

An unlikely venture: An interrogation of the criticism of fundamental pedagogics*

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Abstract

This paper begins with a brief historical sketch of how, in 1974, my thinking moved from a natural science approach to the study of educational psychology, to the phenomenological approach pursued at the University of Pretoria. I found what I was looking for – a competent and comprehensive phenomenology of educating in its part-perspectives, including fundamental pedagogics. While studying and teaching these contents, in 1980, I was shocked to read scathing criticisms and characterizations of fundamental pedagogics claiming that Pretoria pedagogics was designed to provide an academic justification of apartheid education in that it was said to be little more than an expression of the racist, authoritarian policies of Christian Nationalism. If these claims were accurate, this would mean I was involved in an unlikely venture in as much as I have anti-apartheid and non-racist sentiments such that this asserted purpose of fundamental pedagogics, specifically, and pedagogics, in general, would conflict with my own values and philosophy of life. Fortunately, my first-hand experiences with the phenomenological endeavors at Pretoria do not support these claims. This

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gives rise to the question: How is it possible that the critics of fundamental pedagogics and I both are equally convinced of the accuracy of our understandings of fundamental pedagogics and what has given rise to this discrepancy?

The main thrust of this paper addresses this question. Since an investigator's method will influence strongly what legitimately can or cannot be expressed about a particular phenomenon, the most appropriate method of investigation for pedagogics is deemed to be the phenomenological method, as the aim is to interrogate the phenomenon of education, as (was) the intent of fundamental pedagogics in the 1980s at the University of Pretoria. Phenomenology is a method designed to disclose the essences or universal structures of a phenomenon. Its first strategy is called the phenomenological reduction, epoche, bracketing. This gets us closer to the phenomenon itself by temporarily holding in abeyance the essence-blinding influences of whatever kind (e.g., assumptions, theories, ideologies [explicitly the Christian Nationalism of apartheid South Africa], philosophies of life, etc.). A consequence of this bracketing is that an investigator's access to and dialogue with a phenomenon will not be disrupted or distorted by what is being bracketed. Within this bracketing, the eidetic reduction or method of free variation is performed as a way of disclosing and highlighting what seem to be essences. These essences are universal and thus do not imply or require a particular ideology, etc. Otherwise, they wouldn't be universal. Next, a hermeneutic method is used to illuminate and clarify the meaning of each essence (what function does it serve). Finally, the dialectical (triadic) method is used to determine the coherences among the essences (how do they serve as mutual conditions for each other to occur). Practicing fundamental pedagogics (and pedagogics in general) occurs only while bracketing is engaged. This means that fundamental pedagogics only can scientifically describe the essences and structures of the reality of educating* but not its contents

* Reality of educating/education, upbringing, child-in-education refer to an adult-child educative relationship at home and in school within which an adult accompanies a child in his/her becoming an adult.

(e.g., a particular religious commitment or political view that has been held in abeyance by bracketing).

Pretoria calls the activity within brackets a science of or a theory of the reality of educating. And this gives rise to distinguishing the pre-scientific, the scientific and the post-scientific, where bracketing is absent from the pre- and post-scientific attitudes, and ideologies, etc. rightly play a critical role in the reality of educating. Even though fundamental pedagogics is not in a position and doesn't aim to select particular ideologies that are necessary for the act of educating, in revealing and describing these universals of this activity, these essences, as preconditions for establishing an adult-child educative relationship, provide guidelines for a practitioner (parent, teacher) to establish and sustain such a relationship and these essences also can be used as criteria for evaluating the pedagogical quality of an educational activity as well as whether applying an ideology in a particular way distorts the essences of that relationship. That is, these essences make possible a purely pedagogical perspective on the reality of educating in contrast to a psychological perspective, for example.

In the literature critical of fundamental pedagogics almost always there is a conflation of the scientific and the post-scientific with the consequence that pedagogics is criticized for justifying apartheid education when in fact it is in no position to do so and doesn't aim to. Pedagogics also is criticized for not including political discourse in its description of essences. Examples of these criticisms are presented and evaluated pedagogically.

Thus, it seems that almost all criticism of the pedagogical studies at Pretoria can be attributed to a conflation of a scientific activity with a post-scientific one – one of content. Hence, not keeping track of the scientific and the post-scientific activities, facilitates these conflations.

A possible answer to my beginning question of why there is this “discrepancy” is that I limit my evaluation of pedagogical findings to what was obtained while bracketing was engaged (the scientific/phenomenological), while most critics focus on the post-scientific issue of prescribing to practice where much of what was bracketed now must be used to nuance the meanings of the essences within a particular practice. That is, *I limit myself exclusively to the essences disclosed and*

described when bracketing is engaged, while most critics are focused on how these essences are applied post-scientifically. Possibly the “discrepancy” between our appraisals of fundamental pedagogics arises because we are approaching the reality of educating from different points of view, i.e., with different questions and interests.

The consequence of critics and defenders talking past each other has been costly. The phenomenological efforts at Pretoria have been vilified and ostracized for political, more than academic reasons to an extent that generations of possible contributors to its line of thinking have been thwarted completely. I suggest that the Pretoria findings be studied with an open and scientific mind and then decide if these findings are or are not a treasure trove of insights into the reality of educating a child.

