

DRAFT
August 2024

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF NOT DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN POSITIVE FORMING WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AN ADULT-CHILD EDUCATIVE RELATIONSHIP®

George D. Yonge

INTRODUCTION

The study of education by college and university faculties of education in the U.S.A. is usually limited to studying the school as an educative institution with a primary focus on teacher preparation. Schools are created and designed as formal educative institutions in which credentialed professional teachers teach valued content to groups of children in classrooms. Thus, to gain theoretical and practical insight into the aspects and activities of schooling, faculty apply seemingly relevant theories and knowledge as compiled and interpreted by educational philosophy, educational psychology, educational sociology, etc. and, in doing so, they pursue the study of educative schooling as an applied field, which relies on these and **other** academic disciplines for designing and justifying its educative theories and practices through the eyes (perspectives) and criteria borrowed from these and other academic disciplines. Since a pedagogical (educational) perspective, with its *own* categories and criteria, has **not arisen** from this applied approach, and since the academic study of educative schooling is so prominent in the U.S.A., there is a resulting absence of such a pedagogical perspective, by which the essential meaning of “educating” is disclosed and sharpened. Thus, it is almost expected that there is

@ The following distinctions between forming (molding) and educating use the more detailed typology by C. G. de Vries (1986), *Orientation in fundamental educational theory*. Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers, pp. 21-26. The consequences and implications drawn are mine and not De Vries’.

an inclination to use the word and concept “education” to refer to such a diversity of matters that “educating” is used as a synonym for any positive and sometimes even negative forming. For example, it is common for “educate” to be used to mean “inform about”, “make aware of”, to refer to schooling, teaching, and learning of *any kind*, and much more.

To show if and/or how this broad usage stretches and distorts its original meaning, and covers over and obscures its essential structures, requires an insightful understanding of the primordial nature or essences and structures of the event of educating so that these insights can be expressed as categories which can be used as criteria for precisely evaluating these obscuring influences. But where does one find this primordial occurrence of educating?

As noted above, the main thrust of the scholarly study of education in the U.S.A. is focused on educating as it occurs in schooling, and even though the essential structures of educating are obscured and even hidden in non-essential ways, they must be present for schooling to be an educative institution rather than, e.g., a trade school, which has essentially different teaching, learning, and aim structures than educative schooling. And even though empirical studies of educative schooling provide valuable information and knowledge of what is found there, an empirical approach, as a focus on what *is*, does not identify what *must be* (the essentials). A genuine pedagogical (educative) perspective is possible only by using its own categories and criteria which are rooted in the essential structures of a primordial event of educating, which are given with being human and is not created but lived. Thus, the event educative schooling is not given with human existence and is designed to serve and supplement the already existing event of educating as upbringing.

Indeed, there has been a search for a structure or reality which is given with being human **and** which makes this creation of educative schooling possible. It is found that it is the spontaneous, intuitive human reality of family educating, as upbringing, which is the source or foundation of formal, planned, *educative* schooling.

As is seen in De Vries' typology of positive and negative influences which change human beings, considered in more detail in the next section, educating is a special kind of positive forming which **only occurs within** an adult-child relationship aimed at accompanying a child to proper adulthood, at which time it ends. That is, this is nothing other than **educating as upbringing**, which also is the etymological root meaning of the Latin, *educae*, from which the English word education is derived. When a society becomes too complex and intricate for parents or families to teach their children what that society requires of participating adults, educative schools are designed to fill this gap, and are placed on a child's path from childhood to adulthood. This adult-child (teacher-pupil) educative relationship implements the *sane* essential educative/upbringing structures which occur informally, intuitively at home, in more formal and planned ways at school. This means that the educative foundation of the educative nature of schooling is the essential structures of primordial educating/upbringing in the family. Hence, the broad range of meanings given to "educating" obscures and hides its essential meaning at home and in school and, thus currently, the concept "education" does not lend itself as a category for essence illuminative and precise thinking about educating as a special and existentially necessary adult-child educative relationship.

