

# THE DISHARMONIOUS TEACHING SITUATION: GUIDELINES FOR ORTHODIDACTIC PRACTICE\*

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## 1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In contrast to the accepted practice of approaching a child with learning difficulties as an isolated entity, as someone robbed of his landscape, in the present study learning difficulties are viewed against the background of a disharmonious teaching situation.

In spite of the remarkable progress in constructing orthodidactical theory and its gradual fruitful influence on practice, the latter still is hindered by obsolete ideas and unfounded activities. A reason for this probably lies in a particular conception of learning difficulties based on an unaccountable philosophical anthropology. In a period when medical-psychiatric-psychological intervention ruled the domain of learning difficulties with an almost absolute dictatorship, the idea took root that these difficulties are the result of inherent disturbances and deficiencies that can be neutralized or controlled by training particular functional disturbances. Without underestimating its importance, it is, however, an irrefutable fact that an absolutist view of this kind seriously restricts and attenuates orthodidactic practice. This standpoint not only repudiates the didactic-pedagogic situatedness of the child with learning difficulties but, in reality, it reduces child existence to a stimulus-response process.

Because in the recent past the phenomenological establishment of categorical educative structures gave rise to different pedagogical part perspectives (e.g., fundamental pedagogical, didactic pedagogical and psychopedagogical), orthodidactics now is able to clarify the problem of learning difficulties in terms of them. An approach of this nature by which a theme such as "learning difficulties" can attempt to be interpreted and explicated from joint

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\* **Pedagogiekjoernaal** (1982) Vol. 3, No. 2, 27-39.

For a detailed and documented discussion see Du Toit, A.S. (1980), **Die disharmoniese onderwyssituasie: Riglyne vir die ortodidaktiese praktyk**. Unpublished D.Ed. dissertation, University of Pretoria.

pedagogical perspectives, raises the question of the scientific status of orthodidactics.

## 2. THE SCIENTIFIC STATUS OF ORTHODIDACTICS

An approach that allows the orthodidactical situation to be interpreted and particularized in terms of the essentials of the part perspectives of pedagogics gives rise to the following questions:

- \* why is orthodidactics committed to particularizing and interpreting by using the essentials of educating disclosed by the other part perspectives?
- \* why doesn't orthodidactics have its "own" categorical structure; in other words, why can't orthodidactics also reveal essentials of educating?

Because of a particular awareness of essentials, fundamental pedagogics, didactic pedagogics and psychopedagogics disclose essentials of educating that provide a perspective on the reality of educating **in which pedagogical essentials are adequately actualized**. To view pedagogical essentials presupposes the presence of adequately actualized essentials otherwise they wouldn't exist and couldn't be viewed. In this light, the harmonious educative event is the "originator" of the disharmonious. Since the inadequate educative event is the focus of orthopedagogics (and the inadequate teaching event is the focus of orthodidactics), **their scientific aim cannot possibly be to reveal essentials**. Confused-appearing essentials cannot be revealed in their essentiality. No confused-appearing essentials can make the claim to orthodidactical categorical status simply because, from an orthodidactical perspective, they are distorted. Adequately actualized essentials always are the "originators" in the sense that they are viewed "earlier"; they first have to appear in their adequately actualized form before an essential can be typified as confused, attenuated or inadequate.

## 3. THE PROBLEM OF A DISHARMONIOUS TEACHING SITUATION

Specifying a lesson situation as disharmonious is possible only by making inferences and interpretations from a harmonious lesson situation. Experience shows unambiguously that the educative event takes its course by means of lesson situations. Educating

occurs by means of lessons as necessary formal implementations of a particular sequence structure. This implies that educating is actualized by teaching and that the meaning of teaching is rooted in educating (Van der Stoep<sup>1</sup>) because teaching exposes life contents in accordance with which a child is guided to proper adulthood.

Moreover, a child evidences his own participation in the lesson event by entering it in an act of unlocking (opening) himself to the life contents. Thus, the teaching event progresses by means of two clearly distinguishable acts, namely, a guided-actualization and a self-actualization for which the life contents (now learning contents) are the focus. If it is taken into account that pedagogical essentials are constitutive of the educative reality, then necessarily, the lesson situation is made possible not only by functionalizing the pedagogical essentials, as disclosed by the various part perspectives of pedagogics, but they show particular relationships with each other as they originate in practice. The relationships with each other that these pedagogical essentials show through the essentials of the contents are preconditions for a harmonious lesson situation.

