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A Curriculum of Inclusivity: Towards a "Lived-Body" and "Lived-Experience" Curriculum in South Africa

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Abstract

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's "lived body" theory, we argue for a shift towards a lived-experience and body-specific curriculum in South Africa. Such a curriculum would view learning as a lived, embodied, social and culturally contextualised field. Its central aim would be to draw the learner into a plane of consciousness conducive to being awakened to the act of learning through an attitude of full attention. We specifically use the term "body-specific" to imply, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all curriculum model, one in which lived experience and the "body" form the conceptual basis on which the curriculum is built. Consequently, we reject the orthodox cognitive conception of the curriculum which views learning as a mental exercise oriented towards the acquisition of pre-designed knowledge that is "outer fixed" and "inner constructed". In contrast, we propose that learning should be outwardly constructed through lived experience and inwardly fixed (embodied) as knowledge develops against the pre-noetic background of the lived world. Underpinning this is the essentially Merleau-Pontian notion that the knowledge we hold originates from (i) our relationships with this world that are embodied in experience, and (ii) our engagements within society and culture. The "inner" and "outer" shift in learning infers a switch from pure, disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer-reviewed and almost exclusively university-based learning to experience-based, applied, problem-centred, trans-disciplinary, heterogeneous, hybrid, demand-driven learning. In such a curriculum, the role of the teacher would be to focus on how the world arranges itself around the learner and to guide learners to see how the world reveals itself to them through their personal lived experience.

Introduction

The recent student protests since 2015 in universities across South Africa instilled a sense of urgency into the post-apartheid transformation process, and in particular the "decolonisation" of the curriculum, which centres on Western epistemologies. These at times violent protests, under the banner of the #FeesMustFall movement, and the intensification of demands for a decolonised curriculum, led to a nationwide shutdown (in the last terms of 2015 and 2016) of all universities across the country. For full details of the #Fees Must Fall movement and the call for a decolonised curriculum, see Murris (2016), Le Grange (2016) and Postma (2016). At national level, decisions were taken, such as the Minister of Higher Education Blade Nzimande's response that the university curriculum must be decolonised. In the Western Cape, we witnessed the appointment at UCT of a central curriculum committee to co-ordinate the decolonisation of the university, and a colloquium on decoloniality at the University of the Western Cape in May 2017 (Le Grange, 2017). In other provinces across the country, universities hosted various panel discussions on these topics, while further discussions took place at national

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conferences, such as the Southern African Educational Research Association conference on how to decolonise the curriculum. The local *Journal of Education* published two special issues in search of new ideas on how to decolonise the university curriculum. Despite all these initiatives, however, the legacy of colonial education with its concomitant Western epistemological discourses remains in evidence not only in our universities but also in our schools. The student protests and the calls for a decolonised curriculum serve as an urgent wake-up call for curriculum change in South Africa in all sectors of the education system.

Le Grange (2017) maintains that all the post-apartheid curricula in South Africa which culminated in the national curriculum frameworks had more in common with the apartheid curriculum framework inspired by Frank Taylor (1911) and Ralph Tyler (1949). These curricula were merely lighter or heavier versions of the so-called "Tylerian factory" model of schooling. In sum, in this curriculum model the educational process is synonymous with the production line of an industrial system aimed at producing specified products. This is because the focus in all these curricula is on "high knowledge" and "higher-level skills" (DoBE, 2011), which are all directly linked to the objectives of a specific economic strategy. Based on our personal experiences as both teachers and teacher educators in South Africa over the last 20 years, it seems to us that teaching and learning are fundamentally the same in schools and universities today as they were almost 50 years ago. Scholars such as Jansen (1999, 2002), Koopman (2017), Le Grange (2017) and Ogunniyi (2007), amongst others, thus concur that the principles according to which the post-apartheid curricula were designed were geared towards developing learners who remained consumers of predesigned knowledge. In other words, these curricula did not represent a break with the past and remained unchanged despite concerted criticism of their rigidly mechanistic and instrumental nature by deliberative curriculum scholars, re-conceptualists and complexity theorists. According to Beets (2012), these curricula were never aimed at producing adaptable, thinking, autonomous people, who are self-regulated and capable of co-operating with others (p. 69), but were rather a continuation of the apartheid agenda of advancing curricula to prepare learners to participate in the labour market. Pinar (2015) notes that a new curriculum that does not value and embrace human subjectivity ("self-knowledge") in its design and development features runs the risk of repeating past mistakes. He claims that a curriculum that is stripped of human subjectivity and historicity becomes a projection that only reproduces the past (p. 188).