The origin, or primordial appearance of educating in human existence is the birth of a child, and has been studied for many decades overseas, as the point of departure for studying the informal upbringing of a child in the family **and** its formalized reconstitution in educative schooling, with a method for disclosing and describing its essences by trying to neutralize any obfuscating assumptions, beliefs, theories, etc.

The phenomenological method is designed to disclose or uncover the essences and structures of any experiential occurrence, e.g., educating, and I use these essences/structures in what follows (ess georgeyonge.net/node/151).

Since no child is born an adult, and he/she needs considerable support and guidance to become one, an adult-child relationship of educating, as upbringing, rearing, parenting is an existential necessity for a child to be humanized and taught to be a full-fledged

adult, but schooling is not an existential necessity although, as noted above, in complex societies, educative schools are established to complement and complete family educating by teaching children skills, dispositions, life contents, which most parents cannot teach, and which are needed to actively participate in society; indeed, in “Home schooling”, a parent *does* teach his/her child required curriculum content without his/her child attending school, which illustrates that school attendance itself is not an essence of educating in its primordial meaning.

DE VRIES’ TYPOLOGY OF INFLUENCES

There are two main types of influence: (1) physical, biological, emotional, social, cognitive **growth, maturation, and decline**, called *human development*; and (2) positive and negative influences of the entire natural and cultural worlds, called *forming*, which give human development directions and nuances. In what follows, my focus is on forming and not on human development itself, because my concern is with some theoretical and practical confusions which arise when positive forming and educating are conflated.

Following DeVries’ typology, forming refers to the circumstances, events, and influences from the entire environment which shape a person’s becoming, and which result in the quality of his/her being human. The total environment includes the positive and negative formative influences from people, animals, and things in both the natural and the socio-cultural worlds, and which occur over the span of one’s life. In addition, some of these influences are deliberate or incidental, and are purposeful or aimless.

Negative forming refers to influences which have a detrimental effect and include influences from the environment, friends, literature, movies, etc. This negative forming is intentional when someone deliberately influences someone to do wrong, or incidental when someone is unintentionally or incidentally influenced detrimentally by someone, by reading an article in a magazine, by watching a television program, etc.

A person also encounters events and influences which are beneficial and promote the favorable course of his/her becoming. This

lifelong, positive forming includes all positive influences from the world of nature and the socio-cultural human world; important here is the fact that a person always gives meaning to and deals with these influences and, thus, is an active participant in and is responsible for what he/she makes of these influences (their potentialities and limitations).

In *contrast* to the above examples of *lifelong* positive and negative forming, ***educating is an existentially necessary instance of positive forming which only occurs within an adult-child relationship (situation) with the aim of accompanying and supporting a child in becoming a morally independent, responsible adult, at which time educating/upbringing is superfluous and ends.*** (Of course, in educating, as one kind of positive forming, an educator must always act in consideration of a pedagogic implications of a child's developmental level, e.g., toddler, adolescent).

For someone who views educating as including lifelong teaching and/or learning activities which occur anywhere and irrespective of any relationship, but primarily within the context of schooling, and who, thus, might be inclined to consider educating to mean *any* occurrence of positive (and for some, even negative) forming, the above delimitation of "educating" to an adult-child supportive, accompanying relationship *for the sake of* a child's becoming an adult, might be too restrictive, if not arbitrary. As is evident in DeVries' typology, educating is *one kind* of positive forming, the essential structures of which *do not* extend to *all* kinds of positive forming, which is precisely the justification for this delimitation.

For a child, as not yet an adult, there is a distinction between positive forming which occurs *within* and *outside* an adult-child educative relationship/situation. That is, both a child and an adult are positively formed outside an adult-child educative relationship, i.e., events and actions which bring about changes for the better in the lives of both, such as movies, television, literature, peer groups, and the natural and cultural environments in general, but **it is only a child who can be positively formed educatively.**

This is because educating is a *special kind* of positive forming.

