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DIDACTIC SCAFFOLDING LEADERSHIP PEDAGOGY: A CASE STUDY OF LEARNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION¹

ABSTRACT

This is a collaborative retrospective/introspective study of over forty years of spiritual and faith learning and teaching in search of answers to the following questions: Why did so many of the youth Coetzee (2019) taught develop into some of the most prominent leaders at all levels of South African society? What did he do right? How did he construct his teaching ministry? Hermans' (2003) didactics of learning as a theoretical learning theory is employed as a theoretical framework in response to the above research endeavour. Coetzee's (2019) methodology (hereafter, the Y-model) is applied as a case study of didactic scaffolding. The Y-model serves as an example of how faith education can support contemporary religious education as a relevant and meaningful alternative to producing authentic and successful leaders.

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a collaborative retrospective study of over forty years of spiritual and faith learning and teaching (Coetzee 2019). It is retrospective in the sense of a historical review of the didactics of leadership education I received, and introspective in terms of Coetzee (2019), my faith and spiritual director, and my own personal knowledge and experiences of learning and teaching. The context



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for teaching and learning was Kimberley (the “Y” as referred to by the locals at the time), the Diamond City in the Northern Cape province of South Africa.

I have recently collaborated with Coetzee (2019) in search for answers to the following questions: Why did so many of the youth he taught develop into some of the most prominent leaders on all levels of South African society? What did he do right? How did he construct his teaching ministry? It is for this reason that I reflect, in a narrative sense, on the teaching and learning practices that informed and shaped our young perceptions, world views and progressive action. The scaffolding, which a narrative approach offers, helps us construct a strategy of open dialogue with various collaborative approaches to enable us to tell our stories and to create new stories to replace the old ones (source unknown). Another reason for this study is to offer some options for the general dysfunctionality of Christian education in established churches:

Today the need for meaningful faith formation practices is more relevant than ever before, as the faith formation practices of the church will in future no longer be able to function according to traditional approaches (Roebben 2004:225).

Hermans’ (2003) didactics of learning as a theoretical learning theory will be employed as a theoretical framework in response to the above challenges and quests. Coetzee’s (2019) methodology (hereafter, the Y-model) will be applied as a case study of didactic scaffolding. This is a descriptive study juxtaposed with Hermans’ (2003) theory, with the Y model as an example of how faith education can support contemporary religious education as a relevant and meaningful alternative.

Scott’s (2019) book, *The 100-year life*, directs us towards future learning in an adaptive mode – not within formal institutionalised, age-structured learning practices, but as life-long learning to sustain “permanent” employment and to deal with unexpected crisis through adaptive leadership practices (see Dames 2018:29-36; 90-92). Scott’s (2019) futuristic notion of learning should be welcomed, especially if we are to confront the “banking or transmission theory of knowledge which undermines critical consciousness, [which] has returned with a vengeance” (Freire 2001:4). Learning should rather refocus on thinking, including critical discernment. It should focus on patterns of systems, in order to grasp the plurality of meaning in the web of life at present (Osmer 2005:159):

Therefore, religious education ought to promote religious self-clarification-in-communication – religious competence, critical and informed awareness (in the light of fake leaders’ propaganda of irrationality and lies as rational and truth claims) of the moral, ethical, religious and existential life issues in individual and collective realities of young lives (Roebben 2004:217-218).

How is this to be realised and what form of learning informs Coetzee's (2019) and Hermans' (2003) approaches in terms of Roebben's (2004) views? Roebben (2004), a Dutch scholar, provides an insightful analysis of religious education, with specific reference to the complexity of the modern identity and agency of young people.

2. HERMANS' MODEL OF PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

We will now attend to the critical questions of *how* learning occurs and *what* didactic process/es feature in Christian religious education to develop young leaders. First, a word of caution from Roebben (2004:220):

The theory of didactics of correlation of the 70s and 80s in its seamless form of connection between faith and life is gone. It has become redundant to educationally apply bits of theological content to link faith and life. Young people prefer to personally assimilate the religious praxis and viewpoints they encounter in their lives. They "surf the sea" of (cultural, social and religious) meaning and are continually designing their own "narrative language" as a permanent neo-logy.

Young people of the twenty-first century are consistently learning and posing in-depth, sometimes "uncomfortable" questions by applying the didactics of correlation, not as a conventional form of theology, but as a revitalised and expansional search for meaningful, developmental, mediated and communicative didactics (Roebben 2004:220; Hermans 2003:270).

Following Hermans (2003:269), we opt for the theory of *culturalism* as one of the schools in the psychology of learning and knowing. *Culturalism* relates to religious practices that are embedded in a community of practice. Culture can engender discernment or even inhibit learning (Hermans 2003:269; Osmer 2005:160). A culture of faith engenders a formational role that shapes and prioritises its participants in a specific way of understanding and learning:

By means of adopting a certain culture of faith people simultaneously adopt a certain way of dealing with themselves, a certain way of positing and "judging" themselves within the horizon of the world that has immediate effects on their awareness of life, which in turn becomes part of this culture of faith (Engemann 2015:74).

