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Philosophies of Education and their futures, in South Africa

Abstract

Philosophy of Education in South Africa during the latter half of the 20th century was characterised by three ideological strands. The first was known as 'Fundamental Pedagogics', the second 'Liberalism', and the third 'Liberation Socialism' (i.e., Marxism/Freire). When apartheid formally ended in 1994 these strands lost their impetus and faded from educational debates, arguably because of the disappearance of apartheid itself, as the locus relative to which these ideological strands positioned themselves. This paper characterises these three positions and some of their major proponents and ideas, and then present an overview of where philosophy of education in South Africa is now, nearly 30 years after apartheid. I suggest that since 1994 the strong, competing philosophical and ideological commitments that informed philosophy of education during apartheid have significantly dissipated, and have not been meaningfully replaced. Instead, education policy and curriculum are now arguably underpinned by neo-liberal concerns, and the results have been, and continue to be, an unmitigated disaster for schooling in South Africa. Part of the reason for this is because philosophy of education is much diminished, and no longer directly meaningfully contributes to, and informs, educational discourse, policy, teacher training and curriculum in South African schooling.

Keywords

African Philosophy of Education; South Africa; Post-apartheid; Fundamental Pedagogics; Liberalism; Liberation Socialism;

Introduction

Philosophy of Education in South Africa is, to paraphrase Pirandello, the Italian dramatist (somewhat badly), 'a character in search of an author'. What I mean is that, since the publication of Oberholzer's *Inleiding in die Prinsipiële Opvoedkunde* (1954) [*Introduction to the Principles of Education*], there has been an ongoing contestation over what Philosophy of Education is, and what it should do, in South Africa. During and, I contend, since the end of apartheid there has been, and continues to be, a 'search' for a Philosophy of Education. To paraphrase Eminem (even more badly), the rather small and somewhat fragmented Philosophy of Education community in South Africa, would like, very much, for the 'real' Philosophy of Education, the 'real' author of the character, to stand up, please. To explain the reasons for this fragmentation and contestation is the intent of this paper, which gives a sketch of what has happened in the past and the challenges we now confront. Philosophy of Education in South Africa during the latter half of the 20th century has been characterised by three philosophical positions, each with significant ideological implications. The first was known as 'Fundamental Pedagogics', the second 'Liberalism', and the third 'Liberation Socialism' (i.e., Marxism/Freire).[1] When apartheid formally ended with the transition to democracy in 1994 these strands lost their impetus and faded from educational debates, arguably because of the disappearance of apartheid itself, as the locus relative to

which these ideological strands positioned themselves. In the spirit of intellectual history, this paper characterises these three positions, particularly Fundamental Pedagogics, given its dominance, and some of their major proponents and ideas, and then it presents an assessment of where Philosophy of Education in South Africa is now, nearly 30 years after apartheid. As the paper will show, especially during apartheid, political ideas and competing ideologies concerning education were often inseparable from the philosophical positions which underpinned them

Before the paper does that though, it is necessary to explain why the focus is on the latter half of the 20th century particularly. Essentially this is because of the National Party victory in 1948 which enabled the consolidation of right-wing White power to formally institute the policy of apartheid (literally Afrikaans for 'apartness'). This would enable Whites to exert firm control over the majority Black population, particularly in terms of education and labour, and supposedly ensure their separate development. A key legislative dimension of this control was the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Act 47 of 1953).[2] This act created a nationally controlled, segregated education system that was especially designed to direct Black people into unskilled, or semi-skilled labour (vital for a mining and agrarian economy). However, the important backdrop to this is that the idea of 'South Africa' per se, only came into formal existence in 1910, with the formation of the Union of South Africa (and eventually a Republic in 1961). Before this 'South Africa' as a unified country with a distinct geography and some sense of collective national identity did not exist (and the question of a 'national' identity today is still a complex one). One implication of this was that before 1910 the control of education was dispersed across the Cape and Natal colonies, and the Transvaal and Orange Free State Republics, who operated independently and largely autonomously from each other though each, in various ways, instituted formal education initiatives, particularly for Whites (Lawson, 2023; SAHO, 2023).[3] The education of Black people before 1953, was largely managed and controlled by various church missionary societies (with varying degrees of state aid) who had operated in Southern Africa since the late 18th century (Behr, 1988; Lawson, 2023). Part of the rationale for the control of Black education at the state-level was the 1951 Eiselen Report (1951), commissioned by the apartheid government. The commission, chaired by W. Eiselen, an anthropologist, was premised on the fundamental assumption that Blacks and Whites would receive a separate education to prepare them for the separate roles they would play in South African society. One significant term of reference guiding the commission was the "formulation of the principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitude, and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration" (Eiselen, 1951, p. 7). As I will show, this position lent itself well to a particular use of phenomenology as allowing one to discern a supposed distinct racial 'essence', which was the basis for Fundamental Pedagogics, and a justification for separate education.