This brief outline of the background to post-apartheid education brings us to the aim of this paper. To address the current problem, such as the demand for a decolonised curriculum to break with South Africa's apartheid past, we argue for a shift towards a *lived-experience* and *body-specific* curriculum. In the language of Pautz (1998, p. 37), we contend that such a curriculum has the potential to draw learners into a *plane of consciousnes*s that has the potential to *awaken* them to the present through an attitude of full attention that is connected to the world around them. Such a curriculum requires teachers to look beyond pre-designed school content and other institutionalised forms of knowledge, and to draw on the *"body-knowledge"* or *"embodied knowledge"* of the learner as an integral part of the learning environment. What makes knowledge concrete and finite is its rootedness in our bodily orientation and behaviour: "Perception is not born just anywhere", but "emerges in the recesses of the body" (Carman, 2008, p. 9).

Before we discuss the philosophy of learning based on lived experience, we first focus briefly on the historical roots of the notions of "lived experience" and the "lived body" in curriculum theory to illuminate the importance of the "body" in action *in* and *to* the world as a meaning-making mechanism.

Brief Account of "Lived Experience" and the "Lived Body" in Curriculum Theory

In South Africa, phenomenology, although it does not feature in curriculum theory, can be traced back to as early as the 1960s and the work of Oberholzer (1968), Nel (1968), Landman (1975), Van der Stoep (1969) and various others, who were all members of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. Krüger (2008) reports:

> At UP we were immersed in phenomenology – pure unadulterated existential phenomenology (which, by the way, had very little to do with existentialism, a philosophic trend which was regarded as unacceptable). I was immersed in the phenomenology of, *inter alia*, C. K. Oberholzer (1955, 1968) and saw the person ("man") as existential, but open to meaning-giving possibility. The approach at my disposal was the phenomenological method accompanied by the hermeneutic and the dialectic methods ...., revealing the ways the essences of educational phenomena are actualized in their interrelationships. (pp. 216-217)

According to Krüger (2008), the search by academics at UP was for a unique pedagogical theory that would break away from the mechanistic and mechanical approaches to human learning that had their origin in the UK and USA. This search led to the development and design of Fundamental Pedagogics (FP). For a fuller account, see Oberholzer's (1954) seminal *Inleiding in die Prinsipiële Opvoedkunde* [Introduction to Fundamental Pedagogics]. This work led to FP becoming a

powerful educational doctrine in South Africa in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Oberholzer (1968) maintains that FP is "relatively autonomous" because it has fixed essences that reveal the structures of phenomena (p. 170). The important shortcomings of this work with respect to the phenomenological design principles are, firstly, that the teacher is required to describe the *phenomenon* so accurately that it does not provide any basis for debate or argument (Landman cited in Barnard, 1992); this approach thus disregarded and discounted the firmly held beliefs with which learners entered the classroom. Secondly, the pedagogical environment did not allow for deeper engagement with and exploration of the meaning of the phenomenon, nor did it encourage any open-minded dialogue, discussion, or exploration of ideas of a kind that would make the learner central to the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, it did not view the subject content as an opportunity to train learners to live responsibly. In other words, in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, phenomenology was very underdeveloped and misconstrued as a science of lived experience.

