

The Lost Art of Pedagogy: An exploration in three parts

L'art perdu de la pédagogie: Une exploration en trois parties

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Three authors, all art teacher educators, explore the essential qualities of pedagogy that make teaching an art form in its own right. Pedagogy is first looked at from a social perspective, as a special kind of relationship between teacher and learner. Continuing the belief that understanding be embodied in praxis, teaching is then considered as performance. The third part expands on the theme of pedagogy as transformation, drawing from the author's conviction that she and her art education students are participants in a community of artists who teach. The three parts interact in an attempt to rediscover and reclaim the art in teaching.

Trois auteurs, tous des formateurs d'enseignants en art, étudient les qualités fondamentales de la pédagogie qui font de l'enseignement une forme d'art à part entière. La pédagogie est examinée en premier lieu du point de vue social, à titre de relation particulière entre l'enseignant et l'apprenant. La pédagogie est ensuite examinée en tant que performance, conformément au postulat voulant que la compréhension naisse de la pratique. Le troisième volet est consacré au concept de pédagogie synonyme de transformation, l'auteure étant convaincue qu'elle et ses étudiants appartiennent à une communauté d'artistes qui enseignent. Ces trois points de vue interagissent afin de redécouvrir l'aspect artistique de l'enseignement et de se le réapproprier.

Part One: What is Pedagogy Anyway?

Harold Pearce

Before we can find something, we have to know what it is that has been lost. We also have to know where it was last seen. Furthermore, we need to know where we are now. And, as my mother used to say: "If you were that lost sock, where would you be?" So we begin by asking some questions:

What is Pedagogy?

How can we say that it is an art?

How can we say that it is lost?

Where and how might we find it?

Let's start with the last question. A good place to start looking is in the field of art education. A good point of view from which to look is a social perspective. Some socially responsive art educators sense the need to re-orient the field to its roots in pedagogy, which for now we can assume to mean "the art of teaching." In recent years art education has focused its attentions on subject matter (disciplines) rather than on pedagogy, the act (and art) of teaching. This concern with subject matter is best exemplified by a preoccupation with standardized curriculum content and the resulting ramifications for accountability, student and teacher assessment, and teacher preparation. In the process, we have lost sight of what good teaching is about, no matter what the subject. What had been overlooked are the larger pedagogical concerns those qualities that make teaching an art form in its own right. What is "social" about this concern? All learning, be it between individuals, in-school classes, communities, or other groups, has a social dimension. The essence of learning and teaching is relational and its context is always social (and the social is always contextual); human beings acting with each other and acting in, with and upon their world. The quality of these interactions will be a concern of this paper.

One of the foundation blocks of social theory is the notion of "praxis," or the reciprocity of thought and action. In praxis, theory enlightens practice. Practice, or life, always comes first and theory comes later as a result of reflection. Pedagogical praxis refers to thoughtful action: action full of thought and thought full of action (Van Manen, 1986, p.54). As we shall see, praxis is an essential quality of pedagogy.

So, what exactly is pedagogy? The word for pedagogues derives from the Greek *paed*, *pais* for child (boy) and *agogos*, for leader or escort. Escort derives from the Old Italian word *scorgere* meaning to perceive, guide, observe. The word "observe" has etymological connections to preserving, saving, regarding, and protecting. So a pedagogue is literally one who leads or guides or serves a child. In ancient Greece and Rome, a pedagogue was a slave who accompanied children to school but the term came to mean a "trainer of boys." Pedagogy moved from meaning simply instruction or knowledge itself to the art, science or profession of teaching. Today pedagogue and pedagogy have slightly negative, stuffy or archaic connotations, probably by confusion or association with the word "pedant". Pedant was the same root but has evolved to mean one who "is uninspired, narrowly academic or who unduly emphasizes minutiae in the presentation or use of knowledge" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary). Pedagogy's negative connotation is a North American phenomenon. In Europe the term connotes respect.

Although rooted in the word for child (or boy), the essence and nature of pedagogy can extend beyond leading, escorting or teaching children. Being a child can be an attitude, a state of mind. It is being innocent, curious, open to learning. On the other hand, being a teacher is being open to letting the learner learn. This essence lies in Rudolph Arnhem's observation that "pedagogy is at its most powerful when the truly wise serve as teachers to the truly youthful" (Arnhem, 1986, p.291). As Heidegger would say, the "truly wise" teacher is one who "lets learn" or who in the words of a writer and pedagogue, Max van Manen, is sensitive, and full of thought and tact. Pedagogy then, is a way of being.