There are many complex reasons why the National Party government wanted state-control of education. One, discussed in detail in the Eiselen Report (1951) itself, was the "intense involvement" of missionary schools in the education of Blacks (Behr, 1988, p. 34). This involvement was uncoordinated and contested, and the presence of both Protestant and Catholic mission schools meant that different conceptions of education, with different aims, existed. Certainly, the Nationalists worried that a Christian education, without proper state oversight, could lead Blacks to aspirations for equality with Whites. As Hendrick Verwoerd said so chillingly in 1954, "The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour" (quoted in Behr, 1988, p. 36). Because these mission schools largely depended on state aid the withdrawal of this aid effectively closed them. Within four years after the implementation of the Bantu Education Act virtually all 7000 mission schools had closed, or been

handed over to the Bantu Education Department, with the notable exception of Catholic schools (Collins & Gillespie, 1994).[4]

Another significant reason for the state to introduce Bantu Education was the desire to protect and elevate the White proletariat and ensure the reproduction and differentiation of a Black working class. From the 1950s monopoly capitalism and large-scale industrialisation began to emerge in South Africa, necessitating a more nationalised and effectively controlled standard of segregated schooling and labour. This was underpinned by the desire to alleviate the ongoing problem of poor Whites; a feature of South Africa already noted in 1886 by the Dutch Reformed Church Synod. Various causes are attributed to the existence of this poverty, such as poor education, Rinderpest - a highly infectious viral cattle disease, traditional Dutch land inheritance practices, the Anglo-Boer War, and low wages, but there were a "multitude of different factors, both exogenous and endogenous" (Fourie, 2007, p. 1275; See also Fleisch, 1992, 1995). The 1932 five volume report, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission* (Grosskopf et al., 1932) had recommended that strict racial segregation, better education and better economic opportunities and institutional support for Whites would alleviate this poverty. This was especially necessary to prevent Whites from competing for the same wages as Blacks, which would mean their own living standards would be equivalent to the Blacks they were supposedly superior to. The consequences of this segregation and White empowerment were, for example, "rigid comprehensive racial division in the gold mining industry, within which wages earners of equivalent skill were divided on racial lines into occupations with different functions, income and status" (Cross & Chisholm, 1990, p. 45).

Partly what also informed this segregationist, essentialist thinking (and which informed Fundamental Pedagogics) was the late 19th early 20th century theory of social Darwinism which, in the South African context, was intertwined with religion. Afrikaners had, by the mid-20th century, come to see themselves, "rather awkwardly" as Terreblanche puts it, as one of God's chosen people (2002, p. 52). Before the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) White Afrikaner poverty was perceived as religiously self-inflicted, as a punishment for sin, because one had not been 'elected'. However, after the devastation of the Second Anglo-Boer War, where the British used a scorched earth policy on Afrikaner farmlands, and concentration-camp like internment of Afrikaner men, women and children, Afrikaner poverty became an ideological issue that combined nationalist and religious sentiment with racial science (Terreblanche, 2002). Afrikaners where White, a people ordained by God, and had suffered cruelly at the hands of the British. Thus, the religious justification for why some Afrikaners were poor fell away, and combined with a collective sense of 'manifest destiny' and a need to eradicate White poverty (especially after the Carnegie Commission) the creation of a racial segregated, hierarchically ordered society was justified.

A concrete, powerful example of this ordering was the Bantu Education Act legislation implemented by the Nationalist government in the 1950s to both solidify and reproduce this segregationist society, by ensuring Black people received a nationally controlled, inferior education to Whites, to create the conditions for "stabilizing a black urban underclass of semi-skilled labourers" (Cross & Chisholm, 1990, p. 56). To reiterate just what this meant I quote again from Verwoerd, who infamously said, in his 1954 Senate address on the ratification of the Bantu Education Act, the following, "What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd… Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live" (quoted in Glass, 1957, p. 1317). Education thus became one of the central and significant ideological battlegrounds for the justification and contestation of apartheid, and these battles were framed around distinct philosophical positions, which I will now discuss.

<u>Fundamental Pedagogics</u>

Fundamental Pedagogics was used in the service of apartheid, to justify what had become the official educational policy, Christian National Education, to ensure the preservation of Afrikaner identity. The idea of a Christian National Education emerged among Afrikaners living in the Cape Colony in the 19th century, as the British colonised it (MacMillan, 1967). The aggressive anglicisation of the Cape by Alfred Milner was perceived as a threat to the Afrikaner language and culture. This, along with the British abolishment of slavery in the Cape Colony in 1834 prompted what became known as 'The Great Trek', a large migration of Afrikaners away from the Cape to form what would become the Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The desire among Afrikaners for an education that would preserve their identity and language gained momentum in the 20th century, particularly after the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. This was formalised in 1939 through the creation of the Instituut vir die Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys van die Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge [The Institute for the Christian National Education of the Federation of the Afrikaans Culture Organisations] (Enslin, 1986a; MacMillan, 1967). This institute promoted separate schools with first-language instruction to preserve Afrikaner identity. Furthermore, other important aims of Christian National Education would be to "reveal the Christian Philosophy of life, Calvinistic beliefs and promote the principle of nationalism in education, i.e., the national ideal, traditions, religions, language or culture of each social group" (Cross, 1986, p. 186). This entailed the complete segregation of Blacks, who would receive an education and Christianisation that was to be commensurate with their inferior status in South African society. A further implication of this position would be the segregation of Whites in terms of schooling, according to their first language (either English or Afrikaans) and, to some extent, religious orientation. This was explained by J.C Coetzee, an important advocate for Christian National Education, in 1948, as follows: "We as Calvinistic Afrikaners will have our CNE schools: Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Jews, liberalists and atheists will have their own schools" (quoted in Cross, 1986, p. 186). Influential and politically well-placed individuals, such as Verwoerd (Minister of Native Affairs from 1950 and then Prime Minister until 1966 when he was assassinated), strongly supported the ideals of Christian-Nationalism, which became state policy from the 1950s onwards.

