploration of and entry into the world, success is essential. Success reassures him and spurs him to further effort and risk. It forms the basis of a positive self-image. (Of course, the converse is also true.) Educational help is therefore essential to ensure that the child's experiences will promote the process of becoming. Buitendijk has long established as an axiom of child anthropology that the child is the initiator of relations. For the empirical educationist this means that the educand assigns meaning and is involved – *wants* to understand and *wants* to be involved. An educand *wants* to grow up as a matter of course. The child's ideal of maturity is constituted by concrete moments observed in adults – for instance, he wants to be as strong as his father, to run as fast as his football hero; she wants to be as pretty as her teacher. The child needs to identify with an adult. At other times, 'being grown-up' means specific independent actions like feeding or dressing himself. Thus taking the initiative in growing up, becoming what he should be, can be called self-actualisation. It can be done only by means of educational help, so that self-actualisation cannot occur except as guided actualisation. *Self-actualisation*, then, is another empirical-educational category.

For the baby it is a major breakthrough when he 'discovers' his own hands and feet: one of the very first indications of self-knowledge or of an own identity. Identification continues until a personal identity is formed. This identity, with its physical and psychological properties and its extensions, enables him to answer the question '*who are you?*' But it is never simply an objective rational knowledge of the self. This self is inevitably judged by subjective norms and evaluated as good or bad, good-looking or plain, clever or stupid. What results is the evaluated self-identity called a self-concept. When Langeveld says that the child wants to be somebody, the empirical educationist takes this to mean

somebody specific – someone the child can accept and esteem by his own standards. *Being somebody, as a category, means the establishment of a self-identity and positive self-concept*, and this is possible only with educational support.

According to Landman (1977, p. 16) the educator sees the evaluatory significance of pedagogical categories, understands them and uses them as criteria for his own educational work – to assess whether what he is engaged in is education or not. A child who, despite so-called educational help, cannot understand, become involved or form self-identity, cannot mature, and such ‘help’ is not authentic educational help. The empirical educationist is constantly involved in the concretising of educational help towards the child’s self-actualisation.

We can now deal in more detail with each of these categories:

1.3.2. Significance attribution

In empirical education studies then, we identify as pedagogic any actions of the child which are concerned with the attribution of significance to things. For instance, the child’s physical development and maturation are important from the pedagogic point of view if we can establish their function with regard to the child’s exploratory endeavours to construct a meaningful life-world for himself. When we think, for example, of a child who is learning to talk, we are not really thinking of language development. It is certainly interesting to note the sounds and the words he utters at this early stage, and the extent of his vocabulary at the age of two, but these things assume pedagogic relevance only when we are able to determine what meaning the use of language has for the developing child and how he makes use of language in the process of making sense of his world or attributing significance to it. Similarly, the only type of learning which is pedagogically significant is intentional, meaningful learning – particularly when it takes place in the pedagogic-didactic situation. Significance attribution is an inherent function of childhood. The very small child who recognises relationships between himself and the persons and objects in his world is engaged in the process of attributing significance. The process begins when the child learns to differentiate between his sensory perceptions so that, to a limited degree, he can make predictions and entertain expectations. As his body develops and his control over it increases, he begins to explore himself and his world and thus to assign meanings to whatever he encounters. His activities in this direction are constantly on the increase and he becomes increasingly responsible for his own significance attributions.

The child assigns meaning or attributes significance in order to orientate himself in his environment. An increase in meaningful relations enables the child to enhance his orientation. Thus a developing life-world is constituted.

Two additional questions need to be answered:

- (a) What is the nature of meaning?
- (b) How is meaning structured? In other words: How does development of meaning take place.

If a person, object, situation or concept is meaningful, it must already have been meaningful to a person. Meaning can only be discussed on the presupposition that there is a person who understands. Ogden and Richards (1953) introduce their analysis of meaning with a discussion of the relations between ideas and words, and ideas and objects. There is a relation between the idea and the word as symbol and a relation between the idea and the object as referent. Meaning is abstracted from the concrete situation depending on the way in which the particular person understands it. Thus, there is a relation between my mind and the object *ash-tray* and between my mind and the word *ash-tray*. However, no relation holds between the object *ash-tray* and the word *ash-tray* other than via the mind of a particular person.

A sign can only be meaningful if there is a person who can interpret that sign. This goes for the stop sign which the motorist has to interpret as well as for the patient's temperature which the doctor has to interpret. *Meaning exists only in the mind of someone who understands*. If a person understands, there is a relation between his mind and the referent on the one hand and between his mind and the symbol on the other hand.

As a symbol for the description of meaning, language has an indispensable function in daily life. When a referent, sign or symbol is meaningful, the necessary critical features for the description of the object can be distinguished. A person must be able to constitute the logically meaningful object or statement. A description should not be contradictory. Thus a *square triangle* cannot be logically meaningful.

Over and above the logical meaning of an object or concept a person or group of persons may assign individual meanings to it. Such meanings are usually emotive. There may be so many affective overtones in the total psychological meaning that the logical meaning is overruled. Hence a child may develop an abnormal fear of cats or spiders.

The understanding of the logical meaning of a concept pre-supposes a certain cognitive structure and functional knowledge. However, the person is involved as a totality in the relations which he finds meaningful. Piaget (1954, p. 145) says: "Consciousness is essentially a system of meanings that may be cognitive (perceptual, conceptual, etc.) or affec-

tive (values with a conative factor being implied here). These two (cognitive and affective) aspects of meaning always go together; they cannot exist independently, although they may be examined separately." May (1965, p. 206) also stresses the conative aspect: "Intentionality is the capacity by which we constitute meanings in life." Frankl (1964) rightly says that man's search for meaning is a primary motivational force in his life. He longs for a life as meaningful as possible. The meaning of our existence is not so much invented as discovered. Frankl (1964, p. 105) sees man as "a being whose main concern is fulfilling a meaning and actualising values". Because of the total involvement in significance attribution the meaning of any object or event is its relation to the self of the perceiver.