KEY CONCEPTS:

educating, upbringing, psychopedagogics, fundamental pedagogics, pedagogics as a science, phenomenological method, phenomenological, reduction (bracketing), pre-scientific, scientific and post-scientific perspectives, Langeveld’s pedagogy, essences/categories, apartheid education, authoritarian teaching, Christian National education, science of vs science for, theory of vs theory for

The venture

During undergraduate study at the University of California (Berkeley) in the USA my major study was the psychology of the middle 1950’s. On the graduate level, it was the educational psychology of the early 1960’s. As a result of this study, my only perspective on “education” was a psychological one, and specifically, the educational psychology of the 1960’s that I had uncritically accepted as primarily meaning teaching-learning at school, as was the case in the USA in the 1960’s. At that time, I had a

gnawing uneasiness about the relevance of much of what I was learning. For example, the definition of learning as a change in behavior seemed superficial – classical and operant conditioning do not describe what a child does but what is done to him/her to change his/her behavior.

A few assumptions (beliefs) that I ended up with were that educational psychology is psychology applied to education. This assumption was reinforced by the fact that essentially the content of my educational psychology curriculum was a reiteration of what I had learned in psychology and by the fact that about half of the courses I took as a graduate student were offered by the psychology department. I also held the unquestioned view that *any positive experience (including teaching and/or learning) was “educational” whether it resulted from informal parenting or from adults, children, games, toys, etc.* The criteria for what was “positive” were based on achievement tests and other mostly tacit/unstated criteria. More than a decade later I would realize that these views obscure the study of the phenomenon of education – mostly because they conflate educating and positive forming.

In 1961, just as I was completing my graduate studies, I accidentally encountered the European notion of phenomenology as a philosophical method, in general, and (Dutch) phenomenological psychology, specifically, and began reading what little I could find in English that

made sense to me at the time. Two books that caught and kept my interest were W. Luijpen's *Existential phenomenology* and a little later Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of perception*. My interest in gestalt psychology gave me a point of entry into Merleau-Ponty's thought since he used a lot of their work to illustrate and develop some of his philosophical ideas. My dilemma reached a critical point when I realized that this literature and others provided a perspective on being human that appeared to be truer to life than the insights (mostly implicit) I had assimilated from studying psychology and educational psychology and which led me to question the validity of many of their interpretations and findings.

In 1964 when I began teaching educational psychology my intellectual dilemma became even more intensified. I was obligated to teach traditional educational psychology that I now "felt" to be of questionable relevance to a prospective teacher and I readily questioned them explicitly; my dilemma was that I had no positive alternative – an unsatisfactory state both for myself and my students.

My strategy was to gradually introduce reading assignments from the literature of phenomenology and humanistic psychology with the hope of integrating these streams of thought but this led to a hodgepodge of eclectic ideas that could not be directly applied to the school situation. I persisted with this frustrating approach for about a decade only because I didn't know what else to do and because humanistic and phenomenological views of

being human (being a child) rang truer to life and thus were more palatable than the natural science view of persons underlying most of traditional educational psychology.

In 1974 I read a review of BF Nel's *Fundamental orientation in psychological pedagogics** in the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* and ordered the book from South Africa. This was my first introduction to the phenomenological study of education/upbringing being pursued by the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. It completely turned my understanding of the terms "education" and "educational psychology" upside down and introduced me to Langeveld's principles of child becoming adult and his (philosophical) child anthropology. Nel's book also introduced me to a developing pedagogics as a phenomenological study of upbringing/education at Pretoria of which psychological pedagogics (later psychopedagogics) is an integral part.

In addition, it became clear that this "psychology" emerged from within the adult-child educative relationship itself and thus is a "situational psychology" arising from and embedded in the phenomenon of bringing a child up and was not an "applied psychology". Nel's references were predominately to Dutch phenomenologists and my studies of phenomenology sharply attuned me to these ideas in as

* Published in Afrikaans in April 1968 as *Fundamentele oriëntering in die psigologiese pedagogiek* and an English translation appeared in September 1973.

much as the phenomenology I learned for the most part was a Dutch explication of it (e.g., Luijpen, Buytendijk, Kockelmans, Kwant, Strasser, etc.). From then on I prescribed Nel's book in my Introduction to Educational Psychology course that gradually morphed into my Introduction to Psychopedagogics.

As a situational psychology, psychopedagogics discloses and describes the essentials of child learning and becoming *within an educative relationship*, e.g., Sonnekus (1968), and it could not stand alone without drifting into a psychology of learning and development because it needed the fundamental pedagogical (context/situation) descriptions by Landman et al. (1975/2011), the didactic pedagogical (teaching) descriptions by Van der Sroep and Louw (1979/2005), the sociopedagogical descriptions by Pretorius (1979/2017) and the orthopedagogical descriptions by Van Niekerk (1979/2001) of the one unitary phenomenon of accompanying a child to adulthood.

Consequently, in my course I prescribed readings in these part-perspectives and more. Early on I prescribed W. H. O. Schmidt's (1973) book, *Child Development: The human, cultural and educational context*, and later I added a book on parenting by Schulman and Mekler (1985), *Bringing up a moral child*, while some fellow educational psychologists wondered, correctly from their perspective) what these readings had to do with applying psychological principles to schooling.

