

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES: AN ATTEMPTED REDEFINITION AND RESULTING FUTURE TASK FOR ORTHODIDACTICS*

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1. Introduction

Today the concept "learning difficulties" has become part of the general vocabulary not only of pedagogics but also of a considerable number of related disciplines. Therefore, a general description of this idea is not easy to formulate simply because different contents are continually attributed to this concept from a variety of perspectives. However, the aim is not to establish a generally accepted description of the concept; from a pedagogical perspective it has become urgently necessary to localize the problem more precisely. There are two reasons for this:

1.1 Pedagogical research on "learning difficulties" presently is seriously hindered by too narrow a definition of this concept.

1.2 The development of pedagogical thought [in South Africa] has resulted in a greater clarity of the scientific status of orthodidactics. In its turn, this has contributed to a more accurate description of its task and terrain. Since the whole problem of learning difficulties closely involves orthodidactics, this concept has to be brought in line with these new developments. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to bring greater clarity to this concept and to sketch some guidelines for future orthodidactic research.

2. Review of the current non-pedagogical approach to learning difficulties.

It is not the aim to provide a thorough evaluation of the current approach to learning difficulties, thus to the practice of "remedial teaching". This is not to underestimate the comprehensive and insightful contributions of the current approach to children with learning difficulties. However, ever since pedagogics has taken responsibility for a child with learning difficulties, it has been critical of the current view and practice. Authors who eagerly

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associate themselves with the points of criticism and who have discussed the matter are pedagogues such as Sonnekus¹, Gouws² and Stander³. For the sake of an orientation, however, a few remarks are made.

Because of pedagogy's entwinement with philosophy, an essential pedagogical contribution to the problem of learning difficulties remained long overdue until recently, and it was especially psychiatry and later psychology--both empirically established sciences--that had taken the lead with respect to the fallow field of learning difficulties. The establishment of psychiatric clinical syndromes, their etiology, symptomatology and therapy⁴ allowed insight into a child with learning difficulties to thrive. The application of psychiatric and psychological insights to teaching children with learning difficulty, for conspicuous reasons, is known as "remedial teaching." Still later, insights from various sciences were applied to this practice so that remedial teaching quickly became a potpourri of often one-sided and even contradictory practices.

True to its origin, remedial teaching provides evidence of an underlying naturalistic anthropology that is characterized best by its almost feverish subjection of a child with learning difficulties to objective testing with the help of an "arsenal of scientific apparatuses and measuring techniques"⁵. With a characteristic relationship of objectivistic knowing, a child is kidnapped from his existential landscape, but even more, he becomes a person reduced to an object. Thus, *ipso facto* there is no encounter with a child-in-distress and no pedagogical penetration of his experiential world. The high premium put on exact, verifiable data makes subjective involvement with him impossible.

On the basis of these [so-called] "objective" results--the sum total of which are assumed to be knowledge of a child with learning difficulties--a program of remedial teaching is planned, that amounts to nothing more than remedying the defective functional aspects should these appear in the tests as symptom-images.

Certainly one of the most important criticisms of this approach is that a child with learning problems can scarcely be understood in his essence, that he thus is not viewed as a child-in-education but as an automaton with a constantly repetitive nature. Therefore, such an approach all too often results in the diagnosis and treatment of

symptoms. Theoretically the pedagogical indeed is recognized as a causative factor among numerous exogenous ones, but practice shows a disconcerting lack of the pedagogical. In such cases "pedagogic" is equated with "teaching" ("educating") that, in its turn, is degraded to methods, techniques and artificial recipes. If it seems necessary from the diagnosis, this is supplemented with a psychotherapeutic program for treating feelings of inferiority, diminished self-confidence, apathy and weakened interest⁶. In summary, it appears that a child with learning difficulties is viewed as someone who cannot achieve at school because of functional deficiencies or emotional disturbances that can appear over the entire range of his being. After determining what they are, remedial programs then are established and directed to them such that the deficiencies or disturbances are removed.

3. Contemporary pedagogical thought about learning difficulties

Since pedagogics has assumed responsibility for learning problems an entirely new approach to the problem has been advocated and followed. In contrast to an atomistic-mechanistic plan of action, a child is now approached in his individuality as a situated person: in agreement with the [philosophical] anthropological fact of being that the pedagogic event is an undeniable experiential fact,⁷ a child's experiential world is explored in terms of pedagogical criteria with the aim of maximally understanding it. In contrast to a functional-remedial approach, the educability of a child with learning difficulties is made primary so that these difficulties are viewed as ways in which deeper causes manifest themselves and not as causes in themselves.

