

NEW AVENUES: THE DIALOGICAL NATURE AND METHOD OF BIBLE INSTRUCTION *

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Abstract

Die dialogiese aard en metode van Bybelonderrig

Die veld van die opvoedkunde vorm een van die primêre arenas waarin die politieke stryd om 'n meer demokratiese samelewing in Suid Afrika daar te stel, hom afspeel. Die daarstel van 'n nuwe, meer relevante opvoedkunde konfronteer opvoeders met die taak om navorsing te doen oor en te eksperimenteer met veral nuwe metodes en 'n meer demokratiserende verwerking van kurrikulum- en kursus-inhoude. Die verkenning van die dialogiese aard en metode van Bybel/godsdiensonderrig moet binne hierdie raamwerk sowel as binne die raamwerk van interdissiplinêre dialoog beoordeel word. Die transformerende effek van die kommunikasie tussen God en mens, die aspekte van sowel die transformerende gebeure in die didaktiese kommunikasieproses, die kontekstuele betrokkenheid van die dialogiese leerervaring en die transformerende effek van die gesuggereerde emosionele ruimte in die leersituasie vorm die beginsels ten grondslag van hierdie voordrag. Die dialogiese model kan effektief aangewend word om leerlinge/studente te begelei om Bybelinhoude selfstandig en relevant te kontekstualiseer, om die gesonde persoonlikheids- en sosiale ontwikkeling van leerlinge interaksioneel te stimuleer en om 'n meer demokratiese asook assertiewe ingesteldheid by leerlinge te stimuleer.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to participate in the dialogue on a more democratic, more effective and a more relevant education system for pupils in South Africa, especially in the field of Bible/religious education. I give a broad overview of the general needs

* A first draft of this paper was read at the annual gathering of the Southern African Biblical Studies Society in Johannesburg at the Rand Afrikaans University, 1990. An example of the application and explication of this model can be found in Smit (1989).

in education and then proceed to motivate and explain the nature, function and use of what I would like to call a dialogical model of instruction.

2. The general context of education in South Africa

Broadly speaking, the current education situation in which the majority of the people of South Africa find themselves at the moment, can be described as follows (Khanyile 1989):

Education comprises one of the major arenas of the political struggle against the illegitimate, authoritarian, oppressive and hegemonic South African government. Education in South Africa is exclusively geared towards the protection and advancement of white privileges and white domination. The inferior Bantu education is a co-opted partner in upholding this system by creating 'schooled people' who cannot compete with the white minority on an equal footing. This system only produces a workforce for the white bureaucracy. We have to start building an alternative now.

In describing the general aim and activities of the National Education Crises Committee (NECC), one of the most progressive education movements in this country, Khanyile (1989) makes the following statement:

The aim of the NECC is to replace the undemocratic, coercive, ineffective and irrelevant education system of this country with a democratic, participatory and relevant alternative. We demand a single, entirely new and an equal education system which functions according to democratic values and procedures. We reject the authoritarian structures which force irrelevant curricula, irrelevant course-content and undemocratic teaching methods on us.

Khanyile (1989) describes the different spheres in which a more progressive alternative education system has to be developed as follows:

The challenge is to do research on and experiment with new, innovative, more efficient and more democratic teaching methods; to develop more relevant curricula and course content; to examine and transform educational structures so that positive, creative communication can take place between teachers and pupils and teachers and the broader community; to eliminate race as part of the entrance requirements to educational institutions; to urge educators in all educational institutions to participate in people's education so that illiteracy, especially, can be eradicated.

Referring to Gramsci's 'morbid symptoms of the *interregnum*', i.e. the instability in societal structures during a time of change from one epoch to another, Hartshorne (1990) predicts

... a further deterioration and a further disintegration in African education in South Africa in the next three years. The old system has died, but the new has not yet been born ... Research is urgently needed by all concerned educators.

It is against this background that I want to propose a model of dialogical instruction for the contextually-relevant learning (Freire 1985) of the Bible. The model can play a role in emancipating the teaching practice in South Africa from the totalitarian and totalising discourses of *apartheid*, capitalism, Marxism, Africanism and state authoritarianism. Since the dialogical model which I propose in this paper is democratic and inter-disciplinary in nature, it facilitates not only a democratic discourse but also instigates democratic structures, procedures and values according to which people within the education situation interact in the teaching/learning practice. In a democratic teaching *praxis* the agencies, influences, circumstances, problems and expectations of all individuals, groups and institutions represented, must be taken into consideration and officially and practically accounted for.

3. The dialogical nature of biblical communication

The biblical concept of the dialogue between God and humanity can serve as basis for the understanding of the introduction of the dialogical model of instruction into the subject/s of Bible/religious instruction as well as Biblical Studies.

In connection with the discussion on the question of the center or *Mitte* of the Old and New Testaments, it can be argued that the idea of the dialogue between God and humanity underlies some of the most important proposals. Eichrodt's (1961) identification of the 'covenant', that of Fohrer (1968) of 'the rule of God and the communion between God and man' and that of Vriezen (1977) of 'communion' as 'central concept(s)' or 'underlying idea(s)' of biblical theology, all rest on the basic assumption that there exists some form of dialogue or action and response between God and humanity.