Max Van Manen is currently a Professor of Education at the University of Alberta, Canada, where he teaches curriculum studies, phenomenological writing and research methodology. He has been an elementary and a secondary school teacher in the Netherlands and Canada. He is an author, a teacher and a parent. To Van Manen, "pedagogy is the activity of teaching, parenting, education, or generally living with children, that requires constant practical acting in concrete situations and relations" (Van Manen, 1990, p.2).

Van Manen uses four words that I would like to explore to help us locate pedagogy tone, tact, thoughtfulness, and hope. These are not words one often hears in school staff rooms (at least not often enough). As pedagogues, says Van Manen, we need to strike the right tone with children. To find the right pitch, to be in tune, we must be tactful. Tact is a particular sensitivity and attunement to situations. Pedagogical tact is having a sensitivity to what is best for each child, for each learner, and having a sense of his or her life and his or her deep preoccupations. To Van Manen, "True pedagogy requires an attentive attunement of one's whole being to the child's experience of the world" (1986, p. 50).

A tactful principal (teacher, pedagogue) knows what to say and what not to say, what to mention and what to pass over or leave unsaid. The ability of a principal (teacher, pedagogue) to enter into the world of the child is thoughtfulness. (Van Manen, 1986, p.10)

This special ability is pedagogical thoughtfulness. It is sustained by a certain kind of seeing, listening, and responding. Tact in our relationship with learners grows out of this basis of thoughtfulness (Van Manen, 1986, p.12).

Not only is pedagogy about a relationship between teacher and learner, it also encompasses a relationship of both with a subject. To know a particular subject means not only to have knowledge in that domain but to know something of the way it relates to us and we to it. To know a subject means to love and respect it for what it is and the ways it lets itself be known. Says Van Manen, "it is in this letting us know that subject matter becomes a true subject: a subject that makes relationships possible" (1986, p.45). This responsiveness to the subject is the essence of the relationship between student and subject matter. The relationship between subject matter is of course, just as integral and reciprocal.

... there is deep truth in the statement "you are what you teach". A math teacher is not (or should not be) just somebody who happens to teach math. A real math teacher is a person who embodies math, who lives math, who in a strong sense is math. (Van Manen, 1986, p.45)

For math, we can substitute art a real teacher "embodies art." Stated this way, we have finally cleared up, once and for all, and laid to rest, the question of whether or not an art teacher must be a practising artist. This is not the point. The point is that as art teacher, an art pedagogue, must embody art. Or to use another of Van Manen's words, an art pedagogue must be attuned to art.

To Van Manen, another important quality for pedagogy is hope. Hope refers to all that gives us patience, tolerance and belief in the possibilities for our children, our learners. Hope is what distinguishes "a pedagogic life from a non-pedagogic one" (1986, p. 27). Van Manen offers a new definition of pedagogue:

Those who are inhabited by hope are true fathers, true mothers, true teachers to children. Pedagogic hope animates the way a parent or teacher lives with a child, and it gives meaning to the way an adult stands in the world, represents the world to the child, takes responsibility for the world, and embodies or stylizes the forms of knowledge through which the world is known and explained to children. (1986, p.26)

Thus, he says, "hope gives us pedagogy. Or is it pedagogy that gives us hope?" (1986, p. 28)

In order to fix a direction and a stance for an orientation to pedagogy, let me conclude this introduction with a bit of social theory jargon: “reflexive dialectic of pedagogic praxis.” “Reflexive dialectic” refers to a constant alertness and questioning of what education is, what teaching is. It is a constant measurement of our pedagogical action. “Pedagogic praxis” refers to thoughtful action: action full of thought and thought full of action.

Back to my mother’s question and my lost sock: “If I were the lost art of pedagogy, where might I be?” Well, a good place to look would be in the classrooms of thoughtful, attuned, and hopeful teachers like Cynthia Taylor and Amy Brook Snider.

Part Two: Pedagogy As Performance?

Cynthia Taylor

We who call ourselves EDUCATORS have attended to the pedagogical imperative all too well. By our well-meant efforts we have transformed the ancient and honourable calling of TEACHER into an exact science. We have examined roles and delineated tasks with the bright intelligent eye and the efficient manner of clinicians (psychologists, sociologists, pathologists, time management consultants, and economists). We have learned to provide rationales, to hone critical skills, to develop and market slick curriculum packages, taking some pride in declaring them “teacher proof.” We have focused on target groups (the children), learning centers (the classrooms), resources and materials in a bewildering array. We can analyze and manipulate behavioural patterns and develop effective questioning strategies. As art educators we find comfort in the oft-repeated assertion that we are the purveyors, even the guardians, of EXCELLENCE in education. We, the communicators, provide it-clean, tidy, and without blemish. We even provide the content, market-researched and precision-tested: art history and aesthetics are “scanned”, studio classes are planned for and delivered without a hitch. And without doubt, our stature has been increased in the eyes of the bureaucrats. We have become “accountable.”

