Towards a few ideals in the concept of teaching. Teaching as a vehicle in education

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ABSTRACT
Recently researchers have become increasingly aware of the value of the concept of teaching as an implementer of educational goals. At least many of Gert Biesta's recent theoretical-conceptual studies on teaching and the teacher provide indications of this. It is all about finding teaching again, but not exactly in the same sense as before. It is possible to conceptually highlight aspects of teaching that emphasize its value. This unique value can be expressed through a teleological model combined with a modern view of causality, i.e., teaching works as a complex and reciprocal process. The causal mechanism can be traced by using close conceptual analysis, which leads us to essential power categories: There are potential structures for student learning (within which all factors are not always activated), moreover, teaching intentions are indispensable.

Keywords: education, teaching, learning, educational philosophy, discourse

Teaching – a missing or a "transcendent" concept?

Recent philosophical articles written by Gert Biesta (2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2016) on teaching, teachers and learning provide the impulse for this article. Biesta's claims that the concept of teaching is avoided nowadays, and that the value of teaching in education is not understood as it should be. For Biesta, teaching is a momentous concept, without which much is lost from the standpoint of education. According to Biesta, the concept of teaching has, however, been eclipsed by an emphasis on learning discourse (learning, learner, learning environment, etc.). The Swedish researchers Säfström, Månsson and Osman (2015) have also addressed this topic. They view teaching as a necessary, empowering and transformative force. The authors reject attempts

to replace teaching with learning discourse. Their argumentation supports the same conclusion made by Biesta's in his many articles. The concept of teaching needs to be re-invented. This need essentially stems from the goal of education being to build a life together with others. Indeed, it is detrimental to education when learning is only seen as an individualistic event. The teacher controls the teaching, but the student also has an important task in this process, i.e., to learn, criticize, accept or be skeptical. As these Swedish researchers maintain, teaching is not just about lesson-focused learning; but about releasing the "life-process". In this article, I focus on philosophical aspects of teaching, and consider the significance of empirical research for philosophical analysis. Biesta and Säfström et. al. (2015) have all examined also the political-economic dimension of teaching. I would like to add to discussions on the concept of teaching as causal from the perspective of the methodology of human sciences.

Teaching as an implementer of education is a neglected area, and is somehow considered to represent «old world» authority-centered schooling (although the scientific conceptual definition of teaching is not governed by that). At the same time, it is a mistake to think that by replacing teaching with different concepts of learning, we have attained a better understanding of the mechanisms that promote student learning. Biesta (2005) points to at least four trends which, in one way or another, have contributed to the rise of a new language of learning (*The New Theories of Learning*, *Postmodernism*, *The Silent Explosion* and *The Erosion of the Welfare State*).

I would highlight at least one more trend that has contributed to this shift away from teaching. It is related to the different characteristics that the concepts «teaching» and «learning» embody. Learning – irrespective of its quality or quantity – exists with or without teaching. It is a more tangible concept than teaching. When we talk about teaching, we are thinking about intentional learning, but it is difficult to measure the extent to which we have succeeded in promoting learning. The difficulty of promoting learning, or rather the difficulty of verifying its promotion, is clear in the history of teaching research. This is evident in the disappointment of researchers involved in the history of research on teaching, especially in the 1960s and 70s and the so-called process-product research design implemented at that time. On the other hand, more cumulative and older research traditions on learning in the educational context have led to a situation – as many educational authorities will confirm – where educational psychology in general and, particularly, its learning-oriented research is one of the most respected domains in educational science.

In the field of education, the developments over the last few decades that are described above have led to somewhat contradictory views today. There are recent empirical studies in which *teaching is still a central theoretical concept*. Some projects show how essential it is to conduct research that focuses on teaching in school. Tjernberg and Heimdahl Mattson (2017) defend so-called Praxis-oriented research, which utilizes scientific knowledge and investigates practical work for change. They say this approach establishes a connection between the development of «... learning processes in schools, teacher education and research.» (p. 43). The term «triple learning process» can be used to describe the

connection and interaction between these factors, and the work that requires that teachers and researchers collaborate. The essential conclusion is that teachers would benefit greatly from research that is conducted in schools and which focuses on pedagogical practices. In this kind of research, teachers play an active role, not only as recipients of the research results, but as shapers of the research in many ways. Recent conceptual studies also underline the unique importance of teaching in education (Biesta, 2013). Furthermore, there are a number of journals of education that focus on publishing research specifically on teaching, such as *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *Learning and Instruction*, and *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*. Nevertheless, it is the above-mentioned liturgy of *«learning discourse»* that has been strengthened in recent years in national curriculum texts, in academic curricula for teacher education, and in the popular media.