New adaptive challenges in communities necessitate critical discernment for cultural change (Osmer 2005:160). The most basic concept in culturalism is participation, based on developmental, social, mediated and meaningful learning. These four attributes feature as an integrated theoretical framework of the Russian learning psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (in Hermans 2003:270). It presents a theoretical foundation for participatory learning in religious

education. Hermans (2003:270, 275) refers to Bruner in stating that cultural and social influences affect learning and thinking in cultural contexts. The basic metaphor of culturalism is the person or learner as a participant in sociocultural practices (Hermans 2003:275). Thus, knowing and learning crystallise through participation in sociocultural practices, as outlined in Vygotsky's education theory (Hermans 2003:275-280).² Each of the above attributes forms an integrated whole in the entire didactic structure in religious education (Hermans 2003:282).

Learning through participation is basically an integrated and reciprocal process of the Vygotskian theory (Hermans 2003:270). Groome (1980:107) cites John Dewey that all education is "the participation of the individual in the social consciousness" of humanity. Formal education plays a limited role in participation in social formation/socialisation and the social consciousness of humanity, especially as the "active knower" (see Freire 1998:3). Daily living influences in social contexts affect our formation much more than formal education does (Groome 1980:107). Mental activities are in a constant state of change and are influenced by sociocultural processes (Hermans 2003:283-284; see Roebben 2003). Social learning shapes human actions within a semiotic system between people and within persons (Hermans 2003:287-288). Existential issues inform or construct social worlds determined by historical, cultural and contextual social relationships (Hermans 2003:290-291). Bear in mind that our citizenship implies freedom to participate in the living networks of life (Freire 1998:90). Mediated learning is based on mental tools such as concrete context as well as knowledge, psychological and language tools (Hermans 2003:292). Mediated learning and action function in the entire semiotic system. It encompasses political, sociocultural and traditional realities by mediating meaning in different situations (Hermans 2003:291-292, 294).

2 Here follows a short summary of Hermans' (2003:275-280) reference to Vygotsky's education theory: "(1) Social learning refers to people engaging in an activity collectively by interacting with each other with material and symbolic tools which transform their knowing and learning; (2) Knowledge and learning or contextual learning is rooted in a socio-cultural context, more specifically in the cultural tools used in that context. Learning develops participants in a specific culture to apply and appropriate cultural tools of transformation; (3) A meaningful activity or practice prevents the reduction of knowing and learning by the epistemological self as an intramental or intrapsychic functioning of individuals. Learners construct their own self-image, their conception and development of knowledge and the significance of learning for everyday life in meaningful (cognitive, affective, motivational and social) learning activities or practices; (4) Mental processes such as remembering, communicating, analyzing, problem-solving and articulation of personal feelings become meaningful through its genesis, change or development. Mental processes are human semiotic systems re content and purpose. Meaningful participation in religious practices and the religious self can only develop from participation".

It is about the appropriation and application of knowledge and skills in new learning situations (see Scott 2019) between cognitive, affective, motivational and action-oriented learning processes (Hermans 2003:296). Hence,

we are “programmed to learn”, we live, or experience, or we find ourselves open to experience the relationship between what we inherit and what we acquire. We become genetic-cultural beings. We are not only nature, nor are we only culture, education, and thinking. Thus growing [development], to us, is an experience affected by biology, psychology, culture, history, education, politics, aesthetics, and ethics (Freire 1998:94-95).

Hermans (2003), by citing Vygotsky, offers valuable insights into how we can reshape our genetic-cultural knowledge and experience as holistic persons, from the perspective of an instructional process: “Instruction is the measures and conditions introduced in the learning context to promote teaching and learning” (Boekaerts & Simons, in Hermans 2003:300). What measures and conditions did Coetzee (2019), as a case in point, appropriate and employ?

3. THE Y-MODEL AS A CASE STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Over forty years ago, my local minister, Jaco Coetzee (2019), in collaboration with all the ministries (youth ministry, Christian education, women ministry, parents, church council members, and so forth) in the local congregation and elsewhere, and various academics and reflective practitioners (Coetzee 2019; Mager 1975; Pipe 1975), developed a didactic model that has shaped the lives of many young leaders in South Africa since the 1970s until the present. It was a holistic and integrated didactic model with *He is mine: I am His* as theme (Coetzee 1975; see Hesselink 1997:97).³ Constant dialogue characterised the learning and listening activities between our community of faith and its individual participants (Osmer 2005:158). Our community of faith exhibited the ability to listen to one another with respect and openness, which was conducive to an atmosphere of trust in the community (Osmer 2005:158). Coetzee (2019) researched the methodology of didactics and applied it to his own life in terms of the following didactic scaffolds: problem conceptualisation and description; aims and objectives; programming; evaluation, and, lately, celebration. These didactic steps did not develop in an office, but were shared with the youth, learners (hereafter, educands), parents, church council, community members, and so forth. Bible narratives were employed from a cognitive outside perspective:

3 For access to this source by Dames & Cloetzee (2019), copy and paste the following website link: <https://tinyurl.com/r7sv6de>

Can contemporary religious education, beyond objective-technical explanation and subjective aesthetical elucidation, open up the religious-hermeneutic, meaning of a Bible text without fear of becoming catechetical (Roebben 2004:225).