In August/September of 1980, I was invited to be a guest lecturer at the University of Pretoria where I had the opportunity to interact and talk with members of the Faculty of Education who were enthusiastically and impressively carrying out phenomenological studies of educating (what they referred to as pedagogics) as a multi-faceted but integrated, unified activity. *

Pedagogics, in general, and psychopedagogics, specifically, seemed to be precisely what I had been yearning for and that might minimize my dilemma. I was also so impressed and excited about their achievements that, in order to make more of their literature in pedagogics available to myself and my students, in the mid 1980's I began translating some of their books, articles, dissertations, etc. but with a vigilant, if not skeptical eye for any indication of the promotion of or justification for a so-called "apartheid education". I found no indication of this in the materials I read and translated. Indeed, as a non-religious, Liberal Democrat (USA), anti-segregation (USA), anti-apartheid (RSA) individual, I would not have been able to accept these writings if I didn't experience that their disclosed essences are valid descriptions of the phenomenon of educating in its totality. To me this means they are descriptive of the universal, unchanging *structures/forms* of educating and not of its particular and varying contents that are governed by a particular

* For a student's first-hand account of this academic climate during the 1970's, see the preamble in Kruger and Yonge (2008).

philosophy of life, ideology and/or particularized aim – the very things that are put in brackets (i.e., temporarily held in abeyance) during a phenomenological analysis (see below). Even so, there is a small but influential literature that characterizes the findings of the Pretoria faculty, and in particular, those of fundamental pedagogics (FP), as providing a justification of or for the policy of apartheid education (Beard and Morrow, 1981). In as much as I have challenged the validity of this pro-apartheid characterization (e.g., Yonge, 1990; 1991; 2008), below I try to clarify precisely what it is I am defending *and why*.

In teaching these perspectives on education for approximately two decades I remained impressed by the mutual coherence of their descriptions and the more I translated, the more I could see that the contributions of the Faculty of Education at Pretoria were unique and worthy of being translated into English which also would place these findings in a less hostile context than that of post-apartheid South African academics and politics. Along this line, I developed a website to make my translations of the findings of the Pretoria School easily accessible to interested readers and critics.

My English translations of more than 100 pedagogical studies of educating from different part-perspectives and their findings are accessible on line at georgeyonge.net : An example of a fundamental pedagogical study is Landman, et al. (1975/2011) , especially chapters one and two; a tabulation of fundamental pedagogical categories,

structures, relationships and criteria appears in Gerber (1972/2009); a study of the psychic life of a child in education (psychopedagogical perspective) and the resulting categories is that by Crous (1984/1997); the categories disclosed by a didactic pedagogical (i.e., educative teaching) perspective on the phenomenon of educating appear especially in chapter 3 of Van der Stoep and Louw (1979/2005). An example of how the different part-perspectives function as an integrated unity and where theory and practice merge, is in designing and presenting a lesson (Basson, et al., 1985/1994; Van der Stoep et al., (1973/1999) and in the practice of orthopedagogics (including pedotherapy (i.e., educational therapy in contrast to psychotherapy) are Crous (1979/1997) and Van Niekerk (1979/2001).

With no claim of completeness, below are some highlights of the phenomenological method that was followed by the *entire* Faculty of Education at Pretoria (For a more detailed and complete account see Landman, W. A. (1983/2006).

Phenomenology, as a method for disclosing the essences of a phenomenon, begins with a thinking strategy that tries to eliminate or minimize the essence-blinding influences of assumptions, theories, ideologies (especially the Christian Nationalism [CN] of apartheid South Africa), philosophies of life, etc. that can hide and distort how a phenomenon “speaks to” or discloses itself to the investigator. This attempted control these influences is to place them in

brackets or temporarily hold in abeyance as many of them as is feasible. This is called the *phenomenological reduction* and it is sustained throughout a phenomenological study of an experience of something. This *bracketing* allows for a closer, clearer view of and access to the phenomenon itself; that is, it allows the phenomenon to describe and explain itself to us as it would if it could without our assumptions and life commitments, etc. intruding, skewing and even interrupting our dialogue with the phenomenon. (Even though a *complete* phenomenological reduction is not possible, this does not invalidate its value). *Within* this reduction (bracketing), an *eidetic reduction* is performed. Also called the method of free variation, this is a way of disclosing and highlighting what seem to be essences. To further confirm these seeming essences, the *hermeneutic method* then is used to disclose and clarify *the meaning* (what function does it serve) of each of them. Then, by means of the *dialectic (triadic) method*, the interrelationships (coherences) among the essences and structures are disclosed (i.e., how do they serve as mutual conditions for each other to occur). These strategies are used while the phenomenological reduction (bracketing) is operative and thus the resulting essences/categories will transcend any occurrence of the phenomenon and thus can claim universality. This is similar to seeing through many examples of triangles to the universal essence of “triangularity” which *does not prescribe a particular characteristic* even though “triangularity” must be

particularized by size, type, color, etc. to be a concrete experience; that is, any particular content is a possible nuance of an essence provided its actualization does not distort or destroy it. That which has been bracketed temporarily thus has been declared to be essential or non-essential by means of the strategies taken within this phenomenological reduction. Then the bracketing is lifted. In this way, the essential nature of the phenomenon is described scientifically (in this case, phenomenologically). This is in contrast to a pre- and post-scientific description of the phenomenon in which influences and context must play a role in the act of educating a child.

My understanding and defense of fundamental pedagogics (and pedagogics as a unity)

The following considerations are offered with some of the criticisms of FP in mind. I first present my understanding of the nature of FP and then, in this light I comment on a critique by Suransky-Dekker (1998) along with some less politicized comments by Hoadley (2018).

During the 1970's and early 1980's there was a spate of papers critical of FP awhile virtually ignoring an evaluation of pedagogics, in general, and its *inseparable* part-perspectives (i.e., fundamental pedagogics is but one part-perspective of a more comprehensive unity that should be evaluated as a totality). I characterize many of these papers as sometimes mean-spirited and denigrating. Even so, these efforts were successful in aborting the entire project of the Pretoria Faculty of Education in post-

apartheid South Africa as well as claiming that the whole endeavor of fundamental pedagogics was to provide an academic justification for apartheid education (Black schooling).