A harmonious lesson structure is where there is harmony between form and content as they are put into motion by the didactic modalities. This implies that guided- and self-actualization should harmonize with the lesson content. This is possible only if there is a balanced interplay among the lesson and learning aims, the principles of actualization, the teaching and learning aids, etc. Then the child gains access to the elemental contents in such a way that they become changed to fundamental contents and then there is mention of an adequate learning effect. This further implies that the essentials of fundamental pedagogics, of teaching and of learning are harmoniously actualized in the lesson situation.

Thus, the disharmonious actually is a "degenerate" harmonious situation. Consequently, orthopedagogics (respectively, orthodidactics) cannot be qualified as an essence seeking science. Indeed, orthopedagogics designs its own conceptual system that, in contrast to the normal course of educating, stresses particular qualitative accentuations and refinements. Disclosing the structural, as an ontic fact, thus is beyond the scope of orthopedagogics. Rather its focus is on the ways the pedagogical constituents are put into motion in the orthopedagogic situation.

Ter Horst<sup>2</sup> says rightly that orthopedagogics merely poses practical questions and that it is an eminently practical science.

In light of the above, Van der Stoep's assertion acquires increasing value as he states that the task of orthopedagogics is two-fold, namely, interpreting generally valid descriptions for the orthopedagogic situation and research aimed at the modifiability of these descriptions in an orthopedagogic framework as a particularized matter.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4. A SEARCH FOR CONSTITUENTS OF THE DISHARMONIOUS TEACHING SITUATION**

A search for constituents of the disharmonious teaching situation must necessarily stem from an analysis of a few such situations within which children with different kinds of learning difficulties find themselves. The common particulars thus obtained can be viewed as constitutive of a disharmonious teaching situation.

The following children with learning difficulties are discussed in the original dissertation as they find themselves in a normal didactic situation: the neurologically impaired child, the affectively disturbed child and the child of low ability. By means of a macro-structural analysis of the situatedness of these three types of child with learning difficulties, viewed as examples of three frequently occurring causes of learning difficulties, a number of common particulars are revealed that are offered as possible constituents of a disharmonious teaching situation.

##### **4.1 Disharmonious pedagogical relationship**

No teaching event can proceed harmoniously when the fundamental pedagogical relationship appears to be confused or actualized inadequately. A disharmonious teaching situation is characterized by a feeling of mutual frustration. The child's inadequate learning leads the teacher to feel alienated because he experiences the child's failure as a reflection of his own teaching. Therefore, he does not make himself available to the child as a trustworthy, authoritative and understanding educator. Moreover, he is not prepared to direct his teaching to the child's specific learning. On the other hand, he fails to try to grasp and understand the child in his being different.

He doesn't notice the child's distress and possibly is unaware of his specific deficiency in learning.

The child experiences the confused pedagogic relationship as contributing further to his distress. Possibly he experiences his teacher as an unapproachable and unsympathetic authority figure who confronts his problem without understanding. He is considered to be unapproachable because they do not trust and accept each other. Consequently, the child shows indications of anxiety, insecurity, tension, etc. by which he makes known his need for an adequate pedagogic relationship.

#### **4.2 Affective distress**

For a child, affective distress is always pedagogic distress because he experiences his educative situation as meaningless and threatening. The close relationships among affectivity, intentionality and the cognitive imply that a labile affectivity wreaks havoc on his intentional directedness as well as on his cognitive attunement. Sensing, as an affective, accompanying mode of learning, then shows a lability that necessarily impedes adequate learning.

#### **4.3 Lived experience of being different**

Owing to the direct and purposeful character of a formal teaching situation and, with this, the continual evaluation of his learning, the child with learning difficulties repeatedly finds himself to be a failing person in the eyes of others. He experiences himself as someone who cannot meet expectations, as someone who is being excluded. Therefore, the child with learning difficulties manifests a negative self-image that not only contributes to a further underactualization of his psychic life but also, and especially, leads to an obscure perspective on the future.

#### **4.4 Inadequate actualization of cognitive potentialities**

Because of the particular relationships among the above constituents and the cognitive potentialities, it is not surprising that an analysis of such situations repeatedly shows that these potentialities are inadequately actualized.

#### **4.5 Deficient learning effect**

Although not a constituent in its own right, deficient learning is a necessary consequence of a disharmonious teaching situation. It has to be clearly recognized that the effects of learning are not and cannot be limited to the cognitive. Affective concerns also are relevant as are particular motor-physical dexterities and versatilities that drastically influence him in the situation of "learning about living". In reality, the above do not qualify as constituents of a disharmonious teaching situation until there is evidence that the result of learning clearly is deficient. This means that there has to be a history of failures that show a cumulative effect.