In the Old Testament, the covenant communion between God and humanity is based on the communication or dialogue between Creator and created. It is the particular characteristics of God which form the basis of this dialogical relationship, viz. *rachum* (mercy, compassion), *chanun* (gracious, merciful) *chesed* (close boundedness, solidarity, togetherness, love), and *'emet* (faithfulness, loyalty) (Vriezen 1977:338ff). These characteristics create a sphere in which the individual as well as the people of God as a collective whole are introduced into the healing experience of a life under God's rule. The paradoxes of calling and grace, election and faithful obedience, grace and righteousness describe the complimentary concepts of the dialogical relationship between God and humanity. This dialogical relationship involves both the personal and socio-political spheres of life. The people of Israel experienced this dialogical relationship in a very special way in their interpretation of the Law, the prophetic preaching and teaching, their cultic activities, the oral and written wisdom traditions and personal encounters with (the creating and life-giving word/*dabar* of) God. God addressed his people as a collective whole in specific contexts of distress, oppression, need, and joy. His rule established the sphere in which He facilitated the obedience of his people. The people of God had to respond by putting into practice the word of God - not by legalistically following traditional or cultic precepts but by faithful creative

contextually-relevant obedience. In their dialogical encounters with God, the people experienced the transforming, renewing and lifegiving power of the living God.

In the New Testament, the dialogical relationship between God and humanity is based on the teachings, preaching and activities of Jesus (who acted in the capacity of God's representative - cf texts like Mk 1:11 & 9:7) and the hearers' and perceivers' response. Through his words and deeds, Jesus introduced his followers to a life under the rule of God. A life under the rule of God implies the obedient practice of principles like love, justice/righteousness, grace, forgiveness, etc. Not only did the early Christian church practice the central concepts underlying the gospel in a contextually relevant way, it also had to innovatively create liturgical, social, economic, educational structures as well as (ethical) guidelines for interpersonal behaviour which the early Christians' various situations demanded. These responses to the divine address in and through the Jesus events had to be in line with the main thrust of the gospel message Jesus proclaimed. The contextually relevant way in which the gospel- and letter writers responded to this challenge witnesses to the creative development of this dialogical process of divine address and contingent obedient human response. Dialogical thinking occurs within the covenantal context of persons and involves all the human elements that make up a conversation or confrontation (cf Fensham 1971). It is reminiscent of oral discourse and is directly audience-centered because biblical thought '... is inseparable from the specific situation that evokes it' (cf Beker 1980). The dialogical relationship between God and humanity is based on the creative and life-giving Word of God (Jesus Christ). As the Word of God, Jesus practiced the ideals of God's grace, love and righteousness, and demanded the same from his followers - or to state it differently, he demanded that they too, live under the rule of God. The believer had to respond by furthering these ideals in society through faithful, creative, contextually relevant obedience.

If we understand the words 'dialogue with God' in a literal fashion, there are especially two aspects of this dialogue which have a bearing on our model of the dialogical teaching of the Bible. The first is that it is 'this creating, communicating, lifegiving, conversation between God and man' (Burden and Prinsloo 1987) which not only transforms humanity, but also the socio-political context. It is this transformatory or renewing aim and effect of God's Word which has to be perpetuated and developed in the contextually relevant dialogical way of teaching of the Bible (cf 4). The second is the fact that the quality of the relationship between God and man (grace, love, faithfulness and loyalty) must form the social and emotional sphere of the practice of this model (cf 5).

4. An adequate communication model underlying the dialogical method of Bible/Religious Instruction

4.1

The model of instruction proposed here, is based on Bakhtin's (in Todorov 1984:54ff) criticism in 1928 of Jakobson's (1981:18ff) model of literary

communication. This criticism basically comprises the fact that Jakobson's model creates the impression that linguistic exchange between people functions like the work of telegraph operators: the sender has a content to transmit, and encodes it with the help of a key and transmits it through the air; if contact is established, the receiver decodes it with the same key, thus recovering the initial content (cf Todorov 1984). Such a view of discourse comprises a reduction of discursive reality. Todorov (1984:55) states in this regard:

Discourse or dialogue does not maintain a uniform relation with its object; it does not reflect it, but it organizes it, transforms or resolves situations.

Bakhtin (in Todorov 1984:55) states that Jakobson's model is radically wrong because Jakobson regards the social relations between the author/text[A] and reader[B] as unchangeable and fixed; '... we also have a ready made message X, which must simply be handed over by A to B'. This fact as well as the fact that the critic must only determine the 'what' ('content') and the 'how' ('form') of (literary) discourse establishes a reductionistic and deterministic view of literary discourse.

In reality, the relations between A and B are in a state of permanent transformation; they continue to alter in the very process of communication. Nor is there a ready made message X. It takes form in the process of communication between A and B. Nor is it transmitted from the first to the second, but constructed between them, like an ideological bridge; it is constructed in the process of their interaction (Bakhtin in Todorov 1984:55f).