Thus, the positive influence of one child on another, a child's positive contribution to an adult's way of living, one adult's contribution to another adult's potentialities and becoming, as well as the positive influence of interacting with or caring for pets and animals, etc. all occur *outside an adult-child educative relationship and are not examples of educative forming* (educating). The aim of an educative event is *limited to a relationship within which an adult supports and accompanies a child to become adult via positive forming*. An adult, as already adult, is not in an educative (i.e., pedagogical) situation to be supported and accompanied to what he/she has already become; however, when he/she is supported and accompanied by another adult to become a more "refined" adult, he/she is in an adult-adult andragogical relationship/situation. Furthermore, formative accompaniment is a *lifelong* matter which includes positive, caring accompaniment of the elderly who are then in a gerontological situation and not a pedagogical (educative) or andragogical one.

Often, the formative *results* which occur within and outside an educative situation are indistinguishable and, thus, are equally desirable. Two children might learn the same woodworking skill with equal proficiency, but one has learned it on his/her own by trial and error, i.e., outside an educative relationship, while the other has learned it under the guidance of a high school woodshop teacher, i.e., in an educative relationship. In this comparison of successful, positive learning, being within or outside an adult-child educative relationship is not essential for learning to perform this concrete skill. This equivalence of the *resulting* learning effect does not neutralize the *essential* structural difference of being within and outside an educative situation. It is only a reminder that a positive learning effect is necessary but not sufficient for an educative situation to be. **What makes a positive formative influence "educative" is whether a child is in an educative relationship/situation with an accompanying adult.** In its primordial, essential meaning, "educative" modifies the *situational event* and not the result itself.

Negative forming and educating are incompatible because, in its root meaning and aim, educating must be a *kind of positive forming*. However, it is worth noting that "educational neglect", in

the sense of a neglectful adult-child relationship, is all too evident, and occurs within a situation/relationship which *fails* to adequately realize the essences of educating and, thus, is negative forming and not genuine educating.

A CONCISE OVERVIEW OF SOME RESULTS OF DECADES OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDIES OF THE PRIMORDIAL EVENT OF EDUCATING UNDERTAKEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA (see geogeyonge.net)

To label diverse instances of positive forming “educating” is to invite conceptual and practical confusion. Educating, as a necessary human event, comes into being, originates when a child is born and an adult establishes an educative relationship with the *purpose* of accompanying, assisting, and guiding him/her to live as an independently choosing and morally responsible adult *human being*. As repeatedly noted, this event is constitutive of and only **occurs within** an adult-child educative relationship. The original (i.e., primordial) educative event is constituted by a parent-child relationship in the family, and later a teacher-pupil *educative* relationship is established in school as a formalized, supplemental extension and completion of the original parent-child relationship. Thus, **the essential structures of *educative teaching* and *accompanying* at home and at school do not differ, even though in school they occur more systematically, formally, and less spontaneously than at home.**

Within any family or school educative situation, there are *intentional* and *incidental* educative actions. Intentional educative actions are purposeful, planned, and deliberate, and involve accepting a child’s approvable actions or, if necessary, correcting unacceptable ones by deliberately presenting a child with positive alternatives and values to encourage him/her to act acceptably. Incidental influencing includes a child’s conscious imitation of his/her educator and his/her spontaneous or incidental identifying with the adult and the notion of adulthood exemplified by his/her educator. However, a precondition for intentional and incidental educative action to occur within an educative relationship/situation

is the realization of a sequence of mutual interacting by which the adult-child relationship *at the core* of educating deepens from a mere being-by (association), via a being-with (encounter) to a being-for each other (engagement). These first three phases make an increase in mutual trust and understanding possible, which makes a child more receptive and involved in an adult's approving or correcting intervention (teaching), which then is followed by a return to associating and ending the sequence structures when the child periodically breaks away from associating and acts and chooses in an adult's absence.

Hence, **some essentials of educating are that it only occurs within a situation constituted by a special adult-child relationship of trust, understanding, and authority, which is characterized by a sequential rhythm of relaxation, intensification, intervention (e.g., by teaching), and relaxation by means of purposeful activities aimed at supporting and guiding him/her to normative adulthood. This educating is only realized through teaching and learning *within* this relationship.** In an incidental way, via a child's spontaneous identification with a trusted and understanding adult/educator, as a person, and intentional imitation of his/her example of being an adult, the adult/educator him/herself becomes educative *content* for a child within this situation.