But what have we lost? We have replaced MYTHS with exact science; MAGIC with methodology; and MYSTERY with mastery. We no longer yearn for the shadowy, formless world of passion and pathos, or for the “something wild, out-of-hand, something that for the rest of the world is dynamic, which demands endless adjustments in a relationship that can never be permanent” (Brook, 1989, p.39). In this “time of the world’s night” we pedagogues have turned away from that “something” which has given us meaning, and provided us with the source-material for understanding our life-work: ART.

There are a few who regret the passing of what in ancient traditions was an honoured and valued vocation. Many of those voices which point to the danger inherent in striving for “excellence” and the “ideal” come from outside the field:

The more rigorously the IDEAL is reached, the more likely it is to be disastrous: a bright, intelligent eye, full of exact images, set in a head of the most frightful stupidity. (Hughes, 1988, p.39)

I am not convinced, however, that acquisition of art concepts and skills: will lead to experiences of expansion, or to ‘creation and re-creation’, or to the kind of encounter that sets beholders or listeners or readers ‘in motion’ breaking with the fixed and the ordinary, transforming their lived worlds...I want to see a curriculum that allows for the risks and for surprise. (Green, 1989, p.223)

In education, failures are more important than success stories. There is nothing so dismal as a success story. Teach on the verge of peril. (Schafer, 1978, p.11)

There are a few (but only a few) art educators who by their example and in their writing plead for a change in how we envision our view of what it means to teach:

When a lesson becomes a performance, the lesson as a whole may be thought of as a work of art, and the teacher has clarified the relationship between art teaching and art making. The roles of the teacher and the artist are united. (Szekely, 1988, p. 91)

Year after year, I prepare my students to go into classrooms. They are good students, and serious. I ensure that they can follow all the rules, and can apply the best principles drawn from various curricular approaches as they plan for lessons which meet objective criteria. They can describe learning tasks and write realistic goals. They show themselves capable of program planning, they polish their rationales and brainstorm ideas for lessons that appear (on paper) to be rich and full. Their lesson plans are models; their materials are carefully laid out in advance of every class; traffic patterns and clean-up chores are worked out. I fulfill MY pedagogical task, and have every reason to believe that my students will be well-trained, well-prepared teachers.

And yet, year after year, I watch lessons which are dull and lifeless; about, but devoid of ART. Clockwork-true to the lesson plans, they are delivered by harried student teachers (who have an eye on the clock more than the students), at break-neck pace, and with voice soft and apologetic or rising shrilly to unbearable pitch. Delivery is often rushed or pedantic; the students stand at the front of the class, rigid, eyes glancing off notes which rustle in shaking hands. They write on the board in large looping letters which look familiar. Of course! They are modeling

themselves on the very worst teachers they themselves have undergone. They understand the business and the science of pedagogy, but have no means by which they can find access to the ART of teaching which is closest, in my opinion, to the art of PERFORMANCE. Although they are fine artists in their own right, my students (generally speaking) cannot make the connection between their own rich lives in art and their teaching. Moreover, they look nervously toward the future, when they will have to “give up” their art, in the interest of teaching. Year after year I hand out copies of the very few articles I find which focus on performance: my copy of “The Art Lesson as a Work of Art” by George Szekely is pale from repeated photocopying. I repeat excerpts from his 1988 book, *Encouraging Creativity in Art Lessons*, and Egan and Nadaner’s *Imagination in Education*, but even those students who dutifully read them do not apply the ideas in their own practice. Then can read about them, but their learning is blocked. “To learn,” says Heidegger, “means to place oneself on a journey. To experience means to learn” (Heidegger, 1966, p.143).

Last spring, for the first time, an elective course titled *Teaching as Performance*, was offered at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. It represented my attempt to address the very real problems we face as a result of our culture’s long-standing urge to make scientific method the center of all our work. Since the mid-eighteenth century, we have assiduously attended to the separation of mind from body, lived experience from knowledge, sense from nonsense. For too long we have fragmented experience, and have learned to place little faith in ancient ways of knowing, which saw the body as the locus of the soul, and the heart as the seat of the intellect.

