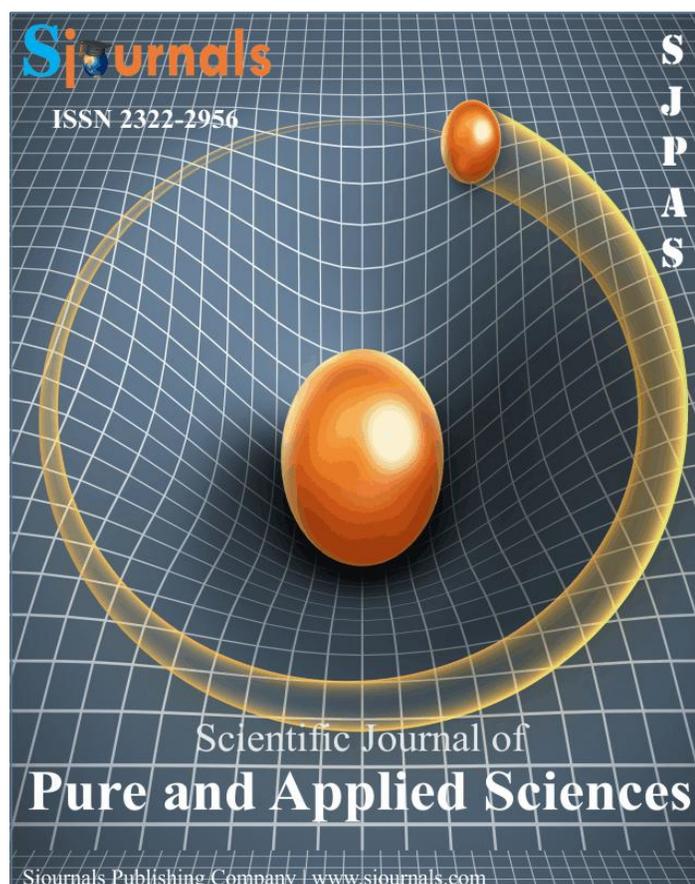


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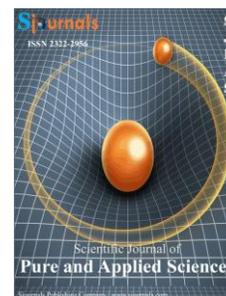
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### Review article

## A synopsis of the epistemology of pedagogic essences and orthodidactic practice

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### ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comprehensive exploration of the contextualization of pedagogic essences in orthodidactic practice. A literature analysis demonstrates that orthodidactic practice is different from functional remedial teaching in that it explores the learner's experiential world in terms of pedagogical criteria with the aim of understanding his or her inner-most personal image hence individual needs. The pedagogic essences which revolve around programming as it relates to the orthodidactic teaching aim and lesson structure enable the learning situation to appeal to the learning image of the learner with a learning difficulty. In the ultimate, the goal is to eliminate the disharmonious educative experiences so that the learner can learn through typical means again. This review also shows that these pedagogic essences are pivoted on individualized educational programming (IEP) and have potential to facilitate the elimination of not only the symptom images but the very factors that create the disharmonious learning situation. This paper established pedotherapeutic intervention as relevant in these regards. Ultimately, the paper concluded that, when expertly implemented, the pedagogic essences form the foundations of orthodidactic practice and make it a more effective alternative to dealing with learning difficulties than the more common functional-remedial teaching strategies for instance.

