

Abstract

There are differences between transactions and in expectations of success. The concept of success may not be borrowed from dissimilar transactions and applied indiscriminately in judging whether teaching acts have been executed. From a statement that one has taught something, only the *intent* to produce a desired outcome may be inferred. The actual *results* of teaching are not implicit within such a statement but require some determination of effectiveness.

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The Element of Success in Transactions

In the extensive writings on how we talk about the nature of teaching and the relationship between teaching and learning the element of success figures prominently. Is there any doubt as to the centrality of the element of success in the following: "[o]ne who has never succeeded at teaching anything to anyone is not an unsuccessful teacher; he is not a teacher at all." Further, "unsuccessful teaching is no more a type of teaching than unsuccessful murder is a type of murder."¹ It might be instructive to consider the standards and expectations of success used in a variety of settings other than education for one notes that the success expectation of teaching tends to be extremely severe.

It is, perhaps, the very search for the appropriate model with which to examine the phenomenon of teaching, i.e., what it is *like*, that contributes to some of the difficulties in attaining to comprehensive clarity in the way we talk about teaching. Thus, it might be better to turn our gaze towards the element of success in some transactions and to get at teaching through the "back door." As a foil for this purpose, I shall be using an article by Richard L. Derr, "The Logical Outcomes of Teaching,"² however, there will be no attempt to summarize the article as a whole; instead, what are believed to be central themes are forthwith excerpted.

It is claimed that "... 'teaching' is an achievement [not a task] word, or what I would prefer to call an 'outcome' word ... To say that ... 'Mrs. Jones is teaching the letters of the alphabet to her class' is to say that an outcome has been or is being produced."³ In this contention, then, that teaching refers to an outcome, *not* the intent to produce an outcome, the rules of tautology come into play: to teach implies to induce learning. Therefore, "[i]t is a contradiction to say that one is teaching x if it is true that one has been unsuccessful in teaching x. One does not do something unless one does it."⁴

Additionally, the author of the article suggests that what may be believed to be elements or components of teaching — informing, explaining, showing — are actually distinct from teaching. Teaching operations whether taken separately or in concert constitute teaching, after the fact as it were; that is, if and only if, they result in initiating learning. Thus, whether or not teaching involves a complex of operations would appear to be less critical than the actual result of teaching. Whether one has, in fact, taught, is to be determined by its effect upon someone else; it is inappropriate to use the term teaching until the data regarding "success" are available.⁵

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This paper will argue the following:

1. We cannot refer to teaching as an "interactive phenomenon"⁶ and also assert that teaching is something *one* does, even as we look for evidence of the doing outside a solitary do-er. Put differently, indeed "one does not do something unless one does it," is true enough if it is clearly something that is done as a solo, and if we are able to identify what the doing consists of. With due respect for the work of Ryle and Smith it is, perhaps, not inappropriate here to remark that the task/achievement distinction may have been overworked, contributing to such intensity of focus as to distort background images and to obscure other distinctions; for example, the solo performance versus the duet, and the variety of transactions⁷ where performance and the judgement of the quality or effect of the performance are enmeshed.

2. To speak of success in some transactions requires the recognition that success can be used to mean the completion of an act upon performance and that it can mean additionally, the positive judgement of an act(ion) in terms of its effect.

3. An adjunction to the preceding is that a transaction involving an exchange of a material object, as in the sale of an item, is alien to the logical geography in which teaching may be mapped.

4. Without an example of what is not an inducement of learning, almost anything can be viewed as an inducement of learning and so, in author Derr's terms, would qualify as teaching. In effect, this would be a *circulus in probando*. For instance, if didactic intent is not primary, are the efforts of artists and entertainers to be considered teaching if they happen to induce learning — of something?

I

If Teaching Is An "Interactive Phenomenon," It Is Inappropriate To View It As A Solo Performance.

Some transactions are presented here in order to emphasize the two-person requirement in the doing of the act and, through contrast with teaching, to probe the distinctions in the term success. For convenience they are labelled as mutual ventures, coercive transactions, and active/passive transactions.

In a mutual venture such as kissing and dancing, there has to be a common and shared interest for execution of the transaction. To say that "John and Mary danced" is to speak of a duet; in most circumstances within this culture we do not have to ask in redundancy, whether they danced together. In other words, the result is implicit in the infinitive. To dance means — to use the phrase in "The Logical Outcomes of Teaching" — that "one does not do something unless one does it." Now, to speak of success in relation to the transaction of dancing would be to refer to the completion of the dancing act rather than to the intent to produce an outcome or to its quality or effect. This is not to suggest that one cannot make a qualitative judgment about how well the dance was done; it is simply to say that if two partners danced it means that, upon performance, the action is complete.