Mahatma Gandhi described a “new education”: a perfect, well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit all have full play, and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole” (Gandhi, 1953, p.50). In one of his last books, *The Third Realm of Education*, Herbert Read spoke to the problem:

This negation inherent to our technological civilization must be resolved; and since it cannot now be resolved in work, it must be resolved in the development of the only impulse that is left underdeveloped in our civilization; aesthetic play. The only development of the play impulse that is adequate for this task of reconstruction is its development into creative art (Read, 1960, p. 59).

In this course, as it was introduced to and played out by a small, brave band of students, there was a conscious attempt to initiate activities specifically designed to reintegrate our dismembered natures, primarily through PLAY. My goal was to encourage us to learn and celebrate our bodies, listen to our own voices, and to relate to each other as vibrant, interconnected beings. Through this course I wished to make a beginning, to re-claim the ART in pedagogy. The intention was, of course, that the students (once they had been freed from fixed patterns and habits) would be enabled to apply the insights to their teaching practice.

The activities were, indeed, performative in that they incorporated various forms of acting expressively and reflectively, exploring gesture and movement, sound, image and word. I assigned tasks which called upon students to lose their heretofore rigid ways of presenting concepts. I used any means I could devise to unblock habitual patterns of thinking and acting. I challenged them to take on what they feared most, providing an environment which was supportive. They engaged in theatre games and sports and they connected with each other's bodies, minds and personal histories. They worked together to create and present mythical worlds. I drew upon the expertise of professionals from other fields to see how science as method can illumine art. Voice was understood as being a tool, at the disposal of the one who speaks. Space was seen to be fluid substance, which can be shaped in order for "something" to happen.

Reflecting on experience, we discovered that serendipity has a place in learning; that art knows no particular form; that life, though rife with ambiguity and uncertainty, is for celebrating. We (for I was as active a participant as any other course member) sang, we danced, we laughed, we played, we learned the extent of our capabilities as we exposed our frailties. We learned to take risks.

Mostly though, we were encouraged to risk our own self-understanding: to lose ourselves, in a sense, in the interest of composing our lives afresh. As teachers, we are still artists: our emerging selves will connect with those of learners as we embody art at work in our teaching:

As we consciously present the artist's role to our students, we approach it as an art form in which the teacher represents an art world of fundamental truths that transcend the teacher's self and personal interests. In 'performing' the teacher's role, or other dramatic roles for our students, our goal is... [to draw] attention through ourselves to the fundamental truths of art. (Szeleky, 1988, p.167)

If we are convinced that art is a transformative undertaking, and learning is a fluid, dynamic process, I believe what we must do is to act. AS IF our lives are ongoing works of art. By our art-full acts, we will reintegrate the various aspects of our natures. As art educators, we must discover ways to help our students exemplify the art of teaching. Let us revivify teaching as an art form, by embodying our understanding in praxis.

Part Three: Pedagogy As Transformation

Amy Brook Snider

Philip Jackson (1986) has identified two approaches to pedagogy: the transformative and the mimetic. He characterizes the former as “teaching capable of accomplishing ...a transformation of one kind or another in the person being taught a qualitative change often of dramatic proportion, a metamorphosis” (p.120). In my work as a teacher of undergraduates studying art education in combination with art, design, and occasionally architecture, I help students find or name something which has been ignored or lost to them: self knowledge, a critical component in the process of making or teaching art.

One of the courses I teach, *Twentieth Century Ideas about Art and Self*, is a course which defines itself in the space between the studio, the art history lecture, and the classroom. It provides a forum for all that is missing from the traditional studies in art and art education. It has become a class unlike any other I teach or have taught before because it is a place where miracles have been known to occur.

From the beginning, the students and I define ourselves as a community in which we are free to present ourselves without fear of censorship and transform what was previously considered ordinary into what Ellen Dissanayake (1990) had called the “special”. We tell stories about memorable childhood experiences, engage in collaborative art projects, construct autobiographical performances, and study the work of artists and artisans considered marginal to the mainstream art history in our textbooks. In the process, connections are continually being made between different realms of educational experience as well as between art and self. Previous choices are reconsidered; new art forms are tried on; risks are taken. Students learn to see beyond the categories which they had always used to demarcate their life worlds. But perhaps most important, we start to shed initial prejudices about each other and see beneath those superficial assessments we usually live by in all human relations.