Problem analyses were performed through reciprocal conceptualisation and description. The same method was applied to establish the objectives, methods and programmes featuring in various learning activities or projects. Coetzee (2019) consulted widely with young leaders and allowed them to make these didactic discoveries themselves. The Y-model can be typified as symmetrical teaching and learning, knowing and re-knowing embedded in a political discipline essential to the invention of our new-found citizenship in South Africa, especially during the oppressive apartheid era or any neo-colonial tendencies (Freire 1998:90; Ackermanns 1998):

Citizenship is not obtained by chance: It is a construction that, never finished, demands we fight for it. It demands commitment, political clarity, coherence, decision. For this reason a democratic education cannot be realized apart from an education of and for citizenship (Freire 1998:90).

In a different sense, as a leader, Coetzee encouraged the community to engage in adaptive activities, in order to deal with various challenges:

[Coetzee (2019) helped our faith community to] confront the difficult issues before it at any given time, manage the conflicting values evoked by such issues, and design a process of learning that allows the community to forge a response consistent with the values it holds most dear (Osmer 2005:161).

Christian education, youth ministry and all the other ministries in the congregation formed an integrated semiotic system of learning. The educands learned, in the very first learning activity, about the purpose of Christian education, and this knowledge was integrated and shared in every other learning activity through reciprocal participation. Therefore, the educands always knew what was expected of them and why it was expected of them. These are crucial educational scaffolds. For instance, Frankl (1984:28) refers to Nietzsche in this regard: "He who has a 'why' to live for can bear almost any 'how'". This knowledge and the accompanying skills were shared with members of the youth ministry, where young leaders engaged with each other in participatory small groups to analyse a problem and develop objectives for various learning activities and youth programmes. Youth ministry programmes were grounded in real-life or existential realities and not in abstract cognitive or specialised silos.

These programmes were started by youth members and were, in many instances, based on the educands' own experiences, perceptions and dreams. In other words, "the educands' cultural context constituted their concrete localisation of knowledge and experience to re/create their world" (Freire 1999:46). In another sense, this emerging leadership framework directed our community of faith to its mission within our "localised social context, interacting with processes and relationships beyond its internal life" (Osmer 2005:157). Social interaction, or intentional socialisation, was a key practice in Christian education, which was process based and part of the content of learning. The quintessential content of learning was based on contemporary relations and interactions between persons (Groome 1980:118, 120).

Didactic scaffolding became a regular and natural process in the way in which Coetzee (2019) approached each learning situation.

3.1 Problem analysis

Problem analysis centred on the question: What is the problem called? Why the need to share the learning material with the youth and educands? Whose problem is it? Note the importance of posing critical questions by Foundez (1998:34-35). He posits that questions are a profoundly democratic act. The genesis of knowledge lies in asking questions; a curiosity of posing questions is a never-ending life-seeking act. By adding the words "because of" or "for this reason", the problem was grounded in real-life or existential contexts as an objective issue and not as a subjective matter. The latter can cause identity destruction if approached in an un-empathetic manner. As such, "Biblical religious education can contribute to moral and religious emancipation and the strengthening of identity" (Roebben 2004:223). The youth or young leaders of the twenty-first century hold a profound body of experience. However, they are ill-equipped to discern on which foundational or ground rule their experience is based and to which concrete questions of experience it refers. In other words, do they have sufficient scaffolding to make meaningful and value-based determinations of their experience and unambivalent reflection/s on that experience? This reminds us of a communicative model of rationality regarding reason as a special kind of situated conversation within a community, in which participants seek truth claims (Osmer 2005:5). A short statement was usually introduced to challenge educands to critically engage with their pedagogue. Osmer (2005:55) regards discernment as an integral activity of the Christian teaching ministry. He refers, in this regard, to Paul's (Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 6:2-4) practices of discernment as practices of modelling and practices of the free exercise of individual conscience. Coetzee (2019) often challenged the youth and educands with the statement: "There is no God", according to Psalm 53:2, in order to invite their responses or input. Vague descriptions of the problem by youth members or educands were usually

answered with the response “[I]t is an interesting view”, to avoid shaming educands or exposing “wrong or irrelevant” answers. Coetzee (2019) avoided abstract expert knowledge and skills inculcation and replaced these with the shared and collaborative input from the youth themselves. The end result was that the youth defined, described and took ownership of their own problems to be overcome through specified and contextual objectives or community-based projects. This learning practice can be defined as a form of service for Christian social action (Wolterstorff 2002:77). For Coetzee (2019), it was “impossible to teach content without knowing how students think within the context of their daily lives” (Freire 1998:78). His teaching was an ongoing self-training practice to grasp, through critical reflection, how we were conditioned by our cultural context, and to facilitate “our way of acting and our inborn values by collaborating with us and developing our intellectual discipline” (Freire 1998:79, 87). Reminiscent of our struggle for liberation in South Africa and in Kimberley at the time, we challenged Coetzee (2019) as a White person with our existential issues. We were a dominated and exploited people in an evil and destructive apartheid capitalist and political system. As the hegemonically perceived and treated lower classes, we were determined to engage in the transformation of our intellectual capacities in terms of the various forced-prescribed educational disciplines. We engaged simultaneously

to create a social, civic, and political discipline, which is absolutely essential to the democracy that goes beyond the pure bourgeois and liberal democracy and that, finally, seeks to conquer the injustice and the irresponsibility of capitalism (Freire 1998:89).