Christian National Education, as is evident, was a thoroughly racist and self-serving ideology underpinned by many historical and political fears and justifications which haunted, (and perhaps still haunt) Afrikaners. Fundamental Pedagogics emerged out of Christian National Education as a 'theoretical methodology' to give Christian National Education the guise of respectability; to find proper philosophical justifications for why it was necessary to segregate people according to race, work, religion, and language. Christian National Education needed a means to justify itself on 'scientific' grounds and, conveniently, Fundamental Pedagogics was described by its proponents as an "autonomous science" of education which could "yield 'universal truths'" that could provide this justification (Beard & Morrow, 1981a, p. i; See also Suransky-Dekker, 1998).[5] While Oberholzer's *Inleiding in die Prinsipiële Opvoedkunde* (1954) [*Introduction to the Principles of Education*] was an early work introducing the ideas in South Africa it was the widely prescribed book by Viljoen and Pienaar (1971), *Fundamental Pedagogics*, inflicted upon teacher-trainees from the 1970s onwards that brought it to prominence.

Fundamental Pedagogics was claimed to have been influenced by the work of the Dutch educator M.J. Langeveld, especially his *Beknopte Theoretische Pedagogiek* (1946) [*Concise Theoretical Pedagogy*], though Fouché (1982) points out that actual references to him are scant. While Langeveld's work was translated into German and Japanese, no English translation exists. Langeveld wrote this work after the Second World War, adopting Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology

into a pedagogy that would focus on the concrete, lived reality of children, and their formation through the educational process. He was primarily interested in using the phenomenological method to understand the pedagogical lifeworld of the child, "not only from a hermeneutic ontological perspective but also from the point of view of the child" (van Manen & Adams, 2014, p. 608). As I have mentioned, Langeveld's ideas were then taken up and significantly modified by various Afrikaans educationalists whose work would set the tone for the dominant approach to Philosophy of Education in South Africa, for much of the last half of the 20th century. I mentioned Oberholzer, Viljoen and Pienaar, but it was the prolific work of W.A. Landman that particularly influenced the development of what became known as 'Fundamental Pedagogics'.[6] The problem with this 'phenomenological pedagogy' is immediately evident to someone who has studied phenomenology. It is a deliberate mystification and distortion of the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Langeveld, and was used to befuddle generations of teacher-trainees with convoluted, impenetrably pseudo-phenomenological babble to disguise ideas that are often perfectly self-evident.[7] It amounts to what Frankfurt describes as 'bullshit' in that it is a "*deceptive misrepresentation… especially by pretentious word or deed* (2005, pp. 4; 10). The Fundamental Pedagogic books I have surveyed, in English and Afrikaans, are characterised by excessive verbiage, long and impenetrable sentences, plenty of hyphens, and liberally sprinkled with complex phenomenological terms developed by Husserl and Heidegger, which are rarely properly defined, or contextualised.[8]

Essentially Fundamental Pedagogics argued that, through using the phenomenology method, the Husserlian *epoché* or process of 'bracketing', one could discern a particular 'lifeworld' of a people. The preservation of that lifeworld was only possible through a certain kind of deliberate educational intervention, so-called 'pedagogic structures,' that would shape the child into the adult they were meant to be. Thus, the phenomenological method allowed one to discern the 'essence' of a people (*volk*), and so shape education to sustain that essence. For the Afrikaners this 'essence' included Calvinism, "fatherland, community, blood-ideology, history and tradition, mother tongue and education policy" (Landman quoted in Suransky-Dekker, 1998, p. 39). Evidently Afrikaner pedagogues were also able to discern the suitable lifeworld for the different Bantu tribes as well, and other races in South Africa, and thus rationalise that the 'lifeworld', the 'essence' of each race, should be kept pure and separate, and that certain races were 'objectively' superior to others.[9]