The following is a narrative, one of the three elements in transformative teaching identified by Philip Jackson, which exemplifies my work as an artist who teaches. As I reread a chapter by Howard Gardner (1973) describing the creative process as problem-solving in a medium, I focus upon these words as if for the first time:

Although a direct assault on an artistic problem is sometimes effective, desired qualities may sometimes be better realized as a result of ...the undirected making activity characteristic of play. Execution is particularly marked by such undirected but potentially

fruitful activity. When this freedom of exploration, this combining of possibilities and schemes is complemented by an ability to discriminate, to perceive when an effect has been realized or a work consummated, the skilled individual will be well equipped for artistic production. (p.276)

In previous years, our readings and discussion of this chapter was usually informed by observations of children painting in neighbourhood pre-schools followed by collaborative art activity (my antidote to Gardner's portrait of the creative process as solitary). Since this group studio work usually ended up being a lot of fun and resulted in some highly imaginative pieces of art, I may have been unconsciously thinking about the role of play in creative process all along. But now I want to bring my understanding of play to a more conscious level. I begin my preparation, that is, my research, by:

- 1-Going through my library and finding readings related to the subject in a variety of disciplines: anthropology, psychology, art, and poetry (the more outside the field of art education the better.)
- 2-Picking out quotations for the quotography (a form of bibliography I devised that stimulates thinking on the subject).
- 3-Having students read aloud their observations of pre-school play while we identify distinguishing characteristics and create a taxonomy of play.
- 4-Bringing in children's books, slides of children's art, modern and contemporary artists inspired by children's art, and toys and reproductions of toys.
- 5-Bringing in photographs of children playing.

These are the elements which I arrange and rearrange in an effort to provide the class with the material to approach the question: "What is the relationship between play and the creative process?" Doing it once will not be enough. I keep making adjustments and talking about it with my colleagues in the department. It is hard to predict how long before my "text" is written in this transformative collaboration I call teaching. And there is more evidence that once it does work, new "texts" will have to be written. Textbooks are not useful in this process, for if I were to follow a prepared text filled with pre-digested, selected, and received knowledge, such discoveries would be impossible. All the real work involved in this messing around in material or information would have been done by somebody else and I would be sleepwalking through these creations without being called upon as a participant. And God knows what my students would be doing! The "I" is safely removed from a "teacher-proof" experience, for teaching within such a paradigm is serious business, anything but fun and certainly not messy.

There does not seem to be a way to make a distinction between what my students do with the stuff I provide and what I originally thought of as the catalyst for the process. Perhaps what Philip Jackson has left out from his description of transformative pedagogy is that in the process the teacher undergoes a metamorphosis as well.

A fitting conclusion to this paper and this search, is a quotation from a book published in 1917 written by Herman Harrell Horne called *The Teacher as Artist: An Essay in Education as an Aesthetic Process*:

That the standard here set up for the teaching process is high, perhaps too high for general attainment yet awhile, is admitted; yet we may steer by the stars. My idealistic writings on education have been criticized for lifting the standards too high, 'putting the teacher on a pedestal', and seeing philosophical significance in 'mere pedagogy'. The charge is well founded unless you who read, having the eternal perfection in your hearts, prove otherwise by your beautiful work in shaping individuals and society. (p.iii)

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Postscript to The Lost Art of Pedagogy

Harold Pearse (with suggestions from Cynthia Taylor and Amy Brook Snider)

It is gratifying to see what has been called the “lost art” of pedagogy being discovered again, twenty years later. Of course, the art of, or more to the point, the art in pedagogy, was never really lost, although it might at times be hard to find. As I noted in the article, it was alive and well in the classrooms of artful educators, such as Cynthia Taylor and Amy Brook Snider, who approach teaching as thoughtful social interaction, inspired, informed performance, and a path to transformational self-knowledge. In their pedagogical explorations, actions and transactions, they embody art. Re-reading the article that was written so long ago, the three of us agree that while our approaches to the art of writing may have improved, what we wrote still generally reflects our values, feelings and ideas about the field and its possibilities for transformation.

The past twenty years has allowed us to observe the results of our practice in the careers of our former students, many who in conversation and by reputation, appear to share and practice the pedagogical approaches we espouse and embody. They say that our teaching has made a difference to them as teachers, artists and persons. The impact of Amy's teaching and ideas on her students and the field was affirmed when she received the "NAEA's June King McFee award in 2002. At the recent CSEA conference in Fredericton, New Brunswick in October, 2011, both Cynthia and I were recognized for our teaching accomplishments. Her Gaitskell Address was an inspiring testament to a life-long, ongoing and passionate commitment to teaching as art and as performance. Most significantly, three of the other award winners were our former students!

After 30 years, Amy has stepped down as Art Education Chair at Pratt Institute to devote herself to full-time teaching. Although Cynthia and I are retired or semi-retired, we are still active pedagogically in various capacities, both formal and informal. It is said that artists never retire. The same can be said for artful pedagogues. Perhaps the complement to life-long learning is perpetual pedagogy.