Our struggle for liberation has made an impact on Coetzee’s (2019) teaching activities and taught him a sense of empathy and solidarity with our living reality under apartheid.

3.2 Objective clarification

Objective clarification focused on the question: What is the objective or aim of each specific learning activity? Both Coetzee (2019) and the youth and/or educands sought to define and articulate clear objectives of learning to direct learning towards a certain path or aim. The objectives had to meet the following principles: be clear, simple and comprehensible for the learner; be attainable, and be measurable. Key concepts and concepts such as “spiritual maturity, faith maturity”, and so forth that are difficult to measure had to be unpacked and simplified. Unclear, nonsensical and unmeasurable concepts were reconfigured by adding the words “through” or “because of”. We were trained to distinguish between good and poor objective statements or descriptions.

3.3 Learning activity

Learning activity focused on the method of programmes by moving from the problem to the objective. Only by knowing where you are, in other words, where the educand is and what the problem is, and where the educand wants to be, can the teacher develop a learning activity. The learning activity or learning material was, in essence, also the method the educand applied from where s/he was and where s/he wanted to be. Problem analysis and objective conceptualisation were crucial for any learning activity. The learning activity was as a whole participatory in nature. It was also objective and contextualised in our homes, schools, churches and the broader community. We concur that learning activities in the Y-model resonate with “the *participatory* and *decentralised nature* of congregational *leadership* in the Uniting Reformed Church of Stellenbosch, South Africa” (Osmer 2005:153) (own emphasis):

In a socio-cultural approach the mind extends the human body and implies that *knowing and learning include everything in a given action situation – not only the learner[s] and their mental processes, also fellow learners; the space (learning situation), the purpose of the action (intentionality), the time dimension and broad cultural and institutional context in terms of participation metaphor learning and knowing – it must always be located in a total action situation or practice.* In terms of this totality we can speak of *meaningful learning* (Hermans 2003:278) (own emphasis).

Coetzee (2019) inspired us to share and participate in learning activities and leadership responsibilities in a total meaningful action context or practice.

3.4 Evaluation

Evaluation functioned as a measure to determine whether the objective of the learning activity was reached. As a rule, educands were only evaluated on whether they meet the objectives of the entire Christian education programme before being accepted as full members of a church. Nothing more and nothing less! However, the educand him-/herself knows best whether the teaching programme reached or realised its objective with him/her. Evaluation of the learning activity always followed after each completed learning activity, youth meeting, conference or community outreach programme, before a new programme or learning activity could start.

3.5 Celebration

Celebration (as an informal practice at that stage) followed when educands achieved their learning and teaching objectives as an expression of joy and gratitude. This last didactic step “crowned” educands as full members of their faith community as well as maturing persons in their faith, spiritual and human

lives. Educands planned and executed their own forms of celebration such as athletics, cycling to local neighbouring towns, camping, games and small-scale sport activities. The families, youth and the community of faith of the educands usually joined these celebrations as an event of shared participation.

Osmer's (2005:xiii) observation about each community's understanding of education as a teaching ministry and ministry as the edification of the community for missions within the triune God, encapsulates the essence of the Y-model. It "emerges from the web of normative commitments that articulate its particular vision of the ultimate purpose of existence and the way of life that best corresponds to this vision" – on condition that the normative commitments of a community are publicly declared, especially within our contemporary pluralist religious society.

4. THE Y-MODEL CO-DEVELOPED THROUGH CONCRETE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Youth members, educands and not only the youth leaders were empowered with knowledge and skills that no other programme (of a conference, camp or annual calendar) could offer. No learning happened before all the group participants performed a problem analysis and objective description within their cultural circles. I can concur with Freire (1974:42) on this point:

Instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lecturers, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programmes that were "broken down" and "codified" into learning units. In the culture circles, we attempted through group debate either to clarify situations or to seek action arising from clarification. The topics for these debates were offered us by the groups themselves.

Following Freire (1974:42), I concur that we launched a new institution of popular culture. We taught and learned within a "culture circle" and we regarded the dominant cognitive school approach as a traditional, permanent and passive practice. Our teaching programmes were grounded in concrete existential, political, economic, social and living faith issues in terms of the actual life experiences of our community (Hermans 2003:282-283; 290-291). As a result, the teaching material was co-developed with the active participation of all of us (Foundez 1998:139). The end products, the programmes and the learning activities were our own; we were the speakers or presenters at youth gatherings or events – not some "expert" speakers from somewhere else (Hermans 2003:296). For example, one of the youth leaders thanked a visiting speaker at a conference by stating:

Minister, thank you very much for your explanations today. After all your explanations this clear issue became completely unclear to us (Coetzee 2019)!

This is an example of educators who generally “produce answers without having been asked anything!” (Foundez 1998:35).