In the international arena during the 1960s, Pinar (cited in Pinar & Reynolds, 2015) identifies Dwayne Huebner as one of the first curriculum scholars to introduce phenomenology to curriculum studies. Huebner's work on phenomenology in the field of curriculum studies was inspired by Maxine Greene, a colleague of his at Columbia University, who drew heavily upon phenomenology, existentialism and imaginative literature in her studies in the field of philosophy of education. While Marla Morris (1998) points out that Greene's work was significantly influenced by phenomenological thinkers such as Sartre, Shultz and Merleau-Ponty, she suggests that Greene moved beyond the work of these authors in conceptualizing a phenomenology of the imagination. "Green's phenomenology of the imagination opens doorways to lived experience; it is through the imagination that educators may hope for better futures" (p. 124). This is because the imagination is characterised by freedom and authenticity, as such opening individuals to new possibilities for transforming their experience of the world. According to Pinar (2005), Greene's work had a profound influence not only on him himself, but also on a number of other prominent North American curriculum scholars such as Janet Miller, Madeleine Grumet, William Reynolds and many others. Along with various other Canadian and European scholars such as Ted Aoki, Max Van Manen and Donald Vandenberg, these scholars laid the philosophical foundations for the concept of a "curriculum-as-lived".

Pinar, who is one of the advocates of human subjectivity in curriculum studies, was introduced to phenomenology in 1967. He studied phenomenology with his graduate students – in particular, Madeleine Grumet – at the University of Rochester. In the early 1970s, Pinar developed the concept of *currere* – the word itself being the infinitive form of the Latin verb meaning "to run" – to refer to a curriculum envisioned as "the educational experience of a complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2015, p. 1) as opposed to the word "curriculum", which denotes a syllabus (objectives or outcomes). This new concept (*currere*) created a shift in curriculum studies from being a field focused on curriculum development to being one dedicated to understanding the very notion of a curriculum. Pinar's (2015) *currere* places the learner and his or her experiences in the world at the heart and the centre of the educational process. According to Pinar, the term *currere* emphasises the complexity of the notion of curriculum, given the fact that learners have unique educational experiences, needs and histories due to the diverse backgrounds from which they enter the learning environment. By 1975, Pinar had shifted his research interest from phenomenology to autobiography, and yet phenomenology – the recognition of the central importance of lived experience – remained foundational in his autobiographical work. Pinar's initial interest in phenomenology had nevertheless been focused entirely on developing a future for the field of curriculum studies after Ralph Tyler (Pinar, 2015).

Through the proliferation of many published works, Ted Aoki was acknowledged by Pinar (2015), Pinar and Irvin (2005), and other phenomenological scholars such as Pinar and Reynolds (2015) and Max van Manen (1990), as another curriculum scholar who had made a major contribution towards infusing the curriculum with phenomenology. This was illustrated by the publication of his collected works under the title *Curriculum in a New Key*. In the introduction to the book, Pinar explains how Aoki was introduced to phenomenology in the early 1970s, when he had to present a paper at a symposium in Montreal, Canada on the theme "Phenomenological Description: Potential for Research in the Fine Arts" (Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 1). Aoki's paper was entitled "Towards Curriculum in a New Key" and called upon scholars to open their thoughts and actions regarding the curriculum to reach beyond positivistic instrumentalism and to include European Continental scholarship. Two of the scholars he met at this symposium were Alfred Schütz (a noted phenomenologist) and Helmut Wagner (a disciple and colleague of Schütz). In 1978, Aoki met up again with Max van Manen, who by then was vigorously involved with Continental hermeneutic phenomenology. Subsequently, Aoki and Van Manen collaborated and promoted phenomenology as a practice and methodology in curriculum studies in Canada (Pinar, 2015).

