**Teodóra BÉKEFI**

# Péter Tóth – Kinga Horváth: Didactics

*Artificium omnia omnes docendi.* The art of teaching everyone everything – says the motto of Péter Tóth's and Kinga Horváth's recently published *Didactics*. The citation is taken from *Didactica Magna*, the grand opus of the seventeenth-century philosopher-pedagogue Comenius. A momentous sentence of actual work on the history of pedagogy, shedding light on the fact that the most critical dilemmas of pedagogy are constant – but in diverse contexts of different times, our answers cannot remain the same. An essential problem of (post)modern thinking is to pose the question: what is the definition of *everything* in the twenty-twenties if any? What do we know (or at least think) about knowledge? Pedagogy, especially Didactics, establishes the *how* (the "art of teaching") according to the *whom*. These three (*what*, *how,* and *whom*) are anchored aspects of the book expressed already by the preface, and all the eight chapters can be assigned to at least one.

The question of *how* it is in prevails in the book, which is not surprising if we consider its genre. The genre of *Didactics* is an interesting question (of this particular one and other works with a similar title), given that it is a mainly theoretical summary of inherently practical problems (the subtitle is *An Introduction to the Theory of Education*). The explicit target audience is Hungarian-speaking teachers of Slovakia and student teachers of J. Selye University; the aim is to help their professional learning and development. As the authors do not emphasize the socio-cultural aspects of education in the ethnic minority in Slovakia, the theoretical summaries are comprehensible and adaptable in other cultural contexts, such as Hungary.

The first of the eight chapters introduces the concept of didactics, considering the relation between didactics, pedagogy, and theory of education. The conceptual exposition is accompanied by a rich historical introduction, which remains a frame of reference as it enumerates the most important works that influenced nowadays' (including, of course, the authors') pedagogical mentality, from Comenius to John Dewey and Sándor Nagy, closing with Iván Falus, also mentioning the most important works of Czechoslovak and Slovak literature.

Returning to the focus of the book, we can see that practical considerations, induced by the characteristics of the target audience, organize the weight of the three main aspects of *what*, *how* and *whom* – from the 5th to the 8th chapters, almost the two-thirds (two hundred pages) of the book discuss the aspect of *how*. The 5th chapter describes education as an objective process, emphasizing that both are essential characteristics. As Figure 14 (p. 126) suggests, the (micro)process of education can be described with difficulty as many factors affect it. Chapter 5.3 enumerates the different levels of design and planning from the core curriculum to the lesson plan, demonstrating that many external aspects determine the process of education. 5.2 describes, on the other hand, the internal conditions of an educational process by listing the objectives of education and learning outcomes. This chapter establishes the complexity of the educational process, the components of which are described in the following three chapters.

Teaching strategies are classified according to the phases of the educational process (listed on p. 125): strategies of motivation (Ch. 6.1), obtaining knowledge (Ch. 6.2), applying knowledge (Ch. 6.3), systematizing knowledge (Ch. 6.4) and assessment (Ch. 6.5) are described. Practical and organizational aspects of education are detailed in Chapter 7. Apart from the types and the possibilities of organizing lessons and activities, the chapter emphasizes Internet-based learning, which is a very current topic not only because of the pandemic situation. The 8th chapter focuses on teaching methods and instruments, paying particular attention to digital and Internet-based possibilities, also considering the characteristics of Generation Z and Alpha. All three chapters approach the question of *how* from diverse aspects, according to the complex process-like characteristic of education, giving a broad but comprehensible description.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 help better understand the question of *whom*. The second chapter discusses the epistemological aspects of education. Apart from the essential theories of epistemology, logic and reasoning are two central concepts of the concise summary (including heuristic research). This helps better understand the students' reasoning processes and allows the reader to reflect on their reasoning characteristics, which is fundamental for a (student) teacher. The third chapter describes the theories of learning from behaviorism to constructivism, and the models of teaching and learning, including the description of the educational context. Computer-based and virtual learning environments also have an essential role in this chapter, as does neuro-pedagogy as a new and modern aspect of educational research. These two chapters establish the theoretical base of Chapter 4, which details the characteristics of students. Besides the description of cognitive, reasoning, and moral developmental phases, motivation theories and the concepts of metacognition and learning styles give a wide range of helpful information about the possible learning characteristics and methodology. It is also important to mention the description of special educational needs, from disadvantaged to gifted students.

Specific problems of students and beginning teachers are two aspects that could have enriched the wide range of topics of the book. In addition, they would have given a few points of reference for the target audience of the problem. Reflectiveness is also a fundamental aspect of teaching that would have been interesting to read more about than in Chapter 6.6. Otherwise, it has to be said that *Didactics* is a very complex, detailed, and informative work and is advised to be used in teacher education and for promoting teachers' professional learning and development.