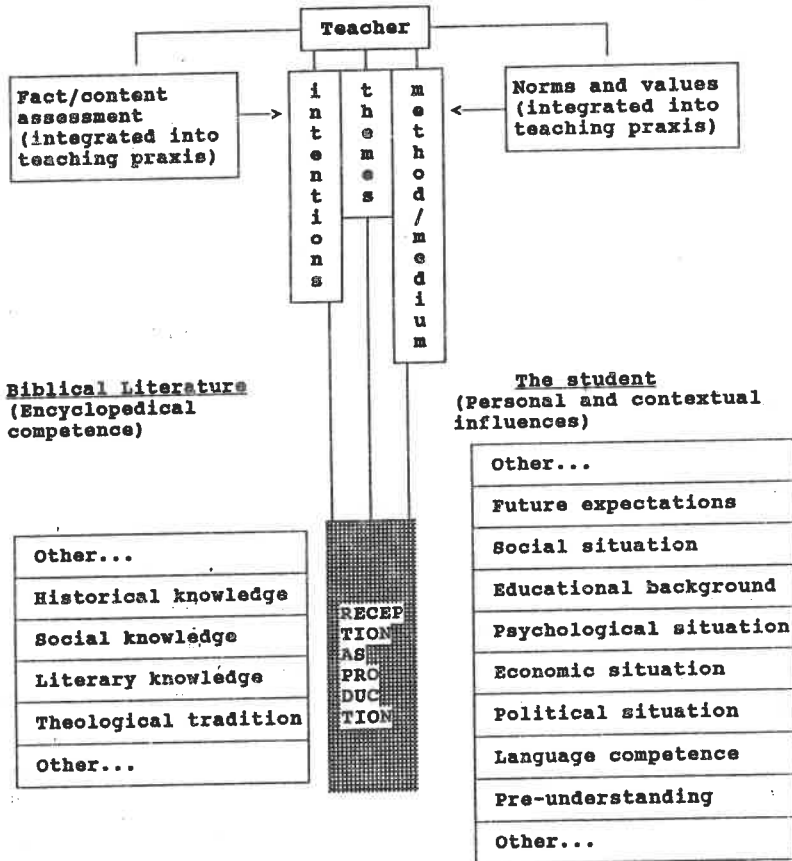
It is evident that Bakhtin reacts against Jakobson's deterministic abstraction of communication by retaining the qualities of living speech in his model of literary communication. Fowler (1981:85) criticizes Jakobson for the same reason. He states:

Being language, literature can't shed its interpersonal function. The theorist and critic, obeying his ideology (formalism in the case of Jakobson - my insertion) may choose (without knowing he is choosing) to downgrade the interpersonal in favour of the less committing formal-textual-poetic function. I choose, perhaps for equally ideological reasons, to draw attention to the inevitable and important interpersonal-interactional-discursive dimensions of literary texts.

Without going further into the criticism of Jakobson's model at this point, we can state that there exists a discursive or dialogical relationship between the literary text and the reader. The discourse or dialogue between text and reader can be seen as an event which brings about a 'process of interaction' in which the reader not only constructs or produces the message(s) of the text for him/herself but is also transformed by this process. From these observations it follows that: when more than one person participates in a discussion where a literary text forms the basis of the discussion, not only will each individual participant construct his/her view of the significance of the text, but each one will also be transformed by his/her interaction with the (literary) text.

4.2

The complex of interrelational functions playing a role in the process of literary reception is based on a 'communicative base relationship' (*kommunikatives Grundverhältnis* - Heuermann 1973:16) consisting of textual factors and factors influencing the productive reception of the text by the reader/pupil. On the side of the text, Heuermann (1973:16ff) identifies textual features (and their relevant subject disciplines) which determine the literary communication process. On the side of the reader he identifies all the individual elements (and their relevant subject disciplines) present in and influencing not only the personality and/or constitution of the individual reader but also the activity of producing a particular individual contingent reading. When transposing this communicative base relationship of literary communication to the didactic situation, a third relation influencing the process of literary reception is opened up, viz. that of the educator/lesson plan and the pupil. The elements influencing the pupil from this side comprise the features of intentionality, thematics, method/medium, norm evaluation, evaluation of facts and analyses of forms as they emanate from the lesson plan/educator/instruction. An adapted version of this complex of functions (excluding the related disciplines) which all converge in the central concept of reception, can be explicated schematically as follows (cf Heuermann 1973:24, 1975:98 & 1982:23):



Textual components and features influencing the pupil in the reading situation are depicted on the left and the right of the centre of reception respectively. Textual components function as different levels of encyclopedical knowledge establishing a) a context within which the text refers as well as b) procedures or disciplines facilitating the restructuring of this context. In order to understand the text, the reader will have to supply his/her encyclopedical competence - which varies from person to person - about the text. In the didactic situation, this competence is supplied as part of the instruction. It is evident that it is possible - according to this model - to raise the level of reader competence. Features influencing the student, comprise the totality of personal circumstances and characteristics determining the individual's level of participation as well as the contingent context in which a contingent reading is produced. The educator acts as facilitator and creates the atmosphere as well as the educational situation in which the reading of the text takes place. The basic norms underlying the dialogical model of instruction and influencing not only the encyclopedical competence for interpreting the text and the personal and contextual influences on the student but also the reception process itself basically comprises norms expounded in this article, viz. democratic procedures, mercy, grace, solidarity, love and loyalty as well as meaningful interaction between peers. The way in which the intentions, themes, medium of education and subject content are assessed and handled according to these norms in the education situation can be explained adequately in terms of suggestopedic procedures (cf 5 and 6).

