

## 28. EDUCATION, TEACHING, TRAINING: A FEW CONCLUDING REMARKS

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At this educational conference we as teachers and educationists have for the past four days been directing our attention to especially education and training. Many burning issues in these fields were investigated. We have been enriched with new insight, understanding and enthusiasm.

If, however, one has to pay attention to so many issues in such a short period, it could easily happen that one tends not to see the wood for the trees. Therefore I could also not in this brief concluding word try to offer a recapitulation of the whole conference. In the space of a few minutes this would be impossible anyway. What I would like to do, however, is to reflect for a few minutes on the essence of what education is. What do teachers and lecturers do every day?

We all know that education is a *lifelong* task. The first cry of the newborn baby is already a cry for help of a human being coming into being, a cry to be brought up. And this process continues until death. It is also a *vital* task. A nation or culture which neglects its educational task cuts off its own future, and goes under itself. But what exactly is education?

### **Forming, education and teaching**

It is important that one should not confuse the various issues — even though we could perhaps just distinguish them and not divide them clearly into categories. I think here of concepts such as *forming, education and teaching*.

In all human relationships there is, consciously or unconsciously, *forming* of one person by another. The author of Proverbs has already taught that as iron grinds iron, so one person moulds another.

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All forming is not, however, *educational* forming — people can also influence one another adversely.

Education or nurture, however, is still a too encompassing concept. Nurture as such does not exist, it is an abstraction. One always encounters specific *kinds* of education/nurture. In this conference, for example, our focus has not in the first place been the kind of education which parents offer their children in the home. The attention was specifically directed at *nurture* by means of *education*, which includes teaching, instruction and training. In the case of education one can also distinguish between primary, secondary and tertiary education. There are also different kinds of (secondary) schools, viz. academic, technical, agricultural, home economics, etc., each offering a distinctive kind of education.

The question is thus now very specific: what does one really do when educating others?

### Some concepts in Greek and Latin

Our word *pedagogue* comes from the Greek *paidos* = child and *ago* = guide, that is, somebody leading a child. The Latin word *educere* also means leading somebody. Like the word *nuntrire* (to nurture, to feed), the other Latin word *educare* also in the first place had a literal meaning, viz. to nurture, to (make) grow. (It is used, for example, in the sense of training a vine.) The Latin verb *instruere* means to build, to render capable.

If we draw all these together, we find that education (and teaching as a specific kind of education) means

to *lead* someone  
so that the person can *develop* with  
the purpose of becoming *capable*.

### Point of departure, direction and destination

If we wish to use the image of a journey, we could say that education has three stages. The *point of departure* is the teacher (or lecturer) who gives purposeful guidance to the child (or student). Because this guidance is not without *direction*, one always has to speak of norms or criteria. And the *purpose* (final destination) of the action is that the pupil

or student will become capable of fulfilling his task through this process of deployment.

In recapitulation: *Education is a conscious effort of the provider of education to guide the receiver thereof towards the awareness of and equipment for his task in life in accordance with certain norms.* (I add, between brackets, that in the case of school education, especially, the parents, as those desiring education for their children, shall be responsible for the direction and the purpose of the education.)

In the few minutes still at our disposal, just a few fleeting thoughts to clarify some of these ideas.

(If we go into this issue a little more deeply, we would indicate that a particular anthropology underlies each education system, and that the ideals of education will change when this underlying anthropology changes.)

### Conscious guidance

The serious question which we have to pose here is whether we as teachers and lecturers always realise our great responsibility. Are we continually aware that we are the guides of our children and young people who have been entrusted to us by their parents? Do we guide them on the right road? Are we good models according to which they can model their own lives with confidence?

As teachers and as lecturers we are leaders. But do we really know what a leader is? Does this simply mean status, position and dominance over the young?

Christ contrasted with this the idea that someone wishing to be a leader had to serve first (Mark. 9 : 35), and someone who wishes to be great in his kingdom first had to be humble, like a small child (Matt. 18 : 3—4). In Matthew 20 : 20—28, Christ makes it clear that it is heathens who desire to dominate others. His disciples should, however, like servants and slaves, not strive to dominate but to be in self-denying service at the disposal of others. Anyone in a position of teacher or leader should also study carefully Christ's rejection of autocratic leadership and his guidelines for true Christian leadership in Matthew 23 : 1—12. And we also should not forget John 13:1—7, in which Christ Himself sets the

example and washes his disciple's feet — the despised job of a heathen slave.

As has emerged from the circumscription, education is guidance, via opening up, towards capability. One cannot separate these elements (guidance, deployment, equipment) from each other.

By deployment, opening up, we mean that the teacher (lecturer) should help the child (student) to open up the whole of reality in which he finds himself, so that he can come to knowledge and understanding of it.

He is guided towards an understanding of the still unknown. For that reason the curriculum may not be one-sided. And gradually, as the world open up to the child, so that child begins to open up like a flower, and he develops.

In this way, the third facet of education, that is, equipment, is realised. The child/young person is made capable of fulfilling his task and vocation in the world in this way.