This philosophy, and its Christian-National underpinnings, had far-reaching implications, implicitly justifying, in part, the creation of 'homelands', mostly barren tracks of land allocated to different South African tribes; the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953 to ensure Black South Africans received a nationally controlled education that prepared them for menial, manual labour in the service of Whites and their Calvinistic God; and the creation of a few co-called 'Bush/Black' universities for the different racial categories of people who were not permitted to attend universities for Whites.[10] What is particularly impressive is how these Afrikaner pedagogicians managed to take a philosophy founded on atheistic grounds, Husserl considering himself an intellectual agnostic and Heidegger writing that philosophical "research is and remains atheism" (1985, p. 80), and to concoct both a deeply racist and also supposedly profoundly Christian justification for apartheid.[11]

However, Fundamental Pedagogics did not go unchallenged, as this paper will show. Suransky-Dekker (1998) perceptively argues that the dynamics of the Anglo-Boer wars re-emerged in the form of a pedagogic struggle between English-speaking White academics, and their universities, and Afrikaans-speaking White academics and their universities. The Afrikaans universities dominated the tertiary landscape, both in terms of influence and number, and because the various government-controlled 'Black/Bush' universities were populated with Afrikaner academics, and their curriculum was designed by the University of South Africa (UNISA), this ensured that Fundamental Pedagogics

was the official Philosophy of Education that many teacher-trainees were taught. This also applied to most (though not all) teacher training colleges in South Africa, whose highly prescriptive syllabuses were controlled by the Department of Education and Training (Suransky-Dekker, 1998; Parker, 2003). Tainted by its racist pedagogy, and its incomprehensible, to quote Fouché, "bad phenomenology" (1982, p. 165) Fundamental Pedagogics was, with the end of apartheid, rightly confined to the dustbin of history, lingering only vaguely now in the memories of those thousands of soon-to-be retired teachers who were unfortunately still exposed to it in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Liberalism

Liberalism was, in some sense, the 'official opposition' to Fundamental Pedagogics and associated strongly with the English-speaking universities, notably the Universities of the Witwatersrand, Natal, Rhodes and Cape Town. Before the National Party government passed *The Extension of University of Education Act, 1959*, barring Blacks from attending White universities entirely, and mandating the creation of Black universities, two of these universities, Witwatersrand, and Cape Town, operated as 'open' universities which meant admittance was based on academic merit only. Though Black students were admitted before 1959, they did not enjoy full equality with Whites in terms of access to certain university facilities (Murray, 1990). The passing of *The Extension of University of Education Act, 1959* was strongly criticized by the English universities, partly because it curtailed their autonomy in determining who they could rightly admit on academic aptitude alone. For much of the course of apartheid English-speaking universities, given their liberal influence, condemned it and thus, for example, the University of the Witwatersrand has a strong anti-apartheid struggle history (Shear, 2022).

Since these universities espoused a liberal philosophy to education that argued for individual autonomy and academic freedom, the end of apartheid heralded a victory for them, though it also meant that their nemesis was gone, and thus too, in some sense, the intellectual debate which had sustained this alternative tradition. While Christian National Education and Fundamental Pedagogics have their origins in close Dutch-Afrikaners relations and the Continental Philosophy tradition (e.g., Afrikaans academics often went to Holland or Germany to attain postgraduate degrees),[12] the liberal tradition was brough to South Africa in the 19th century through British colonisation efforts and significantly influenced, and continues to influence the ethos of the English-speaking universities. An interesting example of how these spheres of influence worked was clearly evident in Philosophy departments in South Africa in the 20th century. Afrikaans-speaking universities taught almost exclusively in the Continental tradition[13] and English-speaking universities in the analytic tradition.

There were also, significantly, some Afrikaner educationalists who were strongly influenced by the liberal tradition because they completed postgraduate studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. As Fleisch (1992) documents, this trans-Atlantic exchange occurred between 1914 and 1948, with nearly one hundred South African education students setting sail for New York. Teachers College was a major centre of various fields of education and included the likes of John Dewey as faculty. An important early educational Afrikaner liberal, who obtained his doctorate from Columbia University in the 1920s, was E.G. Malherbe, who was a strong advocate for an empirical approach to education. He was a significant, and somewhat controversial educational voice in South Africa in the first half of the 20th century because of his advocacy, which he based on empirical research, of bilingual schooling, in English and Afrikaans, for Whites (Fleisch, 1995). This position was perceived by the Nationalists as a deliberate attempt to destroy the Afrikaner *volk* and made him unpopular. He was relegated to the University of Natal as rector. An important qualification here is that the idea of 'liberalism' for much of the first half of the 20th century in South Africa still entailed segregationist thinking, elements of social Darwinism and Kipling's sense of the 'White man's burden'. We see these

positions explicitly endorsed in, for example, the letters of John Marquard, another Afrikaner who studied at Columbia, who was killed in action at the Battle of Amiens in 1918, and especially in the life and work of Jan Smuts (Fleisch, 1992; Morefield, 2014). Nonetheless, liberalism in South Africa came to be associated with a certain progressive attitude towards the Blacks, what Legassick described as "tender-mindedness" towards the natives (quoted in Cross, 1986, p. 188). Cross' work (1986) gives a succinct overview of the various political and economic liberal positions that emerged in South Africa in the course of the 20th century.