Aoki advocated for "decentering the modernist view of education ... to open the way to include alternative meanings, including lived meanings, legitimated by everyday narrative – the stories and narratives in and by which we live daily" (Aoki, 1999, p. 180). Aoki envisioned curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived functioning simultaneously in the process of

teaching and learning (1999, p. 180). He held that the experiences of both teachers and learners are vital for effective (or authentic) learning to occur. As Magrini (2015) puts it:

> Aoki's practice of phenomenology reveals an understanding of an attuned mode of human transcendence in learning, which opens the possibility for an authentic educational experience where educators and students dwell in the midst of the curriculum's unfolding as an ontological phenomenon. (p. 274)

Given this vision of the curriculum, Aoki perceived education as a place where the in-dwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each should have for the other. What unites Aoki and the other curriculum scholars mentioned as having made invaluable contributions to the field of curriculum studies is the belief that learning is a human activity that cannot be separated from lived experience since, as Talero (2006) puts it, meaning "develops under our eyes" (p. 191). In other words, learning is situated everywhere and cannot be detached from embodied and social participation through experience. The notion of the body as a form of "practical intelligence" appears significantly in the work of Greene, Pinar, Aoki, Van Manen and others. For example, Greene explores how the body schemata work and how understanding how they work can serve as a basis for human development.

At the very core of the views of these phenomenological scholars, which also unites them, is the conviction that knowledge is primarily concrete, embodied, incorporated and lived (Evensen, Standal, & Ytterhus, 2017; Van Manen. 2014). As the sphere of transcendental consciousness, learning is viewed as characterised by the "appreciation of the ontological primacy of meaning and of the lifeworld" (Feilberg, Norlyk, & Keller, 2018, p. 217). Thus, the world is not something that is given to us, but something we engage with through our bodies as intermittent knowledge receptors when we are moving, touching, breathing, tasting and eating, which brings forth our concrete engagement with it. This means that a person's cognition depends on having a body, which Merleau-Ponty explains by structuring experience and its meaning as perceptual, emotional and expressive. Although the work of the above scholars embraces lived experience and consequently endorses curriculum-as-lived, they seem to overlook how the child is rooted not only in the "concrete", but also how the child "in the situation" or "context" is also attempting to project his or her personal "selfhood". Here selfhood refers to a shift towards a richer self-understanding from an essentially anonymous state to a more individualised or personal state, or from the natural to the cultural world. Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) writes: "[I]n pre-natal existence, nothing was perceived, and therefore there is nothing to recall. There was nothing but the raw material and adumbration of a natural self and a natural time. This anonymous life is merely the extreme form of that temporal dispersal" (p. 404). Thus, all of one's engagement with the world in lived experience can be viewed as a learning experience.

Consequently, these scholars did not move beyond the idea of *curriculum-as-lived*, as their focus was mainly on lived experience. Furthermore, although the body appears significantly in the work of Greene, it is more in a philosophical educational context. In this paper, we argue that more emphasis should be placed on the living body as a meaning-making, lived, embodied, social and culturally contextualised object of learning. From this perspective, we argue for greater focus on the perceptual and expressive incorporation of the social and cultural life that is often lived without being thought. As such, the curriculum should also take into account the invisible within the visible, the immediate perception of sense and significance that does not appear directly in a curriculum based on lived experience. It is only when lived experience and the living body are synchronised with conventional disciplinary knowledge that learning shifts from a process of understanding to a thinking process that transforms our being (Koopman, 2017). This is where the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty can make a solid contribution to the field of curriculum studies by moving beyond curriculum-as-lived.

The aim of this paper is, thus, to add to the existing body of knowledge and to argue for a "lived-experience curriculum" with specific focus on "body knowledge" or embodied knowledge as a form of authentic knowledge. This is because existential phenomenology differs from ordinary human experience as "individual being" or in Husserl's (1936/1970) epistemic or transcendental ego. To achieve this aim, we draw on Merleau-Ponty's (1945/1962) notion of the "lived-body" and argue that consciousness is perceptual, derived from experience, and shaped by context. In the next section, we provide a brief account of the work of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) and his notion of the lived body, as well as the way in which his philosophy can be used to shape modern-day discourses of curriculum as lived.

Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Perception

The foundation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology rests on two intertwined aspects, namely, (i) the "body" or "self", and (ii) the "world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962). In this tradition, "body" (self) is viewed from a different perspective than it is for phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger. The reason for this is that Merleau-Ponty views the body as "the point of contact between a material world and a mental representation of the world" (Rabil, 1967, p. 25). From this perspective, the body is seen as the centre of action, and this action he describes as an expression of the *"will"*, which automatically gives the body intelligibility

and privileged metaphysical status. This means that the body acts in the world in trivial ways by moving around, moving objects around, and in more creative forms of social relations, cultural roles and positions in search of meaning. In this process, whether trivial or creative, a constant flow of information through action takes place. According to Feilberg et al. (2018), human beings share meanings all the time when we have the attention of others or through joint recognition of a situation, even in complex emotional situations where sympathy and empathy are conveyed. In their view, this is how human beings learn to understand within a certain context the expression, for example, of being "funny" or "scary" or "trustworthy". This information comes from sharing, undifferentiated experience or practice. Most of the time we are simply a common "somebody", or what Heidegger call *das Man*. So it is through the living body in both physical and imaginary ways that meaning unfolds and how we get to know the world (Lilja, 2013).

In the Merleau-Pontian tradition the body has its own rules and laws that govern its perceptual power. From these perceptual powers a person develops his or her narrative identity in which he or she develops a personal understanding of the social field, cultural fields or even a specific skills set, which can be of an academic nature. According to Carman (2008), perception lies in: (i) the passivity of the sense experience (sensory dimension) and (ii) the activity of bodily skills (motor dimensions). These underpinning aspects or structures of perceptions do not function separately or independently, but are inseparable and run in unison as they form the centre of consciousness. Carman points to perception as "always both passive and active, situational and practical, conditioned and free" (2008, p. 79). Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) describes perception in terms of *body schema* and *motor intentionality*. In other words, body and world are viewed as overlapping sinews in a common "flesh" or an "interweaving" or "interlacing" of threads in a single fabric (Carman, 2008, p. 80). This implies that perception is grounded both in subjectivity and in objectivity of experience of its inner feel and its intentional grip on the world. Perception, thus, should be understood not as a mental phenomenon but rather as a bodily phenomenon.

Accordingly, the lived body can be viewed as one's intentional opening to the world, which in turn acts as a transmitter of information in experience. Lilja (2013) explains this when she states that "the body is related to and communicates with its surroundings" (p. 3). In lived space – for instance, the classroom – the sense organs receive and transmit information to the brain in different stages. During this transmission between body and the lived space of the room (or world) the person gains an understanding based on the significance of the room (or any object in the world) to that person. As people pick up information through their sense organs, it shapes their perception of the world. However, this perception constantly shifts, as they are always seeking for a "maximum grip" on the world by way of the intentional arch. The idea of a "maximum grip", as Jing and Jespersen (2017) note, comes "from his [Merleau-Ponty's] interpretation of perception and manipulation" (p. 312). Jing and Jespersen point out that, when we look at things around us, we adopt a level of self-referential intentionality in which we find the best body-set to take things in as a whole or in different parts. In other words, when I walk into a gallery and look at a specific painting, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) argues, I move around to find the right posture and distance from the painting to get a clearer view in order to get a better understanding of what I am looking at. Hence we search for the maximum visibility which is obtained through certain equilibriums between the interior and exterior horizons. What this implies is that my body is geared to the world when my perception provides me with the most varied and most clearly articulated spectacle possible. As my motor intentions unfold, they receive the responses and my action specifies perceptual ground, a background for my life, a general milieu for the co-existence of my body and world.