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## **1. Introduction**

Orthodidactics may not be divorced from ordinary didactics but there is need for teachers to recognize the precision and intensity with which it should be practiced. Orthodidactics is concerned with eliminating a disharmonious educative situation. A disharmonious educative situation is one where there is no harmony between the form and content of a lesson creating barriers to learning. Du Toit (2009) defines a disharmonious educative situation as "...one with disturbed relationships among the essences of educating teaching learning and the contents that result in the disturbing appearance of the essences of the lesson structure." Thus, in orthodidactics, lesson aims and objectives should be clearly linked to the contents of the lesson (that is, the IEP), the child's needs, interests and capabilities and the teacher should be sufficiently qualified and motivated to teach or re-teach the individual learners. In this context, theory should always be linked to practice. Use of concrete aids, personal experiences, practical environmental contexts and activity should be emphasised to ensure that the learner guides and participates in his or her own learning. Although this synopsis of the epistemology of pedagogic essences of orthodidactics provided in this paper are not exhaustive and no panacea for meeting all needs of children with learning difficulties, they are meant to provide a basis for putting orthodidactic theory into practice. Thus, the focus of this review is to explore systematic understanding of the context of pedagogic essences in the practice of orthodidactics. Orthodidactics in this paper is viewed as a specialised science of teaching dedicated to individuals who are experiencing learning difficulties (Derbyshire, 1997; Du Toit, 1997). The paper identifies the pedagogic essences that characterise orthodidactics and examines their strategic implementation to the field of orthodidactics. These pedagogic essences in general relate to orthodidactic programming which according to this paper should be informed by orthodidactic diagnosis, the orthodidactic teaching aim and the lesson structure which should be anchored on individualized educational programming (IEP) and are reinforced through pedotherapeutic intervention.

## **2. Contextualizing orthodidactics**

Orthodidactics has been often equated to remedial teaching, but the two are not the same. Notwithstanding its comprehensive and insightful contributions, remedial teaching is restricted to the application of psychiatric and psychological insights (Pretorius, 2008). Of late, other insights from other fields of study such as sociology and information technology have been brought to the fore. Remedial teaching comes up as a prescription after subjecting the child with learning difficulties to objective standardized diagnostic testing. As a matter of fact, these objective tests do not enable pedagogical penetration of the child's experiential world. Du Toit (1982) concludes that when a remedial programme is planned on the basis of the results of the diagnostic tests it amounts 'to nothing more than remedying the defective functional aspects...' which may have appeared as symptom images in the tests. In the ultimate, the child is subjected to a universal programme based on a prescribed performance index. In addition, the child with learning difficulties in a remedial setup is seemingly regarded as one who can hardly achieve at school. This often results in the prescription of less challenging and artificial exercises of pedagogic essence.

In contrast, in orthodidactics, the learner is approached in his or her individuality. The learner's experiential world is explored in terms of pedagogical criteria with the aim of understanding his or her inner-most personal image hence individual needs. Unlike in a functional-remedial approach, the educability of a child with learning difficulties is made primary, so that the difficulty is 'viewed as a way in which deeper causes manifest themselves and not as causes in themselves' (Du Toit, 1997). Research is conducted by the orthodidactician (Specialist teacher) him/herself with the view of establishing personal images of the child. It is these personal images and not the universal symptom images that are used as the bases for the implementation of orthodidactic essences in orthodidactic intervention which should emphatically be premised on individualized educational programming (IEP). Thus, in order to refocus orthodidactic assistance, research should focus on individualized orthodidactical designs within the context of the lesson structure. Particular attention should be paid to the inadequately actualised essences of the disturbed inter-relationships within the lesson structure (Du Toit, 2009; Van der Merwe, 1999).

### **3. Exploring the context of pedagogic essences in orthodidactics**

Orthodidactics is concerned with eliminating a disharmonious educative situation. A disharmonious educative situation is one where there is no harmony between the form and content of a lesson creating barriers to learning (Pretorius, 1999). Du Toit (2009) defines a disharmonious educative situation as, "...one with disturbed relationships among the essences of educating, teaching, learning and the contents that result in the disturbing appearance of the essences of the lesson structure." The pedagogic essences in orthodidactics are such that lesson aims and objectives should be clearly linked to the contents of the lesson in the form of an individualized educational programme (IEP). This pedagogic essence entails that the needs, interests and capabilities of the child who is already in a disharmonious educative situation should guide programme or lesson planning. Further, the teacher should be sufficiently qualified and motivated to teach or re-teach the individual learners. In this context, theory should always be linked to practice. Use of concrete aids, personal experiences, practical environmental contexts and activity should be emphasised to ensure that the learner guides and participates in his or her own learning (Broekaert et al., 1998). The implementation of these pedagogic essences is premised on orthodidactic diagnosis, orthodidactic programming, orthodidactic teaching aim and ultimately on the lesson structure.