Arriving at the present situation seems to have involved a three-stage process in which varying emphasis has been given to the concepts of teaching and learning in school education research (1). The beginning of this development can be seen in the research carried out on teaching and its conceptualization, which outlined the notion of teaching as a narrow task whose aim was to find teaching that supported the student's learning. Disappointment in empirical research (process-product research) diminished interest in teaching research, creating new research settings in which the student also played a role, and involving learner cognition in research settings (e.g., Winne, 1987). Although the objective was relevant and hopeful (i.e., to understand the mechanism of teaching), quantitatively this research was limited (2). Discourse of learning then came into being as an alternative research setting, producing many "ideal" descriptions of learning (3). Today, awareness of the value of teaching in realizing the goals of education is in a nascent state. We therefore need to rediscover the essence of teaching and cast it in a true new light. I propose that this is possible by conceptualizing aspects of teaching that emphasize its inherent value.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, I ask whether the philosophy of education literature offers content that can modify and ultimately construct an elaborated conceptual view of teaching. If and when appropriate topics are found, what kind of reworking and «correction» might they require? The following subthemes construct an image of a multidimensional concept of teaching, and include: a) the teacher's beliefs and intentions; b) the importance of teaching to the learner; c) the uniqueness, authority and importance of educational science for the teacher's thinking and action; and d) causality, which is possible when the above-mentioned factors and forces (a–c) are included and activated. I regard causality in teaching as a complex matter, but in any case its essence is real. Its verification in empirical research is challenging, but not impossible.

In search of the essence of teaching
Educational teaching with and against the grain

Biesta (2015c) argues that teaching is vital, without it there can be no education. He suggests that educative teaching comprises three sub-areas that must be involved in practical teaching: content, purpose and relationship. He further analyzes «domains

of purpose», which include qualification, socialization and subjectification. According to Biesta, too much emphasis is placed on achievement, i.e., objectives in the qualification area. Furthermore, because education easily becomes unilateral, in addition to qualification, Biesta also emphasizes socialization and subjectivity. This is a real challenge for teaching, which Biesta (2015c) realizes: "This means that teaching always also requires a judgment about the best balance – or perhaps it is better to say the least worst compromise – between the three domains" (p. 675). There are also problems in promoting student qualification, i.e., some learners learn meaningfully, but some have tremendous difficulties with meaningful, generalizable learning. I would argue that these problems in the area of qualification also pose serious challenges for other domains and, hence, for the overall development of learners.

We aim to gain a broader understanding of the human being and his or her development. Moreover, learning is not merely additive and adoptive, but primarily, or at best, oriented towards a process of meaningful understanding. In education and in comprehensive teaching, "learning with the grain" is not enough. According to Biesta (2012), teaching should also provide resistance, go against the grain, if we want to break away from the language and the emphasis on learning. Teaching is not, however, just a monologue, so it is natural and necessary that teaching sometimes opposes and provides a different perspective on things. This perspective presupposes the growing autonomy of teaching; while education and teaching are part of society, society cannot dictate how to educate or how to think about education.

Biesta (2015d) argues that students should not be seen as clients. They cannot know in the same way as their teachers (at least not always) what they need or what is good or necessary for them to learn. However, this does not mean that students' voices should not be heard. Biesta points out that, in education, the student and the teacher have different responsibilities and expectations. He views the needs of learners in a complex and critical light, as seen in the following quotes:

> But the more fundamental question is whether the educational process itself can be understood – and should be understood – in economic terms, that is, as a situation in which the learner has certain needs and where it is the business of the educator to meet these needs (Biesta 2005, p. 58).

> The first reason, therefore, to be against learning – that is, to be against a language which makes it possible to present education in terms of «meeting the needs of the learner» – is that the underlying assumption that learners come to education with a clear understanding of what their needs are, is a highly questionable assumption (p. 59).