The teacher always has to keep in mind that there is a good balance between these three elements of the educative process. Somebody cannot be equipped for his task without guidance, and without the world in which he lives being opened up for him. Education also does not have the purpose of cramming a great many facts in the child's head and forgetting that the main issue is not knowledge only, but knowledge for the sake of guidance towards the assumption of a task, a vocation. (The well-known controversy as to whether education should be directed at the subject or at the child is nothing other than an emanation from the dialectical tension between the scientific ideal and the ideal of personality within humanistic philosophy.) As a house is only completed once it has a foundation, walls and a roof, so education is only completed once it includes all three these elements.

### According to specific norms

Each lecturer and teacher who has a formative influence on the development of pupils and students, *must* know what the direction, the purpose of his education is. One does not simply *teach* — one works in accordance with certain norms. Are we always clearly aware of the norms which should direct our education, and give direction to it? If this is not

the case, then we can never really succeed in the essential purpose of education, which is to provide direction to the life of the developing young person.

I cannot now go into all the relevant norms. As an example, however I take only the fact that a teacher/lecturer should always see the child/student as a human being, created in the image of God. For that reason the child being educated should never be treated like a mere object — his freedom and responsibility as a person, even though not fully developed, should be acknowledged and respected. A child is not simply a piece of amorphous clay which has to be moulded at will by the hands of the potter. The educator may also never have the purpose of turning children into mere replicas of himself.

Anti-normative “education” would thus amount to an attempt to train or drill a child like an animal. Such dominating power, manipulation, mechanical training, is not education, but rather “mental engineering” or blatant “brainwashing”.

The opposite, which is a *laissez-faire* attitude, is also anti-normative. Both forced guidance and no guidance are wrong.

The results in the child/student will then also be either rebelliousness, aggression or fearful submission (in the case of force), and confusion, uncertainty and lack of discipline (in the case of a *laissez-faire* attitude). Instead of maturity the result will be immaturity. Neurotic tendencies and even permanent damage are not excluded.

### On the way to a specific purpose

I have purposely been dealing with norms first and now turn to educational objectives or ideals. Many people confuse the two. Ideals are not, however, norms, but norms *do* determine ideals.

Education and teaching are purposeful actions. Do you always have a firm purpose in mind?

It is a pity that the Christian educators of the past accepted the Graeco-Roman educational ideals so uncritically. And today still it is rather a matter of humanistic ideals (such as maturity, self-realisation and emancipation) which are more important to Christians, than holding to truly

Biblical objectives such as faith, hope, love, self-denial and the willingness to sacrifice. Man should not, after all, develop for his own sake, but for the sake of love of God and the neighbour, which is the most fundamental meaning and destiny of being human.

As final destinations for education we find, amongst others, the following: a morally strong personality, a psychologically mature person, a socially well-adjusted or independent person, somebody schooled for a specific profession or trade, a cultural being, a citizen obedient to the state, a believing member of the church.

All this sounds very beautiful, but these are basically only humanistic ideals of personality. Education and teaching here are only instruments for self-glorification of man — which ultimately will lead to a downfall. Apart from the fact that certain facets of (much richer) humanity are absolutized here, there remains the fact that the most profound and the highest purpose of education is not noticed. What is it?

Is the most important objective of education and teaching not to teach children and young people to accept responsibility? I mean here the responsibility in the deeply religious sense of response (in each facet of one's humanity) to God. Do our South African education/upbringing at home and our teaching in school not often fail on this cardinal point? (And education towards responsibility means that we should not only teach our children *facts*. We will once again have to offer them clear *norms* for each facet of their lives!)

The task of the lecturer/teacher is to guide his students in such a way that they are prepared for their vocation. And what is the highest vocation of man? That is to be of service to God and his Kingdom. Here we have ended up with this Conference at that with which we started: the Kingdom of God. I therefore do not need to explicate this any further.

This simply means that we have to guide our pupils in such a way, open up the world to them and equip them so that, with the whole of their lives, and in all spheres, they will serve the only true and living God, and bring Him glory. In order to be able to do this, we have to teach our children and students what God's will is for every sphere of life — and also get them to make their will subservient to God. And the highest commandment — that we know — is that of love: of God and of the neighbour.

## An immense responsibility

I do hope that with this brief concluding word I have made two things very clear. In the first place we have the task of continually asking ourselves what we are busy with in our task as educationists. In the second place we have to realise what an immense responsibility we have as educationists. We as leaders are in the position to determine the lives of many young people, and therefore also the future population of South Africa.

I do hope that this conference will contribute to a realisation of the wish of the Psalmist:

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth,  
that our daughters may be as cornerstones,  
polished after the similitude of a palace  
(Ps. 144:12).

Your task as teacher is here compared with that of the agriculturist who has to train our sons as vines to the top, and with an artist, who has to hew, to mould our daughters so finely that they will be suitable as firm and beautiful cornerstones, fit for a palace. Our sons and daughters, "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Fortunately we as believers also know that we need not carry this immense responsibility all by ourselves. A teacher, like an agriculturist, need not do more than fulfil his responsibilities. We need only plant and tend — God will ensure growth (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6—9).

Our final thought at this conference is then a fervent wish and a serious prayer that what has happened here in the course of the last few days will be blessed and used in the Kingdom of God.

"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22).