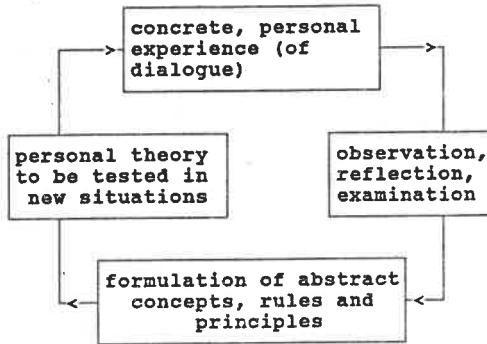
4.3

Applied to the dialogical teaching model, the pupil is given the opportunity, not only to read the text in a creative way in the class situation, but also to interact with and confront other pupils with his/her particular reception of the text through dialogue. The total complex of all these factors play a creative and creating role in the formation of messages (influencing other participants in the didactic situation) as well as in the retro-active exchanges in the speaker him/herself (caused by the messages of the other participants' speech reactions). The interaction of participants with each other will facilitate personal transformation. The particular characteristics of the participants in a dialogue therefore not only influence the content of the conversation but also determine the changes which take place during the conversation in the psycho-social constitution of the individual. Wardhaugh (1986:39f) explains this dialogue as follows:

Each must present him/herself to the others. Each must at every moment decide who he is and what he is doing, where he is and what he is saying, has said, is about to say and does not wish to say and how all the foregoing is related to all the other things done and said and possibly to be done and said.

4.4

How these factors play a formative role in the constitution of the individual can be explained by the experiential learning cycle of Johnson & Johnson (1975:7ff):



Experiential learning is based on three assumptions, viz.:

- a) Personal involvement facilitates optimal learning.
- b) Self discovered knowledge facilitates changes in behaviour.
- c) Personal goalsetting motivates commitment to learning.

In the 'process of interaction in dialogical or discursive learning, the process-character of the learning experience highlights the fact that every individual participant changes or is transformed in a variety of ways, due to his/her dialogical interaction with other people, the biblical material, his/her context and ultimately with God. Pupils participating in the dialogical learning process will, according to Johnson's model, reflect upon the dialogue which took place. This is accompanied by the formulation of abstract concepts, rules and principles. It is then tested in real life, which in turn facilitates feedback, on the basis of which the activities of observation, reflection and examination takes place, and so on.

In point 2 above, I draw attention to the fact that it is extremely important that we develop and experiment with more democratic (or democratising) models of teaching; in point 3 I state that the quality of the relationship between God and humanity (grace, love, faithfulness and loyalty) can form the social and emotional sphere or context of the practice of the 'dialogical model of instruction' and in point 4 I explain some relevant aspects of the different levels of interaction in the dialogical teaching situation. I believe that aspects of Suggestopedia, as developed by Lozanov (1978), can further extend our concept of the dialogical model of instruction.

5. General aspects of suggestopedia

According to Balevski (1979) suggestopedia as teaching method rests on the profound observance of three educational principles and three means of organising the training process. Balevski (1979) describes these principles as follows:

5.1

Through unconditional acceptance and the creation of a relaxed psychological state of mind, the educator invokes a feeling of joy and lack of tension in the pupil. The simulated concentration of attention on study material as well as the psycho-traumatic fixation on society's limiting suggestive norms are dropped. This 'atmosphere' of 'decentered concentration' facilitates the rapid as well as successful mastering of large volumes of study material without any manifestations of boredom, fatigue, stress and anxiety.

5.2

The individual is viewed as somebody who participates with his/her full personality in the instruction and learning process. In this process the unity of the conscious and the subconscious states of mind of the individual are fully utilised. Not only rational functions like conscious attention and the conscious realisation of subject matter, but also the emotional aspects of the individual, like the personality, interests, aspirations and other reserve capabilities are activated in the learning process.

5.3

The principle of suggestive interrelation comprises the interpersonal relations between educator and pupil. The educator steers the instruction process toward activating the reserve capabilities of the human personality. As such, the training practice acquires the value of a therapeutic practice during which the pupil is assisted to develop a healthy self-esteem as well as a harmonious, mature personality.

The basic suggestopedic principles which are realised through psychological, didactic and artistic means can be described as follows:

5.4

The educator follows a comprehensive psychological approach which facilitates the unburdening of and liberation from de-suggestive or psycho-traumatic blocks restricting the individual from realising his/her full potential. Student-teacher interaction becomes more humane and unpretentious. It is pervaded by mutual understanding and assistance.