To critique something effectively, one should be clear about what is being evaluated. And certainly, it is not appropriate to criticize a line of thinking for not including or considering something it had no intention of including, but, as will be noted, many of the criticisms of FP are of this nature.

An extremely important distinction for understanding the nature of the Pretoria results, as well as for delimiting what I contend are valid essence-descriptions of the reality of educating a child, are an *educational* (pre-scientific/contextualized), a *pedagogical* (scientific/decontextualized, via bracketing) and a *pedagogic* (post-scientific/re-contextualized—via bracketing being lifted) perspectives on this reality. Very briefly, an *educational situation* is almost exclusively pre-reflective practice, a *pedagogical situation* is almost entirely reflective “theorizing” about the pre-reflective practice and a *pedagogic situation* is where “theory”^{*} and practice both are salient – that is, it is where theoretical reflection informs and changes pre-reflective practice to reflective practice. Here *both* theory and practice are

* In this case, disclosing and describing the essences that arise from and are inherent to this pre-reflective practice.

reciprocally salient and thus theory can inform practice and practice can inform theory.

My interest in the phenomenological results of the Faculty of Education at Pretoria from the late 1960's to the early 1990's is limited *exclusively* to a pedagogical situation where assumptions, ideologies, etc. (and especially a Christian Nationalism) are bracketed. Importantly, this means the purpose of FP is to disclose the essences (preconditions) of that event and not to prescribe *specific contents* for the concrete practice of educating. What it does prescribe to a practitioner is the universal preconditions that have to be met before his/her activity can qualify as "educative". That is, pedagogics is directed exclusively to specifying the *form* of his/her educative actions but prescribes *nothing* regarding what he/she chooses as *contents*. In this context, it is only form that is disclosed by pedagogics as a whole. In contrast to this universality, *contents* vary from one concrete act of educating to another and their choice and justification are derived from one's philosophy of life, ideology, etc., that is from everything the phenomenological method is designed to bracket and temporarily hold in abeyance; specific contents are not to be found within the form itself/ In addition, since educating always is for the benefit of a child, any content that violates his/her nature/welfare (philosophical child anthropology) could distort or even destroy the form and thus not meet the conditions for an event to be an example of educating.

Since 1930 and for approximately two decades, at the University of Pretoria education was studied following an Anglo-American approach that they found to be extremely inadequate (see Faculty of Education, 1980/2000). By pursuing the groundbreaking thinking and example of Langeveld (1968) in Utrecht, The Netherlands, who studied educating phenomenologically by starting with the phenomenon itself and not as viewed philosophically, psychologically, etc., gradually they were able to break out of their unsatisfactory approach. Since about 1970, the phenomenological study of educating was characteristic of the research in all departments of the Faculty of Education and since then pedagogics gelled into a unitary whole of interrelated perspectives on educating. This unity reflects the reality that in the concrete practice of educating there are inherent and inseparable psychological, teaching and other moments within an adult-child educative relationship (disclosed and described by psychopedagogics, didactic pedagogics and fundamental pedagogics, respectively).

Pedagogics as a science* of educating *necessarily* includes these three perspectives and others. To criticize only or mainly FP, as has been done in the literature, can lead to a distorted understanding of pedagogics as a phenomenology of educating (see e.g., Beard and Morrow, 1981; Reagan, 1990; Suransky-Dekker, 1998).

* In this paper “science” or “scientific” almost always means “phenomenology” or “phenomenological” This does not imply that the phenomenological method is the *only* acceptable method for practicing science.

In studying educating phenomenologically, Langeveld (Utrecht) as well as Oberholzer (1954) and later Landman et al, (1975/2011) limited their “theoretical” (i.e., phenomenological) study exclusively to what they could disclose while they engaged both the phenomenological reduction (bracketing) and the eidetic reduction (method of free variation). By bracketing any religious, political and other orientations that might obscure or distort the phenomenon, and hence, the essences presumably disclosed, the results of both the Utrecht and Pretoria analyses will be devoid of any religious, political or other commitments; however, after the bracketing is lifted, particular contents *must* be imported from a lifeworld permeated by all that was bracketed. These contents enliven the essences (universal forms) such that they can be implemented in a concrete practice.

In the literature critical of FP almost always there is an ambiguous use of the term “theory” where a theory *of* (as a scientific matter) is conflated with a theory *for* (as a matter of prescribing for practice). A few examples of this conflation are mentioned below. To my understanding of Langeveld’s phenomenological study of educating as well as the Pretoria research, both are theories *of*, where the aim is to reveal the essences of educating itself. As a human *necessity*, educating/upbringing can and *must* occur in an extremely wide variety of political and religious situations; even so, a practitioner’s “educative” activities can be dysfunctional if they do not more or less meet the

preconditions described in and “prescribed” by the essences of educating as a special adult-child relationship. These preconditions, as guidelines for an educator’s ways of acting, are the only explicit “norms” to be found in and inherent to an educative relationship – and they are revealed and explicated by the various part-perspectives such as fundamental-, psycho- and didactic-pedagogics. These “norms” are relevant to providing parents with guidance and support in child rearing, and especially in a pedotherapeutic situation (see Van Niekerk, 1982; Crous (1979/1997)). They also provide criteria for evaluating the pedagogical acceptability of a concrete act of educating and even for the pedagogical acceptability of a particular doctrine for educating such as pragmatism (with respect to the latter, see De Vries, 1985).