The essences (categories) of educating can be used to constitute an *educative/pedagogical perspective* on other events of positive forming, and, by changing these categories to questions, they can serve as criteria for judging whether the categories (essences) of other occasions of positive forming meet the pedagogical criteria for being an educative (pedagogic) event, and why.

WHY CONFLATING BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT POSITIVE FORMING AND EDUCATING OBSCURE ACCESS TO THE PRIMORDIAL MEANING OF EDUCATING

Here I present a **thought** experiment indicating *why* the following four hypothetical examples, considered by many to be educative activities, mainly by unknowingly conflating positive forming and

educating. These examples are viewed in terms of a few criteria expressive of the above essential structures of educating, i.e., the primordial parent-/adult-child relationship formed with the aim of supporting and guiding a child to adulthood, by engaging in a sequence of mutual **activities**. (see georgeyonge.net/node/148 for access to a detailed discussion of the essences of each of these structures which are preconditions for an educative event).

In comparing each hypothetical example of positive forming with some pedagogical criteria expressive of the primordial (ontological) foundation of the event of educating (as upbringing), it is shown why each of the four hypotheticals do not qualify as an example of educating, *and* how the primordial meaning of educating is distorted (reconstituted) by insisting that each example is a matter of “educating”:

(1) During a playground pick-up softball game not involving any adults, a child spontaneously shows another child how to figure out his/her batting average. As a result, this child suddenly attained a new insight into and deeper understanding of fractions, proportions, etc. This learning result promotes his/her future classroom learning in this area of arithmetic, and even in daily life. In other words, this playground teaching-learning supplements this child’s future learning in educative and teaching situations in and out of school. Even though this instance of positive forming, which includes teaching and learning, is valuable and desirable, *at least two essentials for it to be an educative event are missing, i.e., an adult-child educative relationship and the aim of guiding the child in the direction of normative adulthood.* A child, as not yet an adult, cannot guide another child, or anyone, to where he/she is not yet. Thus, effective teaching and learning are necessary for educating but are sufficient **only** if they occur within an adult-child relationship directed to the child’s adulthood. Hence, a similar child-child episode is educative if, e.g., an adult/educator asks a child to teach another child something *and* that the adult/educator

takes pedagogical responsibility; then the episode becomes embedded in an adult-child event of educating.

Now, if a researcher assumes or believes that “educating” includes hypothetical episode 1, he/she has a distorted understanding of educating without being aware that his/her assumption or belief logically eliminates the **necessity** of an adult-child relationship, which changes the entire structure or form of educating, including its aim. Hence, the primordial meaning of educating is obscured.

(2) A child independently runs across a “how to” book on photography, studies it, and immerses him/herself in taking pictures. As an example of positive forming, this reading and experiencing possibly are preparing him/her for later systematic instruction in photography. Even so, this independent reading and experiencing do not occur within an educative relationship. There is *no adult-child educative relationship, or any other kind, there is no teaching (except, perhaps, metaphorically; neither a book nor experiencing “teach”, even though a child learns plenty from both), and the aim of helping him/her become adult is also absent*. Such independent learning is highly valued by most educators, especially since independent learning is an indication that a child is becoming or progressing in the direction of independent, responsible choosing and acting expected of an adult, but *it is not educative unless it occurs within an adult-child pedagogical relationship aimed at a sequential rhythm of activities which guide and support a child in his/her becoming adult*, e.g., as an assignment by a teacher, which then is evaluated in terms of the criteria derived from the essences of the pedagogical aim structures.

A researcher who believes this episode is an example of and, thus, a source of insight into educating, in fact, is reducing educating to positive learning, and this obscures everything pedagogical. In this hypothetical episode, learning (without teaching) is too broad and decontextualized a category for illuminating much about the fundamental nature of educating.

(3) A child teaches an adult a procedure or provides information which is relevant and valuable to an aspect of this adult's work performance. Again, *teaching and learning are involved, but there is no adult-child pedagogical relationship. (even though there is a child-adult one), and the aim of the teaching is not to support and help an adult become what he/she already is.* As in example (1), educating is reduced to teaching-learning, and is an impoverished focus for gaining fundamental insight into the primordial, essential nature of educating.