On the basis of this approach, the orthodidactician, under whose jurisdiction the problem falls, has provided interesting research results on a theoretical and practical level⁸. Thus, research was done to establish *personal images* of children with learning and educative problems (epileptic, deaf, poor sighted, etc.). In spite of this, there were still highly contentious problem areas into which orthodidactics was not able to venture until recently. Perhaps because of a one-sided and truncated view of the practice of providing help, orthodidactics did not succeed in establishing an accountable theory for designing programs for giving help and authentic orthodidactical diagnostic techniques. The dilemma in which orthodidactics found itself is directly related to the local

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3.1 The role of the psychological pedagogic

In the Republic of South Africa, the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria took the lead in practicing and developing pedagogics as an autonomous science. Especially psychopedagogics had engaged in the arduous struggle to emancipate itself from psychology. Highpoints of this struggle are aptly described by the various labels by which this perspective was known--from educational psychology as an area of psychology applied to education, through psychological pedagogics (Nel) as an acknowledged pedagogical discipline but clearly functioning with psychological insights*, psychopedagogics (Sonnekus) was crystallized into an autonomous pedagogical part-perspective on the reality of educating. According to Sonnekus, the proclaimed area of study of psychopedagogics is "the totality of everything that appears regarding the psychic life of a child as they are actualized in a child's pedagogic situation"⁹.

Under the regime of psychological pedagogics, viewed as an autonomous part-discipline of pedagogics, the traditional master-slave bond between psychology and educational psychology (along with remedial teaching) continued to a large degree. Still, an important difference was that the idea gradually began to take root that reflection on children with learning and behavioral problems is a distinctly unique terrain that justifies a specialized part-theory under the roof of the pedagogical. Consequently, orthopedagogics and orthodidactics were proclaimed to be part-disciplines of pedagogics and research was pursued in this terrain, but it still took place under the jurisdiction of psychological pedagogics. It is contended that exclusively psychological pedagogical insights were used to interpret and assimilate the orthopedagogic-orthodidactic situation.

Not for a moment are the particular contributions of psychological pedagogics to orthodidactics denied or called into question. Still their monopolization of the problem of learning difficulties had the

* For example, Van Parreren's learning theory and Frankl's Logotherapy, with a few changes, were transformed into Psychological Pedagogical pronouncements.

additional effect of limiting learning difficulties to inadequate acts of learning as a result of "somatic or psychic or spiritual deviations"¹⁰. In other words, learning difficulties were not studied within the context of a disharmonious teaching situation but rather as an isolated *learning* problem. Obviously, based on such a one-sided approach, orthodidactics could not arrive at an accountable design of orthodidactic diagnostic techniques and programs of assistance.

3.2 The role of the didactic pedagogical

Corresponding to the then current description of orthodidactics as that aspect of orthopedagogics that reflects on re-educating a didactically derailed child by means of specialized, corrective didactic measures¹¹, the emphasis is on "re-educating" rather than on the "didactic measures".

Viewed against this background Van der Stoep¹² accomplished an interesting breakthrough when he proclaimed that orthodidactics is an aspect of didactic pedagogics and that the task of orthodidactics is to investigate and describe the nature, essentials and problems of teaching situations that have a corrective or exceptional character. In this way he tried to shift the focus from the learning restrained child to the teaching event as the juncture between the events of teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, at this stage orthodidactics was not yet in a position to make such a shift in emphasis. The most important reasons for this are that neither psychological pedagogics nor didactic pedagogics had at their disposal categorical structures that then could serve as structures for reflecting on learning problems¹³. In addition, the insights of didactic pedagogics on teaching and psychopedagogics on the learning phenomenon had not yet been built into an integrated structure and any intersecting planes that existed between them were merely haphazard. Only after the lesson structure was described by didactic pedagogics, in which the scientific findings of the other part-perspectives were blended into a unitary structure, was orthodidactics able to make this necessary shift in emphasis regarding the problem of learning difficulties. This establishment of a lesson structure is implicit evidence of the progress that pedagogical thought had made toward categorical thinking.

