PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION

A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

EDGAR STONES

Psychology of Education

A pedagogical approach

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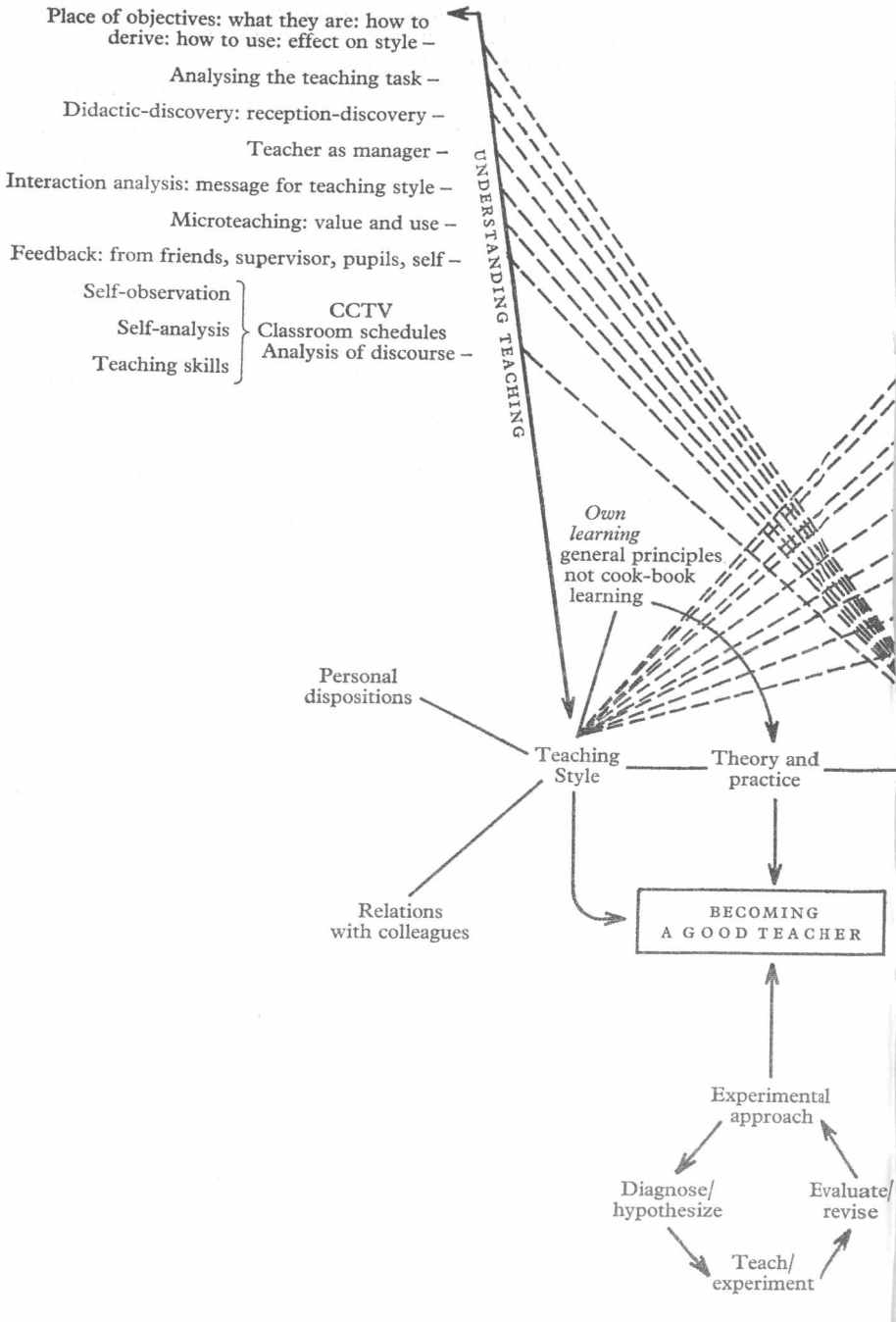
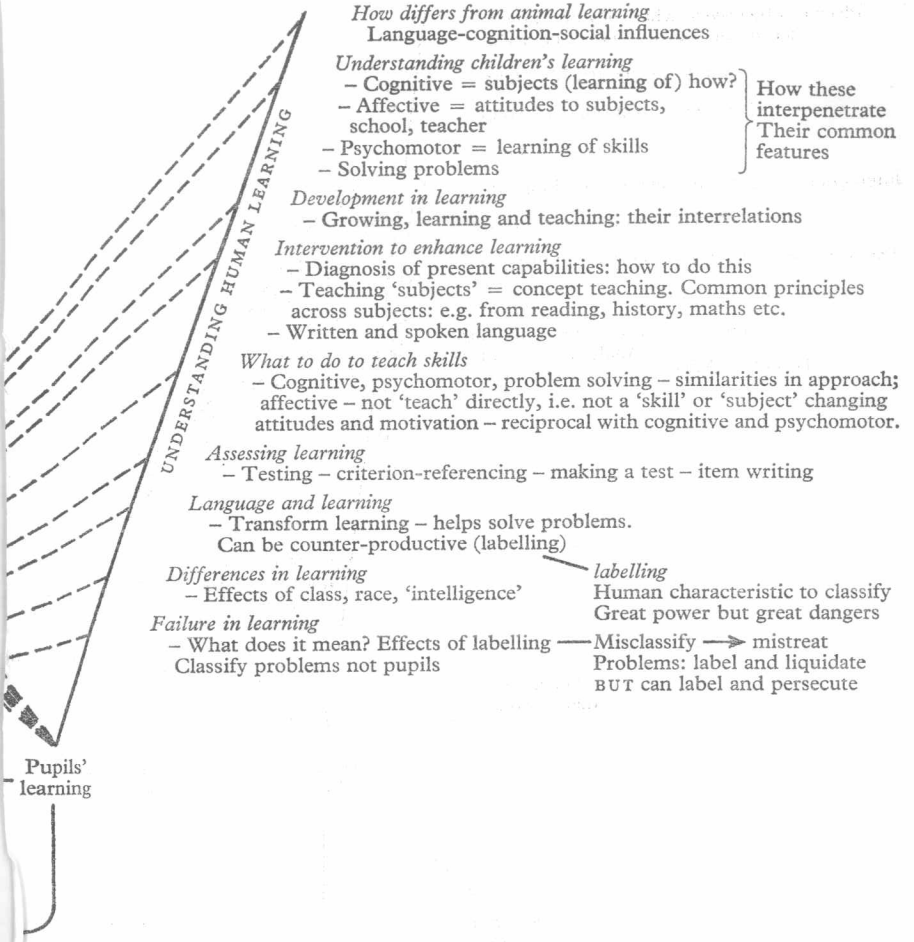