In the learning situation tutorial material must be logically meaningful, because meaning eventually appears in the mind of the individual. Ausubel (1968) points out that we are not so much concerned with the logical meaning of teaching material in the school – this is presupposed – as with the psychological meaning. This is the actual, idiosyncratic, cognitive product which results when a particular learner relates or integrates potentially meaningful material with ideas in his cognitive structure. Meaningful tutorial matter can only be learnt in relation to the relevant concepts, ideas and principles that have already been assimilated. Thus new meanings are established. The effectiveness of a new meaning depends on its permanence or conservation (Piaget).

If the cognitive structure is organised in a clear, stable and efficient manner, and if it comprises suitable linking ideas, accurate, unambiguous meanings will appear which will be identifiable and available (Ausubel 1968). This point of view leads Ausubel to stress the necessity of explanatory teaching for meaningful verbal learning whereby ideas are formed and assimilated.

Everybody gives meaning to his identity as he understands it. These meanings have a logical dimension with distinguishing features of which people have a common understanding. There is a further dimension of meaning which is idiosyncratic and uniquely a person's own. Ausubel (1968) calls this the connotative dimension of meaning. It includes the affective aspects and aspects of values involved in self-evaluation. The total integrated meaning of an individual's self-concept can only partially be known by others: either from inferences made from his behaviour or from the person's own revelation of the meaning of his self-concept (e.g. an autobiographical report).

Through this spectrum of meaning which relates everything in his life-world to him, he gradually orientates himself to a widening life-world. The better the orientation, the greater and more effective the degree of independence. Without increasing significance attribution there can be

no development towards adulthood or growth in independence. Psychological meaningfulness determines whether or not an act or situation is to be considered as an empirical pedagogical one that will *lead to further maturation of the child*. "Yet it is only through genuine understanding that we will be able to deal effectively with whatever comes our way and be really secure and happy" (Lombardi, 1975 p. 115).

Meaning clears the way for further attribution of meaning – a *sine qua non* for the maturing process. By attributing meaning, the child orients himself and constructs a meaningful life-world. Because logical meanings are embedded in the surrounding culture, pedagogical assistance – and particularly, at school, pedagogical didactic help and explanatory teaching – is essential for the optimal attribution of meaning. Spranger (cf. Langeveld 1961, p. 440) succinctly expresses this idea when he speaks of a hierarchy of meaningful totalities. Whatever is meaningful is therefore a factor in a totality of values. A totality made up of meaningful parts is called a totality of meaning (Sinnganze). Such a totality may in turn be part of a higher or more comprehensive totality of meaning. To understand something means to fit it into the totality where it belongs. For instance, a word has no meaning in isolation: it acquires meaning in the context of a sentence, and the sentence acquires meaning in the context of the whole communication. An action becomes meaningful when carried out in order to actualise a value. *The maturing child will not actualise himself unless he knows, understands and is capable of action, i.e. unless he attributes meaning*. Hence the attribution of meaning is an essential empirical-educational category of the maturing process: the explication of logical meanings and the affective overtones of connotative meanings all depend on educational help. This is obvious when we look at the effective attribution of meaning; but it is equally true that ineffectual attributions of meaning can often be traced to a lack of good educational help.

We can now discuss the essential components of the attribution of meaning.

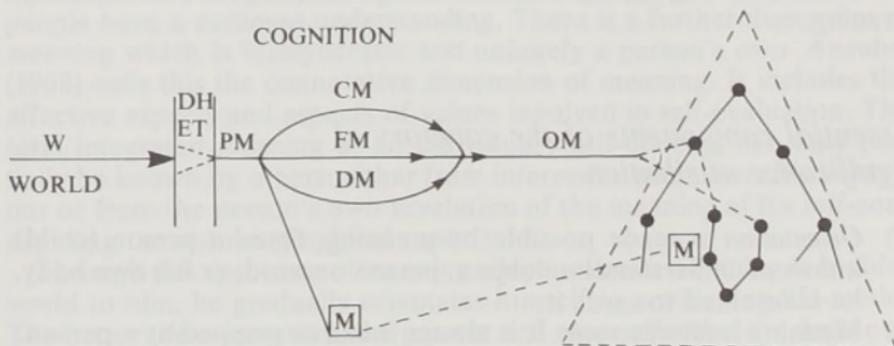
Essential components of the category of significance attribution

- (a) *Orientation* is made possible by meaning. Once a person (child) knows or understands an object, person or word, or his own body, he is oriented towards it.
- (b) Meaning is *idiosyncratic*. It is always found or grasped by a person.
- (c) Meaning always *relates* to other meanings in the *cognitive structure*.