#### **4.6 Incorrectly anticipated lesson plans**

Incorrectly anticipating particularizations of didactic plans (i.e., an incorrectly judged aspect of teaching) constitutes a disharmonious teaching situation to the extent that the lesson is not attuned to a level the pupil can attain. For example, the teaching aim is not adjusted to the pedagogically attained and attainable level: it is mistakenly assumed that a child is on a particular level regarding knowledge and his actualization of learning, becoming, etc. and on this erroneous basis, specific aims are set. With respect to the child with learning difficulties, in practice, this amounts to the fact that each lesson activity, to some degree, progresses inadequately and that each phase of the lesson can constitute a disharmonious teaching situation. Finally, it is emphasized that the essentials of a lesson structure and the essentials of each phase of its course can be a constituent of a disharmonious teaching situation if they are not focused on the child's actualization of his modes of learning.

### **5. SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING AN ORTHODIDACTIC LESSON**

Superficially, it seems that the constituents of a disharmonious teaching situation and the particularized orthodidactic actions are poles apart and are not involved with each other. This is true and yet both play a cardinal role in planning an orthodidactic lesson. That is, particularized teaching activities should not be considered separately from a penetrating analysis of the constituents of the disharmonious. In practice, among other things, this should involve an analysis of orthodidactical diagnostic data to determine a beginning level. In other words, in formulating the teaching aim, all of the personal, social, situational and school data have to be considered.<sup>4</sup>

In this connection, it has to be emphasized that an orthodidactic lesson cannot be differentiated from an ordinary didactic situation in its essential structure. After all, educating takes its course by means of lesson situations<sup>5</sup> and because orthodidactic intervention is nothing more than educating, it too is a lesson situation in the true sense of the word. However, **the orthodidactical flavor of such a lesson lies in its different approaches, nuances and particularizations.**

Just as subject didactics is focused on implementing pedagogic essences, so does orthodidactics focus on ways of implementing them in the orthodidactic lesson situation. Subject didactics is attuned to an adequately actualized lesson situation. In contrast, orthodidactics considers ways of eliminating a disharmonious educative situation. Both subject didactics and orthodidactics form an academic bridgehead between pedagogical theory and practice in the teaching situation in school because they both are concerned with making the particularization of general essences practical. Particularization means that lifeless<sup>6</sup> pedagogical essentials come nearer to being explained in detail so that, in refined form, they can be integrated with other pedagogical essences and thus create a harmonious practice. Subject didactical and orthodidactical formulations give a suppleness and mobility (flexibility) to concisely described pedagogical essentials that are considered along with the specific nature of the lesson contents, the child's preparation and abilities as well as the particular potentialities and teaching style of the teacher/orthodidactician.

The above indicates that subject didactical and orthodidactical pronouncements are relevant to each other, especially in those situations where children mainly experience problems with the subject contents. If it is true that an orthodidactic lesson differs from an ordinary didactic lesson only in emphases and nuances, the question arises as to how and to what degree the lesson aim figures in an orthodidactic lesson.

### **5.1 The general aims of educating**

Because educating is actualized in teaching and teaching finds its meaning in educating (Van der Stoep), it is logical that the aim of educating always is included in the aim of teaching. The aim of

educating is formulated by Landman<sup>7</sup> as follows: the educand has to gradually live the norm image of adulthood to an adequate degree. This implies value possibilities that can and must be unlocked through pedagogic intervention. The aims of educating really are raised in formal teaching and, from a subject didactic perspective, are particularized and finely nuanced into teaching aims.

Orthodidactic assistance has nothing else as its aim than the child's becoming adult. Also, its teaching aim has the overarching quality of eventual adulthood in view but with this difference: its immediate aim is to bring about adequate learning. This aim presupposes eliminating the child's educative distress and the underactualization of his psychic life so that he again can be taught in ordinary ways. For this, it is necessary that the pedagogical aim be nuanced in such a way that it directly links up with **what is attainable for the particular child with learning difficulties.**

In this connection, the views of Vliegthart<sup>8</sup> carry particular weight as he, following Langeveld, distinguishes between an educative aid and an educative factor. He indicates that children, in an orthopedagogic connection, often are dependent on aids for attaining a particular educative aim. Where, normally, the same aim is attained by educative factors, i.e., in the unaccented daily course of educating, in an orthopedagogic situation, it often is attained by means of purposeful pedagogic intervention. The view that the aims of educating not only are necessarily considered in orthopedagogics (and, therefore, also in an orthodidactic lesson) but also have to be tailored to a specific child can easily be confirmed irrefutably.