According to Biesta, if teaching does not have an educational intention, it does not meet the conditions of teaching. Learning is not a passive process. Learning according to teaching criteria is seen as an intentional and active event that requires critical examination between all actors, teachers and students. On the other hand,

the «intentions» of a teacher may sometimes be unilateral, but then we are no longer talking about teaching. Biesta and Stengel (2016) argue that indoctrination is always a potential «threat» in teaching and challenges its autonomy, which is part of the ideal essence of teaching. However, they note that it is impossible to completely avoid the threat of indoctrination. It is conceivable that ideal intentional teaching occupies a middle way, located between non-intentional learning and indoctrination. The teacher should be aware of these two extremities.

Some philosophers of education (Biesta, McEwan) have argued that teaching should provide enough challenge from the learner's point of view. McEwan (2001) presents two themes or aims of teaching: *making things easy*, a usual theme, and *making things difficult* or more challenging. In the conclusion of his essay he presents an argument that puts this last aim in close connection with educative teaching: "... present a challenge or offer the students an experience that disrupts their equilibrium and leads them to look at things more deeply." (p. 265).

The goal of supporting and facilitating student learning by making it meaningful is, of course, usually an explicit and implicit goal in all teaching. The empirical fact is, however, that there are considerable challenges in achieving this goal; some students learn well and others do not. From this point of view, it seems illogical and pointless that teaching should further increase this challenge. On the other hand, in society and in personal life, more than meaningful learning, i.e., "learning against the grain" is needed. It is therefore important that teaching develops and practices versatile thinking skills, that is, skills that support and develop a critical understanding of information provided in texts and the media. Generally speaking, «making things difficult» should not be a non-natural act in teaching. Considering the same familiar things (making things easy) from a variety of perspectives or in a more unconventional way, leads education in a natural way to a more complex level. At the same time this approach models the complexity of real life and especially modern work life. The above problems have a connection with philosophy of science, and especially critical realism. In research it is not easy to find the whole truth, but by offering different perspectives on the same phenomenon, our understanding of that phenomenon will improve and develop, that is, get closer to the truth. In teaching, we can model the work of a good scientist, which involves genuine challenges where the researcher is compelled to examine his own understanding and knowledge in relation to other researchers. Thus, transparency and competent activity in research could be a good model for ideal teaching.

Teaching as a significant process

Next, we shall examine an even more challenging perspective on the conceptual nature of teaching than the perspective of teaching intention. When Biesta (2013) talks about the superior status of teaching, how should this be understood? What happens or can happen ideally in teaching that affects the student in a completely different way than non-teaching and non-formal learning, and what is essential for the overall development of the student?

Biesta's recent analysis of teaching and its meaning places empirical studies of teaching in a new light. In his opinion, the facilitating features of teaching make the student merely an object. This is paradoxical, because the predominant view has been that instructional approaches using the student's thinking are modern and active, whereas teaching methods that emphasize the teacher's speech are conventional. However, Biesta (2016) sees many so-called facilitating solutions which do not, in the true sense, provide the student with anything of a truly valuable and developmental nature. He criticizes the concept of teaching based on the so-called maieutic conception of teaching, i.e., teaching that promotes something that is already there. According to Biesta, the teacher is left alone in a resource role, unless the process brings about something radically new. He equates learning that is «inadequate» to a robot vacuum cleaner, because it can adapt well to the environment. In fact, many modern solutions to teaching are merely adaptive. Although today's emphasis is on comprehensive digitalization, including teaching, teaching may only be adaptable at its weakest point. Educational-oriented teaching should, however, be critically asking "… whether the environment to which the self is adapting and adjusting is good in the fullest sense of that world" (Biesta, 2016, p. 388). It is questionable whether discourse that focuses on the «surface properties» of teaching, such as traditional vs. modern, which is liturgical and counterintuitive, is at all appropriate for identifying ideal teaching and teaching that deviates from the ideal.