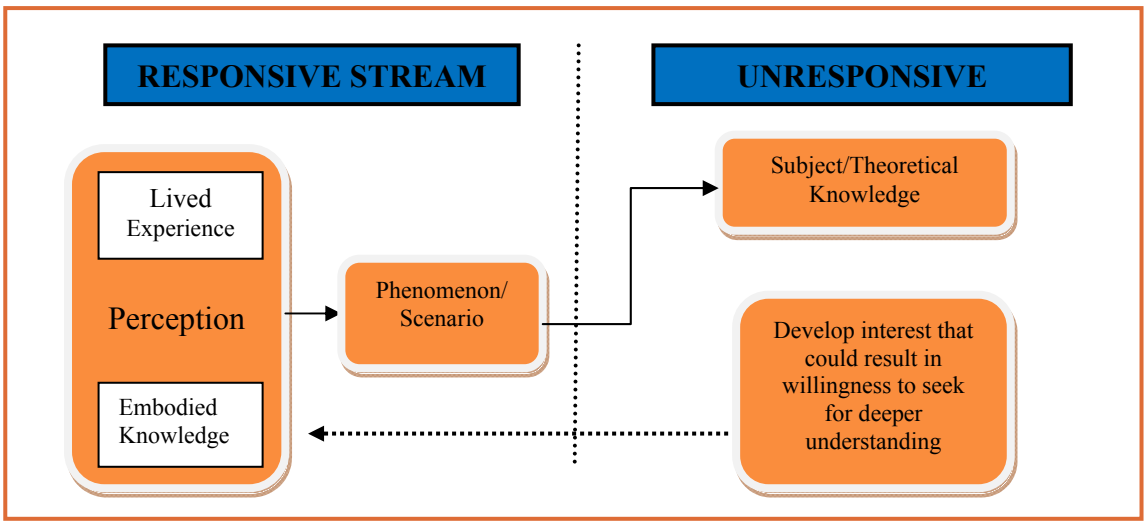
Consciousness is, therefore, situated in the body (Morris, 1998). Consciousness is being directed towards some object through the intermediary body. Carman (2008) contends that, even though the world is objectively out there, we perceive and know it through or by means of our inner experiences of some kind. We know it because we are open to the world, and because we are, at the same time, embedded in it (2008, p. 10). In relation to the learning process this is important, as it helps us to understand that to be awake to the present and the world enables us to experience a level of freedom in which the mind can take objects in by placing them in view and extracting the hidden shapes and meaning implicit in them. This points to our perception as bodily in nature, because the basis of our perception rests in the fact that we have a body that is immersed in the world. It is thus fair to assume that our perceptual perspectives are bodily perspectives. This means that perception comprises not properties of the mind and embodiment but constitutive elements of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962). This leads us to the question this paper confronts: How does the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty resonate with the notion of a lived-experience and body-specific curriculum?

Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy in Relation to a Lived-Experience and Lived-Body Curriculum

Like Merleau-Ponty, we reject the Cartesian view of the separation between mind and body, along with the notion that compositional representation takes place only in the mind. Both these aspects – the separation between body and mind, and purely mental representation – feature prominently in our current constructivist *CAPS* curriculum (DoBE, 2010) and its predecessor curricula

under apartheid with their behaviourist philosophical orientation. Merleau-Ponty views perceptual and bodily behaviour in terms of structures (Carman, 2008),. These structures are intuitively intelligible configurations and ensembles grasped from concrete situated perspectives. Feilberg et al. (2018) explain that structure denotes something stable within an experience or phenomenon. They aver that structure is often conceived of as a horizontal organisation of meaning resembling a momentarily fixed landscape-like coherence of sense and significance. In order to nurture and develop a learner's interest within a discipline, it is therefore important that we highlight or place the focus on the stable concrete structures that are embedded in lived experience. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatical representation of how the sequencing of events in a class could be structured to develop and nurture reflection that could lead to a more plausible or fruitful understanding of the content.

Fig 1: Sequencing of Events Following a Lived-Experience and Body-Specific Curriculum