5.5

The didactic means emphasises an inter-subject relationship which focusses on the relationship of pupil(s) with the main issues, themes and activities of life. The creation and understanding of comprehensive themes and broad rational generalisations form part of this process.

5.6

The artistic means comprises not only the artistic expression of information by pupils, but also the artistic presentation of teaching material as well as the institution's general emphasis on art. The so-called 'right hemispheric brain activities' like imaginative thinking, orientation in space and time, musical ability, artistic creativity and intuitive thinking are activated in this instance of instruction.

Although this model is especially effective in the learning of new languages, it also proves very effective in Biblical Instruction and the teaching of Biblical Studies. The basic assumption underlying the use of this procedure, is that it circumvents the covert grid which restricts the individual of realising his/her potential. The unconscious restrictive ideas which function in terms of self-fulfilling prophecies (Dhority 1985:13) can then be transcended.

6. Aspects of suggestopedia relevant in the activity of dialogical instruction in the South African context

6.1

Bodenstein (1990) states that from the moment of birth, each person experiences his/her particular society as suggesting certain affective, cognitive and moral coordinates determining and structuring perceptions of the self, behavioural patterns and expected and accepted social roles. This complex of suggestions comes from the social, educational, physical, cultural, economic and political environment. Each individual integrates these suggestions into his/her own personal constitution. As part of one's personality, these suggestions suggest to the individual not only his/her value, specific position, function and worth in life, but also the limitations restricting him/her from pursuing the development and realisation of his/her ultimate potential. These suggestions are extremely powerful and suggest 'irrational and unfunctional beliefs' (Bodenstein 1990) about one's own limitations. As these restrictive suggestions are integrated into the individual's un- and subconscious levels of perception, Lozanov (1978) developed a procedure whereby these restrictive suggestions are de-suggested and replaced in the education situation by positive suggestions making it possible for the individual to go beyond these restrictive limits, and to realise his/her potential (Dhority 1985:12).

Lozanov's basic assumption can therefore be summed up in the following terms: people realise only a fraction of their potential, because their environment suggests to them that they are not able to go beyond certain emotional, intellectual and ethical limits (Bodenstein 1990). The environment basically hampers and restricts the individual on the level of his/her self-esteem, self-confidence, self-realisation and belief and faith in him/herself. Lozanov labels these restrictive environmental suggestions 'anti-suggestive barriers' because they function as obstacles preventing one from being open to suggestions aimed at facilitating self-realisation. Bodenstein (1990) describes these barriers as follows:

- a) Emotional barrier: The pupil rejects anything likely to produce a feeling of loosing confidence or security.
- b) Rational barrier: The pupil rejects anything which is not congruent with his/her own (limited) way of reasoning.
- c) Ethical barrier: The pupil rejects anything that is out of harmony with his/her own (limited) ethical views.

It is a basic assumption according to suggestopedia, that every educator suggests certain emotional, rational and emotional perceptions to the pupil/student. If the educator is unaware of the influence of his/her suggestions, s/he could restrict the pupil(s)/student(s) education and development substantially (Dhority 1985). The educator should play a role in eliminating anti-suggestive barriers. The educator should be part of the 'solution' to and not the 'problem' of education in this regard.

In the education situation the educator must not confront these barriers head-on. It is imperative that the educator encourages the pupil to act out or voice his/her emotions, arguments and beliefs. Bodenstein (1990) states that the educator must recognise the validity of each and every person's right to be him/herself and to embrace his/her own beliefs - even when it is quite obvious that these beliefs are barriers. The educator must further encourage or suggest to the pupil that s/he can go beyond these barriers and realise his/her unused potential. Through this process, old beliefs of 'I can't' and 'I'm no good' are de-suggested in favour of the suggestions of 'I can', 'I may' and 'I'm OK'. This positive suggestive learning environment will give the pupil the feeling of unconditional acceptance, the experience to express honestly his/her feelings, thoughts and will, and will facilitate a positive self-esteem, the self-confidence which s/he needs in order to realise his/her potential as well as to confront challenging experiences in his/her environment creatively (cf Bodenstein 1990 & 1981:34ff). The didactic sphere thus created is reminiscent of the social and emotional sphere or context in which the quality of the relationship between God and humanity is facilitated.

6.2

Generally speaking, the following are anti-suggestive barriers restricting pupils' learning and socializing abilities as well as the integration of sound biblical norms in the current South African context. The educator has to de-suggest these anti-suggestive values during the dialogical instruction process.

Barriers in black education
 (extracted from Burman 1986,
 Dostal and Vergnani 1984,
 Foster 1986, Sarap 1986)

To be "black" means that you are an inferior person.

To be "black" means that you are not as clever as whites.

To be "black" means that you

Barriers in white education
 (extracted from Du Preez 1983),
 Dostal and Vergnani 1984,
 Foster 1986, Le Roux 1986)

"Whites" are superior to blacks.

To be "white" means that you can achieve better than blacks.

Blacks are genetically inferior

cannot study, understand and succeed in the natural sciences.

To be "black" means that you can only aspire to be a worker for a white boss.

In order to succeed in South African society, you have to do things "the white way".

You cannot address a "white" person as an equal.