Coetzee’s (2019) learning and teaching activities were more than mere abstract learning or teaching, schooling, preparation, entrepreneurship, training, and so forth. Modern analyses and cognitive approaches are narrow intellectual methodologies incapable of generating self-understanding or insight into the living web of human existence. Note, for instance, Nipkow’s (1985:210) observation:

[Y]outh research in West Germany has given up the attempt to analyze opinions and to investigate (cognitive) self-understanding, and has turned to what is lived, to the elements of “age cultures” (“Alterskulturen”) in the “society of peers” (“Gesellschaft der Altersgleichen”).

The learning activities incorporated us as cultural subjects rather than as passive recipients – “a programme as an act of creation, designed to unleash other creative acts in which we developed the impatience and vivacity which characterises search and invention” (Freire 1974:43). Something had to happen with and within (*intramental*) the learner and his/her environment (*intermental*) (Hermans 2003:288-290). If nothing changes in *what* and *how* we teach and learn, all we would have achieved will be futile – only relevant for those who seek to dominate and prescribe, worse still, discriminate against learners who “lack[s] cognitive, intellectual or scientific research knowledge and skills”. Do we believe in the potential of educands or are we questioning their integrity?

We still do not dare to trust students with the subversive power of another or do we bore them with a school-like type of religious education, because we view them as school-individuals who are only able to take in cognitive models for identity-building, and not as human beings with their own existential longing and resilience, with their own soul? Are they truly allowed to experience their own particular story, and to raise the sort of ambivalent questions to which religious people and communities have been giving their answers – and this from an inside perspective? (Roebben 2004:227).

Learners should learn something by making it part of themselves to experience birth and new life and by becoming involved and enthusiastic in the web of life. This way of shaping learning contrasts with how ministers as experts teach learners with abstract knowledge by treating them as “poor low intellectuals”, while the educand learns nothing as a result (Hermans 2003:296):

It is precisely from this perspective that new ways of dealing with the concept of identity-building are explored in religious education. Norbert Mette argues that religious education in school should go *beyond a formal approach to world views* ('Lebensgestaltung, Ethik und Religion'), *beyond moral education* ('Ethikunterricht') and *comparative religious studies* ('Religionskunde'). Religious education has to show that there is a *God who liberates people from rigidity and isolation*, so that they are able to *follow new paths*. Religious education is about this 'ability', according to N. Mette: an '*identity-from-gratuity*', a possibility of *being-human* that is *not separate* from the present one (*recognisable*), *but that exceeds it at the same time (anticipatory)* (Roebben 2004:226-227) (own emphasis).

Education is thus a cultural lived act in the total web of life. It is always in search of new discoveries and in the art of developing adaptive skills and techniques in educands and young leaders to engage with confidence with the multiple discrepancies of life. Teaching, therefore, implies learning from the educand which may shake the certainty of the teacher: "[W]hen students are free to ask questions on a subject, it can often give their teachers a new angle, enabling them later to engage in more critical reflection" (Freire 1998:33). Coetzee (2019) modelled this critical reflective disposition, which allowed educands to reach beyond formal education towards becoming identity-building human beings.

Learning activities were integrated within learning, for example, at youth camps, in nature, or creation – even during the coldest winter months in the Northern Cape. Ecology, the creation, trees and animals regularly formed part of our learning experience – by observing and appropriating signs and symbols in nature. Anthropocentric learning culminated in cosmocentric learning.⁴ For example, a piece of grass, a thorn tree, porcupine or kudu became learning tools from which educands could draw weak and strong points and apply these in their own lives. Coetzee (2019) thus integrated an anthropocentric and cosmocentric didactical approach with a theological-philosophical approach:

Instead of the wide-spread personality-growth-oriented culture of our time we need the integration of an anthropocentric ethics with a cosmocentric one. The heritage of the Orthodox Christian Churches as well as Asian religions can perhaps show the direction in order to find a language of symbolizing our relationships to the whole creation (Nipkow 1985:212).

Insightful discussions about these learning experiences were then shared with the whole group and appropriated by the personal scaffolding of

4 For more insight into the didactic intersection of psychological, sociocultural, anthropological, cosmological, philosophical and theological dynamics, see Hermans (2003) in footnote 2.

meaning (Hermans 2003:294).⁵ These learning activities exhibited the voice of educands as ethical artefacts and as scaffolders that strengthened their humanity by virtue of being human (Gaie & Tabalaka 2015:388):

It is within a Christian social/cultural environment that people come to appropriate the symbols which carry forward the tradition. It is there that they encounter role models, a world view, and a value system that can be interiorised as their own Christian self-identity (Groome 1980:115).

Our self-identity, our being human, was enhanced by our mutual participation in these creative learning activities.

In the ordinary church life and in everyday situations where Christians live, it is the “not so bright ones” who mostly live more as Christians (see Freire 2001:14). Learning should not focus on a high mental activity. Both low and high mentally active educands, as alluded to by Hermans (2003), should they feel at home in the same learning context, church and world, where they will serve God, as practised by Coetzee (2019). By reiterating, contemporary youth can no longer be approached in a general and religious educational manner. It is common knowledge nowadays that young people determine, to a large extent, their own learning preferences:

Consider the potential of young leaders capable of becoming morally and religiously sensitive or attuned to existential issues and spiritual or faith practices with unconditional, personal and social agency. ... Religious education, if traditionally and institutionally static or even in tune with contemporary living, cannot offer solutions to existential and spiritual/faith challenges for those young leaders living in such complexities – they have to deal with complex questions of life and existential issues on their own without being religiously socialised in their own home and community contexts (Roebben 2004:215-216).