In an orthodidactic lesson, the aims of educating often have the character of being attained in the near future. It has to be remembered that attaining a particularized educative aim in every respect is a precondition for eliminating his problematic teaching situation. On the other hand, the educative aim insures that the child is not delivered to all kinds of techniques and procedures but that the intervention will always be pedagogical in nature.

## 5.2 The orthodidactic teaching aim

The above discussion of the educative aim should be read in the context of the orthodidactic teaching aim. The corrective event necessarily occurs in a formal orthodidactic situation, and this



implies that the teaching aim formulated will indicate the aim and direction of the assistance. The orthodidactic program of assistance can include aspects where the emphasis falls more on a pedotherapeutic facet. It is even possible that particular restraining behaviors will have to be rectified beforehand by pedotherapeutic intervention because they will hinder effective orthodidactic assistance.

Consequently, it is clear that the orthodidactic teaching aim does not have in view only remedying a child's deficient subject knowledge or learning effect. It also involves abolishing and/or preventing the child's inadequate learning so he again can resume being taught in an ordinary didactic situation.

In contrast to an ordinary didactic lesson, the teaching aim of an orthodidactic program is largely determined by the results of an orthodidactic diagnosis. This also implies that reducing the orthodidactic learning content, stating the problem, arranging the learning content, the didactic modalities, etc. will be co-defined by these results. For example, the orthodidactician should again reduce the learning contents, as an already presented piece of reality, but now in light of the following considerations:

- (a) what the child shows he is lacking or deficient regarding his possessed knowledge of the subject;
- (b) the pupil's inadequate level of actualizing learning;
- (c) the pupil's resistance to the subject contents which he has built up.

The above examples with respect to designing an orthodidactic lesson, in general, are essential aspects of orthodidactic practice. Yet these are not the only data needed by the orthodidactician to set up an accountable practice: the ultimate choice from the lesson structure information in question has to be based on the data from the learning image. An accountable orthodidactic diagnosis aims at uncovering a learning image as a particularized lived experience image of a child. Therefore, diagnosing a child with learning difficulties does not only involve applying diagnostic and scholastic media that, at best, can clarify symptoms. The child is approached with an arsenal of pedagogic media that elevates an orthodidactic diagnosis to an orthopedagogic one. In this way, the aim is to try to gain insight into the "different" (inadequate) meanings in the experiential world of the child with learning difficulties. This

diagnosis also involves an acquaintance with the child's actual disharmonious course of becoming adult.<sup>9</sup>

At another time, a number of orthopedagogic-orthodidactic media will be discussed and it will be concluded that they offer clear and decisive interpretation-possibilities. They provide information from the whole range of self-actualization. This information is interpreted pedagogically with the aim of obtaining a learning image as a lived experience image. This means that all of the information regarding the cognitive, affective, volitional, bodily modes of functioning, etc. are judged and interpreted in terms of the disharmonious educative situation. Only in this way can the orthodidactician acquire an understanding and clarification of the learning and learning effects of a child with learning difficulties.