In the coercive transaction, e.g. "Joe fished" or "Joe hunted," what is implied in these statements is, as Scheffler would say, *intent to succeed*.⁸ Thus, it is neither improper nor redundant to ask Joe upon his return: "How did you make out?" To fish or hunt is not necessarily to succeed in catching fish or game, but to make the attempt; the outcome of the completed action is very far from being implicit in the infinitive: to fish or to hunt. Unlike a duet, we recognize that successful fishing and hunting requires us "to beat" the fish and game in competition. Indeed, the intent of the hunter is decidedly not the intent of the hunted; the prey attempts to foil or, at least, to escape the hunter. Thus, it should be clear that lack of success in achieving intended outcomes is not the equivalent of lack of performance of relevant operations.

It is probably evident that teaching is neither the same as the transactions of kissing and dancing in which mutuality is presumed nor, yet, of fishing and hunting wherein the prey typically try to elude being part of the transaction. If the student does not share the teacher's intent but, like game or fish, resists it or tries to escape it, we can, then, only mean by success the completion of acts related to an intended outcome. For instance, when a patient ignores the directives and prescriptions of a physician, *who* is it who has not succeeded and in *doing* what? In a coercive transaction there is, in effect, a competition of solo performers each with a different goal or outcome in mind; the one who "wins" has succeeded in foiling the intent of the other.

II

A Successful Transaction Can Mean The Completion Of An Act Upon Performance As Well As The Positive Judgment Of An Action In Terms Of Its Effect.

Ideally, teaching would seem to involve a cooperative if not a mutual venture between teacher and student. It is further suggested that teaching may be somewhat closer in logical geography to the active/passive transactions of performer and audience. I say somewhat because the fit is far from exact and consequently, we may have to rest content with just some similarity.⁹ Nevertheless, the search for a transaction-type which, more or less, involves some teaching acts is worthwhile in that it may reveal similar logical topography or the necessity of a *sui generis* conceptualization.

In the performer/audience transaction, typically there is a response to, or an evaluation of, the performance, the latter serving as stimulus. It is this evaluative response that actually completes the transaction. (Performance + Evaluative Response = Completed Transaction.) For example, "I told them a joke — but they did not think it was funny." "The minister preached the sermon — but no one felt inspired." "The actor played the part — but the audience was unmoved by the performance." (See Note 9.)

In this kind of transaction, the expectation of an advance guarantee of achievement of an intended outcome would surely be extravagant. Simply put, it is clear that a given performance can fail to elicit a desired response. Moreover, a negative response in each of the above cases is hardly evidence that the action had not been performed; it *is* evidence of how it had been received. As was seen in the coercive transaction [to hunt or to fish], to state the infinitive: to tell a joke, to preach a sermon, to act a part, announces the performance of the act itself; however, only the *intent* to produce a given outcome, not the outcome or effect itself, is implied. In a transaction wherein there is a modicum of shared purpose, there would have to be some kind of demonstration that negative audience response, i.e., lack of "success," is equivalent to the negation of actual performance. This is a belaboring of the obvious but it is necessary since, when it comes to considering the implications of the term teaching, there are those who permit themselves the bland assertion that one can only teach successfully or not at all; i.e., teaching has not occurred if learning has not been induced.

Now, how is it that success, whether in teaching or in the performer/audience transactions above, is commonly taken *not* to refer to the mere performance of an action, but refers to the *effect* of the performance? It seems obvious that mere occurrence of the performance is taken as self-evident; what counts is the judgment of its quality. After all, who does not recall the quip: "operation successful; patient died." But, it is precisely here that a subtle conceptual shift and substitution most often occurs. It is suggested that the conceptual shift takes place because: 1) the definition of success is borrowed from an alien context and then stretched out of shape; 2) there is confusion and interchange between the concepts of completeness and success.¹⁰ Let us take number 2 first.

I have said that performance + evaluative response = completed transaction. Another way of saying it is that without some response there is, in effect, an uncompleted transaction. Now, an

uncompleted transaction ["I told them a joke . . ."] is not equivalent to an unsuccessful one, nor is a completed transaction equivalent to a successful one. A completed transaction may fall short of the desired intent: "I told them a joke — *but* they did not think it was funny." (An uncompleted transaction of the performer/audience variety simply means that we have no report on a response to a given performance.)¹¹ That the completed transaction is mistaken for the successful one occurs because of a transfer in the concept of success from another context. And so, back to number 1, the borrowing of the concept of success from an alien context.

III

A Transaction Involving An Exchange Of A Material Object As In The Sale Of An Item Is Alien To The Logical Geography In Which Teaching May Be Mapped.