Hence, “correlational communities”, in which there is a healthy connection between meaningful human stories and human experiences, are indispensable for effective learning nowadays (Roebben 2004:231). Communities of faith in our pluralistic and secular societies should rediscover life – their own particular

5 “Human psychological processes engender intentionality, feelings and motivational involvement. The distinction between socio-cultural meanings of signs and significant practices and their personal meaning of practice is important. Learning relates to the learner’s personal structure of meaning in social interaction with people. The learning situation and [the] learner’s social identity create[s] live stories in assimilating elements of religious practices (narrative motifs, symbols, actions, customs) by appropriating meaning while identifying with the collective voice of a particular tradition. Meaningful learning also implies the social identity of both learner and teachers” (Hermans 2003:298-299).

culture, language, literature and art, in order to engage in meaningful dialogue and living: “Societies should be societies of dialogue, of total participation, of empowerment” (Foundez 1998:82).

Furthermore, cognitive knowledge is important, but it must not be overemphasised at the cost of relational knowledge. Relational knowledge relates to a sociocultural approach in learning (Hermans 2003:278-288). Faith is a relational phenomenon. It is bipolar, social and interpersonal, as well as a triadic or tripolar relationship with regard to the ultimate conditions and depth of life (Fowler, in Groome 1980:68). Learning, as referred to in the case study, was thus embedded in interpersonal participatory, social and mediated learning in search of the ultimate depth of our lives. Bible truths, for example, were applied in terms of the educands’ world view. It was necessary to rediscover the value of the Bible in a secular society, because this didactic methodology could support the teachings and normativity of the Bible: “The Bible has lost its subversive power and has been degraded to a purely cultural-historical contribution” (Roebben 2004:224). As active participants, contemporary educands should be allowed to re-teach their own teachers or ministers, in order to rediscover the subversive power of the Bible. For example, Coetzee’s (2019) own educands and youth regularly taught him how to read and interpret the Bible in the context of a changing generation and unfamiliar world.

5. VIEWING THE Y-MODEL IN TERMS OF HERMANS’ DIDACTIC SCAFFOLDING OF PARTICIPATION

The Y-model will be integrated with the participatory learning model in so far as it correlates with Hermans’ (2003) four didactics scaffolds.

5.1 Developmental learning

The Y-model applied scaffolding as a key didactic strategy characterised by a shared praxis approach of collaborative teaching and learning (see Groome 1980). Educands were constantly supported to engage in, and to complete planned activities or projects with a clear objective (Hermans 2003:301). Coetzee (2019) acted as an objective facilitator. He constantly assessed *what* type of learning content was applicable, *why* it was relevant, and *how* learning ought to raise the awareness of *how* educands gained knowledge (Hermans 2003:301). Coetzee’s (2019) teaching was characterised by measurable and process-oriented learning – an asymmetrical relation between teacher (as expert) and learner (as active participant) with mutual learning agency of knowing and re-knowing or learning and re-learning (Hermans 2003:301-302).

Coetzee (2019) also became an educand and educands became teachers (Freire 1998:3).

The Y-model was geared not towards reducing the learning situation to the internalisation of learning. Learning was integrated with the overall learning practice or life situation of educands. It was aligned in terms of participation in practices and the organising of the participants' own involvement in these activities. The development of learning activities also became an explicit method in its own right. It developed as a method that integrated holistic learning with the living contexts of educands. Didactic scaffolding also supported the co-construction of personal participation in practices. Learning techniques and communication were crucial and determined how meaning was shaped and shared between Coetzee (2019) and his co-learning participants. The core of our learning practice was a semiotic system informed by educands' own knowledge, and their newly attained knowledge, through active participation in a particular cultural setting. We can say that novice and expert were relationally, emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively involved in a cultural semiotic system by transcending abstract, objective learning. For instance, the relation between Christianity and African cultures in search of a contextual African theology was not consciously explored. Suffice to say that this aspect needs redress in future research. Its practical implication and appropriation played out in the neighbouring communities and public schools. Suffice to say, educands enacted with Black and White youth and build meaningful interracial relationships on a deep personal and public level. If properly appropriated in education, it could advance the moral destiny of all Africans, by rediscovering traditional ethics of conscience for the common good (Mapuranga 2015:281).

Interpersonal participation helped the educands construct their own identity by observing and participating in social and cultural activities. On the other hand, intrapersonal, active participation in learning activities helped us identify with and appropriate the meaning of learning activities (Hermans 2003:302-307). Following Freire (1974:44-46), I concur that educands or young emerging leaders were led from naïve to critical transitivity, in order to facilitate their personal and communal intervention in the historical process of liberation in South Africa. To this end, Coetzee's (2019) didactic scaffolding leadership pedagogy consisted of what Freire (1974) identified as *an active, dialogical, critical and criticism-stimulating method*; in *changing the programme content of education*; by applying *techniques* such as *the thematic breakdown and codification of concepts*, observations, experiences or a biblical text (the latter concepts are my own emphasis). Coetzee's methodology was principally grounded on reciprocal dialogue – a dynamic horizontal relationship between him and his educands. His silence, at times, formed part of didactics to create space and volume for the voices of the less verbal and insignificant among us.

