



SYMPOSIUM

A dialogue on core qualities and practices needed in education
Driebergen, 8th & 9th February 2017

A renewed coming into the world of pedagogy

Reflection of Wouter Pols

One doesn't approach an upcoming event without expectations, without an idea what will happen. Arriving at the UEF/NIVOZ symposium in Driebergen, I expected not only reports of educational experiences, but educational words as well: words to understand what those experiences mean. And indeed, that happened.

Meaning is not univocal. It depends on the words we use when we interpret the meaning of something. In my opinion, the symposium was in search of words that would reveal the pedagogical meanings of the educational experiences we were acquainted with. But what is 'pedagogical'? One of my table mates defined pedagogical as a way of 'being'. She said it is practical and theoretical as well; it is a way of looking at, being with and caring for children. Pedagogy implies actions and words: actions and words from grown-ups related to those who are not yet grown-up. At that moment, a new question popped up: what do we mean by a grown-up? We came to the conclusion that a grown-up is able to de-centre himself or herself, too see himself or herself through other's eyes. If you are able to do so you are able to take responsibility for the things you are doing and the impact of this doing on other people.

Words reveal meanings. By words, we shape the meaning of the things we are doing, the actions we undertake. At the table we discussed the actions undertaken by others (the experiences shown in the film clips). Those actions evoked the actions we have undertaken by ourselves and the experiences we gathered by those actions. That was a great thing. The design of the seminar evoked passed experiences and challenged us to connect them to the experiences of other people. Connecting experiences is a communicative process. We are using words to evoke our experiences and connect them to the experiences of other people and at the same time we uncover the meaning of those experiences. Dewey wrote in his *Democracy and Education* 'all communication is educative'. This sharing experiences and words was a great educational experience.

Which words remained in my head? Relation, connection, trust, belief in the capacity of children to grow up, responsibility. Education is a special relation between grown-ups and not yet grown-ups. That means that such a relation is a non-symmetric relationship with the aim of becoming symmetric. But there is something missing in this definition. It was the Flemish educator Ferre Laevers who told us that an educational relation without reality can't be a fully educational relationship. There should be an in-between: an in-between between the grown-ups and the not yet grown-ups. This reality is the reality of the world. The German educationalist Herbart called this in-between the 'third', within which, he wrote, 'teacher and student are involved'. Education requires an adult who lets the child become acquainted with the things of the world, so that he can experience what he can do with those things and can find the 'fitting' words revealing the

meaning of what he experienced. And exactly this is what we were seeing in the film clips: children becoming acquainted with the things of the world. Growing up means to experience the things of the world, sharing the experiences with them and reveal the meaning of those experiences. Arendt calls this: coming into the world. By coming into the world the human appears as a responsible subject in the presence of the other.

In this respect the seminar was a renewed coming into the world of pedagogy. Thanks to the UEF and NIVOZ organisers!