But what better solution is offered by Biesta? According to Biesta (2015b), education and teaching can be seen as an encounter that provides students with something that is radically and essentially new, something they did not have before. This means that teaching does not just supply the learner with material for understanding. Certainly, it also does this, but the «crossing» level is what interests Biesta, i.e., the idea of transcendence in teaching (Biesta, 2013). For him, «new import» teaching means something absolutely extraordinary that comes out of the process, something that is true and «touches» the learner. It adds up to something that is essential and valued. Biesta (2016, p. 388) questions whether we really know what we want: "It does so by introducing the question whether what we desire is actually desirable, both for ourselves and for the life we live with what and who is other". This view purports, of course, an interest in truth-based knowledge, but also in whether the learner can identify the truth. We can ask whether teaching can offer conditions that promote a recognition of the truth. In these circumstances and processes the teacher plays a crucial role and, of course, the learner's relation to the teacher becomes essential. The teacher has the role of a testifier in teaching (Moran, 2013). On the other hand, students should also develop the capacity for critical thought. The paradox is, therefore, that they usually have to rely on us as teachers to begin with – or perhaps in most situations – but in teaching we should also develop the students' capacity to be cautious when it comes to the quality of evidence and sources presented. This is especially true in situations outside the classroom. As educators we have to develop discernment towards testimony, i.e., the ability to judge information with a critical eye. Schools could even practice

situations where untrue testimonies are offered. It is not just about testimony in teaching but also about many of the ways that connect past learner experiences and knowledge.

A notable point of interest here is the difference between how Biesta and McEwan view the meaning of interpretation in teaching. Biesta does not think that a concept of teaching that relies on interpretation is enough, whereas McEwan views interpretation broadly as something that can ideally and objectively be combined with a wide range of teaching. He also gives the concept a personal and special meaning. McEwan (1989) considers teaching as pedagogic interpretation at the general level. For example, he does not argue in favor of one particular method of teaching. This means that the concept of teaching as interpretation gives rise to a multitude of strategies for achieving a certain learning goal.

The meaning of a text is essential because "meaning is a property of texts, and texts are more than just written documents" (McEwan, 1992, p. 64). McEwan argues that texts should be understood in their widest sense, listing such things as social practices and institutions, cultural products, and so on, which are results of human action and can be regarded as texts to read and interpret. Even a teacher who does not use a book in teaching, can have a "text" which is "read" because it has meaning, and the function of interpretation is to make meaning clearer. When we have something that we interpret as a text, we have to be able to differentiate meaning from *its expression*; i.e., the same meaning can be expressed in many ways. One condition for interpretation in teaching is that it has to be for someone. The students' requirements present a challenge in this respect; there can be no standard teaching, only teaching that recognizes the importance of difference. This underlines the essence of teaching as *offering something important and unique*. McEwan (1992, p. 66) writes: "A new integration of meaning is the accomplishment of successful teaching, a new understanding that is more than just a synthesis of content and pedagogy because it is productive of something new."

Uniqueness, teacher judgment and authority in service

Gottlieb (2012) looks at the development of teachers through three different models, while drawing on general trends in empirical teaching research. In one of these models, "teaching as a skillful activity" is properly characterized as "*a series of bite-sized moves*", a view that focuses on teacher behavior and its standalone elements:

> That a certain teacher behavior exemplifies excellent practice in one case, while typifying poor practice in another, suggests either that the specific behavior in question is not a good proxy for teaching quality overall, or that attempting to declare a certain level of teacher competence based on the presence or absence of certain behaviors represents a fundamentally erroneous approach. (p. 503)

Gottlieb (2012) views the second model, which focuses on the teacher's mental state or internal beliefs in skillful practice, somewhat more positively, and considers it more

sophisticated (see e.g., Shulman, 1987). It may be that the teacher's knowledge base allows for more flexible action than a model of behavioral elements. The focus has now shifted from behavior to the mental side, but in some ways this is also a mechanistic conception. The third option offered by Gottlieb has a different focus, with context and the teacher's judgment gaining the most attention. This view is holistic and emotional and is not based on codified representation, i.e., scientific knowledge of what is a good way to know, think or act. Rather, it is about *the context of the whole* where it works and the fact that the teacher has to assess elements from an appropriate perspective. Here he draws on Dreyfus (2005). An alternative view on how to develop skillful practitioners is described by Gottlieb in the following way: "Dreyfus goes on to point out that relevance exists only in context, in the mutual engagement of mind and world, and thus resists 'codified representation' on either the side of the consciousness or the side of the world." (p. 512).

Biesta partly raises the same idea of the teacher's significance as Gottlieb, emphasizing the teacher's judgment and ability to make wise conclusions and find solutions for education (2015c, 2015d). He also considers the importance of context and situation-specific aspects, similar to Gottlieb (2012). While Biesta (2015d) highlights judgement and contextual features, he criticizes empirical research that produces so-called «What Works» research results. According to him, such results are not valid for quality evaluation of teaching activities because this research orientation does not make clear what goals the results should promote.