You have to accept the daily insults "whites" direct at you

to "whites" in terms of their potential of studying and understanding the sciences.

Whites are threatened by blacks and must "keep them in their place".

South Africa is an afflicted country and (wrongly) rejected by world opinion. The only right way of doing things is the "white" (Afrikaner) way.

"Blacks" addressing whites as equals are impudent.

Whites feel that they can insult "Blacks" freely.

Following Lozanov, (cf also Habermas 1971:156ff and Dhority 1985:12) we can say that these master symbols not only structure the social behaviour of people in South African society according to *apartheid* principles, but they also prevent pupils from developing into healthy, well-balanced people who are out to realise their potential. As such, they restrict people's ability to socialise meaningfully with other human beings. They also function as barriers preventing people from realising their God-given potential.

If the educator addresses these barriers head-on, it would be counter-productive, because it will only activate the existing ingrained, emotional, rational and ethical barriers of resistance to alternative perspectives, beliefs or master symbols. In order to play a meaningful role in the democratizing of the teaching process these master symbols must be de-suggested and pupils motivated in the dialogical learning process to move beyond their inhibiting and restrictive limits.

7. The dialogical method of instruction

A dialogical method of instruction must create a space in which the different aspects of education as expounded so far, can be accommodated, viz. the dialogue between God and the pupil (cf 3 above), a process of personal growth and transformation in the productive interaction with biblical literature (cf 4.1 & 4.2 above), the creative process of dialogical interaction with peers (cf 4.3 & 4.4 above) and a suggestive educational sphere/atmosphere in which the pupil can develop a healthy understanding of the realisation of his/her own potential without infringing on the freedom of others (cf 5 & 6 above). In order to instigate a contextually relevant dialogue in which the Bible functions as primary discourse partner, a variety of procedures can be followed. These procedures incorporate the theory as set out above. The outlines of the method of dialogical instruction can be described as follows:

7.1

Start the dialogue or discussion by means of presenting ambiguous statements, followed by the instructions to state whether they are 'true' or 'false', followed by the instruction to 'motivate' the choice. A statement is ambiguous when it has more than one 'sense' or 'hard core meaning'. Some instances of synonymy, homonymy, polysemy, structurally ambiguous sentences and referentially versatile phrases can be used in these statements (cf Hurford & Heasley 1986:121ff). The choice between 'true' and 'false' draws the pupil into the appropriate dialogical context and tempts the pupil to 'own' the 'problem' as represented by the ambiguous question. The theme or problem triggers off responses within the listener. Two basic types of responses are triggered off, viz.: an intuitive, naive response by which the listener unconsciously opts for one perspective, or the other; an internal dialogue within the listener. The listener creatively weighs the truth value of the statement against the background of his/her personal and contextual disposition. When the listener is confronted with the 'motivate' instruction this internal dialogue is then pursued on a more conscious level where the initial 'intuitive' reactions are then reviewed more consciously. The pupil is now playing the 'dialogical game' within him/herself, and prepares to share personal views, whereupon the discussion or conversation ensues.

7.2

Open up the thematic context for discussion through ambiguous statements, thematic or contextual descriptions, documents or information. These procedures trigger off a theme, a complex of themes, real-life problems/situations or challenges which function as a basic frame of reference, context or as an actual situation of discourse within which the discussion proceeds. The pupil is 'forced' to supply an agenda, suitable to the basic frame of reference or context. This agenda includes topics relevant to the basic frame of reference that s/he feels should or could be brought up for discussion (Wardhaugh 1986:29,113 and 139ff). Personal and contextual influences (cf 4.2) will determine the particular agenda that the individual as well as the group supplies for the productive reception of the text.

7.3

Read the appropriate biblical text. The pupil will already try to see connections between the context of the discussion and the text.

7.4

Supply relevant encyclopedical knowledge, i.e. relevant historical, social, literary or theological information about the text (Widdowson 1975). An encyclopedia contains factual information of a variety of types, but generally, no information on the meanings of words (as in a dictionary) (Hurford & Heasley 1986:184). The encyclopedical knowledge of the biblical text will enhance a better understanding of the significance of the text in its 'original' context.

7.5

Supply an interpretation or question the significance of the text in the biblical and succeeding context(s). This will not only supply the 'rules of the game' of

contextualising the text in the individual's or group's context(s) but also facilitates a dialogue with previous interpretations/contextualisations, i.e. 'readings' in different 'horizons' (Jauss 1970:176).

7.6

Further (ambiguous) statements or probing questions can be used to stimulate dialogue and facilitate the contextually relevant understanding of the text by the individual as well as by the group.

7.7

The contextually relevant production of meaning by the individual and/or the group for their own context(s) takes place *via* and during the conversation. The interaction between text and context rests on the assumption that:

Contexts are constructed continuously during the course of a conversation. As a conversation progresses, items previously unmentioned and not even associated with the topics so far discussed are mentioned for the first time and then become part of the context of the following utterance.

(Hurford 1986:70)

This model does not ask that the 'meaning of the text' should be 'applied' or 'appropriated' to the reader's own context - 'meaning' is produced, weighed and sifted and 'internalised' during the process of instruction and continues long after the instruction event.