- (d) Meaning always has a *logical* dimension that makes mutual comprehension possible. This is known as the denotative meaning.
- (e) Meaning also has a *psychological* dimension, the peculiar meaning assigned by a given person. This is known as the connotative meaning.
- (f) Meaning is *discovered* rather than invented. The world the child enters is a world of meaning, and he must increasingly discover the meanings it contains. For him to do this, educational help is indispensable.
- (g) Meaning can be attributed only when a person *wants* to do this – *wants* to understand.
- (h) The attribution of meaning always has an *action component* not necessarily motor action; it may also be predominantly mental action.
- (i) The attribution of meaning is always *cognitive*. It depends to a greater or lesser extent on differentiation, integration, comparing, memorising, etc.
- (j) There is always an *affective dimension* to the attribution of meaning, for instance the sensation of success when meaning breaks through and the pleasure or anxiety involved in the connotative dimension.
- (k) Meaning always has a *normative component*. The logical aspect in particular must be congruent with objective norms. When it comes to psychological meaning, the individual consciously or unconsciously sets up subjective norms, e.g. for self-acceptance.
- (l) The attribution of meaning is a *task of the person*, who is always totally involved in the process.
- (m) The assignment of meaning implies that the *nature and quality of relations* with an object or person are determined by the meaning assigned.

ATTRIBUTION OF MEANING

COGNITIVE STRUCTURES



- W = CULTURAL WORLD
 ET = EXPLANATORY TEACHING
 DH = DIDACTICAL HELP
 PM = POTENTIAL MEANING
 CM = CONNOTATIVE MEANING
 FM = FUNCTIONAL MEANING
 DM = DENOTATIVE MEANING
 OM = OWN MEANING (RESULT OF ASSIGNMENT OF MEANING)
 M = MECHANICALLY MEMORISED KNOWLEDGE: LOOSE CHUNKS IN
 COGNITIVE STRUCTURE

1.3.3 Involvement¹⁾

Involvement implies *drawing* in or being drawn in. It means that a person or issue is drawn closer and that the subject is therefore involved with it. It can be either a subject-subject or a subject-object relationship. The subject physically and psychologically draws in the other person, or the issue and is intensely involved with him or it. Obviously, the subject must not only be willing to be involved but must intend it. One cannot be incidentally or sporadically concerned with an issue one is involved with – no more than the government of a country at war can be sporadically interested in its own armaments or in enemy activity.

To be involved, at least a modicum of functional knowledge is required. One cannot be involved with an issue of which one knows nothing and with which one has no concern. One gets involved because of one's intention to *know more*. To be involved implies that one wants to be involved.

We need to see the connection between involvement and will. Kuypers (1963, p. 232) defines the will as the longing function of the human psyche. It works outwards and longs to change the status quo. As he says, the instinct and impulses emerge as motivations in the function of willing that actively strive for changes in surrounding reality. Kuypers stresses (1963, p. 240) that the will must not be seen as a separate entity: it is simply a function of the soul, a specific, active aspect of the personality. This is confirmed by May (Reeves 1977, p. 156) who sees the will as the basic intentionality of human existence. According to Meyer (1967, p. 38), intentionality refers to awareness: to be aware of something, to observe it, think of it, desire it, etc. This is how May (1970, p. 230) describes the connection between the person in totality and the world he is conscious of: 'Meaning has no meaning apart from intention. Each act of consciousness *tends toward* something, is a turning of the

1) Cf. Landman et al. (1977, p. 97): *Toenemende inspanning as pedagogiese kategorie*.

person toward something, and has within it, no matter how latent some push toward a direction or action.' In other words, he stresses the intrinsic interaction between an objective – seen as a value to which meaning has been attributed – and the will. It is therefore the person in his totality who *wants to assign* meaning.

Despite this involvement-in-totality with all psychological functions, the conative function may be distinguished by these properties:

- (a) *Knowledge*. The conscious cognitive process is essential to all conative processes (Kuypers 1963, p. 244). 'Cognition or knowing and conation or willing, then, go together. We could not then have one without the other' (May 1970, p. 230).
- (b) *Setting an objective*. An objective includes all the possibilities of which a person can be aware, everything that has value for him. In the broadest sense, values comprise whatever satisfies or means happiness to a given person at a given time.
- (c) *Choice*. Once objectives are known and their implications have been considered, a decision is then taken. '*This is the objective I want to achieve.*' That completes the preparation. Action now follows.
- (d) *Conative action*. As soon as the decision is taken – the objective selected – internal or external action begins, i.e. psychological or motor action. It may take only a moment – for instance signing a cheque or contract – or it may take perseverance, as in setting oneself to become a champion boxer or enrolling for a university degree. What is then involved is a conative attitude, an attitude of the will, by which the action is maintained over a long period.

The *task* of the will lies in the action by which the self is actualised and its life-world structured. It includes the dynamic progressive orientation and re-orientation, shaping and re-shaping of an entire life that is constantly in transit, by way of change and improvement, to a more structured and integrated existence. This is not a game or a role to be played: it demands the person in his totality. Frankl (1964, p. 99) says that 'man's search for meaning is a primary force in his life'. He sees this as the 'Aufgaben-Charakter' or life work and stresses the importance of personal responsibility (Ghysbrecht 1977, p. 132). We may distinguish *a number of conative actions* on the basis of the degree of conscious awareness involved:

- (i) *Reflex actions* that take place mechanically. This is not a conative action in the true sense of the word. Most reflexes derive from self-preservation and become automatic by force of habit.
- (ii) *Ideomotor actions* based on what a person visualises. Since visualisation is a highly individual affair, these actions are subjective: for instance, a conscientious bank official unexpectedly embezzles money or a policeman suddenly accepts a bribe. It is a partial re-

action of the psyche to what is visualised. Many 'small' everyday actions are of the ideomotor type, e.g. the choice of a tie or a pen. However, an important action that should have involved the whole awareness can sometimes be taken ideomotorically, i.e. shooting a red traffic light.

(iii) *Pure conative action*. A decision to act is taken by a person as an organised whole. The implications of objectives have been considered in the light of knowledge, an objective has been selected, and responsible action is then taken.