There is no need to consider this in an absolute way. «What Works» research provides information on teaching and learning and uses different indicators for learning outcomes. The teacher can take advantage of this information when he or she uses knowledge as a basis for decision making, though teaching is not just a rational function from the teacher's point of view. It should also be remembered that, with regard to methodological approaches, studies are mostly narrow in scope, i.e., analytic studies (Salomon, 1991, 2006). Therefore, they demand adaptation to a practical context, which in teaching is multifaceted and complex. Unfortunately, few systemic studies have directly examined the interactive implementation of phenomena or the application of research results.

A teacher uses (or should use) different sources in his or her decision-making. Biesta emphasizes the teacher's own thinking and discretion. In addition to "reading" the context and situation, it is useful for teachers to become acquainted with meta-analyses/syntheses of empirical research and individual research results in the field, regardless of the human sciences methodology used. Naturally, there are problems with the use of statistical indicators (see, Simpson 2018). This is the so-called 'effect size' used for both individual studies and meta-analyses. However, various factors can distort, or at least influence, how we use the results of quantitative research in support of knowledge and reasoning about education. Simpson (2018) points out that «Researchers too work in societies where contexts, resources and intentions matter.» (p. 909) Researchers also have ways to adjust the results. Effect sizes may be better

understood as a measure of the clarity of a study. He underlines that intervention is only one component. There are also other components present in such studies, but they are not «measured». In systemic studies, however, these other components are also measured and, in general, evaluated as part of «the whole» (Salomon, 1991).

Biesta (2007) writes: "On the practice side, evidence-based education seems to limit severely the opportunities for educational practitioners to make such judgments in a way that is sensitive to and relevant for their own contextualized settings." (p. 5) and continues: "Research, in short, can tell us what worked but cannot tell us what works." (p. 16) I have a different view on this, because generic psychological powers apply to a certain degree to a wide variety of contexts. Many principles have applications beyond the original study. To a large extent (if the validity of the study is good), it is a question of principles that also apply to future scenarios. Of course, practices verified through empirical research cannot, of course, exclude the responsibility and discretion of the teacher, relevant in any context. But the situation is not so black and white. The context has its own importance. A comment made by Pring (2000) is also relevant: although the situations are unique, they are only partially so. There are similarities between cases as well. In addition to 'analytical research' (Salomon 1991), researchers should also be encouraged to carry out comprehensive, 'systemic' studies. In fact, such studies help teachers' reasoning and reflection processes. Cain (2016, p. 617) writes: 'He (Biesta 2007, p. 21) concludes that research-generated knowledge cannot be used as a basis for action but only, '*to make professional problem solving more intelligent*''. I agree with Biesta on this point.

My conception of teaching differs partly from both Gottlieb's and Biesta's. Contextual factors that the teacher uses as a basis for decision making is one source. Teachers unconsciously, sometimes even knowingly, use research-based information as a basis for decision-making in their teaching. The most ideal option is, in my view, to combine the teacher's own experiential knowledge, scientific knowledge (empirical studies and educational philosophy), and judgment to bear on the educational context. Teacher judgment is vital here, and necessary in building a whole that works in teaching. Only rarely does (empirical) research focus on the whole of teaching, unlike philosophical research.

But who gives the teacher permission or power to exercise judgment? There is still a need for a spiritual strength that justifies the teacher's way of being and interacting with the students. Let us call this factor *authority*. The educational relationship relies on authority, which implies that in this relationship the teacher has a different responsibility than the student (Biesta, & Stengel, 2016). However, an ideal situation or stage of development is one where the learner also takes responsibility and knows what should be desired. The concept of authority has most likely been misunderstood and neglected for two reasons. First, it is confused with authoritarianism (tyranny, unconditionality, etc.). Secondly, the nature of authority is not properly understood; it should be perceived of as a service rather than a state of domination. Biesta and Stengel (2016) describe its ideal role as follows: Authority is not something we "have"

or "succumb to" or "submit to" but something persons create in the process of their interaction (p. 48). According to these authors, teaching is seen to broadly include relation, intention, and purpose. Good teaching, unlike so-called effective teaching, happens when human affect, power, and values are in play. Teaching always involves not only judgment on what the purpose of the teaching is, but also reflection on the means by which this aim is to be achieved. To be a credible user of power in making these judgments, the teacher draws on their authority.