What brought a distinctive sense of a liberal Philosophy of Education, as well as liberation socialism, discussed in the next section, to the fore, both as critiques of, and meaningful alternatives to Fundamental Pedagogics, was the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The Soweto Uprising is described unambiguously by Terreblanche as "one of the most decisive events in South Africa's political and economic history in the 20th century" (2002, p. 308). It was led by Black school children in Soweto protesting the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in Black schools (see, for example, Hyslop, 1999). The heavy-handed and brutal government suppression of the Soweto Uprising, in which hundreds of school children were murdered by the state police, completely discredited the apartheid state, precipitating an inexorable crisis in government and education. While the liberal Philosophy of Education tradition was already present at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1972 because of Wally Morrow, and Steve Biko, an important early proponent, in some respects, of liberation socialism was active in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Soweto Uprising was arguably a catalyst for more vocal academic critiques of Fundamental Pedagogics (see Beard & Morrow, 1981b), and the development of alternative traditions.

One such tradition, especially prominent at the University of the Witwatersrand, was the influence of the 'London School' based at the London Institute of Education, associated with University College London. The 'London School' introduced the use of analytic philosophy, especially conceptual analysis, into the study of education (Ozoliņš, 2021). It was co-founded by Paul Hirst and Richard Peters and was very influential in the 1960s and 1970s. Hirst and Peters were also both committed to a liberal conception of education (White & White, 2022). Wally Morrow, who completed a Masters degree at the Institute in 1968, introduced the 'London School' to South Africa. A particularly important platform for the broader critique of education in South Africa, and the dissemination of ideas associated with the 'London School' was the journal *Perspectives in Education*. This journal was started in 1976 as the inhouse journal of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. Morrow was the first editor of *Perspectives in Education* (e.g., Morrow, 1989, 2009).[14] Another important contributor and defender of liberal education at the University of the Witwatersrand was Penny Enslin (e.g., Enslin, 1986b, 2014).

Liberalism is deeply antithetical to Christian National Education and Fundamental Pedagogics in numerous ways, arguing, for example, that education should allow for the full autonomous development of the individual, rather than instil a *volkish*, communal identity. Liberalism is optimistic about human potential, unlike Christian National Education which characterises human nature as sinful and fallen. Liberalism also promotes principles such as equality, intellectual freedom, democratic participation and personal and moral autonomy (Ashley, 1989). Furthermore, for Enslin, especially in the apartheid context, and with reference to her own work, the liberal position could offer a response to "injustice, nationalism, gender inequality and ideological hegemony" (2014, p. 91).

Liberation Socialism

Liberation socialism, or what Cross (1986, p. 186) calls "radical/neo-Marxist" Philosophy of Education, was the third ideological strand and for a time certainly dangerous to advocate for. After the Second

World War South Africa and the National Party were gripped with the same kind of McCarthyism that dominated the United States. In South Africa it was called '*die rooi gevaar*' (the red danger) and formed part of Cold War anti-communist propaganda. This 'danger' was further compounded by the then banned African National Congress and South African Communist Party, who had strong Soviet ties and Marxist sympathies, and because of the covert 'Border War' (1966-1990) South Africa fought in Namibia and Angola, at the pretext of preventing the spread of communism. What gave liberation socialism its impetus was, like liberalism, the 1976 Soweto Uprising. While this paper characterises liberalism and liberation socialism as separate ideology strands, following Ashley (1989) and Cross (1986), Enslin (2014) does mention that they shared certain important parallels. As I have discussed above, the Soweto Uprising was a major event in shifting the educational landscape and permitting a wider articulation of ideas that were critical of Christian National Education, Fundamental Pedagogics, and the National Party. Another significant tragedy was the death in 1977, in police custody, of Steve Biko, who was at the forefront of the Black Conscious Movement and a strong advocate for African socialism, a kind of heretical Marxism. An important and influential socialist liberation organisation that emerged in 1983 was the United Democratic Front which characterised itself as a federation and represented numerous anti-apartheid groups, including some education groups (Seekings, 2000). As is becoming increasingly evident in this paper, political ideas and ideologies became entangled with, and were reflected in philosophical positions concerning education.

Ashley (1989) offers a helpful survey of some of the early movements and important authors whose critique of South African society and education drew strongly from Marxist political economy. For example, the African National Congress produced a document is 1981 that stated that education "is related to the society as a whole through the system of production and the ideological and cultural structure" (quoted in Ashley, 1989, p. 46). The educator and priest Buti Thlagale (current Catholic Archbishop of Johannesburg) wrote in 1983 that "the present socio-economic system is responsible for the distorted Bantu education system. Education for blacks is geared towards serving the needs of capital" (quoted in Ashley, 1989, p. 46). An important initiative was the emergence, in 1985, of the People's Education movement. This approach to education drew inspiration from Freire's critical pedagogy (2000), arguing for an education that would promote critical consciousness and allow for full democratic participation. It was also anti-capitalist, and explicitly against the kind of individualism promoted by capitalist competition. People's Education wanted to realise "people's power" through wide spread and equal access to a "high level of education for everyone" (Molobi quoted in Ashley, 1989, p. 48).