A person's vitality is determined by his intentionality (Paul Tillich 1952). Intentionality stresses purposefulness. *Involvement may be defined as the psychic vitality or vigour with which a meaningful objective is pursued and achieved*. It depends largely on the person himself whether his potential will be actualised (May 1970, p. 243). Again, *involvement* in actualising a *meaningful* objective is defined by this psychic vitality expressed in vigorous physical and psychological action – which may be protracted, entailing a conative attitude.

In an educational context, a child in the process of learning and becoming must progressively orient himself in regard to people, objects, ideas and himself. He does this, with educational help, by learning, understanding, forming meaningful relations and building up a life-world within the ambient culture. *The psychic vitality that is the driving force behind all learning and developmental tasks is defined by the empirical educationist as involvement*. It depends largely on the child himself – his involvement in the task of living and becoming – whether his potential is actualised or not.

Involvement presupposes a valued objective. The child always sees maturity as the ability to perform a given task. He considers himself grown-up when he can feed himself, tie his own shoe-laces, read, write, or choose a career. The child is intensely concerned with every task of learning or becoming; involvement in the maturing process cannot be reasoned away. Involvement can be recognised by conative action, but it cannot be understood without knowing its intention. 'You cannot understand the overt behaviour except as you see it in relation to, and as an expression of, its intention' (May 1970, p. 230). Because of the inherent interdependence of knowing and willing, the willed objective must to some extent be known. 'If I do not will something, I could never know it; and if I do not know something, I would never have any content for my willing' (May 1970, p. 230).

Every child wants to be grown-up, and this means that he is involved in every task of learning or becoming. Not only must he understand its purpose – he must also see how to perform the conative action. This calls for educational help, to expose not only the meaning of the objec-

tive – the *where to* – but also the *how*. The educator must help the child to get involved in assigning meaning to the task of becoming and in carrying it out. Pedagogically speaking, such an involvement in the process of becoming is an involvement in norms – a progressive involvement in an ever more satisfying embodiment of their validity and the demands they make (Oberholzer 1968, p. 300).

Involvement in the actualisation of cultural values and norms constitutes an empirical-educational category. The intensity of a child's involvement is evidenced by the degree of attention, absorption, interest, perseverance, dedication, expectation, practice, etc.

Concrete experience of the great life work (Frankl) of becoming mature occurs when the child encounters obstacles and challenges. According to Lombardi (1975, p. 113): 'Our initial striving is to overcome'. The child is constantly experiencing *his own problem, his own obstacle, his own challenge*; and so each victory or success demands an exertion of psychic vitality, i.e. involvement, in accomplishing or mastering the task. If the child is the initiator of relationships (Buitendijk), he must solve his own orientation problems, establish his own meaningful relations – in a word be involved in actualising himself as the open possibility inherent in his expanding potential. He cannot be involved unless he wants to be, i.e. unless some degree of meaning has been attributed to the objective. Maturity and all its component aspects, as seen by the child, entails intense involvement in the actions leading up to it. These may be broadly classified as becoming, attribution of meaning, formation of identity, and belonging. Successful self-actualisation is largely determined by the intensity and quality of involvement, which depends on educational help to activate and direct it.

A child may also be involved in what is wrong, worthless or destructive. But where his objective is uplifting, illuminating and normative, involvement as a psychopedagogical category tells us not *where to*, but *how* – the nature of his intense concern with the achievement of the educational goal.

A second danger – apart from involvement with what is destructive – is a lack of involvement. This shows up as indifference, listlessness, or apathy in the sense of an absence of feeling, passion or excitement. As May says, it is not hate that is the opposite of love – it is apathy. The opposite of will is not indecisiveness but being uninvolved, detached, unrelated to the significant events. Then the issue of 'will can never arise' (May 1970, p. 29). Supportive educational help is needed to direct the child's assignment of meaning and his will to involvement.

Essential components of the category of involvement

- (a) Involvement entails an occupation or *action* – either a psychological or a motor action.
- (b) It refers to action directed towards an *objective*.
- (c) It means an action in which a person engages *because he chooses to*.
- (d) Involvement, to the person involved, means *significant* action: he is convinced that this action will help him achieve his objective.
- (e) Involvement presupposes *interest* in the objective but also in the action.
- (f) Involvement is possible only when the interested person gives his *attention* to it.
- (g) It often requires *practice* and *perseverance* in the activities concerned.
- (h) Involvement as directed action shows that the achievement of the goal is *anticipated or expected*.
- (i) Involvement as action defines *self-actualisation*;
- (j) Involvement is *experienced* – as success or failure, anxiety, joy, meaning, frustration, confusion, etc.
- (k) Involvement is the name given to the active intentional assignment of meaning undertaken by *a person in his totality*.
- (l) Pedagogically speaking, the child's own involvement in his self-actualisation is the index of the educator's success in involving the child in his totality with valid, *demanding norms*.
- (m) Involvement may be defined as the *psychic vitality* that drives, directs and intensifies the actualisation of the tasks of learning and becoming.