In essence, new learning materialised within us and among ourselves, and continues to shape our identities and destinies: “Christian faith is a lifelong developmental process involving the total person” (Groome 1980:76-77). In attaining all these objectives, the diligent and timeless manner, in which Coetzee (1975) sought an increasingly clearer comprehension of how he should prepare and develop each and every didactical scaffolding, proved indispensable:

Teaching requires constant preparation and development on the part of teachers, as is made clearer and clearer by their teaching experience, if well lived and apprehended. Such development is based on a critical analysis of their practice (Freire 1998:18).

5.2 Didactics of social learning

Social learning was holistic and integrated with us as educands within our living realities. The reciprocal learning was essentially *intermentally* (between individuals) and *intramentally* (within individuals) (Hermans 2003:309). In a different sense, learning was characterised by a dialectical relationship between our peers and community of faith and our social and cultural environment (Groome 1980:126). Communication was key in learning. It was a process of construction and reconstruction of the semiotic system of faith and moral formative practices (Hermans 2003:310). Mutual respect, love and communication in the process of development and collaboration learning and relational knowledge characterised learning grounded in the sociocultural reality (Hermans 2003:310; Freire 1998:3). Collective intentionality for learning and discovering was a crucial attribute (Hermans 2003:316). Learning was a transformative and reciprocal process of active educand and active environment – educands grew as dependent and independent agents of change. The cultural context, the concrete location of educands’ knowledge and experience shaped their agency to co-create their world. Process-oriented instruction informed and developed our actions through the application, assimilation and sharing of mutual action, wisdom and behaviour. Needless to say, we need to engage with how African wisdom or African public theology intersects with the geopolitical realities in contemporary society. African wisdom can help overcome ecological and socio-economic challenges (Botman, in Vellein 2015:87-88). Our community of faith and parents functioned as correlational communities that informed us as educands about the intersection of faith and life, espousing responsibility in becoming leaders or adults. Existential questions were embedded in the social context, human experiences and interpretations of Bible stories juxtaposed with living contexts of educands. We influenced social relationships that informed our lives with meaning:

The dialectic relationship means that the social/cultural context does not totally determine an individual’s self-identity; in fact, the individual can give an altered shape to his or her social reality (Groome 1980:113).

The integration of learning with the ecology, community-based activities such as visiting patients in hospital and having dialogue with peers (from the Muslim and Hindu communities) helped us apply learning within our own life experiences, which informed critical and evaluative reflection afterwards.

From the above, it is imperative that Christian education must prioritise “a critical reflective activity in terms of our socialising if faith is to be appropriated and relevant” (Groome 1980:108). Coetzee’s (2019) critical reflective approach enabled educands to create coherence between everyday discourse and practice – “a discourse to advance the conditions of the weak, poor, homeless and ill and a practice that advanced better living conditions of the vulnerable” (see Freire 1998:15). Goroncy (2017:34) captures our then public-oriented learning in a profound way as a “new political reality, as a new politic marked by mutuality and humility, and cultivating the habits of forbearance, forgiveness, and reconciliation”.⁶ Life in apartheid South Africa, at the time, was plagued by human suffering and oppression. Educands gained a new sense of sociopolitical consciousness. As a White Afrikaner male, Coetzee was caught between our aspirations for a liberated country and the privileged comforts of White South Africans. It must be said that he demonstrated a sincere empathy and compassion for our plight and his integrity as a spiritual leader never wavered. Goroncy’s (2017) new politic-oikos paradigm became apparent in how we, as emerging leaders, reshaped and transformed life and work in South Africa. We contend with Vellem (2015:100) that African wisdom, as embodied by leaders in Africa, has a lot to offer in the management of the twenty-first-century *oikos*, *ikhaya* for life giving: “Ikhaya is much more than covenants, but is the very existence of humanity – being home rather than being turned into an eternal

6 Read more about this profound declaration: “It is a *community marked by a profundity of dependence – upon other communities and their stories, upon the creation, and upon the Ground of all being. Each of these relationships carries certain responsibilities* and is, when healthy, marked by the kind of giving and receiving that characterises the divine life itself. It is a *community that feels enlarged and enriched rather than diminished or threatened by the presence of the other, and thus by difference. It recognises God’s image in the face of the stranger* who is not in its own image. It is a *community that celebrates and practices relationships as ends in themselves, and therefore resists those brutal patterns that turn relationships into means for some other purpose.* It is a community learning not to trust itself to know itself, learning to know who it is only *by making itself accountable to the judgement of others, even while not relinquishing the difficult responsibility of making judgements itself.* These are some of the *extraordinary gifts that friendship and true community bequeath* to us all. Moreover, Christian community is about *the way a people who don’t necessarily really like each other very much learn to live together.* These are *virtues impossible* to be had *apart from a humble reception of others, a reception styled by listening to and with others, and by risking whatever transformation results*” (Goroncy 2017:34) (my own emphasis).

vagabond, wanderer, squatter camp in the 21st century”. It is for this reason that elders in society should be recognised as the embodiment of life wisdom, and the education of the youth should ground future leaders as role models of wisdom with value-based norms and living principles (Baloyi 2015:267).