Two very influential Marxist texts were Althusser's 1970 *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (2014) and Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1977). A significant South African collection was *Apartheid and Education* (Kallaway, 1984) whose aim was to explain the continuing instability of the education system in South Africa through Marxist political economy. Another important book was *The Right to Learn* (Christie, 1985) written as an introductory textbook framed around historical materialism concerning class, capitalism and education in South Africa. Arguably, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the birth of a new South Africa in 1994 there was little interest in adopting or pursuing a strongly Marxist-orientated Philosophy of Education and like its cousin, liberalism, liberation socialism faded away. The rise of postmodernism also contributed to this with some attempts made, especially by Philip Higgs, to develop a new pluralist conception of Philosophy of Education (L. Higgs, 1998).[15]

and their futures…

This overview gives some sense of what Philosophy of Education looked like in the last half of the 20th century in South Africa. It was evidently a contested and animated intellectual space because so much was genuinely at stake, and because, especially after 1976, different academics developed strongly defended philosophical positions against Fundamental Pedagogics. Education was being deliberately used as a tool of the apartheid state to perpetuate injustice, inequality, and racism, and people of good conscience could not let this go unchallenged. Since 1994 the strong, competing philosophical and ideological commitments that informed philosophy of education during apartheid have significantly dissipated. Instead, education policy and curriculum are now informed by neo-liberal concerns and increasing throughput and pass rates by any means, and this continues to be a disaster for schooling in South Africa. This, in spite of the various waves of well-meaning (but decidedly Eurocentric) curriculum reforms introduced since 1994, which Muller and Hoadley (2019) survey. While our education approach is meant to be underpinned by a human rights discourse, democratic citizenship and inclusive education, the reality is that our schooling system is highly prescriptive, technocratic, and meant to be skills driven. If you examine schooling and curriculum for the majority of the population, it would be an endorsement of the "banking-model concept of education" Freire is so critical and despairing of (2000, p. 71), or 'talk and chalk' as Muller and Hoadley (2019) suggest. Our entire school year culminates fanatically around, and is reduced to, the national matriculation pass rate (Grade 12), our school leaving certificate. The increase or decrease of this number, compared to previous years, is seen as an indication of the success or failure of the Department of Basic Education. However, as numerous commentators point out repeatedly, if the dropout rate of learners is considered, about 60% of learners who enrol in Grade 1 actually pass in Grade 12 (Cordeur, 2024; Govender, 2024). These dropouts contribute to South Africa's exceptionally high unemployment, currently at 32.9%, one of the highest in the world (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Thus, while the Department of Basic Education blusters on about its continuing success (Motshekga, 2023), it is also introducing a General Education Certificate which learners will receive if they leave school in Grade 9, thus tacitly acknowledging the significant dropout rate in schooling (Department of Basic Education, 2021; Jobson & Duncan, 2019). South Africa's university throughput rate is also appalling. Of 100 learners who start schooling only 14 will qualify for university, and of those 14 only 6 will get an undergraduate degree (Tomlinson, 2023). Public schooling in South Africa is beset with deeply entrenched societal and spatial inequalities, poverty, poorly trained and sometimes neglectful teachers, terrible school violence, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, gangs, one can go on and on. This had led important education commentators to describe South Africa's current education system as being in "complete ruins" (Tomlinson, 2023), or even "worse than it was under apartheid" (Chisholm, 2012, p. 81).

In the wake of this ongoing schooling disaster in South Africa it is pertinent to ask what philosophers of education in South African should be doing, and what they are doing. During apartheid, and especially after 1976, philosophy of education was characterised by animated intellectual debate. Education was guided powerfully by ideological and philosophical prejudices that emerged at a policy level, filtered through to universities and colleges, into teacher training and were then manifest in the schools. This, in turn, gave rise to strong critique and contestation and competing traditions. Nonetheless, the end of apartheid and the collapse of Fundamental Pedagogics left a significant vacuum, given its pervasive academic dominance and the long shadow the University of South Africa cast over many other tertiary institutions and teacher training colleges. Furthermore the 1990s (partly as a response, perhaps, to the dominance of Fundamental Pedagogics) saw the erosion of the disciplinary specific nature of Philosophy of Education, Sociology of Education and Psychology of Education. Instead, these disciplines were lumped into 'Education Studies' or 'Educational Theory' departments (L. Higgs, 1998). This kind of integration has done much to dilute the kind of philosophical rigour (and training) that was evident in the latter half of the 20th century concerning philosophy of education in

South African, and has contributed to its ongoing impoverishment. Another reason for the demise of the discipline was also arguably the advent of democracy itself. It seemed, in a sense, self-evident what the philosophical ideals would be that would underpin education, and the need to either promulgate them or contest them became less relevant and pressing. Two education policies also changed the kind of emphasis placed on teacher-training programs, directing them to become far more positivist and skills orientated. The first was the *Norms and Standard for Educators Act of 2000* (Department of Education, 2000) which was followed by the *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Qualification Act of 2011*, revised in 2015 (Department of Basic Education, 2015). In these Acts prescriptive, technicist, outcomes-based language dominates, with emphasis placed on applied skills and competences, and practical training for effective specialised subject teaching, particularly with respect to the Bachelor of Education degree. All the other education specific disciplines are amorphously gathered together as "foundations of education" (Department of Basic Education, 2015, p. 22) and given little emphasis.