1.3.4 Experience

The possibility of being a participant in a situation is given to man. He can be receptive to the values and meaning of the situation (Garbers in Nel, Sonnekus and Garbers, 1965). All behaviour is accompanied by feeling. Examples of feelings that can be *experienced* are *listlessness or disappointment, tiredness, sadness or gaiety*. In feeling and in willing, experience is primary, says Kuypers (1963, p. 207). Each affective experience has a different quality. It indicates that the individual is touched by a situation; but he must also be open and accessible to its meaning (Nel et al., 1965). One cannot select one's experiences in advance. People who strive for happiness find that it eludes them. *Feelings are determined by the situation, or at any rate by the meaning attributed to the situation: '... affect is not something you strive for in itself but a by-product of the way you give yourself to a life situation'* (May 1970, p. 15). Psychological

feelings like *joy, sympathy, sadness, antipathy, etc. do not occur in a vacuum*. They cannot be summoned at will. They are an indication of how a situation is being experienced and evaluated. In experiencing a situation to which a certain meaning has been assigned, subjective experience is integrated with meaning and so the meaning acquires a personal dimension.

Should I for example suffer the agonising experience of a car crash or the death of a loved one my factual description of the event will probably be dominated by the affective experience. Since meaning can only be assigned to an object, situation or event by a person, it follows that both denotative and connotative components of meaning will be present, depending on the degree of involvement and the quality of the experience. Where there is personal involvement, the experience will have some or other quality or shade of quality which will endow the relation that is formed with a connotative dimension. Meticulous observations by brain surgeons like Wilder Penfield have yielded much information on the storage of experience which would not otherwise have been available. We cannot give a detailed discussion of the findings of Penfield (1963, p. 679-93). By means of micro-electrodes that stimulate the brain electrically he managed to map the affected brain area (in cases of epilepsy for example) before operating to remove these areas. Since nothing but local anaesthetics had been used, the patients could report on their experiences during stimulation. Many examples are cited of patients reliving certain experiences when given areas of the cortex were stimulated (such as hearing a symphony, looking in at a dance hall, etc.) which they had experienced before. These experiences were more than memories. In most cases patients could not recall the rest of the experience once the electric stimulation had stopped. He concludes: ". . . that past experience, when it is recalled electrically, seems to be complete including all the things of which an individual was aware at the time." *It would appear that the whole stream of consciousness is registered in the brain in its meaningfulness and intensity*. Many literal experiences are in the sub-conscious mind in that the person cannot recall them to memory. He also thinks that a particular area of the cortex plays a role in the sub-conscious interpretation of present experiences and in making available the complete report on previous experiences.

It follows from these results that

- (a) the living experiences of a person are stored in the brain;
- (b) he had paid attention to these experiences;
- (c) what is registered is an integration of the meaning which he had assigned to the situation and the affective experience of it;
- (d) there seems to be a mechanism in the cortex which sub-consciously interprets present experience in terms of past (forgotten) experience

and in such a manner that it seems to the person as if the full meaning is in the present experience;

- (e) affective experience has a necessary function in the whole of significance attribution because the actual experience is registered in the brain as a Gestalt and this experience serves as a source of reference for the interpretation and assignment of meaning to new experiences.

The experiences of the infant range from comfort to dis-comfort, from calm to tension. It has a clear affective tone which manifests itself in crying, sleeping, prattling noises, etc. This initial affective experience as a form of significance attribution is the beginning of cognition. The child's first experience of meaning is what people and things do to him and with him. He remembers and anticipates these experiences. He also discovers meaning in what he can do with people and things. Through educational support the child learns that meanings are not only vivid experiences; they develop a denotative character. The experience becomes loaded with feeling.

Awareness and experience are more than cognitive activities: They involve the whole range of dynamic interrelationships between a person and his world. Illustrations: (i) to see, smell or imagine a flower; (ii) to feel pain or be listless, sad or cheerful. The first activity is cognitive. It refers to the flower as an object, a 'Gegenstand' (Kuyper 1963, p. 206); it forms the other pole of a relationship and the seeing, smelling or imagining defines the nature of the relationship.

In the second case – experiencing pain, sadness or gaiety – there is no object to be understood or action to be directed. It is a condition one submits to, an experience, a description of the quality of the relationship. It concerns the feelings. The condition is understood as well as emotionally experienced, but the two aspects are distinct. In saying 'I am glad, or sad' one indicates that one understands the experience; no matter how slight the time lapse, the experience precedes any possible reflection on it. We must distinguish between these two modes of awareness. What I know, other may know too; but what I feel and therefore experience is unique to me. The quality of educational help determines what a child experiences subjectively. It varies from the pleasure of being praised to the pain of being humiliated, insulted or rejected.

Every aspect of the child's experience can be either positive or negative. This applies to physical perceptions like pain or physical vigour, the quality of social relations (e.g. enjoyment) relations with objects or ideas (e.g. frustration, failure or success), and spiritual anguish or the joy of redemption. Muller (Meyer 1967, p. 91) describes a patient's subjective experiences in terms of mood and of feelings such as excitement, fury, affront, irritation, dependence, unhappiness or contentment,

Because a person is totally involved in the assignment of meaning, he experiences success, frustration, etc. and these determine the quality of the meaning assigned.

Personal subjective experience reflects my evaluation of the situation. Evaluations can be broadly classified as pleasant or unpleasant.

Essential components of the category of subjective experience

- (a) Experience determines the *quality* of relationships.
- (b) Experience is *emotional* and indicates that a situation is evaluated in terms of varying degrees of *pleasantness or unpleasantness*.
- (c) Experience, by determining the quality of relationships, stresses the *uniqueness* of each person's relations.
- (d) Experiences and more particularly their intensity – determine the *clarity and stability* of the meanings assigned by a person.
- (e) Experience inhibits or *incites a person's involvement* in every attribution of meaning.
- (f) Experience is a meaningful event involving the *total person*. He experiences certain feelings and also *knows* that he experiences them.
- (g) Educational help is not always the sole determinant of meaning, but an educator's praise or disapproval determines the positive or negative *intensity* of the subjective experience.

