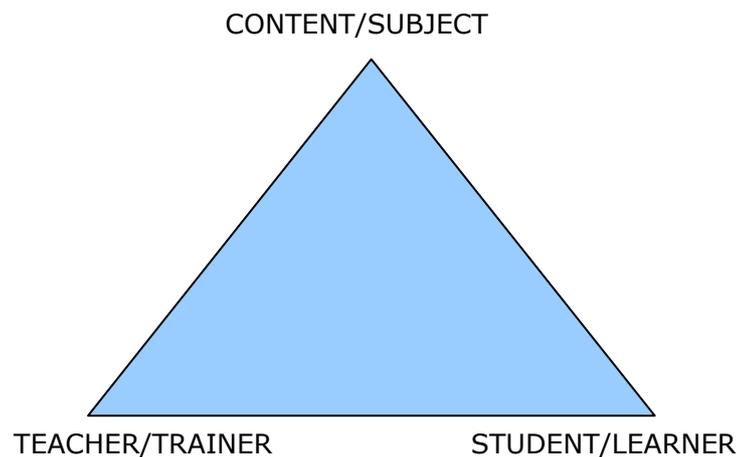


The Didactic Triangle

The **didactic triangle** in which student, teacher, and content form the vertices (or nodes) of a **triangle** is the classical pattern used to conceptualize teaching and learning – especially in the formal education sector (and in the German speaking world, it seems...) It is usually depicted as an equilateral triangle, which is to show that all three relations are equally important or should be seen as equal. In reality the axes can shift quite a bit if for example the focus is exclusively on the content (or the process) or the teacher/trainer or the learner are in their minds busy with other things and the energy goes there, etc.



In the process of teaching/learning everything is of importance what happens in all three relations of these points to each other and in the field determined thereby. The most simple examples for those relations are:

Teacher/Trainer – Content/Subject: preparing

Content/Subject – Student/Learner: learning

Teacher/Trainer – Student/Learner: teaching

But the triangle can also be used to analyse far more complex contexts:

Trainer/Content

- How do I personally understand the content/subject.
- How did I acquire my knowledge about the subject.
- How experienced/well versed am I in this topic/subject.
- Where are my personal preferences and barriers in this subject.
-

Trainer/Learner

- What is the connection between people that meet here.
- How do we define our roles.
- What do we know from each other.
- What is our common history/experience.
- ...

Learner/Content

- How can/does the learner approach the topic
- What prior experiences does he/she already have with the topic
- What interests/fears/assumptions does the topic raise in her/him
- What concrete use can he/she make of the content learned
- ...

Nowadays the view prevails that the triangle has to be put in a comprehensive social context – which adds a fourth dimension to it, usually shown as a circle around the triangle.

Didactic principles

Didactic principles are general principles that describe a desirable design of the teaching / learning process. They are guiding principles and are superordinate to concrete technical goals and, like the diverse didactic theories and models, they always come from a specific image of the world and are therefore also changeable and shaped by the times.

Didactic principles inspired by the work of German psychologist, pedagogue and education expert Siegbert A. Warwitz as one example are:

Age and development adequateness - learners need to be picked up at their respective levels of competence and interest to facilitate effective learning

Holisticness - refers to the content (the whole is more than the individual parts, embedding in a world view, ..) as well as the learning person (intellect, emotion - hand, heart and brain).

Illustration / Visual clarity – be less abstract, convey the content more pictorially or make the content sensually detectable

Being an example / role model - to keep the teachers words and deeds in harmony

Structuring and progression - goal orientation, composition and structure (selection of contents and methods), but also e.g. "From the easy to the difficult" and "from the known to the unknown"

Repetition and Variation - Repeat, practice, experience, transfer to other areas - with the aim of consolidating the acquired knowledge and protecting it from loss.

Self-directed autonomy - motivation and empowerment of the learner to do it themselves - "learning by doing" with John Dewey or even the guiding idea of Montessori "help me to do it myself".

Safety - creating a safe space for experimentation, allowing trial and error without real risk

System and consequence - or also the principle of goal orientation and confirmation of success: teaching as planned in systematic procedure that aim at the achievement of a (learning) goal - this also implies the necessity (for teachers and learners) of a success control and thus confirmation of success.

Up-to-dateness - teaching and learning does not take place out of time and space, but should relate to reality and to the happenings of the day.

Individuation and socialization - the individuality of each learner as well as their integration into a social environment should be considered. In adult education strongly represented as participant orientation.

Other principles that may be particularly relevant to working in non-formal learning - sometimes complementary or overlapping with Warwitz – and are often named are:

Connectivity – the conveyed knowledge should be linked to existing previous knowledge and experience.

Practical and contextual relevance - it is necessary to establish and clarify the relationship to the practice and contexts of the participants.

Process orientation and variety of methods - through targeted use of methods and variety of methods enable / stimulate processes of self-directed learning.

Learning Objective Orientation - Orientation to and structuring of content based on learning goals to be achieved.

Action relevance - not only in the educational process itself, but also aimed at changing the behaviour in the future.

Other general principles could / should be:

Equal opportunities

non violence

autonomy

This list is not exhaustive and was translated by non-professional translator Alexandra Beweis.

About learning

Factors that influence learning and should therefore be considered are:

- the motivation
- the learning biography / learning experiences; Socialization / learning milieus; Personal pre-requisites → individual learning type
- learning conditions

The **motivation** can be roughly categorized in:

<p>intrinsic of their own accord, interest in the topic, curiosity</p>	<p>extrinsic external constraints and incentives e.g. Commissioned by employer, in a school class setting</p>
<p>habitual basic willingness to learn, lifelong learning as habitus / lifestyle</p>	<p>actual concrete occasions and usability</p>

The **individual learning type**

is influenced by:

- your own learning biography
Positive and negative previous experiences with learning (school, exams, ...), continuity of learning (habituation / dehabituation, habitus), learned (or not yet learned) learning techniques such as structuring content, interpreting texts, making references.
- Socialization / learning milieus- in which environment do I move? How important is education here? Proximity and distance to certain topics?
- Personal (rather genetic) conditions such as Intelligence, memory, but also which sensory channel (visual, auditory, haptic, interactive) is preferred

Also, the (old) familiar types of learning (visual, haptic, ..) are often criticized today as too "flat" - rather, we speak of

multidimensional learning *

following this we learn in constant change and in combination of:

- Sensory learning: touching, grasping, feeling, seeing, listening, tasting, smelling,...
- Observative learning: watching, observing
- Motor function, Manual Learning: Practical Doing, Trial and Error, Experimenting
- Analytic-Understanding Learning: Questioning, Explaining, Comparing, Examining, Dissecting, Understanding
- Eidetic, Mental Learning: Imagining, Reflecting, Explaining, Describing
- Emotional-affective learning: experiencing, feeling
- Social-affective learning: acting together, reflecting, discussing, experiencing¹

In each learning situation those learning ways/possibilities are activated that:

- offer themselves from the objective requirements of the task
- are available on the part of the learner

Examples for learning conditions (in non formal education) can be the room and its setting, the timing, the group, the context,...

Teaching/Training is not pure information/knowledge transfer, but rather the opening of access to the subject.

¹ Siegbert Warwitz, Anita Rudolf: *Das Prinzip des mehrdimensionalen Lehrens und Lernens*. In: Dies.: *Projektunterricht. Didaktische Grundlagen und Modelle*. Schorndorf 1977. S. 16 und 17