4. The rise of a categorical pedagogical structure as a necessary step for clarifying both the problem of learning difficulties and the status of orthodidactics as a science

4.1 The fundamental pedagogical

With the rise of fundamental pedagogics, proposed by Oberholzer and established by Landman, the possibility emerged for meaningfully coordinating the explanations and interpretations of the different areas of [pedagogics as a] science. Thanks to the phenomenological method, Landman indisputably shows the autonomy of pedagogics as a " ... pedagogics with a distinct and unique perspective on the lifeworld from a pedagogical situation and which is not reducible to anything else"¹⁴. By pedagogical perspective is meant an "engagement" with the reality of educating that asks that it show itself as it essentially and universally is, as viewed from this particular [i.e., pedagogical] standpoint¹⁵. {From this perspective] the disclosed real essences are then expressed as scientific judgments or categories. The complexity of the educative reality makes part-perspectives possible [and necessary] as focal points within the framework of the pedagogical perspective¹⁶. The categorical structures illuminated in this way are intertwined with each other in life reality¹⁷, and this insures that the different pedagogical part-perspectives cannot degenerate into compartmentalized findings without doing violence to the pedagogical.

A categorical pedagogical structure is a necessity for a meaningful scientific practice. The following quotation by Landman acknowledges this fact. "Pedagogics has to be a pedagogics of essences, otherwise it is not a pedagogics that can claim to be scientific."

Clearly the categorical pedagogical structure, viewed as an overarching concept for the various categorical structures of the different part-perspectives, has far-reaching implications for orthopedagogics (respectively orthodidactics) because the question of an accountable approach to a child with learning difficulties in a teaching situation necessarily has to be aligned with these structures.

4.2 The didactic pedagogical

Following closely the lead of fundamental pedagogics, Van der Stoep in his accounting for the real essences of didactic pedagogics, designed its own categorical structure. He succeeded creatively in describing the essences of teaching and eliminated the unwholesome separation between educating and teaching. Indirectly this dealt a blow to those who wanted to describe the didactic in terms of things other than teaching itself, and in doing so they undermine the autonomy of didactic pedagogics.

Convinced that an accountable didactic-pedagogical theory, in practice, results in a lesson, Van der Stoep and co-workers, such as Van Dyk, Swart, Louw and others turned to the lesson structure as an original experiential datum with the consequence that constructing a lesson structure, as encompassing the basic data for planning or designing the teaching of a lesson, is elucidated. Considering the above, it is almost unnecessary to emphasize the importance of the lesson structure for orthodidactics.

4.3 The psychopedagogical*

Concerning psychopedagogics, it is especially thanks to Sonnekus that it has acquired independence [from psychology] within an autonomous pedagogics. Sonnekus proposes as the area of focus of psychopedagogics the psychic life of a child-in-education¹⁸. However, the emphasis falls clearly on the psychic life as an event of actualization that occurs by means of "becoming" and "learning" as equally primordial structures of a child's psychic life. As potentialities, becoming and learning are actualized in terms of a stream of "actualizations" that on closer analysis presume a subtle nuancing between self-actualization and guided actualization. To show how a child actualizes "becoming" and "learning", Sonnekus has identified in the psychic life modes of being, namely, lived experiencing, experiencing, willing, knowing and behaving, that in their meaningful relations represent modes for actualizing "becoming" and "learning". On this basis, self-actualization and guided actualization are possible and arise in the educative situation¹⁹.

* This heading was added by me (G. Y.). The author had only **4.2 The didactic pedagogic and psychopedagogic**. I added 4.3 merely to emphasize that a comprehensive pedagogic perspective, at minimum, has to include the part-perspectives of fundamental pedagogics, didactic pedagogics and psychopedagogics.

Keeping in mind that a child announces himself as a learning person in a teaching situation, it is obvious that the categorical structure of psychopedagogics is of inestimable value for orthodidactics.

In summary it is emphasized that, although separate part-perspectives are a scientific necessity for a more penetrating investigation of the educative event, Landman stresses that *the disclosed essentials (being-structures) are intertwined with each other in life reality*; in addition, the actualization of the essences disclosed by one part-perspective are a precondition for actualizing the essences revealed by another part-perspective.²⁰ *As will be evident later, the lesson structure in many respects reveals the subtle interplay among fundamental-, didactic- and psychopedagogical essences.* In truth, a functioning lesson is the juncture for actualizing pedagogical essences.

Considering this conclusion, it appears that the problem of learning difficulties cannot be explained [or interpreted] by a commitment to a single pedagogical perspective. An accountable view of learning difficulties, in my opinion, lies in an interpretation and elucidation of the categorical pedagogical structures. In other words, *a collective pedagogical perspective on learning difficulties is the only alternative for reaching an accountable view.*

When orthodidactics stakes itself on a procedure of this nature, the result is a penetrating reflection on the status of orthodidactics as a science. On the one hand, such a procedure is interpreted as findings provided to orthodidactics from other pedagogic perspectives; on the other hand, it is argued that orthopedagogics loses its scientific status because it does not disclose essences, but by means of interpreting pedagogical essences, ways of responding appear. This problem is considered later and attention now is directed to describing learning difficulties.