Nonetheless, despite its diminishment, there have been two discernible trajectories since the end of apartheid that have influenced the discipline, one arguably giving rise to the other. The first, as I mentioned, was work notably by Philip Higgs in the late 1990s and early 2000s who began arguing for a postmodernist, pluralist approach to philosophy of education (for example P. Higgs, 1997, 1998). This was supplanted relatively quickly by the emergence of a more distinctive focus on developing an African Philosophy of Education, a move which was also mirrored by Philosophy departments in South Africa, which gradually began to focus more on African Philosophy. One could argue that postmodern theory and its attack on 'grand narratives' and defence of the multiplicity of 'truths' partly provided the opening for these developments. Thus, while African Philosophy of Education is still in its infancy, it is characterised, as Horsthemke suggests, by "promise" in the sense that while "African Philosophy of Education shares a range of concerns with Philosophy of Education elsewhere… there is a distinctive set of concerns in African Philosophy of Education, arising from particular historical and sociopolitical circumstances (2017, p. 696). Horsthemke's position here parallels my own, both in my teaching and research (Griffiths, 2024). Without question the future of philosophy of education in South Africa, for it to have a future, must reflect African values and lifeworlds, and how these pertain to education. Here I deliberately mean 'lifeworld' in its Husserlian sense, in terms of what a people believe about themselves, and their "socially, culturally or evolutionarily established" sense or meaning, particularly as it pertains to education (Beyer, 2022), and *not* in the sense it was abused by Fundamental Pedagogicians, to promote essentialising racial characterisation. However, I would go further and argue that contemporary African philosophy of education is, and should be underpinned by a *critical* phenomenology which allows for a "rigorous account of how contingent historical and social structures also shape our experience" (Guenther, 2020, p. 12). Using an orientation like this will allow us to better understand how the forces of colonialism and apartheid shaped and continue to shape educational practice and policy. This approach will also allow us to better discern the genuinely relevant African dimensions of philosophy and education that can play a valuable role in how we constitute an (South) African philosophy of education.[16]

Some evidence of this critical approach can be broadly discerned in three important and entangled strands that are developing a sense of an African philosophy of education. Arguably the most important is the concept of *Ubuntu* which captures the "communal rootedness and interdependence of persons" (Letseka, 2000, p. 179). Metz, paraphrasing Biko, characterises *Ubuntu* as the "great gift from Africa" because the concept encapsulates a distinctly African understanding of the importance of human relationships which offers something which other dominant ethical positions do not (2022, p. 1). This evidently bears on education and here Waghid (2014) for example, has generated, and continues to generate a significant amount of work aligning *Ubuntu* with an African Philosophy of Education. However, there are aspects of his approach which have also been criticised (Horsthemke, 2017). Partly

why *Ubuntu* holds promise for its role in African philosophy of education is because a significant amount of work has been done, since the 1990s in developing a much more coherent, academically rigorous sense of what African Philosophy is, and could be, with *Ubuntu* being a central concept (for example Coetzee & Roux, 1998; Metz, 2022; Ramose, 1999; Wiredu, 2005). My sense here is that developments in African philosophy, which has gained significant momentum in South Africa and elsewhere, will in turn also enrich African philosophy of education.

Another discernible strand concerns indigenous knowledge and epistemology, with the work of Dei (2000; 2008), Le Grange (2007; Le Grange & Mika, 2018) and Horsthemke (2004, 2008, 2021) making important and, in the case of Horsthemke, critical contributions. The third strand, particularly since the 2015 #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa, is epistemic decolonisation (Griffiths, 2019). Here work by Jansen (2017, 2019), and especially Mbembe (2015, 2016, 2021) continues to be particularly original and generative. While many thinkers of epistemic decolonisation in Africa tend to paraphrase work done by their South American contemporaries, Mbembe's work is characterised by the development of his own African decolonial concepts, and his measured, pragmatic approach to decolonial theory in Africa.

This is by no means an exhaustive account, only a brief overview of some of the work currently being done. However, despite this, what is evident now is a profound disconnect between philosophy of education in South Africa and its actual relevance to teacher training and schooling. Apartheid education evidently had a very deliberate and philosophically grounded policy on how the training of teachers and the education of learners was to be directed. Post-apartheid South African education seems bereft of any such conviction, whether it be democratic or citizenship education, Africanisation, or decolonisation. While the strands I characterise above show the scholarly development and Africanisation of philosophical concerns that bear on education, little of this is makes any difference to the lives of teachers and learners in South Africa. While we might pay lip-service to numerous aspirational values expressed in various policy and curriculum documents, there is little sense of a strong, philosophically informed orientation guiding schooling and teachers in terms of what we want future South Africans to be, not just what we want them to know.