8. Dialogical instruction in the current context of education in South Africa

During the last fifteen years, education has become '... one of the major arenas of political struggle ...' (Khanyile 1989, cf 2 above.)

The criticism against the education system and educational practises in South Africa (cf 2 above) has revealed the education system as well as the pupils participating in this system as heavily politicised. This fact cannot be ignored. The dialogical model proposed in this article addresses this issue and provides a viable alternative method of instruction which can creatively capitalise(!) on the politicisation of the educational environment. Apart from the fact that the model introduces dialogical interaction in the classroom (facilitating a more democratic teaching practice), contextual realities are taken into consideration in the teaching and learning experience. The following discussion serves to provide a short overview of how the model can be applied to biblical instruction. Matthew 5:43-47 serves as example. The realities of 'township' life provide the context for the example. The highlighted sections indicated below can be presented to the class with the help of an overhead projector.

8.1 Ambiguous statement

'Christians do not have enemies'. After the pupils committed themselves by choosing either 'true' or 'false', they have to 'motivate' their choice. In order to motivate their choice, pupils will offer a variety of arguments and examples from real life situations. This will get discussion going. Other statements that can be used are statements such as: 'it is very easy to like a person that does not like you'; 'nobody likes an enemy'; 'it is easier to be an enemy than to be a friend'; 'usually people do not know who their enemies are'.

8.2 Thematic context

If the 'ambiguous statement' approach is not used, a thematic or contextual description, a document or information about a specific event (e.g. from a newspaper) involving 'enemies' can be used to start the discussion. Using a contextual description, the following can be stated: 'In our situation, we have people opposing each other, trying to harm each other and to damage each other's property. They think that violence is a solution to disagreement. But violence solves nothing. It only leaves a lot of people hating each other. It is better to forget about disagreements and to live a peaceful life'. The same procedure, i.e. of stating whether this description with its 'solution' is 'true' or 'false', with the request to 'motivate' the choice, is applied.

8.3 Read the biblical text: Matthew 5:43-47

Subsequently, pupils can be asked to say what they think the significance of the text is with regard to the discussion that they have just had, or one can just go through to the next point.

8.4 Supply encyclopedical knowledge

The following encyclopedical knowledge about the structure of the text can be supplied. 'In this section, Jesus gives one command, one motivation and three qualifications of the command. The command is that his followers should love their enemies. The motivation is that they will then be "sons" of God. The qualifications of the command are that they must love unconditionally (as the Father does), that their love must encompass even people outside their close circle of relatives and friends, and that they should greet people as a token of this love. The motivation can be understood as follows: according to the Hebrew way of thinking, "to do the right thing", makes you a child of God. "The right thing", is what God requires you to do in order to create a situation of peace and harmony among people. If you do show love to people, you then act 'on behalf of God' as his 'son'.

The qualifications can be explained as follows: (1) The statement that God lets his sun rise and that he lets the rain fall on the evil and the good, is a statement about the fact that God loves all people unconditionally. God does not want people to change before he loves them. He loves them as they are. He loves them first. His love draws them into the sphere of his peace, harmony and wholeness.

(2) To love people in the same way that God loves people, means that his followers have to show that love to all people, irrespective of race, colour, or creed.

(3) To greet somebody in the context that Jesus lived, meant that you wished

him/her the peace of God. That means that you not only show that peace to all people, but you openly wish that they experience the peace and harmony of God in their own lives. That is the love Jesus wants his followers to show to everybody.'

Alternatively or in addition to the information above, the following encyclopedical knowledge about the enemies of Jesus' followers (who were Jews like Jesus himself) can be supplied.

'There are seven groups of people that this text could have referred to in Jesus' time. These are: (1) the Roman Empire which was oppressing the Jewish people in Palestine, (2) the Roman soldiers who represented their masters, (3) Herod Antipas, the ruler in Galilee, (4) some Jewish officials who collaborated with the Romans (5) some other Jewish groups (6) bandits and robbers living in the countryside and (7) individuals in society that Jesus' followers experienced as enemies. The Roman Empire illegally occupied many people's territories in the Mediterranean world. This was done by means of brute force. The Empire's governors and officials exploited the people in each country by heavy taxation. Apart from the atrocities of soldiers, many Roman and even some Jewish officials exploited and oppressed the people. The Roman occupation created very difficult living conditions for the Jews in Palestine (and also for other peoples in the Mediterranean world). One can understand that these suppressed peoples would have regarded and experienced the Romans, the military forces and their collaborators as enemies. In addition to this, the ordinary people always had to fear that bandits and robbers would rob, kill or molest them when they travel. Apart from all these enemies, some individuals would regard other acquaintances - sometimes even family (!) - as enemies for various personal reasons. It is in this situation that Jesus required his followers to love these enemies. This is an incredible command. The principle underlying the love-command is that the love shown by Jesus' followers draws the enemies into the sphere of God's salvation, peace and love.'