## **6. GUIDELINES FOR THE PRACTICE OF ORTHODIDACTIC ASSISTANCE**

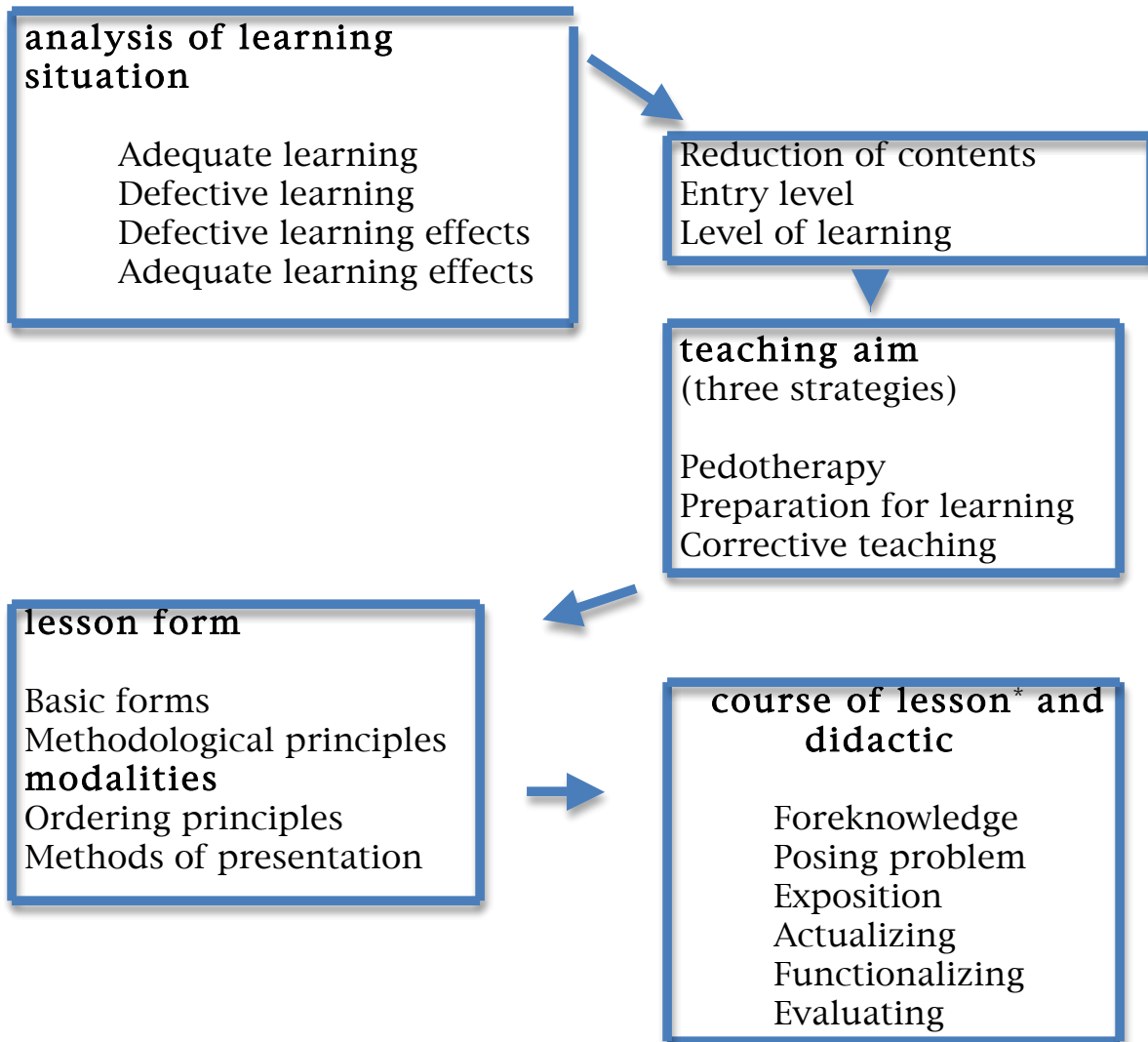
It is usually emphasized that orthodidactic assistance progresses by means of lessons and that an orthodidactic lesson, in its essential structure cannot be differentiated from an ordinary didactic lesson. Thus, "orthodidactics" is and remains "didactics" since a child with learning difficulties only learns inadequately and not differently. Hence, the lesson structure contains the basic information needed for clarifying and designing an orthodidactic lesson.

The design of an orthodidactic lesson, at most, can be distinguished from an ordinary didactic lesson design in that its nuances and particularizations are attuned to the learning image of a specific child with learning difficulties. The lessons for the child are designed with the aim of by-passing certain underactualized modes of learning, of making greater use of adequately actualized modes, etc. in order to change a disharmonious into a harmonious teaching event. An orthodidactic diagnosis does not imply that it merely is necessary preparatory work; in reality, it is united integrally with designing an orthodidactic lesson.

Thus, for example, the analysis of the learning situation makes available, at least in reduced form, an image of the actualization of learning and with this an entry level for teaching. The orthodidactic teaching aim is based directly on these data and cannot be differentiated for a child without them.

Earlier, **educative distress** and an **underactualized psychic life** were shown to be possible constituents of a disharmonious teaching situation that result in an **inadequate learning effect** (or particular deficient learning effect). Thus, an orthodidactic teaching aim always includes a differentiation regarding these aspects. This amounts to three strategies, each of which is included in the teaching aim, or that, in particular circumstances, can be separately valid strategies, namely, pedotherapy, preparation for learning and corrective teaching.

Against the background of this cursory explication, the following orthodidactic model for assistance is offered, that also can be a guideline for a total orthodidactic practice:



\* The first five phases of the course of a lesson are continually repeated; they also are characterized by checking and correcting.

## 7. REFERENCES

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