The task then of African philosophers of education is twofold. On the one hand we must continue to develop the discipline, guided by the spirit of a critical phenomenology as we articulate and develop philosophical, educational concerns that bear upon the African lifeworld, and its historical context. This, for the decolonial theorists is the *analytic* (Mignolo, 2007). However, our second, bolder task is the *programmatic* (Mignolo, 2007). This is to agitate for the transformation of schooling and teacher training policy so that they are more deliberately and explicitly shaped by those concerns, rather than the neo-liberal, technicist values which currently dictates our educational approach, and which is clearly not working. Both the Nationalist government and its antagonists understood all too well the importance that distinct and well-articulated philosophical principles and values hold in shaping education policy and teacher training. This, if anything, is the lesson we should learn from our past.

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[1] I adopt these distinctions from Ashley (1989), see also Cross (1986, p. 186) who describes them as "the nationalist/conservative, the liberal, and radical/neo-Marxist" positions.

[2] In 1978 legislation (Act 102 of 1978) was implemented which required the replacement of the word 'Bantu' with the word 'Black' in all official documents (Behr, 1988). Malherbe suggests that this may have been because of the unpopular legislation associated with the word 'Bantu', such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (1977, p. xiii).

[3] For a survey of the various education commissions undertaken in South Africa since 1863 see Behr (1988).

[4] This is its own fascinating history, see Collins and Gillespie (1994) and especially Christie's (1990) work.

[5] This is, I think, a deliberate kind of obfuscation. 'Science' in English, if it not qualified as 'human' or 'social' is understand as implying the natural sciences and an empirical methodology. However, the German word '*Wissenshaft*', Dutch '*wetenschap*' and Afrikaans (derived from the Dutch) '*wetenskap'* refers to knowledge accumulated by systematic study and organised by general principles. See also Enslin (1990) for the use and abuse of the term 'science' by Fundamental Pedagogics.

[6] See du Plooy, Griesel and Oberholzer, pg. 349 (1982) for a list of many of Landsman's publications, mainly in Afrikaans.

[7] The collected volume of essays *Problems of Pedagogics* (Beard & Morrow, 1981b) is a collection of various critiques. See also Fouché (1982).

[8] Fouché (1982), and Reagan (1990) would concur with my characterisation.

[9] Fundamental Pedagogics also had some Black apologists too, notably P.C. Luthuli, whose *The Philosophical Foundations of Black Education in South Africa* (1981) offers a remarkably sanitized account of the colonization of Blacks, attempting to distil an account of how their 'lifeworld' was transformed. It is a strange and vacuous little book.

¹⁰ The term 'bush' university is a derogatory term and refers to the universities that were created by the Nationalist government after the passing of the *The Extension of University Education Act, 1959*. This bill mandated the creation of separate university colleges for Blacks, Indians and Coloureds. See Behr (1988, pp. 192–199) for more interesting details.

¹¹ Though, as Kai Horsthemke has pointed out to me, the Heidegger controversy concerning his virulent anti-Semitism, since the publication of Farias' *Heidegger and Nazism* (1989), has only further entrenched itself with the publication, in German and gradually in English, of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* (1931-1970), as the final volumes of his *Collected Works* (See Horsthemke, 2019). Some would argue that his entire corpus is thus irredeemably tainted with racist anti-Semitism, which would mean that his philosophy could well be utilized by Afrikaner Nationalists to justify their own essentialist, racial position. However, I remain in Julian Young's camp (my PhD supervisor) who deftly argues, for example in *Heidegger, philosophy, Nazism* (1998) that a careful reading of Heidegger's philosophy shows that it is not necessarily compromised by his political affiliation with the Nazis, or racist convictions concerning Jews.

¹² See Suransky-Dekker (1998).

¹³ Including my alma-mater, the University of Pretoria, I was never exposed to any analytic philosophy. Anecdotally I recall attending the first Postgraduate Philosophy Association conference in 2015 at the University of the Witwatersrand and being entirely flummoxed by their analytic version of Immanuel Kant.

¹⁴ *Perspectives in Education* in now housed at the University of the Free State and is a generalist education journal. It is sadly a shadow of its former self, and was recently on the verge of losing its journal accreditation status in South Africa because of the poor quality articles it was publishing (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2020). The editor has since been replaced.

¹⁵ This despite him being a firm advocate of Fundamental Pedagogics previously, which Horsthemke and Enslin (2009) detail.

¹⁶ I am not arguing that this approach should be pursued solely, and exclude other traditions in Philosophy of Education. I am also not advocating an identity focussed position in the form of an ethnophilosophy. Rather, I am arguing that more critical, philosophical attention must be paid to education issues in Africa.