As Figure 1 illustrates, a lived-experience and body-specific curriculum should embrace the learner's perception or active thinking derived from lived experience and embodied knowledge. This is because perception is embodied and situated in memory. Consequently, lived experience and embodied knowledge should serve as a basis or point of departure to create a suitable phenomenon or familiar scenario for the content. The chosen phenomenon should then be used to introduce the existing theoretical knowledge as intentional meaning making/giving process. If the learner develops a special interest in the phenomenon and how it relates to the theoretical knowledge from the respective disciplines, this could result in the willingness of the learner to look for a deeper theoretical explanation or orientation to the world. This can be done by means of introducing the content in a creative or innovative way that is plausible, intelligible and fruitful and that could stimulate further investigation. One way to do so would be by guiding the learner through constant questioning about his or her understanding of the phenomenon as well as of the key theoretical concepts and knowledge implicated. The questions could be structured in such a way that they prompt curiosity about the phenomenon to motivate the learner to further his or her understanding of it by developing a fruitful "research programme" on the topic or phenomenon under discussion. Cultivating or nurturing the experiences of children has the potential (through research programmes) to allow them to transcend their perceptual boundaries and transform what Greene refers to as their "perceptual landscapes" (1978, p. 103). These landscapes open the door to cultural and historical memories that allow us to reflect on the depth and quality of our perception. By reflecting on this, we unconsciously find ourselves in new learning spaces (unresponsive stream) that allow us to make that which is indeterminate (unknown) determinate (known) through open engagement and dialogue. The inevitability of this inheres in the fact that, as human beings, we are inchoate and our perceptions are always shifting. This speaks to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the intentional arc and the maximum grip, which explains how the mental content in our consciousness arranges itself and shifts over time. This is illustrated by the deepening of understanding by further investigation.

Figure 1 also underscores that all learning begins and ends with the lived world and embodied knowledge of the learner. This is because the perceptual information or mental residues in the memory carry information about phenomena which are linked to a particular sensory modality. This information is funnelled into two possible streams: an *unresponsive strea*m and a *responsive stream*. The border separating these two streams is porous and

therefore penetrable. In the classroom these streams can be stimulated through insightful questioning to lead the learner to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. By drawing on a learner's lived experience and body-specific knowledge, the teacher automatically activates the responsive stream, which could lead progressively to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as the learner becomes more deeply aware of his or her surroundings and of how a phenomenon relates to conventional disciplinary knowledge. It is therefore important, when introducing a topic, to proceed from focusing on an appropriate or familiar phenomenon that opens up the responsive stream, because, if the stimulus (experience) falls outside the receptor field, the "neurons" in effect short-circuit, leading to meaninglessness or pointless memorisation, so to speak.

To make the implications of Fig 1 more explicit, the following example illustrates why it is important that the curriculum take into account both lived experience and the living body of learners. Munyai (2017) reports that, in 2005, in an attempt to help the people of Malawi, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) developed a plan to hand out mosquito nets to curb the spread of malaria. However, instead of using the nets to cover themselves protectively when sleeping, the Malawians used them for fishing. While UNICEF thus believed that the most important need of the locals was to control the spread of malaria, their most urgent need was actually for basic sustenance. UNICEF was not in touch with the lived realities and experiences of the locals, and did not take into account the role of indigenous knowledge in finding solutions to the threat of malaria, for instance by sprinkling the urine of cows around the perimeters of their houses to repel mosquitoes. In other words, in order to avoid misunderstanding the actual needs of learners and thus to "solve the right problems" (Munyai, 2017), it is vital that curriculum planners and policy makers take into account the everyday lived experiences and realities of learners in the local context.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) avers that a person's knowledge develops within the pre-noetic background of the lived world. The implication of this is that the knowledge we hold originates from: (i) our relationships with this world that are embodied in lived experience; and (ii) our engagements with and within society and culture. These two dimensions, as illustrated in the example above, co-exist and constitute the experience of the wholeness of the person. Therefore, we suggest that when merging lived experience and embodied knowledge, curriculum planners draw information from a person's phenomenal field or perceptual experiences that inform or shape the perceptual consciousness. This means that the focus is not on what to think, but on how to bring experience into the equation as a way of nurturing the person's capacity to develop ways to think. This will not only provide the learner with a better understanding of his or her environment, but also improve self-understanding by cutting across the cultural paternalism that dominates so many individuals who are culturally bound.