Place of objectives: what they are: how to derive: how to use: effect on style –
Analysing the teaching task –
Didactic-discovery: reception-discovery –
Teacher as manager –
Interaction analysis: message for teaching style –
Microteaching: value and use –
Feedback: from friends, supervisor, pupils, self –
Self-observation
Self-analysis
Teaching skills
CCTV
Classroom schedules
Analysis of discourse –
UNDERSTANDING TEACHING
Own learning
general principles
not cook-book learning
Personal dispositions
Teaching Style
Theory and practice
Relations with colleagues
BECOMING A GOOD TEACHER
Experimental approach
Diagnose/ hypothesize
Evaluate/ revise
Teach/ experiment



A Map of the Terrain

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Prologue

Seedlings or cut flowers?

Traditionally courses in the style of *educational psychology* have provided ideas like cut flowers. Carefully plucked and presented they have been stuck in the soil of student teacher studies to flourish briefly and wilt quickly as their sustenance seeped away. Come graduation neophyte teachers rapidly forgot such ephemera or complained at their inutility. What they sought were firm-jointed seedlings that would root strongly in their concern to help children to learn and to like learning, and would be nourished by practical experience.

In recent years many teacher educators have themselves recognized the unsatisfactory nature of the offerings handed to student teachers under the rubric of *educational psychology*. However, there is still far to go. For my part, I have long felt and argued that the way forward for educational psychology is to focus on the act of teaching rather than on education as an academic subject. I have also taken my convictions seriously and, with the help of many practising and student teachers, have explored the applicability and relevance of various aspects of learning theory to actual practical teaching. In the pages which follow I draw on those explorations to outline to readers courses of action that I believe will help them develop insights into practical teaching based on systematic studies of principles that

help human beings to learn. I believe that those insights will foster the growth, not only of pupil *and teacher* learning, but also of the fresh shoots of pedagogy that have been so long neglected.

Cooperative exploration

Courses that deal with cut-and-dried facts are by nature transitory; lasting growth and development demand openendedness. Thus the general line proposed stresses an exploratory approach to teaching rather than the routine application of predetermined procedures. Teaching is seen as a form of experimental psychology.

Thus I deem it inappropriate merely to present for digestion the findings, thoughts, hypotheses and hunches of psychologists ruminating about education. Instead I have tried to show how teachers can test psychological principles that have been found valuable in their own practice. Not to apply the principles, but to explore their applicability to real teaching with a sceptical cast of mind that sees research findings and currently fashionable procedures as a matter for debate.

In my disquisitions and excursions I take a pluralistic approach and do not espouse any particular school of psychology. The fact that in some places I draw on the work of Skinner as a guide to action does not put me in the 'behaviourist' camp any more than reference to other psychologists puts me in the 'cognitive' camp. Essentially I believe that these categorizations are in the main simplistic and quite unhelpful in discussions of pedagogy and educational psychology. If I must be pigeonholed I think I should be happiest in the 'pedagogic' camp, a location that I think natural for one interested in teaching and teacher training. I hope many readers will feel persuaded to join this select band.

I hasten to add that I do not lay claim to the whole of pedagogy. My concern is with the contribution psychology can make to pedagogy. I am very much aware that in teacher training there are other important aspects of pedagogy, but I do believe that psychology is of central importance and has a great deal to offer teachers with a genuine interest in their profession. Hence the running head in the pages that follow: *Psychopedagogy*.

Perhaps the key contribution the suggested approach offers is the development of a questioning, exploratory turn of mind that does not take as gospel the expositions in textbooks and lectures, but rather sees them as possible guides to be proved (that is, tested) in pedagogic action in practical teaching. I apply the same criteria to what I have written in this book. I feel some confidence, however, since the procedures discussed have, in fact, been tested in practice in various ways. I am well aware, also, that no book can comprise a complete pedagogical system and I discuss the reasons for this. Thus to dedicated pedagogues, all the book can offer is a beginning; only their personal explorations of the validity of the arguments and suggestions can continue the process of their own pedagogical education. Often this may well have to be a bootstrap operation and this point is also taken up in the book.

I have also made clear my own scepticism about some of the constructs and concepts that have influenced teaching in recent years and at times may have been more polemical than is conventionally thought proper. An instance of this may be evidenced in my discussion of current approaches to testing and the classification of people which, I argue, as they are at present, are basically anti-learning and anti-teaching. I think it is justified and important to take such an approach because it makes explicit the controversial nature of many current practices and concepts that at times have been accepted as received truths, with gravely deleterious effects on teaching. It also makes my own prejudices clearer than is usually the case with conventional tests of alleged impartiality. Time alone will tell where truth lies, and naturally I think time is on my side.

Edgar Stones, November 1983

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