8.5 Supply an interpretation or question the significance of the text in the biblical and succeeding context(s)

In this section, the teacher can either supply some information about the socio-political situation of Jesus' own time or the time of Matthew or any subsequent context in history. Alternatively, an interpretation of the text for a particular context, can also be supplied. Pupils are then requested to discuss the significance of the text for this situation. The questions that should be asked are: how did or could people have applied this text to that particular context, or how did they fail to do so - e.g. the Jewish officials of Jesus' own time or the white Christians in the South African context.

8.6 Contextual relevancy

The question as to what the significance of this text can be for people in the particular 'township context' in which the pupils live can be posed. The issues that surfaced in the discussion (from 8.1 & 8.2) can then be addressed.

8.7 Significance of the biblical text for the group and/or individual

If this does not follow logically from the discussion of 8.6, it can be done as a separate exercise. Pupils can either discuss the significance of the text to their own individual situations or to their situation as a group, while referring to particular 'enemies' or situations of disharmony.

From this example, it is evident that a whole series of issues facing pupils in their own contexts will be addressed in the course of a class. The much needed proposal for a new alternative education system for South Africa falls outside the scope of this article. The dialogical model does however address issues such as the creative use of course-content, the dialogical empowerment of pupils, a more democratic interactive approach between pupils amongst themselves and dialogue with the teacher (cf 2 above). It will also facilitate a democratic discourse amongst pupils, where everybody's feelings, thoughts and situations are treated equally and with respect. In a nutshell: It can facilitate the contextually relevant learning of the Bible, where biblical values not only require contextual significance, but where pupils are taught how to play the game of making sense of biblical texts within their own particular context(s).

Although the dialogical model of instruction explicated in this article is primarily intended for Biblical Instruction, it can also be fruitfully applied in the teaching of other academic disciplines. The dialogical model focuses on one aspect in particular, namely the creative interaction of teacher and pupils, and of pupils amongst themselves. The course content and statements about contextual realities both guide and provide the framework for this (dialogical) interaction. As such, this model aims at providing an alternative to stifling, authoritarian and undemocratic teaching procedures.

9. The role of educators in the South African context

Apart from what was already said in this paper, the role of educators in the South African context can be described as follows:

9.1

Teaching should be relevant, i.e. it should address pupils in the context of their transformation/education or development as students - developmentally, physically, psychologically, socially, relationally, ethically, politically, etc. Pupils must feel that what they are being taught is relevant to their present concerns and their future needs.

9.2

Not description or explanation for the purpose of memorization but the challenging problematization of texts, situations, experiences, general environmental phenomena and the inter-relationship of facts/knowledge and context should occupy the scope of the learning experience. If education focusses on either the transfer of Bible knowledge or on the encyclopedical knowledge about the Bible, it is a

misrepresentation of the Bible's essential nature viz. to function as canon, i.e. to serve as a guideline for faith. The educator has to present the reality that confronts the pupils every day and challenge them to make sense of and/or to contextualise the Bible!

9.3

The main task of the educator is to stimulate an inquisitive attitude and creative, relational thinking. The allowance of a variety of perspectives (differing points of view), doubts, questions and criticisms can create the atmosphere in which all pupils will creatively interact with subject material, freely share personal perspectives and develop their own ideas. The emphasis is on 'learning to learn and to think' and not on learning facts (Hartshorne 1990).

9.4

Educators do not act out an authoritarian infallibility, but a learning experience through which s/he him/herself may grow with the pupils as well as with the programme (Heuermann 1973:33). Teachers' restrictive suggestions and expectations of pupils (Dhority 1984 & 1985) are also circumvented in this way.

9.5

The themes, methods, intentions, norms and determining of facts (Heuermann 1973 and 1975) must be critically evaluated by the educator him/herself as well as in consultation with colleagues. The democratizing principles spelled out in this article as well as similar principles can serve as a framework from which and against which the teaching practice can be practiced and evaluated. Critical evaluation by external agencies like 'inspectors' and 'subject advisors' are at present hampering this process because instead of being creatively involved in the development of a relevant education system and teaching practice

... they visit our schools or inspect record books not with the aim of giving advice and assistance to teachers but simply to harrass them.

(quoted in Hartshorne 1990).

Educators who are really concerned about the undemocratic, de-humanizing, racialistic, racist and exploitative structures and attitudes which are rife in the education system of this country will not only actively resist these measures and anti-suggestive barriers but also work together to eradicate them and to develop methods, models and procedures, which will facilitate a better and more just education system. As Bible/Religious Instruction is a subject taught in basically every school in this country, I believe that the optimal utilisation of this subject can prove to be a helpful tool in achieving this goal.

The model of dialogical instruction as spelled out in this paper has a dynamic of its own. As a model which not only imparts relevant knowledge, but also stimulates meaningful contextually-relevant dialogue, I believe that it provides us with a relevant and viable addition to our corpus of teaching methods for or models of Bible/Religious Instruction. In comparison with existing models of instruction, I see the main contribution of this model as the establishing of a covert intuitive practice,

i.e. relevant, democratic, interactive dialogue in the classroom situation (sometimes intended, hoped for or even taught but never practiced) as an overt pedagogic principle.

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