While according to Du Toit (1997) the foregoing pedagogic aspects are not the only data needed by the orthodidactician (Specialist teacher) to come up with an accountable orthodidactic programme, an accountable orthodidactic diagnosis should aim at uncovering a learning image as a particularized lived experience image of the child. Therefore, an accountable orthodidactic diagnosis is not only limited to diagnostic and scholastic media but also considers the whole arsenal of pedagogic media in order to explore the actual learning problems and not the symptoms alone (Pretorius, 1999). The aim, according to the author is to attempt to gain insight into the different meanings defining the experiential world of the child with learning difficulties. Thus, all the information regarding the cognitive, physical, effective, social and moral domains as well as bodily modes and personal self-images should be collected, judged (analysed) and interpreted in the context of the disharmonious educative situation (Van der Stoep and Louw, 2011). This is the most critical attribute of orthodidactics which clearly distinguishes it from functional remedial teaching which also forms the basis for orthodidactic programming. In these regards, pedotherapeutic intervention becomes relevant in facilitating pedagogic essences in orthodidactic practice.

### **4. Orthodidactic programming**

It has already been suggested in this paper that orthodidactic programming is not limited to remedying the child's deficient learning effect alone but to also actualising the child's psychic life. Orthodidactic programming also involves the prevention or abolishment of behaviours and or emotions that hinder learning effect. Since the orthodidactic teaching aim is influenced by the results of the individualized orthodidactic diagnosis, it follows that the orthodidactic programme is also co-defined by these results (Du Toit, 1997). In designing an orthodidactic programme, it is important therefore to first establish the assumed knowledge of the learner. In other words, the functional level of the learner should be determined in order to pitch the orthodidactic programme at the appropriate level for the particular child. In addition, not only particularization of essences should be considered, but the general principles especially in relation to the functioning of the lesson as well. This should be anchored on critical strategies in orthodidactic strategies which include reduction of learning content, content differentiation, logical sequencing of content, streamlining didactic modalities and matching content with individual needs (Basson, 2005). The authors emphasize that, in these regards, the orthodidactician should consider what the learner is lacking regarding the knowledge of the subject he/she is processing, the learner's inadequate level of actualizing learning and the learner's resistance to the subject content which he/she has amassed. This implies the need for an orthodidactic diagnosis.

In this regard, Van Niekerk et al. (1999) argue that an accountable orthodidactic diagnosis should aim at uncovering a learning image as a particularized lived experience image of the child. Therefore, an accountable orthodidactic diagnosis is not only limited to diagnostic and scholastic media, but also considers the whole arsenal of pedagogic media in order to explore the actual learning problems and not the symptoms alone. The aim is to attempt to gain insight into the different meanings defining the experiential world of the child with learning difficulties (Pretorius, 2008). Thus, all the information regarding the cognitive, physical, affective, social and moral domains as well as bodily modes and personal self-images should be collected, judged (analysed) and interpreted in the context of the disharmonious educative situation. This is the most critical attribute of orthodidactics which

clearly distinguishes it from functional remedial teaching. It therefore follows that the orthodidactic teaching aim should always include a differentiation regarding the child's educative distress and his/her under actualized psychic life (Van der Stoep and Louw, 2011). Failure to do so may result in a disharmonious teaching situation hence inadequate or deficient learning effect. To mitigate such negative outcomes, we need to adopt strategies for coming up and for effecting a desirable orthodidactic teaching aim.