The rules of tautology (implication and contradiction) operate clearly in those transactions which are completed upon their very execution. For instance, "I loaned him my sweater — but he did not borrow it" would be a contradiction as is "I sold him my camera — but he did not buy it." Since the acts are complete within their very performance and without the necessity of a qualitative judgment, to say, "I sold him my camera" makes it absolutely unnecessary to add that "it was bought." Similarly, if "I loaned him my sweater," that it was borrowed is implicit. Thus, in *this* context, a completed transaction and a successful transaction are equivalent.

Now, this equation of complete = success may not casually be transferred to another context such as teaching/learning. To make the case that teaching is similarly tautological, i.e., if teaching occurred it is unnecessary to ask whether learning occurred, would require the demonstration that the act(s) of teaching, apart from how it is received, constitutes a completed transaction equivalent to "I loaned him my sweater" or "I sold him my camera." It should be evident that without the imperative of a qualitative judgment or demonstrable report on the effect of the teaching act(s), we have an uncompleted transaction for we have no way to observe whether, and when, the transaction has been completed other than through such reporting mechanism. To ask whether there has been learning or to seek for some corroboration through demonstration of it is then, *a fortiori*, neither implied nor redundant, but necessary.

Because our vision is less obscured by emotional freightage it may be easier to see the imperative of a qualitative report in the performer/audience transaction. If I say: "I told them a joke," it is clear that the judgement of how it was received is *not* implicit within the performance of the act; to complete the transaction a report or demonstration (widespread laughter or its absence) has to be registered. Moreover, as was stated previously, such a necessary reporting — however negative — does not, thereby, cancel out the performance of the act. Yet, there are those who would permit a negative assessment of the achievement of the intended result of the act(s) of teaching to gainsay the performance thereof. As has been suggested, the definition of success as well as its interchange with the concept of completeness, have been transferred from alien topography.¹²

An event which probably contributed greatly to fix and seal such a conceptual transfer occurred when Smith¹³ unwittingly helped to memorialize Kilpatrick's egregious error: the equation of a transaction involving a material object with a transaction involving an attempted transmission of symbolic skills and interchange of ideas. Smith, apparently, was deflected into arguing tautology and syntax instead of Kilpatrick's illicit transfer. In selling, of course, one has not sold unless someone has bought and the operations or acts involved in selling are important only insofar as they contribute to the consummation of the sale. However, the transaction wherein a material object changes hands ["I sold him a camera" or "I loaned him a sweater"] or even where a service is

performed ["The nurse bandaged the patient's arm"] simply cannot be equated with teaching on at least three counts:

1. The complexity of teaching operations.¹⁴
2. The necessity of repeated trials and tests of performance to ascertain the effects of teaching (i.e., to complete the transaction).
3. The lack of clear point of terminus of the teaching act(s).

IV

If We Do No Identify What Is Not An Inducement Of Learning, We Are Enmeshed In Circularity Of Argument.

In teaching there is, as Scheffler would say, an *attempt* to transmit *something*,¹⁵ and the attempt would seem to involve a complex of operations and actions which requires some cooperativeness. The transmission or development of the something usually refers to an idea or piece of knowledge or to some skill, bit of advice, or a quantum of appreciation. It is probably clear that all of these necessitate either comprehension or repeated trials or tests of performance, or willingness and ability to act, or acceptance and approval, or some fusion of these, as part of the demonstrable evidence of application or assimilation or degree of mastery. It is necessary to stress that transactions wherein a material object changes hands as in selling/buying or loaning/borrowing, or where a service is performed, or even in the active/passive, performer/audience situation, repeated trials or tests of performance are usually not required. This is another way of saying that in the exchange of a material object, the point of terminus of the transaction is well-defined by the actual exchange itself. In teaching, this point is fluid and ill-defined precisely because teaching processes themselves are marked by repeated trials, whether in transmission (e.g., explanation or demonstration) or in those involved in reproduction (assimilation and application).

It may be that Derr would count such trails and even the occurrence of necessary failures as instances of the inducement of learning. If so, how does one escape a charge of circularity for we are then left bereft of being able to ascertain what is *not* an inducement of learning. Witness a child under instruction at the piano: In ten tries at a scale, he gets five right and five wrong in no particular order. Do such repeated trials count as inducement of learning? If they do not count, what degree of success in demonstration is acceptable evidence that teaching has, in fact, occurred; i.e., what degree of failure in a test of performance can be allowed? If they do count as instances of inducement of learning, then what is *not* an inducement of learning?

There is yet another consideration regarding the matter of inducement of learning. An illustration of the misuse of the term teaching is offered by Derr: "We teach respect for adults to young children in our society unsuccessfully."¹⁶ While I would agree, for different reasons, that the usage in the statement is not entirely felicitous, it can actually be taken to indicate the indeterminate quality of our cumulative performances. Surely, there are examples where learning or even its inducement does not, and perhaps cannot, occur at the time that teaching does. Teaching for "appreciations," whether in art, music, or literature — usually with indeterminate results — is a case in point. Even with more clearly definable objectives such as critical thinking, we may find it difficult to state when the inducement of learning has occurred. These would be instances of uncompleted transactions which, it is necessary to recall, are not the equivalent of unsuccessful ones.