Towards a modern conception of causality

Educational teaching is an intentional and interactive phenomenon in which the teacher also utilizes the unique features of context. Since teaching is intentional, we have an interest in how that intentionality produces something good in student learning. The goodness produced is realized in individual situations and events, and also, and especially, across a *wider time perspective*. It is important to realize that, in assessing the causal nature of teaching, we need both knowledge and understanding of the intentions of teaching and its goals. This view also stems from the belief that the teacher and students share an understanding of what the intentions and goals are. A realization of intentionality is an essential component of the transcendental process referred to above.. Awareness of intention helps, but *is not responsible alone for its realization.* Of course, there can be no absolute and exact prediction of the realization of intentionality, but any assessment of causality must also include intention and realization. In discussing causality, intention and other elements and phases of the teaching process should be considered as a whole and based on logical realities and probabilities. Although teaching and learning are different concepts, and the orientation of intent is from teaching to learning, there are "backward interactions" too, but *the causal nature of teaching is not lost.* In studies of human sciences phenomena, such as teaching, causality must be seen as broad in scope, complex and multifaceted.

Teaching does not have a simple and tangible relationship with student learning. Biesta addresses this using the concepts of 'studenting' and 'pupilling' (Biesta, 2015b, p. 233, 2017, p. 26−27; Fenstermacher, 1986). In other words, the teacher does not «directly» bring about learning, but instead tries to influence the student through, e.g., studenting and pupilling processes. Learning can be seen as an effect that is the result of the activity of studenting, but not a direct activity of teaching. The relationship between teaching activities and the learner can also be described as being: "... what students do themselves" or "... that what teaching should actually try to bring about are those activities that may result in students' learning" (Biesta, & Stengel, 2016, p. 42). Biesta sees teaching as a relationship and encounter, but I maintain that this view does not eliminate the causal-intentional nature of teaching.

It is easy to contrast two alternatives a) a naive concept of causality (something is done and then something happens) and b) a rejection of the notion of causality and conclusion that no human phenomena should be analyzed and constructed as causal constructions. But there is, of course, a causal view that perceives the phenomenon

and the dynamics contained therein as a complex and interactive, generating process. Though not yet complete, the critical realism is interested in developing this view. I quote here another "complex" oriented view from the methodological context of empirical research. Morrison (2012, p. 27) writes in his article:

> Researching causality in the social world is better undertaken in terms of understanding multi-directional causal nets, webs of conditions and contingencies operating in specific contexts and wholes, and in the identification of multi-levelled contexts, events and triggers of causation that, in multivariate combinations, lead to qualitative, system-level change. Complexity theory alerts the social researcher to the dangers of singular or simple causality. Social research must move towards recognizing a multivariate, nonlinear, multi-causal, multi-directionally-causal, feedback-enriched, subjunctive and holistically-operating world.

This view can and should be utilized in a philosophical, conceptual review of teaching. Opdal (2018) presents some similar ideas in his philosophical review, but calls his model teleological. He writes (p. 109):

> As regards the connection between teaching and learning, I have argued that this is teleological. Teaching is a process of potential, the possible actualisation of which is learning. The word "possible" is important in this connection. Since not only material, formal, efficient and final causes must be taken into account when explaining the relation between teaching and learning, but also how these causes are reciprocal and, therefore, able to explain contraries, a certain outcome is not guaranteed.

In practice, this concept approaches a philosophical view of science, a critical realism of how the mechanism of causality should be understood. That is, it is important to understand causality as a potential that activation brings into existence occasionally, and that there are situations where the potential is «awaiting» activation, but where it is not immediately activated.

Relationship and encounter are explicitly realized in teaching, but under the surface the teacher is aware of the purpose of the teaching. The teaching effect acts indirectly through complex and reciprocal interactions that are easily lost in the modern era of teaching, e.g., digitality in teaching, but which still exist (as before). Another question, which is more interesting for empirical research, is whether we are talking about ideal teaching or about the idea of teaching (see, Biesta, & Stengel, 2016). Signs or cues of causality would seem to provide this kind of teaching, which is essentially an ideal, although correlation, e.g., between student learning and instruction, is not in itself an authentication of causality. On the other hand, teaching that is far from ideal does not necessarily mean that there is no causal relationship. Of course, if teaching does not meet certain basic requirements, it can be categorized as quasi-education rather than teaching. For example, Byman and Kansanen (2008, p. 617) describe low-level purposiveness (both student and teacher) in teaching in this way:

> Both teaching and studying can be said to be mechanical and technological without personal involvement. Supposedly, motivation is then extrinsic and the working atmosphere is probably perfunctory. The conditions for studying and especially for learning are not favourable. The teaching-studying-learning process is controlled by quasi-teleological systems.