1.3.5 Self-actualisation

We are concerned here with the child's self-actualisation as a person, i.e. helping him to develop to the 'fullest height that the human species can stand up to or that the particular individual can come to (that is) helping the person to become the best that he is able to become' (Maslow 1971, p. 169).

The satisfaction of physiological and psychological needs is the driving force behind the urge to actualise one's potential (Eson 1972, p. 24). There is no question of perfectionism: the self-actualiser is human in the fullest sense of that word. He is totally involved with life, experiences intense pleasure and pain – not merely his own but also that of his associates. The authentic self-actualiser accepts himself to a degree that precludes guilt, anxiety, shame and aggression (Brennicke and Amig 1971, pp. 257-259). Since no energy is side-tracked into anxiety or other morbid defence mechanisms, his attention is focused on objective problems and situations. Seeing himself realistically, he accepts himself, and his self-esteem is not affected by his awareness of specific limitations.

Self-actualisation implies a person's deliberate efforts to realise all his latent potential. *This includes every area of manual skill, intellectual capacity, emotional experience and moral awareness.* The question is: How does a person become what he is or what he is capable of being? It soon becomes obvious that, once physiological and psychological needs have been satisfied, a person develops through his involvement in an activity that is meaningful to him. There is no question of 'a neurotic need for perfection' (Horney 1947, p. 223); as Maslow (1971, p. 43) says: 'Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves'. Such a cause must not only be important to them; they must love it. It must be a vocation rather than a mere profession.

As Frankl (1964, p. 113) says: 'Self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself', and (Frankl 1969, p. 116): 'Self-actualization is and must remain an effect, namely the effect of meaning fulfilment. Only to the extent to which man fulfils a meaning out there in the world, does he fulfil himself.' No-one actualises himself except to the extent to which he devotes himself to a life-work that is meaningful to him, and self-actualisation is only a by-product of self-transcendence.

The child who forgets himself in his involvement with learning, reading, writing or solving a cognitive problem, or sympathising with a friend in trouble, is engaged in self-transcendence. Transcendence – rising above or beyond (Binswanger 1958, p. 193: *Überstieg*) is an open possibility for human beings (Oberholzer 1968, Gordon 1959); or as Goldstein (1934) puts it, the ability to formulate abstractions, to use symbols and to orient oneself beyond the immediate limits of geometrical space and chronometrical time. Only man can lie, says Sartre, and this in itself is an indication of self-transcendence.

Rollo May (1958, p. 74) says: 'Self-consciousness implies self-transcendence. The one has no reality without the other. It will have become apparent . . . that the capacity to transcend the immediate situation uniquely presupposes *Eigenwelt* – 'the self in relation to itself', 'the self knowing itself' – that is, the mode of behavior in which a person sees himself as subject and object at once.'

So if the self-actualising person wants to realise future possibilities, he must transcend himself or rise above the apparent limitations of time and space, physical and mental abilities. This presupposes a realistic self-concept incorporating objective self-knowledge and evaluation of the self identity.

Roberts (1976, pp. 374-477) asks: 'How can an adult help and support a child in realising his potential?' We agree with Pikunas (1969, p. 287) that the extrinsic conditions are the availability to the child of:

(a) human models to identify with;

- (b) principles and ideals to choose from;
- (c) an ordered system of values in his subculture on which he can base a philosophy of life.

More intrinsically, Maslow stresses that primary needs must be met before self-actualisation can take place: physiological needs, security, love, acceptance and esteem. It is significant that self-actualisation is not merely the product or result of an activity: it lies in involvement with that activity and his experiencing of that involvement. Benson (1974, p. 354) describes it as 'the ability to enjoy the experience of being'. Because of his varied interests, demanding orientation in a number of fields, the self-actualiser is not easily bored. The attribution of meaning is always at the centre: as Benson (1974, p. 354) puts it: '... especially in self-actualized people, the deprivation of the cognitive needs can lead to serious difficulties'. After these basic needs have been met self-actualisation may emerge. Here are a few of the characteristics of self-actualisation:

- (a) A self-actualiser must be capable of understanding, of assigning meaning and of progressive orientation.
- (b) He is intensely involved in some task or cause (outside himself).
- (c) He experiences his meaningful activity to an intense degree.

Maslow gives this summary of the actualisation of potential (Benson 1974, p. 351): '... the self-actualized person is fulfilling his potentialities in the act itself'. But this cannot be achieved without educational help. Mature adulthood, the ultimate goal of the child's becoming cannot be attained unless the child realises his potential.

We therefore recognise self-actualisation as guided actualisation as an empirical-educational category.

1.3.6 Formation of self-identity and self-concept

1.3.6.1. *Self-identity*

The dictum of Langeveld (1957), that a child wants to be somebody, drew a good deal of attention – especially from educationists – because of its pedagogical relevance. Many other writers (Jersild, Erikson, Sullivan, etc.) said the same thing in different words.

To be a child is to be somebody, to form a self-identity; to have satisfactory answers to the question *who am I?* In the words of Sullivan (1953, p. 171): 'I believe that a human being without a self-system is beyond imagination. Erikson, who was particularly interested in the identity concept and its implications, explains it like this. Self-identity is

congruent with an integrated whole made up of (i) the person's conceptions of himself, (ii) the stability and continuity of the attributes by which he knows himself, and (iii) the agreement between the person's self-conceptions and the conceptions held of him by people he esteems.