### **5. The orthodidactic teaching aim and the lesson structure**

According to Landman (1972) the general aim of educating is so that the learner gradually lives, to an adequate degree, the norm image of adulthood. In short, the aim of educating is becoming adult. Du Toit (1982) asserts, "The aims of educating really are raised in formal teaching and from a subject didactic perspective, are particularized and finely nuanced into teaching aims." From the same position, the author argues that orthodidactics has nothing else in its aim than the child becoming adult. However, while orthodidactic teaching has the overarching quality of becoming adult, its immediate aim is provision of adequate learning. The orthodidactic teaching aim presupposes elimination of the educative distresses of the child with learning difficulties and the under-actualisation of his/her psychic life (Derbyshire, 1997). The assumption is that, once these constituents of the disharmonious teaching situation are removed, the child can again be taught using ordinary means. It is necessary that the pedagogical aim be nuanced, so that it relates to what is attainable for the individual child with a learning difficulty. Du Toit (2005) asserts that particularising the educative aim (individualization) is the pre-condition for eliminating disharmony in the teaching situation. What actually distinguishes the orthodidactic teaching aim from the ordinary didactic teaching aim is largely determined by the results of an individualized orthodidactic diagnosis (pedodiagnosics). This also goes for the orthodidactic lesson structure.

Van Niekerk et al. (1999) further emphasise that orthodidactic assistance should progress by means of lessons, which while in their essential structure cannot be differentiated from an ordinary didactic lesson, they have nuances that appeal to individual needs. The author is also quick to point out that the orthodidactical flavor of such lessons lie in the different approaches, nuances and particularizations. As such, a lesson structure, in the context of orthodidactic programming should be based on the data from the learning image of the particular learner. For these reasons, orthodidactic teaching should be therapeutic, individualized, more intense, more emphatic, more concrete and more verbal where applicable. Therefore, Du Toit (2009) implores that a lesson structure should be based on the data from the learning image of the particular learner hence the centrality of the role of orthodidactic diagnosis. In the main, the design of an orthodidactic lesson should be at most, distinguishable from an ordinary one in that its nuances and particularizations are attuned to the learner's personal images. In essence, each learner deserves a specially structured individualized lesson structure which should be derived from the IEP. In addition, the lesson structure should not only be individualized but should be linked to the learner's personal image (motives). One strategy for achieving this is pedotherapy.

### **6. Pedotherapeutic intervention**

The orthodidactic programme places emphasis on the pedotherapeutic dimension of teaching and learning. Pretorius (1997) recommends that it is therefore advisable to use pedotherapeutic intervention to rectify any restraining behaviours that hinder orthodidactic assistance among children with learning difficulties. The author defines pedotherapy as the educational practice of helping the affectively disturbed child so that he/she can re-define his/her destiny through improved educational performance. In other words, pedotherapy is intervention provided to change that which causes under-actualisation of the child and that which often leads to learning problems. Van Niekerk (1995) describes pedotherapy as planned special assistance given to the child in a problematic educative situation with the aim of correcting the situation and accelerating the child's learning. It involves a child who needs support to re-live his/her experience and re-define his situation. Thus, pedotherapy is used to treat the child within a didactic context in order to bridge the gap in the child's becoming adult by eliminating underlying anxiety, tension, phobia and certainty (Van Niekerk, 2013). The stem *pedo* relates to child and therefore pedotherapy is effectively child therapy. As such, Pretorius (1997) identified three forms of pedotherapy, namely play therapy, image therapy and conversational therapy, which are relevant to educational intervention for children with learning difficulties. Play therapy is used for younger children below the age of ten years, image therapy for older children aged between ten and fourteen years while conversational therapy is used

for those above fourteen years of age. However, this is dependent on the child's ability, intellectual capability and rate of maturity. In effect, a pedotherapeutic situation as a particular educative situation always revolves around a child in education (Pretorious, 2008). In other words, pedotherapy involves not merely eliminating symptoms, but the very factors that contribute to inadequate learning (Van Niekerk, 2013).