Anyone who studies the same phenomenon within the phenomenological reduction ought to disclose or see similar (if not identical) or at least compatible categories. Therefore, their language of describing them should be extremely similar even if their *practical* interpretations may vary greatly. Such is the case when one compares the results at Utrecht and Pretoria. Indeed, Pretoria has not blindly accepted Langeveld’s categories (e.g., trust, understanding, authority, association, encounter, etc.) but in fact has gone beyond him by elaboration on these categories, describing additional categories and describing their mutual coherences. This is possible because the Utrecht and Pretoria categories are on the same level of

discourse (i.e., while bracketing is operative — on a scientific and not post-scientific level). Before categories can be implemented in practice they must be enlivened or particularized to a unique situation and necessarily this results in each category being nuanced or interpreted in terms of a particular ideology, belief, etc. That is, universal essences, when particularized, will show a *variety* of nuances in meaning – within the limits set by any essence. Consequently, it is not surprising if the nuanced meanings of these essences differ between The Netherlands and South Africa, indeed, between any countries or cultures.

Many criticisms of fundamental pedagogics stem from a misunderstanding and/or rejection of the phenomenological reduction. This invites a conflation of the scientific and the post-scientific or even an almost complete bypass of any phenomenological descriptions, which, in my opinion, is especially the case in the USA.

A relevant and more vehement criticism first was motivated by the presumed political and religious underpinnings of fundamental pedagogics. More recently, Suransky-Dekker (1998) claims to “show” that in the mid 1950’s, Langeveld’s theoretical pedagogy was “transferred” to South Africa primarily by the Pretoria Faculty of Education as an attempt to develop the study of education as an independent science. She then argued that since schooling in South Africa was a clear expression of a Christian (Calvinist) National Education

(CNE) that affirmed apartheid, this strong affinity with CNE influenced the interpretation of fundamental pedagogical thought in the direction of justifying and perpetuating an authoritarian apartheid education.

As evidence that fundamental pedagogics was designed to justify apartheid education (particularly Black schooling during apartheid), Suransky-Dekker (1998), Reagan (1991) and others point to the authoritarian nature of Black schooling that is characterized as emphasizing an authoritarian teacher-student relationship as well as rote, meaningless learning. As a phenomenology of educating, fundamental pedagogics does not prescribe or justify any particular practice because these are post-scientific matters.

If Black schooling under apartheid is viewed in terms of pedagogical essences, fundamental pedagogics (e.g., Landman et al. (1975/2011) can identify where *the pupil-teacher educative relationship* is being actualized inadequately, if at all; psychopedagogical categories (e.g., Crous (1984/1997) likely will show that the quality of affective, cognitive and normative guidance are lacking and didactic pedagogic, of direct relevance to schooling, might show that inadequate schooling is being implemented but little or no educative schooling (e.g., Van der Stoep and Louw, 1979/2005). An authoritarian teacher-student relationship and rote, meaningless learning are unacceptable as judged by the pedagogical categories revealed by fundamental pedagogics and the

other part-perspectives and, thus, it is not possible that these categories (essences) can be used to justify apartheid education or the content of any specific practice. No doubt *teaching and learning* occurred but not necessarily *educative teaching and positive formative learning*.

There seems to have been a *complete disconnect* between the findings of Pretoria and Black schooling under apartheid. Apartheid education was set up and implemented long before pedagogical thinking gelled in the 1970's. It was not designed or justified by pedagogical findings at Pretoria. Even so, fundamental pedagogics is characterized as promoting an authoritarian form of schooling. Indeed, the adult-child *relationship categories* of trust, understanding and authority are mutually entwined and they result in sympathetic, *authoritative* guidance (that has nothing to do with power and control) in contrast to an authoritarian relationship that does not put the interest of the child first (see Landman et al. (1975/2011). However, I do agree with Beard and Morrow (1981), Saransk-Dekker (1998) and others who have pointed out that there are a few infelicitous instances of describing a category that I consider to be inappropriate regarding the reality of educating and not consistent with other disclosed categories. For example, "being true to decisions regardless of their consequences" (Van Resnsberg and Landman, 1988: xxix). A commitment to choices, values and beliefs is beneficial, but a submissive,

docile acceptance instead of a willing obedience is not. During the time I was teaching these ideas, I found that the wording needed to be changed and perhaps a better wording for describing unconditional commitment is as follows: “being committed to but not enslaved by ... “ (Schmidt, 1973:21).

I believe Suransky-Deker’s (1998) claim that there is an antagonism between Langeveld’s theoretical pedagogy and Pretoria’s fundamental pedagogics is false. For example, it seems to me that if the categories of each were expressed, in a common language, say in English, and compared, they would be indistinguishable. As already noted, in many cases the analyses of the Pretoria faculty are an elaboration of many of the essences disclosed by Langeveld.

In Suransky-Dekker’s (1998) study, fundamental pedagogics is viewed in a more nuanced light than the earlier, more political criticisms of the early and late 1980’s; therefore, a more intensive and detailed consideration of her characterizations of fundamental pedagogics follows.

A closer look at Suransky-Dekker’s characterizations of fundamental pedagogics

The earlier criticisms of fundamental pedagogics were permeated with political rhetoric that often had a hostile undertone. Seldom was there a criticism directed to the findings of fundamental pedagogics with the exception of

pedagogical authority that then was defined as meaning an authoritarian instead of *an authoritative* adult-child relationship.

Suransky-Dekker's (1998) study provides a very useful perspective on fundamental pedagogics by viewing it as the result of transferring Langeveld's theoretical pedagogy to South Africa where it was interpreted and shaped to fit into apartheid education. Even though this claim is questionable and will not be explicitly considered, it allows us to use Langeveld's pedagogy as a yardstick for critically comparing fundamental pedagogics to his theory. This will enable us to see clearly that the two "theories" are essentially the same even though it can be expected that the essences common to them would take on slightly different nuances in meaning without distorting or destroying them in accordance with one's ideologies, beliefs, etc.

