

PTA
Phenomenological Teaching Approach

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The themes of PTA are:

Experience

Intuition

Cognition

Thematic-Thinking

Thematic-Teaching

Dimensional-Teaching

Experiential Expressions

Thematic Amplification

Reflective Synthesis

The presuppositions for PTA Phenomenological Teaching Approach are: Experience; Intuition and Cognition with intuition as primary to cognition.

First of all I think in terms of themes. I think in terms of relation. When something stands out for me it becomes thematic, as I have immediately related it to my present horizon which changes through time. With each interpretation I have related it to my present understanding in so doing I have to say at this time I am seeing this, as it will change through further interpretation.

Consider what happens when seeing a movie for the first time. I see it in its wholeness. If I see a friend after watching the movie and if asked about the movie I can spontaneously go through the movie immediately and I did not even take notes in the movie! Now if I enjoyed the movie and decide to see it a second time I see the movie in a different way. In the first viewing of the movie I saw it in its wholeness which is intuitive in the second viewing of the movie I am seeing it in a different way. Now I am viewing it in part as it passes before me I am saying to myself now I know why such and such happened. This is a cognitive move.

A skillful teacher utilizes both intuition and cognition. Cognition without intuition would not see where it was going. Intuition without cognition would not have a way to express itself in ideas or forms.¹

Basically I organize my lectures thematically. This is so because I am aware that I think in terms of themes. With each theme I immediately amplify it making it my own. I have related it to my present understanding and in so doing each time my horizon changes through further interpretation. This is Thematic-Thinking.

When I get ready to do a lecture I organize it and amplify that which has become thematic for me. The organization is the thinking-through and the amplifying is relating it to my present understanding. I have come to understand this as Thematic Amplification. Organization and Thematic Amplification is what makes what I have learned meaningful. This is Thematic-Teaching. Before each lecture I review my material for presentation. In this way it is thematically brought to mind and in focus.

Here is an example of doing Thematic-Teaching using a storybook in the classroom. This is a presentation of how one comes to a theme and how it can be utilized in life. This is connecting the academic with the life situation.

Consider a teacher in K-3 teaching a class using a storybook. This is an example that I presented to doctoral students who were to become teachers in higher education in 1993.

Here you are in front of the class with a storybook in hand as you read the words that accompany the picture you move the storybook to face each participant in a panoramic way. Later you ask: what did you see? what did you like? what did you not understand? In this way you are asking them what stood out for them.

Now these participants probably loved you and your class because they truly understood something that they saw light up before their eyes. They will even remember you as a teacher.

But if you are a teacher that breaks through boundaries to accelerate the development of the mind you explain to the participants that what you have asked them to talk about is a theme.

Then you say that themes can be identified in art, in a movie, in a book and so on. Themes can be identified in life. That is the way we think. We think in terms of themes.

With Dimensional Teaching (Intuition) one is aware of what one is doing while doing it. This includes gestures too. This later gives one more to reflect on. In the immediate awareness the teacher is aware of what they are doing while they are doing it. This means that the teacher can shift in mid-stream so to speak to maintain the flow of understanding. Dimensional teaching also includes helping one participant while working with another. One can merely ask a participant how are you seeing this? This is the way I like to call on another. It is an easy way of asking a participant to let you know how they are seeing something. For instance when a participant elucidates the quickest way to do two-column addition another can hear this and adjust if they did not understand.

One can immediately see that I assume that we think in terms of themes. This is the assumption that I begin with that has emerged in my experience through time. The reason others can understand my lecture is that they too think in terms of themes. This is how we connect. In presenting my lecture I identify my themes in the beginning of it. Then all I do is amplify each theme in the lecture and at the end of it I do a Reflective Synthesis of the themes. During the lecture it becomes apparent to participants that the themes are integral and that they are not separate which then need to be integrated. With PTA the themes are integral and the Reflective Synthesis brings this to clarity. Put another way each theme gives rise to other themes.

Let me give another example. If I wanted to present the theme of friendship I could not just walk in the classroom and merely say friendship and that would be that. I cannot discuss friendship in a pure sense but I can discuss the themes that give rise to it such as loyalty and trust.

Just like the movie example which is thematic. The director intends for the audience to see certain things so they are thematic. That is the said. Most films are set in 70mm which have supporting themes in the margin so to speak that are usually cut off when formatted for the television screen. This but of course drives directors nuts!

While watching the movie each participant identifies certain themes that the director intends but each participant moves to the unsaid because they see things in terms of their present understanding. They relate to their experience.

PTA is basically Thematic-Teaching I begin with a theme that I amplify which makes it meaningful. Each participant goes through this with me in the presentation as they follow along because it is a natural occurrence.

I have come to realize that each participant must take up that which is presented in their own way. This way they make it their own.

Here is another example. If I say the word house I know what I mean. But each participant takes it up differently, one participant thinks of a tent another a castle and yet another thinks of a spot on the beach. This is so because people respond from where they live. This is an example of going beyond the said to the unsaid.

Basically each participant resides in their experience or if you will their Experiential Expressions (Intuition) which are then immediately put into Thematic Amplification then disclosed in a Reflective Synthesis.²

Notes

- 1) Sunnie D. Kidd, "Phenomenological Teaching Approach: Utilizing Intuition and Cognition" (inbetweenness.com 2006).
- 2) Sunnie D. Kidd and James W. Kidd, *Experiential Method: Qualitative Research in the Humanities Using Metaphysics and Phenomenology* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990).