To form an image of himself he has to dissociate the *I* from the *non-I*, the mine for the *not-mine*. This initial consciousness of the self as a unique identity is accompanied by a self-evaluation, e.g. "I am good", "I am naughty". From an initial vague and diffuse image of himself a new image is formed which increases in clarity and comprises categorical terms (boy/girl) as well as attributive values (pretty/ugly, good/bad, thin/fat). The child arrives at a comprehensive set of self-concepts. Some may be favourable and others not so favourable.

The child has to form these concepts of himself in his association with others, especially his educators. This integrated whole of self-concepts, this identity, must be stable and continuous in such a way that the individual may know himself and that others may know him.

Identification takes place when a person perceives himself in accordance with others and acts accordingly (Murphy 1966). The infant does not first establish a self-identity before beginning to identify himself with others; it is while identifying himself with others that he forms a self-identity (Gordon 1959). He perceives himself as if he resembled a variety of other persons; he adopts certain actions, tests them and selects a role to which he assigns the most comprehensive meaning and incorporates it into his self-image. Erikson (Gordon 1968, p. 204) says: "Identity formation finally begins, where the usefulness of identification ends." This new configuration of behavioural modes and roles which the child displays is accepted by the community as peculiarly his. And as such he is accepted as a new individual. The formation of a self-identity is a lifelong task. The individual and his society are largely unaware of this process. It is accompanied by growth and development: as the child becomes capable of doing more things, his self-concepts are changed and extended. Self-identity develops and becomes quite stable during adolescence. The important point is this: with educational support an own identity gradually takes shape: it is accepted by others and a certain dignity is assigned to it. When this happens the person becomes someone.

1.3.6.2 *The self-concept*

Once a person becomes aware of the self, conceptions of an own identity arise. He gets to know himself. His self-conceptions concern the body as a concrete object and also his ideas about his physical and psychological self.

The self-identity comprises the answers, in terms of categories as well as attributes, to the question *who am I?* It may emerge as *I am a boy, Martin Smith, a Std 6 scholar, fair athlete, lazy at school work, untidy, etc.* In his opinion, these properties are as clearly recognisable to others as to himself. Note that this identity is established through interaction with his phenomenal world.

It is through involvement with his world that his actions or activities so largely define his self-image. In the very young child, identity often consists of activity. When a little girl puts on mother's shoes, she is mother; the little boy wearing his father's hat *is* father. He is so involved in feelings of fear, anger or pleasure that he totally becomes what he experiences. He is not acting – not being someone else at the same time. In his imagination he really sees himself as a pilot, engine-driver or policeman, he completely identifies himself with this role and acts accordingly.

These identifications may be temporary, but they illustrate a fact: *to be* a given *someone*, it is usually necessary *to do* a given *something*. The reverse is also true: to do a given something, one usually has to be a given someone. To see oneself as a cricketer, one has to play cricket. One has to *perform*, be involved in, the action to which meaning is being assigned. In this way one experiences one's identity as a do-er, as a cricketer. (How good a cricketer is not relevant, though it may become relevant later on.)

We see, then, that identity implies action and action implies identity. True self-actualisation requires free, realistic interaction between being and doing. To be someone means being involved in a typical, relevant something in such a way as to totally experience it.

Rollo May (Canfield and Wells 1976, p. 203) stresses the link between action and identity: 'It is in intentionality and will that the human being experiences his identity. "I" is the I of "I can". Descartes was wrong when he wrote, "I think therefore I am", for identity does not come out of thinking as such, and certainly not out of intellectualization . . . it jumps from thought to identity, when what actually occurs is the intermediate variable of "I can". What happens in human experiences is "I conceive – I can – I will – I am". The "I can" and "I will" are the essential experiences of identity.'

One's involvement in what one wants to do and can do, and one's experience of the actual doing, are factors in establishing one's identity.

Although action is an intrinsic part of the self-concept, it is a distinct component of the identity. This applies equally to the infant toddling or walking, the child reading, reciting or doing algebra or the youth playing springbok cricket. Of course, these actions call forth reactions from others: they may encourage, discourage or ignore them. This heightens

the meaning of the action to the person in the process of forming his identity. In the end, one does not rely solely on the words, behaviour or estimation of others for one's self-image: one anticipates the judgement of people whom one esteems, and this gives rise to the subjective standards by which one evaluates one's actions and in fact one's total identity. One's sex or name, height or weight, prowess at reading, prose-writing or maths, are evaluated as good or bad against one's own subjective standards. This self-evaluation is a basic component of self-perception. For the person himself, it is naked reality. This is how he sees himself. Self-perceptions form the basis of self-esteem, which for the majority of people is the most crucial question of all (Coopersmith 1967). The primary source of self-esteem is the esteem of others (Fitts et al. 1971). The Christian sees himself as God's creation and therefore of value, and this enables him to accept and respect himself (Wyngaarden 1963).

A self-concept comprises three mutually dependent components: identity, action and self-esteem. The self-concept is always highly meaningful to the person concerned, whether it is based on high or on low self-esteem. This is the self-image a person will vigorously defend if it is attacked or denigrated; '... this organization of ... concepts of the self (self concept) is for any individual the very core of personality. The self-concept is the self "no matter what" (Combs and Snygg 1959, p. 127). This self-identity is never a neutral image. In the light of all this, I consider that the dictum of Langeveld (1957) that 'the child wants to be somebody' must be strongly qualified to be acceptable.