Suransky-Dekker (1998: 11) claims that:

... [since fundamental pedagogics can be traced to the work of Langeveld, there appears to be a puzzling contradiction between the meaning Langeveld's theory took on in Holland (framed in a liberal and humanistic context) and South African fundamental pedagogics (framed in a racist apartheid education context).

And a few pages later (1998:18) she refers to chapter five of her study in which she claims to have established that

(i) fundamental pedagogics was not a South African

invention, but that nonetheless (ii) Langeveld's theory was used to legitimize it as it took on different political, philosophical and educational meaning in the South African context, and that (iii) the increasingly divergent context of ethnic-nationalist imperatives in South Africa led fundamental pedagogics to assume a meaning much at odds with its Dutch roots.

In the above quotation the word "theory" is interpreted by Suransky-Dekker to mean prescription for practice when in fact it means a disclosure and description of essential structures of or preconditions for the act of bringing a child up to adulthood, i.e., it is a scientific matter and is not concerned with a post-scientific particularization of these essences in terms of some or other doctrine, hierarchy of values, cultural/political context, etc. Consequently, the disclosed essences in Langeveld's theoretical pedagogy and in fundamental pedagogics have the same meaning – they disclose and describe the same phenomenon of educating a child and there is no "puzzling contradiction" or "being at odds with its Dutch roots". This meaning of "theory" as a science presupposes a phenomenological bracketing (e.g., of a liberal and humanistic or a racist apartheid education or any other). It is in these post-scientific frames that a "surprising contradiction" might arise but not in the phenomenological descriptions of

Langeveld and fundamental pedagogics. Also, for these essences, there was no need for fundamental pedagogics to use Langeveld's theory to legitimize itself as a post-scientific prescriber of policies of any kind; this matter is not what it is or claims to be. Indeed, this type of confusion is at the core of almost all criticisms of fundamental pedagogics. It is difficult to see how Suransky-Dekker's narrative regarding the "distortion" of Langeveld's pedagogy by fundamental pedagogics would be possible without conflating the scientific and the post-scientific.

... [T]he problem with Langeveld's theory for the South African context at that time is that—if adopted unconditionally—it would have signified a departure from religious doctrine in favor of an essentially atheist and phenomenology based theory of education. Langeveld had suggested that instead of looking to religion for guidance in a scientific study of what does (but also what *should*) happen when children are raised, we should acknowledge the existence of a pedagogical reality which can be scientifically captured in pedagogy as an autonomous and practical science. This pedagogic reality contained a set of norms which preceded any moral or religious norms with which parents could identify. Hence, it was a field of interest which was related to social and human sciences but was indeed also seen as an autonomous field with

objectives and assumptions which were distinctly pedagogical (Suransky-Dekker, 1998:170).

Both Langeveld's and fundamental pedagogics' theory are concerned with disclosing the essential structures of educating and not with whether their findings conform to or deviate from any particular doctrine because any matter of doctrine is one of the many things being bracketed.

But what did the Pretoria faculty of education actually "copy" from Langeveld? It was his suggestion that the phenomenon of education could and should be studied by having its point of departure in this reality itself instead of in other perspectives such as a psychological one in as much as this autonomous educative reality precedes any theory of psychology.

Langeveld's idea of pedagogic autonomy offered a solution to [post world war Dutch] ... parents who looked for non-religious moral guidelines when raising their children. His research directed their search to distinct pedagogic norms that could replace the guidelines that had been offered by religious doctrines. At the same time, those parents who felt comfortable with religion ... could also now rest assured in the knowledge that their actions could be sanctioned not only by their religion but also in a 'neutral' and 'scientific' way.

(Suransky-Dekker, 1998:170-171).

And:

Whereas Langeveld's pedagogy affirmed different religious and ideological diversity in a society that had rejected totalitarianism in favour of social democracy ..., fundamental pedagogics affirmed apartheid in a society which was politically dominated by those who had adopted totalitarianism framed in a CNE mode (1998:184).

Hence:

The arrival of Langeveld's theory in South Africa ... came at a very opportune time. The timing was perfect, as it presented Afrikaners with the opportunity to develop educational thinking in such a way that their long-cherished ideal of CNE could be implemented. What was needed was an academic justification for CN, especially in the field of teacher education, as teachers now needed to be groomed in a new CNE mode (1998:169).

It is unfortunate that this dubious narrative of the "timeliness" of the transfer of Langeveld's pedagogy from The Netherlands to South Africa in order to justify academically the policies of Christian National Education (CNE) under apartheid has, in my opinion, become an indelible part of the history of Langeveld's pedagogy in that fundamental pedagogics is characterized in it as a political deviation from his pedagogy (see Bos', 2011:343 quotation from the above claim by Suransky-Dekker).