Pedotherapy differs from psychotherapy in that it occurs within the educative context and uses the same strategies used in the day to day teaching of the child. It has the same overarching and ultimate aim as that held for education, that is, to help in the child becoming adult (Du Toit, 1978, 1982, 2009). This makes pedotherapy more relevant to the orthodidactic context. In essence, pedotherapy materializes through a pedagogic association between the pedotherapist and the child. However, for this to occur there should be continual willingness by the pedotherapist to respond to the call for distress from the child (Du Toit, 1997). This is because pedotherapy needs tremendous attention. Thus, the pedotherapist should create an interpersonal space characterized by understanding, trust and obedience. According to Landman (1982), pedotherapeutic action can be typified as educatively accountable only when there is (1) Establishment of the authentic pedagogic relationship of understanding, trust and obedience (2) Flourishing of pedagogic association into pedagogic encounters and the optimal use of fruitful educative moments which become discernible in those encounters (3) Realization of the pedagogic aim which is to guide the child back on the road to becoming adult and (4) Observance of the fundamental pedagogic principles. Since actualizing a relation of trust is the first step towards stabilizing a distressed or affectively disturbed child in education (Van der Stoep and Louw, 2011) the pedotherapist needs to understand the child from a longitudinal perspective and the child will progressively understand the well-meaning intentions of the pedotherapist (Pretorious, 1997). In addition, the pedotherapist should confront the affectively disturbed child with authentic pedagogic authority. In this context the sympathetic authoritative guidance is only a means to affective stability of the child hence improved intentionality towards learning. In effect, authoritative guidance provides the child with the much needed certainty, stability and feelings of safety and security which translate to improved learning (Van Niekerk, 2013). Accordingly, Pretorious (1997) deduce that the pre-conditions for successful pedotherapy are winning the child's trust, allowing the child to feel safe and secure, establishing a stable affective relationship with the child, exercising pedagogical authority and showing acceptance, respect, interest, concern, empathy and understanding. These pre-conditions, in effect, form the fundamental basis of the entire orthodidactic programming process and the implementation of the pedagogic essences in orthodidactic practice.

## **7. Discussion and conclusion**

This paper explicates the context of pedagogic essences that are relevant to orthodidactic practice as a specialised science of teaching learners who are experiencing learning difficulties. Learning difficulties in this paper are understood to be a result of a disharmonious teaching situation. In essence, a disharmonious teaching situation results when there is disharmony between the teaching, the learning, the content or subject matter and the teaching strategies. When this occurs, the learner becomes distressed because he/she experiences no learning effect due to this disharmony. Pedagogic essences which naturally relate to programming, the teaching aim and lesson structure are meant to resolve this disharmony or to avoid it as a matter of practice. Therefore, orthodidactic practice aims at correcting the disharmonious teaching situation and rid the child of the distress so that he/she can learn again through conventional methods. This is achieved through the implementation of the pedagogic essences which are in effect reminiscent to best of the best practices. These pedagogic essences are anchored on individual needs and individualized intervention strategies. As a result, the orthodidactic programming which should be informed by orthodidactic diagnosis beyond the usual assessment, the orthodidactic teaching aim and the lesson structure should be guided by the principle of individualized educational programming (IEP). Interventions in orthodidactics are specialized and committed to correcting the disharmonious learning situation. Unlike in remedial education, these interventions are based on individual needs and focus on not only the disharmonious learning situation, but also on the learner's entire personal learning image. This is because the context of the pedagogic essences in orthodidactic practice are pinned on eliminating the very sources of the distress which cause the child to be derailed from the course of becoming adult. This is ultimately achieved through a series of lessons with a lesson structure that is clearly distinguishable from the ordinary lesson structure.

Pedotherapeutic intervention was found to be relevant in these regards. Unlike remedial education strategies and psychotherapeutic interventions that are at times divorced from the learning situation, pedotherapy occurs

within the educative context and uses the same strategies used in the day to day teaching of the child. This makes it a perfect facilitator of the contextualization of the pedagogic essences to orthodidactic practice. Pedotherapy is based on trust-building and the pedotherapist's willingness to help the child with a learning difficulty, thus a child in distress. In a way, the success of pedotherapy as a driver or facilitator of pedagogic essences depends on preconditions that promote a learning effect that appeals to the learner's psychic world. This would once more ensure that not only the symptoms, but the very factors that predispose the child to inadequate learning are eliminated. On these bases, the paper concludes that when expertly implemented, the pedagogic essences form the foundations of orthodidactic practice and make it a more effective alternative to dealing with learning difficulties than the more common functional-remedial teaching for instance.

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