(4) A schoolteacher begins an advanced degree program of study in a School of Education at a University. This course of study involves teaching and learning, independent study, research, etc., but *it is not an educative situation.* This is *not an adult-child pedagogical relationship but an adult-adult andragogical one* which, in many regards has a structure which parallels, while differing qualitatively from the pedagogical—e.g., the relationship, sequence, activity, and aim structures. However, *the aim is the further cultivation of this adult's adulthood,* in this case the development and fostering of his/her professional potentialities. This kind of positive forming is better characterized as “higher or advanced learning” than “higher education” or even “adult education”. Thus, here there is learning and teaching within an adult-adult andragogical relationship of higher learning, but not an adult-child one; also, the aim of accompanying a child to adulthood is missing.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the context of positive forming, it is **only** the supportive teaching and related learning activities occurring *within* a special parent-/adult-child relationship and aim of supporting a child to become an adult, which constitute the primordial occurrence of educating as upbringing (parenting).

When one's primary focus is on the academic study of the formal nature of the teaching and learning in school, there is a tendency to label the primordial occurrence of family educating “parenting”,

and to separate it from what occurs in school; this hinders seeing the continuity of the *educative relationship/event which begins* with parenting and *continues* more formally through educative schooling. That is, family upbringing is the educative foundation of formal schooling. Educating has essential relationship, sequence, activity, and aim structures, and their essences or categories constituting these structures make possible a full-fledged pedagogical perspective on educating and, thus, on the *educative* nature of schooling. In this study, I have used this perspective, (i.e., its categories/criteria) as has De Vries in his typology, to distinguish educating from other instances of positive forming.

It is important and relevant to emphasize that an essence is a characteristic which makes something (e.g., educating as upbringing) what it is, and which makes it distinguishable from other phenomena. In this light, by using a few of the essences of educating (categories) as criteria, it is easy to see how and why an understanding of educating and its essences become attenuated and obscured as various instances of positive forming are then conflated with it. For example, combining an adult-adult andragogical and a child-child positively formative situation with the primordial adult-child pedagogical one and claiming are examples of educating, explicitly negates the necessity for the special adult-child relationship because, in this combination, there are relationships which do not include or require the adult-child one inherent to genuine educating. Also, the aim of guiding/accompanying a child to adulthood is neutralized or obscured because an adult is no longer a child on his/her way to adulthood, and a child is not capable of guiding another child (or anyone) to a destination (adulthood) which he/she has not yet attained. The most evident commonality to which the four instances of positive forming considered in this paper are reduced to “learning something positive/beneficial”. There is no justification for calling any combination of these episodes of positive forming “educating”. If one does study such a combination in the name of educating, one is blinded to the essences of educating and is led to conceptual and practical coAnfusion regarding the reality of educating in its primordial sense.

As one small member of the family of positive forming, the humanizing and individualizing, and socializing effects of educating, as essential conditions for being human, make other kinds of positive forming more accessible as possibilities. That is, of all instances of positive forming, educating, as upbringing, is *the most primordial or fundamental*.

Theoretically, essences as categories are illuminative means of thinking about the nature of educating and of disclosing additional essences. Practically, these essences are guidelines for what must be done to educate. These essences also are useable as criteria for evaluating the quality of actualizing these essences in practice. Without them, there is no basis for an *educational/pedagogical perspective on educating* for identifying inadequacies in realizing essences in practice, and then correcting them. Without them, one becomes limited to searching the decontextualized findings of psychology, etc., and trying to apply them to an educative situation, such as schooling, or even parenting, from the outside. Our literature shows that this strategy is not very effective, primarily because an educative perspective for judging their pedagogical acceptability for applying them to practice is absent from this literature. In other words, without *pedagogical categories*, the academic study of educating cannot stand as an authentic academic discipline, mainly because it must rely on categories borrowed from academic disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology.

The *choice* is between studying educating as an applied field with borrowed categories or studying educating as a full-fledged academic discipline with its own categories. The *decision* is ours!