Fundamental pedagogics (as is Langeveld's theoretical pedagogy) is limited to an essence analysis of (i.e., preconditions for) an educative situation to occur anywhere at any time irrespective of the ideological, religious or other commitments of an educator. Therefore, neither Langeveld's pedagogy nor that of fundamental pedagogics can affirm any particular religious, political or other post-scientific matter. After all, if educating as upbringing is a phenomenon that occurs universally among human beings, then any ideology cannot be an essence or precondition, but the fact that there must be *one or another* ideology directing it is essential. For this reason pedagogical norms (i.e., essences) are necessary but not sufficient for educating to occur. My final comment is on Suransky-Dekker's (1998) comparison of the meaning of "self" in Langeveld's pedagogy and in fundamental pedagogics. This is another example of the conflation of a "scientific" and "post-scientific" perspective:

It becomes clear that whilst the self in fundamental pedagogics looks—at first glance exactly like Langeveld's self and even explicitly claims to refer to an individual self, its contextualization in Christian National Education policy and apartheid politics effectively made that an impossibility. Instead, fundamental pedagogics implies the existence of an ethnic-nationalist and collective self. This has tremendous consequences for education, as the emphasis shifts from raising an individual and unique child (Langeveld's idea) to raising

a child whose identity is pre-fixed in ethnic-nationalist style as implied in fundamental pedagogics (1998:201).

The fundamental ground of the idea of self that appears in fundamental pedagogics and in all part-perspectives is an expression of an existential-phenomenological philosophical child anthropology that reveals a child as being-in-the-world who, as intentionality, simultaneously and reciprocally is open for and directed to the world. These two moments of intentionality are seen as related to Langeveld's notion that a child is dependent on and committed to being educated (openness as receiving meaning from) and wanting to be someone him/herself (directedness as giving meaning to). An individual as responsible freedom also permeates the Pretoria pedagogical literature and is especially evident in an orthopedagogical situation, specifically a pedotherapeutic one, where a concrete, unique individual in a problematic educative situation is in the foreground. On the level of fundamental pedagogics (i.e., on a scientific level), the concrete nuances that particularize these anthropological categories are "open" (i.e., context and content unspecified) and remain inert until they are enlivened by a particular philosophy of life, doctrine, etc. (post-scientific level).

Fundamental pedagogics is accused of prescribing non-essentials such as an excessively authoritarian adult-child educative relationship or legitimizing apartheid education that really amounts to Black schooling under apartheid.

Black schooling was instituted before fundamental pedagogics took form, and what authoritarian government needs a justification for or legitimizing *anything*? These policies reflect ideological prescriptions that fundamental pedagogics, as a science, was not prepared to offer and clearly was not its aim. Furthermore, even if it wanted to, it couldn't justify Black schooling at the time of apartheid simply because that schooling would be deemed as pedagogically inadequate; that is, it would not have met the demands of the pedagogical norms (essences) that are preconditions and guidelines for establishing and sustaining a pedagogical adult-child relationship and that also can serve as criteria for evaluating the pedagogical quality and permissibility of any particular instance of "educating". They also can be used to pedagogically evaluate a particular doctrine of educating such as pragmatism, communism and more (see De Vries, 1985).

In the following section I provide commentary on Hoadley's (2018) view of fundamental pedagogics.

A closer view of Hoadley's characterizations of fundamental pedagogics

Hoadley's (2018:57) brief summary of these early criticisms of fundamental pedagogics follows:

It was argued that it was inaccessible and mystifying (Reagam,, 1990); not amenable to rational challenges and critical scrutiny ((Parker, 1981; Morrow, 1981); and inarticulate, conceptually confused and contradictory

(Morrow, 1981; Enslin, 1988). The most prominent critique, however, was political, the objection to the presentation of fundamental pedagogics as a 'science', 'a theoretical discourse from which the political has been exorcised' (Enslin, 1990:86). ... Enslin critiqued the notion of bracketing or epoche: 'By excluding the political as a legitimate dimension of theoretical discourse, fundamental pedagogics offers neither a language of critique nor a language of possibility' (1990:78).

This concern of Enslin's that the political is excluded from the findings (essences) of fundamental pedagogics is precisely what the Pretoria faculty was trying to accomplish and, in fact, is evidence that bracketing was successful. The political is a legitimate dimension of educational discourse but this is a post-scientific matter. Unfortunately such unfounded criticisms were prevalent.

Hoadly (2018) takes a curriculum perspective on fundamental pedagogics and political characterizations are less in the foreground. Also, instead of referring to a so-called apartheid education in general, her focus is more directly on Black schooling at the time of apartheid.

With respect to the authoritarian teacher-student relation and the prevalence of rote learning and meaningless class participation, she notes the following:

Often this is attributed to the dominant philosophies underpinning apartheid education—Christian National Education (CNE) ... and the philosophy of 'fundamental

pedagogics'. ... Looking at the small number of empirical studies, I suggest the dominant classroom practices can be explained in relation to structural, material and cognitive resources and restraints facing black schools at the time which rendered policy programmes ineffective (2018:56).

Hoadley's suggestion that the authoritarian and rote learning aspects of Black education under apartheid were determined mostly by governmental political decisions seems to be more compelling than a variety of mostly assumed characteristics of fundamental pedagogics (Suransky-Dekker (1998). Indeed, from the beginning of the surge of criticisms, it was stated by Beard, Enslin & Morrow (1981:21) that "[t]his paper cannot be said to have shown that Pedagogics has an influence on educational policymaking and practice in this country" and, as Hoadely (2018:60) says, its influence probably was negligible and she states further:

If one sets aside the dominant political critique ... it is possible to interpret fundamental pedagogics in a different way Eliminating the political from the process of scientific consideration may arguably make subsequent reflection on the life-world and political and social action more meaningful (2018:59).

And yet the source of anger sometimes expressed seems to stem from the assumption that fundamental pedagogics is an underlying reason for and justification of Black schooling at that time.

And further on she says:

The understanding of knowledge or content in relation to fundamental pedagogics may in some ways explain its rejection on political grounds – it left out ‘real’, contextual, everyday knowledge, and was thus construed as apolitical, conservative and socially blind. Under apartheid, amongst liberal academics in a highly politicized environment where education was seen as key to liberation, this was anathema (2018:60).