Shifting the Knowledge Boundaries

Shifting towards a lived-experience and body-specific curriculum requires a shift from knowledge that is outer constructed to an inner construction of knowledge. This means a switch from mode 1 knowledge – pure, disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer-reviewed and almost exclusively university-based – to mode 2 knowledge – applied, problem-centred, trans-disciplinary, heterogeneous, and so forth (Gibbons et al., 1994). The shift to mode 2 knowledge will allow us to develop and nurture new ideas derived from experience. The outcome of the knowledge can be described as socially distributed knowledge and the skill that emanates from it. These new ideas will allow us also to generate new knowledge in the respective disciplines by giving our histories and culture an analytical turn. In 2004, the Department of Science and Technology in South Africa adopted a policy on indigenous knowledge systems [IKS] with the aim of promoting an African identity in the face of globalisation. The policy unpacks the prospective roles and contribution of cultural knowledge in the economy. One of the main objectives, among other things, was to involve academics and applied researchers in further developing the policy and, in the process, come up with innovative ideas and information in respect of IKS. Thus, by shifting to mode 2 knowledge, learners could be given the opportunity to formulate their own position on phenomena, especially cultural knowledge, and learn what could be useful and appropriate for their own development and growth. Instead of seeing the learner as an empty vessel needing to be filled with information or knowledge, the learner now becomes an intellectual resource drawing on his or her own experiences and embodied knowledge. When teachers draw from the fountain of embodied knowledge that learners hold, they could witness the emergence of multiple perspectives in relation to dominant discourses of knowledge. These multiple perspectives emanate from the social, cultural and historical pool of knowledge that shaped their learners' thinking through embodied experience of their world. As Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) reminds us, "I am my body". The teacher thus no longer has to rely on textbooks and electronic sources of knowledge, but rather views the learning environment as involving an intellectual exploration of individual experiences in which information flows from the core of human existence. Morris (1998) states that, because human consciousness is perceptual, embodied and situated, it yields multiple realities and interpretations that ground us among the shifting horizons that constantly allow us to overturn sunkenness in the common place.

Greene (1978) argues that, in such a paradigm, there is

a freedom that shapes the classroom culture. By connecting the learner to his or her experiences, we bring mind and body into a unison which forms the fundamental structure of perceptual consciousness. This reaction to learning will make the traditional classroom look strange. Here the term "strange" refers to an "awakening" that throws the person into a new province of meaning which will provide him or her with cognitive clarity about the world. If we want to open the doors of perception, we thus need to turn towards a curriculum underpinned by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of human consciousness with its perceptual mind-set embedded in the living body.

Conclusion and Research Recommendation

This paper calls for a lived-experience and body-specific curriculum embedded philosophically within existential phenomenology. Existential phenomenology as a theory is not about knowing, but about doing and being. Within the context of curriculum theory, it furthermore offers a way of connecting lived experience and embodied knowledge with the foci of the different disciplinary fields. The model presented (Figure 1) offers an explanation for the processing of experience. Each experiential event represents a new view of the world through experience. If the sensory modalities do not carry information about the event, the memory does not register it, rendering the learner incapable of making a cognitive leap. Conversely, if the responsive stream is activated, the experience becomes the object of consciousness which can be used as a hook to attach disciplinary knowledge. In so doing, the learner rises to a higher level of understanding that creates a deeper state of awareness between the learner and his or her surroundings. However, it is important to take into account the constant changes in society and thus that the theoretical lenses with which we view the world also need to be adjusted, not only in our personal worlds, but also in our institutions of learning.

The "lived-experience" and "body-specific" curriculum discussed in this paper is a theoretical construct of what the authors consider to be "one way of decolonising our school curriculum". The idea and structure of a lived-experience and body-specific curriculum, together with the various scenarios proposed by the authors, warrants further investigation in an actual classroom setting to obtain empirical evidence of how both teachers and learners might respond to and benefit from such an approach. This will enable realistic assessment of the practicality and usefulness of the proposed approach to curriculum design and development. Although the existential phenomenological framework used in this study provides direction for designing an inclusive curriculum, the logistical issues such as the operationalisation of explicit basic didactical structures, learning sequences, teaching and learning trajectories, and the didactical pros and cons of the respective approaches need further investigation.

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