Tomlinson (2008) examines the basic forces and processes of teaching through conceptual analysis. It is interesting that even without explicit empirical research findings (Tomlinson is familiar with psychological theory and research, as mentioned in his paper) the researcher posits "learning promotion potential" consisting of shared work by the teacher and a student/a few students in teaching. Tomlinson (2008, p. 507) states: "...the person in the learner role that does the learning. The teacher is by definition there to assist, but cannot do the learner's learning for them." The fact that the learner plays a vital role in his or her own learning and teaching is not contradicted by the discussion presented earlier. On the other hand, in Tomlinson's (2008) model, the significance of teaching is presented as both straightforward and two-sided. He – unlike Biesta – speaks of the direct effect of teaching:

> The current tendency to talk about 'teaching/learning' activities, as opposed just to 'teaching', perhaps indicates a growing if implicit recognition of this two-sidedness. In the case of the teacher's contribution to teaching, this translates into two irreducible joint teaching functions, namely: influencing the learner's learning and monitoring the learner's learning progress. (p. 511)

Tomlinson's analysis does not conceptualize the activity of the student explicitly, but teaching/learning activities refers to the importance of the learner's position in the teaching context. Both 'influencing' and 'monitoring' clearly refer to the causal and intentional nature of teaching. Something important happens in teaching, and these events must be actively monitored. Both concepts are essentially related to a transcendental understanding of teaching.

The ideal in constructing a conception of teaching

The focus here is on the essence of teaching. This article aims to promote the development of a comprehensive and general concept that extends beyond the educational format. It follows that this conceptual work is not interested in, for example, different kinds of teaching methods, or the usual standard comparison between *conventional-traditional* and *modern-technological.* A number of different qualities can be found within a rational study of teaching, and these same qualities also vary within different teaching methods, not necessarily just between them. This article highlights the important, supportive and new arguments that Biesta has recently raised. But a part of his views are also presented with a cautionary position (relation to causality, "what works" research critique).

Considering the exclusive focus from some quarters on supporting learning and learning environments, one may ask what the core importance of teaching actually is. Biesta has recently tried to restore the value of teaching and of the teacher. But how can this be extended to empirical research? While Biesta often speaks of traditional teaching and facilitating teaching, he also identifies a third approach, one in which the student is the subject. But how does teaching change when it becomes a force for promoting *a subject*, and what are the benefits and drawbacks of this? Teaching as an interpretation is one solution (McEwan, 1989, 1992, 2001), although it is implicit in relation to the conscious subject. Of course, there is a need for explicit educational teaching. Biesta does not consider the goal of understanding in teaching as particularly demanding. I argue that understanding is missed by many, and in many teaching domains, and that this reduces the potential of the *subject.*

The discussion below elaborates on key components of teaching as philosophical problems and offers tentative solutions to these problems.

1. The first problem concerns the goal of educating. Sometimes the goals of education or teaching are unilateral or indoctrinational. Education without goals is also problematic as it does not actively seek to promote the human subject, i.e., this is not teaching, but can promote learning.

The solution highlights the *independence or autonomy of teaching*, currently promoted on a large scale. Biesta presents this concept of teaching as three-partite in nature, pointing to the qualification, socialization and subjectification of the learner. He also emphasizes the importance of versatility in teaching. I would also add cognitive diversity to this list, and in particular the goal of meaningful learning that transfers not only to other qualifications but also to other educational goals in general. The main point is that students should learn "*with the grain*", albeit in accordance with the curriculum. However, teaching should also *«resist»*. Teachers and their students should be vigilant with regard to sources of knowledge. Educational materials, however, do not «teach», we need a qualified person to start the process and regulate it.

2. The second problem concerns the view that teaching is undervalued and treated as a mere source of knowledge. Education without teaching loses one of the key ways of pursuing education for the sake of autonomy and independence. There is a danger that education will be lost, that the essence of education will shrink and that the number of educators will be reduced.