And finally:

It is doubtful then that fundamental pedagogics fundamentally shaped and defined pedagogic practice under apartheid. Even in relation to teacher education, the more ideological aspects are more likely to have inhered in Christian National Education rather than fundamental pedagogics, and it could be the tight coupling of the two that generated more heat towards fundamental pedagogics than perhaps it warranted (2018:61).

In the above comments, Hoadely offers a less political appraisal of fundamental pedagogics and strongly suggests that the political critiques of it might have been undeserved. Even so, given that those involved in practicing fundamental pedagogics at Pretoria were embedded in the culture of Christian Nationalism and its educational policies, it is easy to assume that there must be a “tight coupling” of fundamental pedagogics and

Christian National Education (CNE). However, in order to do fundamental pedagogical studies, CNE (among other ideologies) must be bracketed and this bracketing keeps the two uncoupled. The “scientific” practice of fundamental pedagogics occurs only when bracketing or the epoche is operative.

A lack of keeping the methodological act of bracketing in mind when reading fundamental pedagogical studies seems to be at the core of misunderstanding what it does and doesn't have to offer practice. The phenomenon studied by fundamental pedagogics certainly is normative in at least two senses: the essences and structures of an adult-child educative relationship are preconditions for what *one must do* to give rise to and sustain this relationship and thus they are “norms” in the sense that they specify how an adult and *child should* interact; but it also is normative in the sense that this action is guided by a particular image of being adult. The specific contents of this image are provided by a particular ideology, view, etc. and *not* by fundamental pedagogics.

The reality of educating usually is approached as schooling in terms of some doctrine (e.g., Marxism, idealism, Christian Nationalism), i.e., with the bracketing disengaged. Without engaging bracketing, the reality of educating can be penetrated to its essences only haphazardly if at all. The phenomenological method, as described earlier, was designed to disclose and describe such essences. Also, the suspension of bracketing makes

it extremely difficult to distinguish educating (one type of positive forming) from positive forming in general.

Finally, there has been mention of science and post-science, of a theory *of* educating (as disclosing and describing essences phenomenologically) and a theory *for* educating (as ideologically prescribing policies and actions). A fundamental difference between these two pairings is that bracketing is engaged in the first and disengaged in the second. Many of the criticisms of fundamental pedagogics arise directly from conflating the two.

Closing comments

The criticism of fundamental pedagogics creates the impression that the faculty of education at Pretoria was strongly focused on defending and justifying apartheid education and their efforts were little more than a reflection of the religious and political agendas of Christian Nationalism. At first glance, the plausibility of these claims might seem to be obvious; after all, faculty members at Pretoria presumably were “good citizens” committed to the prevailing ideologies of their society.

In contrast to these claims and expectations, my first-hand experience with the faculty in 1980 is that they were engaged in trying to promote the study of educating as an autonomous science. The literature reporting their results disconfirms the above claims. In following the suggestion of Langeveld, Pretoria’s primary approach was the

phenomenological method that was designed to disclose and describe universal essences of the phenomenon of educating while, at the same time, temporarily “controlling” for any distorting influences from religious beliefs, political policies and many other preconceptions.

Two reasons why the universal essences resulting from Pretoria’s phenomenological studies (and Langeveld’s as well) cannot implicate any particular religious belief or ideology is that, in the first place, their method specifically tries to negate the potentially obscuring and distorting influences of particular ideological commitments, etc. in disclosing these essences, and, in the second place, the act of educating itself, as a universal human occurrence, must accommodate any number of ideologies and thus cannot prescribe any particular one—even though, as a normative activity educating must be directed by an image of what *ought* to be, as nuanced by a specific ideology of some sort.

As noted, many times in this paper, most of the criticisms of fundamental pedagogics conflate “theory” and practice, science and post-science, form and content, etc. These confluences mostly stem from a lack of understanding or a rejection of phenomenological bracketing. This can lead to criticizing fundamental pedagogics, e.g., for proposing a particular authoritarian teacher-student relationship, rote memorization, and meaningless learning, for committing to an explicit political perspective. Fundamental pedagogics is not in a position to propose any content to practice and

that is not its purpose. It does describe essences that can clarify practice for an educator because in an activity such as educating, in fact, essences offer an educator preconditions and thus guidelines for how to act in order for an educative adult-child relationship to even arise.

What should be examined and critiqued, if need be, is the adequacy of their descriptions of the essences or categories disclosed, their mutual coherences and, above all, the extent to which they seem to be an accurate expression of the reality of educating itself.

A possible answer to my beginning question of why there is this “discrepancy” is that I limit my evaluation of pedagogical findings *exclusively* to what was obtained while bracketing was engaged (the scientific/phenomenological), while most critics focus on the post-scientific issue of prescribing to practice where much of what was bracketed now must be used to nuance the meanings of the essences within a particular practice.

Everything considered, perhaps the greatest loss resulting from the arguable criticism of fundamental pedagogics is that generations were prevented from contributing to the study of educating as an autonomous science and to advancing our understanding of the nature of guiding a child to adulthood. Also it appears that books, theses, etc. have been relegated to gather dust on obscurely located library shelves. I find the phenomenological results of the Pretoria studies to be a treasure trove of insights, and it is a shame that they are denounced and even ostracized

almost exclusively because of doubtful political characterizations that have been pointed out. For all of the above reasons I have been and continue to be an unapologetic defender of the achievements in fundamental pedagogics at Pretoria..

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