5.3 Didactics of mediated learning

This type of learning focused on techniques of reflection. Reflection was based on religious stories, symbols, customs, objects, places visited, rituals and feasts. It included various learning activities in faith and real-life practices and in nature:

These techniques provided access to religious practices and its meaning through the intentionality of its participants who assigned meaning to these techniques as meaningful Christian religious symbols (Hermans 2003:317-318).

Communication featured as a core tool within the semiotic system of our social context, culture and symbols to develop insight into faith and moral practices. As stated earlier, learning activities were integrated with different ministries in our community of faith, which shaped the entire didactic semiotic systems. Learning was conscious, systematic, structured and transmission(al) (Hermans 2003:318). Educands not only reflected on learning content, but also incorporated it in actual activities, through which they configured their own thinking and learning processes. This allowed them to gain insight and competence to act in relatively new or unfamiliar situations – in private and public contexts (Hermans 2003:326). Critical engagement with the learning activities and with Coetzee (2019) was a natural didactic activity. After all, to teach “is not to transfer knowledge, but to create possibilities for the development or construction of knowledge” (Freire 2001:30). To teach is part of the very fabric of learning: “Teaching that does not emerge from the experience of learning cannot be learnt by anyone” (Freire 2001:30). Thus, educands’ reciprocal participation characterised learning and teaching, which engendered the invention of a new-found citizenship.

5.4 Didactics of meaningful learning

Meaningful learning was grounded in our diverse historical, political, social and cultural contexts. Hence, participation learning was informed by, and functioned in the above sociocultural practices. Meaningful insight into sociocultural situations was only possible if learning or content was logically and practically applicable. Meaningful learning was always integrated with cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural learning (holistic anthropological) processes (Groome 1980:74-76). It was principally activity-based knowledge (believing, trusting, doing) in terms of our learning situation and our social identity as educands (Groome 1980:74-75). Therefore, participation formed the essence

of meaningful learning. Teaching and learning activities intersected with our participation as educands and teachers (Freire 1998:17). The term “meaningful” signified learning that entailed tasks which were realistic and significant beyond the learning context: “Meaningful learning engendered genuinely life-like learning which was holistic, integrative and contextual because of the participation of learners” (Hermans 2003:327).

Learning was also applied in planned community-based learning activities. Hence, fragmented or abstract learning encountered in real life was avoided (Hermans 2003:328; Coetzee 2019). Material and holistic anthropological learning processes were aligned with the *intermental* and *intramental* potential of learners (Hermans 2003:328). Following Freire (2001:31-32), we concur that to teach and learn were to participate in a total didactic experience that was simultaneously directive, political, ideological, gnostic, pedagogical, aesthetical, and ethical. Our collective lives and struggle for political liberation in South Africa during the 1970s, particularly in Kimberley, attested to this total didactic learning experience. In the final analysis, learning or the achievement of our learning objectives culminated in meaningful, delightful and dignified celebrations. Who can forget the vibrant church bazaars, the delicious Karoo braais, playing rob jumping games, hop scotch, table tennis, soccer battles, cycling and annual family local olympic games - not to mention the “lekker-saam-kuier” (nice visits)? All this to celebrate to celebrate our collective experience of participating in moments of life - so edifying, communal, semiotic and dedicated by the joyful and pleasantly inspired Jaco, Mara, Gideon, Petrus and Elsabe Coetzee.

6. CONCLUSION

The socio-constructivist perspective captures the didactic scaffolding of the Y-model in terms of mutual social support that promoted task-oriented motivation within an expert-novice model of cognitive apprenticeship. This served to advance cultural circles of holistic anthropological participation learning as a total didactic of leadership education (Järvelä, in Hermans 2003:331). We concur that there are undeniable correlations between Coetzee (2019) and Hermans (2003), even with Freire (2001; 1998); Roebben (2004) and Groome (1984). However, Coetzee (2019) consistently avoided the temptation to juxtapose higher and lower mental activities, whereas Hermans (2003) applied these two attributes as *dei facto* didactic principles. The participation learning philosophy transcends any juxtaposing between two or more human beings. Coetzee (2019), therefore, succeeded in building participative-learning practice. Furthermore, the fifth didactic step in his model afforded the educands, youth, their family and communities of faith an enriched scaffold to develop from one faith or life stage to new possibilities or responsible living. This is a huge gap in Hermans', Freire's and Groome's models! We can conclude

that our participatory anthropological learning activities, as integrated within cosmological learning experiences, formed a holistic and whole learning experience. Thus, the Y-model resonates with Vygotsky's educational theory, as referenced by Hermans (2003). But it also extends in its objectives to nurture generic-cultural beings within our own cultural circles through a planned and natural semiotic system embedded in historical, socio-cultural realities.

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