If the point of terminus between teaching and learning appears as fluid or even elusive it would suggest that in teaching an uncompleted transaction is not uncommon. To leap to the conclusion that because there are inconclusive or unknown results the teaching act has not been performed would require strenuous exertion. Since Derr discounts entirely the complex of teaching operations,

teaching can only be said to have occurred after the fact; it is probable that he would not countenance the notion of an uncompleted transaction as described here. Thus, he is compelled to take the judgment of the effect of the performance as the determining factor for the initial execution of the teaching act itself. So defined, teaching would appear to be *sui generis*, for one is hard-pressed to conceive a transaction where the stringency of an advance guarantee of achievement in intended outcome obtains.

To sum up, what does the analysis here show us? Does teaching "fit" into a particular transaction-type of the kind presented here? Certainly, there is the potential for any of the types or a fusion of them to emerge. Such factors as attitudes and predilections, degree of artistry, curricular goals, materials of instruction and, particularly, levels of instruction would affect the kind of transaction that might emerge. I have said that, ideally, teaching can be a cooperative if not a mutual venture or duet. Yet, in some instances, a coercive-type transaction may be observed. Probably, the most common, at least in a historical sense, has been the performer/audience transaction-type or some version close to it.

This notwithstanding, what I have labelled for convenience as mutual ventures, coercive transactions, and active/passive transactions is not the critical issue here. These conveniences were introduced only to probe the distinctions in the term success and to indicate why certain transactions are alien to the logical geography in which teaching may be mapped. As the analysis has attempted to reveal, what is important for us here is the following:

Teaching is related logically to those transactions where only the intent to produce a desired outcome may be inferred from such a statement as: one has taught something to someone. If there has been failure to achieve the intended result, the negative judgment or demonstration of the quality or effect of the performance cannot cancel out or negate the fact that teaching acts have been executed. *A fortiori*, in the case of an uncompleted transaction in teaching, there can be no question that teaching acts have been performed. It is, therefore, believed to be appropriate and fruitful to try to refine the distinctions between transactions which are complete upon execution of an act or exchange and those which must await a qualitative judgment of some performed act(ion) for their completion.

Notes

¹ Liveritte, R.H. "Educational Research and the Concepts of Teaching and Learning," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, (Spring, 1976): 245.

² Derr, R.L. "The Logical Outcomes of Teaching," *Educational Theory*, (Spring, 1979): 139-148.

³ P. 146.

⁴ P. 142.

⁵ P. 145.

⁶ P. 145.

⁷ Actions which can only be performed in association with others.

⁸ Scheffler, I., *The Language of Education*, (Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1960).

⁹ The activities of the humorist, minister, and actor seem to bear a resemblance to what is often encountered in teaching/learning operations: levels of readiness are involved along with problems relating to comprehension and information-sharing. What is probably *not* involved in telling [listening to] a joke, preaching [hearing] a sermon, and acting [observing] a part is: demonstration and replication of skills or application of principles; yet, some would regard the acquisition of appreciations as part of a congeries of skills. In the examples cited, a degree of participant willingness or receptive attitude is assumed as initially present.

¹⁰ In the quip, "operation successful; patient died," may be seen the interchange of success with completeness. "Operation *complete*; patient died" would be a logically precise version. Of course, such a version would destroy the wit and the effectiveness of the quip.

¹¹ Here, there is similarity to the coercive transaction: "Joe fished." (Incomplete transaction.) In order to complete it, we have to ask for an evaluative report of the effect of the performance: "How did you make out?"

¹² The transfer reflects the subtle nature and ever-present effects of enculturation. It was Dewey who advanced the view that the central values of a culture are to be found in almost all its institutions. He might have added: thought patterns. For Dewey, himself, was an exemplar of the ready tendency to think of the transaction of selling/buying as *the* model for teaching and to abstract therefrom, the standard of success in "merchandising" and "marketing" of ideas and symbolic processes and skills. This has had an over-powering effect on expectations of teaching in day-to-day operation as well as in the study of the phenomenon. Indeed, our linguistic patterns are symptomatic: e.g., "I'll buy that!" or "to sell someone an idea."

¹³ Smith, B.O. "A Concept of Teaching," in Smith, B.O. and Ennis, R.H., *Language and Concepts in Education* (Rand McNally and Company: Chicago, 1961) p. 89.

¹⁴ Derr believes that the components or elements of teaching are actually distinct from teaching; that is, the intended outcome of teaching is more important than the complex of operations it might entail. P. 147.

¹⁵ Scheffler, *op.cit.*

¹⁶ Derr, P. 146.