It is not a neutral identity – 'somebody' as against 'nobody'. The child aspires to 'a definite identity' (Adams 1968, p. 79); 'a meaningful identity' (Tonssing in Rogers 1972, p. 536). I would go further: the child aspires to an identity that will be accepted and esteemed by himself and by others. This implies that the identity or image will be evaluated against subjective standards formed in relations with other people. This evaluated self-image becomes the self-concept, which may be defined as follows: *The self-concept refers to a configuration of convictions concerning oneself and attitudes toward oneself that is dynamic and of which one normally is aware or may become aware (Vrey 1974, p. 95). Binswanger and others called this self-concept the Eigenwelt, as May (1958, p. 64) remarks: "Eigenwelt is the self in relation to itself or the self knowing itself."*

The self-concept is the focal point of relationships in the life-world. Yamamoto (1972) says the self-concept may be likened to a map of a region, the self. Each personality trait is revealed in terms of a person's self-concept. If personality is the 'radiant force' emitted from the core of the person, the self-concept is the lens focusing this force on personality traits (Vrey 1974, p. 363). A life pattern is the expression of a self-concept as May (1958, p. 64) says: '... if Eigenwelt is omitted, interpersonal relations tend to become

hollow and sterile . . . and without Eigenwelt love lacks power and the capacity to fructify itself.'

The formation of a self-concept can therefore be seen as a pedagogical category. No child can conceivably become an adult unless he has a definite self-image or self-concept.

1.3.7 Relationship between the categories attribution of meaning, involvement, experience, self-actualisation and self-concept

These five categories are distinct but not separate. The child as a person is always totally involved in each act of self-actualisation, whether physical or psychological, and in each function, whether cognitive, affective or conative.

The infant has to orient himself to the world. Becoming and development towards adulthood are inconceivable without continual orientation.

Orientation begins when meaning (no matter how primitive) is assigned to his immediate surroundings. This gives rise to anchorage points, beacons of meaning, orientation points, essential to exploration and the establishment of a life-world. The meaning of each anchorage point (his own body, his mother, objects) is charged with feeling and with value. He assigns meaning to the degree he experiences, his involvement with the person or object e.g. enjoyment, comfort, satisfaction, security, care, etc. The greater the involvement, the more intense the experience, and the more efficiently will the processes of differentiation, integration, recognition – assignment of meaning, in fact – be directed. The capacity for cognition mushrooms; as language becomes functional, the attribution of meaning relies less and less on experience. Meaning becomes increasingly denotative, though the connotative dimension remains.

In the child's self-actualisation and his building of a positive self-concept, the interdependent and interacting factors of meaning attribution, involvement and experience can always be distinguished. The child is always deliberately directed towards whatever he wants to assign meaning to (or already understands). This demands a visible or subjective involvement, and it is qualified by the quality of the experience, which also shapes his self-concept.

The assignment of meaning demands involvement, and the quality of meaning is determined by experience. As meaning increases, involvement intensifies and experience is clarified: in its turn, meaning is intensified and becomes more finely differentiated.

Educational help is essential. It uncovers meaning, ensures effective involvement; or it may consist of positive support directed at giving the

child an experience of success, or at explanatory teaching or meaningful learning – or perhaps a withdrawal of personal support to allow the norm to become operative. The same five categories remain valid.

The empirical educationist is guided by these categories. He may therefore utilise significance attribution, involvement, experience self-actualisation and self-concept formation as empirical educational criteria in the study of the child.

1.3.8 Empirical-educational criteria

We need pedagogical criteria to judge educational events. Such criteria are designed to promote the realisation of the educational act. They are intended primarily for the educator, to enable him to gauge the success of his activities. It is a pedagogical imperative to guide the child towards understanding and involvement, so that his experiences may support a positive self-concept that will promote self-actualisation.

As we have seen, the basic empirical educational criteria are:

- (a) Attribution of meaning
- (b) Involvement
- (c) Experience
- (d) Self-actualisation
- (e) Positive self-concept

When these criteria are satisfied, education takes place.

1.3.9 Summary

The distinction between understanding as assignment of meaning and experience is not a sharp one, but we agree with Kuypers (1963, p. 207) that it is a significant one and that it is an error to interpret 'experience' so broadly that it includes 'understanding', as some psychologists do. For knowing, the first requirement is understanding (a cognitive process); for feeling and also for willing, experience is primary. And so we shall distinguish between *assigning meaning* and *experiencing*, even though we cannot separate them.

The attribution of meaning, and the accompanying phenomena of involvement and experience, are the criteria by which we judge the child's participation in his own development and in the learning process. On this theme Kuypers remarks (1963, p. 139) that where the self-involvement is stronger and more intimate, the quality of knowing is stronger and more direct. Something that makes a vivid impression becomes a more intimate part of my psychological content than something that is briefly noted. It seems, then, that in studying child development and

learning within the context of empirical education – *significance attribution, involvement, experience, self-actualisation and a self-concept* provide the proper criteria for judging whether or not particular actions may be qualified as psycho-pedagogic.

There are TWO IMPERATIVES for the practice of empirical education. The first is that action in this field must be *pedagogic*. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that our study of the psychic and social phenomena related to child development and the learning process has a steady pedagogic perspective. Constant evaluation in terms of the above-mentioned criteria will enable us to do this. The second imperative is that we should construct an *empirical theory* (which, in view of the above, now becomes a pedagogic-empirical theory) on a factual basis. An empirical theory, whether it relates (for example) to the development of the primary school child or to the attainment of insight or to the actualisation of the results of learning, must be constructed on a basis of facts. Theories and hypotheses concerning any such construct must be developed and elaborated and verified by empirical methods such as observation and experiment, and must then be evaluated pedagogically.

With this background information in mind, it should be clear that the basic function of this pedagogic discipline is the study of the child as he learns and develops within his milieu and as he, with educational assistance, assigns meaning and thus structure to the world in which he lives.