Teaching is a dynamic process that combines the intentions of the learner with the intentions of educative teaching in a diverse manner. Dynamic and interactive teaching processes are unparalleled in terms of concept or meaning compared to teaching resources, materials, methods, environments, etc., as Biesta has highlighted. Teaching can, therefore, be absolutely transcendental. The idea presented here also illuminates

the character of teaching, which involves more than just using so-called pedagogical content knowledge. As an interpreter, the teacher has a unique position. Ultimately the teacher empowers the student to acquire the skills needed to interpret texts themselves. This puts emphasis on the fact that it is not important who the interpreter is, as long as she/he is autonomous. The properties of meaning that a text contains are essential, which allows for a variety of methods to be used in teaching. From the point of view of philosophy of science, it is important for teachers to be critically aware of their personal interpretations. This requirement is closely connected to sources and evidence: are we really presenting the truth when we teach, and on what grounds is it the truth? How can we verify the sources of information used? This view is essential in education that strives to avoid indoctrination.

3. The third problem is that scientific research on education has split into two opposing camps. There are those who are only in favor of general laws and principles (so-called nomothetic science). Unfortunately, these laws can also be applied mechanically, and their failure to work is disappointing. This is to be expected because the phenomenon of education is complex, time-consuming and difficult to fully master using the methodologies of the human sciences. On the other hand, some scientists overemphasize the uniqueness of the phenomenon of education and its contextual construction. They see all educational phenomena as unique and as such unable to be regulated and predicted by general principles and theories. The problem with the credibility of educational science entails many other problems: the gap between researchers and practitioners, the credibility of teacher education, the credibility of educational science from society's point of view, and so on.

Teaching *cannot* be described and perceived *solely on the basis of general principles*, since the significance of contextual factors is inherent in both the dynamics and formation of teaching. Teaching is not a programmable mechanical process that can be managed by implementing or applying only the first and second solutions above. However, it is equally wrong to assume that the teacher cannot or should not take into account the general principles described above. Contrary to teaching intent (the first problem above) and teaching as a «superior» process (the second problem above), the uniqueness of teaching inevitably requires that the teacher should exercise judgment when weighing the whole of teaching against its «surprise» events. Teaching is, on the one hand, a broad and dynamic process that cannot be dominated only by intention or as a general process description. On the other hand, it is misleading to think that the processes of teaching and learning are completely unpredictable and unique: on the contrary, both the empirical study of teaching and the logical rationality associated with teaching obey general laws that the teacher uses in their own teaching-oriented thinking. However, it must be remembered that this generality is not only constructed through the teacher's own thinking and experience-based learning if the objective is to successfully achieve an ideal level of teaching. Reaching this ideal level also requires

the management of educational knowledge, the ability to apply it, and its adaptation to contextual circumstances.

4. The fourth problem regards the dismissal of causality in teaching, or the naïve view that causality is a simple and mechanical process. It is often overlooked that education focuses on a process that is long-lasting and varied and has many interactions. The fact that the causal effects of teaching appear to be ostensibly weak and are difficult to establish empirically has led some researchers to consider teaching to be of little or no significance. Changing such perceptions of teaching is a challenging task.

I have two propositions here: a) Teaching has a causal role; b) However, causal is not to be understood in a naive way: «*When taught, it is learned*». Learning is not a mirror of teaching. There are many factors that lie between teaching and learning, and interaction between these factors impacts how well or poorly something is learned. Research methodologists in the human sciences talk about naive realism and critical realism. The latter refers to causality as a causal mechanism. In this case, it is important to understand how a causal event occurs, which is different from the invariance-based view or correlation favored by quantitative research. The intentional aspect is also important here. An extensive temporal dimension, interactions and a complex essence will arise if we study the causal nature of teaching. The fact that causality cannot be construed through simplified modeling, A -> B, does not mean that there is no causal relationship between teaching and learning. Instead, it involves long-term interaction, indirect impact, and overall holistic management of the phenomenon.

The fourth conclusion binds all of the factors above by viewing teaching as an interactive process over time. It is not enough for a teacher to merely reflect on the nature of teaching and its various factors and perspectives. The fourth condition in this theoretical modeling of teaching recognizes the longevity of teaching. Teaching does not occur only in a moment or a particular situation, or a single lesson. Teaching interactions produce many effects that will partially emerge over a longer time perspective. Causal and multi-faceted interactions are realized in such a way that the general principles are interwoven into the context and the teacher's judgment, forming a whole.

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