5. The disharmonious teaching situation

The primary experience, as the original involvement of being a person in reality, shows unambiguously that the educative event takes its course by means of lesson situations. Thus, educating occurs by means of lessons as a necessary form of actualizing a particular sequence structure²¹. In addition, this implies that educating is actualized in teaching and that the meaning of teaching is rooted in educating (Van der Stoep), because giving a lesson

presents life contents in terms of which a child is guided to proper adulthood.

However, a child also shows his own participation in the lesson event by a willingness to learn the life contents presented. Thus, the teaching event progresses by means of two clearly distinguishable acts, namely, a guided actualization and a self-actualization where the life contents (now learning contents) coincide. If it is remembered that pedagogical essences are constitutive of the educative reality²², it is a necessity that the lesson structure not only make it possible to implement these essences--as disclosed by the different part-perspectives--but that their implementation indicates that there are particular relationships among them. The relationships among the various pedagogical essences shown by the essences of their contents are thus a precondition for a harmonious lesson situation.

A harmonious lesson situation means there is a harmony between form and content, as set in motion by the didactic modalities. This implies that guided- and self-actualization will harmonize with the lesson content, which is only possible if there is a balanced interplay among the lesson- and learning-aim, principles of actualization, teaching- and learning-aids, etc. Then a child gains access to an elemental* in such a way that it changes into a fundamental, i.e., there is an adequate learning effect. This also implies that fundamental pedagogical, didactic pedagogical and psychopedagogical essences are harmoniously actualized in the lesson situation.

The above explanations of a harmonious lesson situation clearly indicate that the current idea of "learning difficulties" is a narrow concept not only in its name [denotation] but also in its contents [connotations]. Actually, the concept "learning difficulties" reflects very precisely the current approach where a child, viewed as an inadequate learner, is placed at the center of interest. Hence, learning difficulties still too often are described as defective modalities of learning such as perceptual-motor or auditory-verbal problems²³, or in terms of educative difficulties²⁴, and although there often are indirect references to pedagogic-didactic factors,

* Elemental means contents reduced to their essentials by a teacher; fundamental means those reduced contents that have been learned, assimilated by a child and made his own in a functional, usable way in everyday life. These concepts are part of Klafki's theory of categorical forming, or double unlocking. See Kruger²⁵. (G. Y.).

learning difficulties are not brought into an integrated relationship with distorted lesson structure essences.

According to the above description of a harmonious lesson situation, a disharmonious lesson situation is 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.*

If the idea of learning difficulties is played out against the background of a disharmonious lesson situation then it is obvious that this concept has a much broader connotation, especially in so far as learning difficulties now are seen basically as leading back to a disharmony in the event of double unlocking [See my previous footnote--G. Y.].

Even so, learning problems cannot be entirely equated with a disharmonious teaching situation simply because all such situations do not necessarily result in learning difficulties. Normally, adequate learning effects still emerge and indeed by means of (a) re-designed lesson(s) which, on the one hand, implies that a teacher, after gauging the effect of his teaching, teaches with greater insight, proficiency and purposefulness. On the other hand, this also implies that he is able to anticipate other modes of learning and that a learning child links up with the unlocked contents. Thus, every disharmonious situation cannot be typified as a situation of learning difficulties. However, it is equally true that a disharmonious lesson situation (or situations) is at the basis of every learning difficulty. Consequently, the concept "learning difficulties" requires a further particularization through a disharmonious teaching situation.

Above it was mentioned that an adequate learning effect assumes a change in the elemental (contents). Kruger²⁵ elaborates further on this when he says "Future involvement with reality rests on the meaning of the contents that speak as an 'extension of the elemental'. A child's participation in future situations thus implies enlisting the contents already at his disposal". From the perspective of experiencing, Ferreira²⁶ agrees with this when he says, "The insights a child acquires in the act of learning, on the basis of previous experiences, are always qualified and changed in order to continually anticipate new reality. Experiencing, then, continually is turned back on itself in the act of learning in order to judge the

possibilities of new experiencing". Thus, from different perspectives, both authors mention the importance of *adequate possessed experiences* drawn from previous lesson situations with the aim of understanding future teaching situations. The implicit meaning that the above discussion holds for particularizing learning difficulties is clear. Disharmonious teaching situations normally are a matter of learning difficulties when inadequate learning effects accumulate into additional inadequate learning effects, i.e., when there is mention of inadequate possessed experience, thus, when there is a history of failures.

Following Ter Horst it is explained that there are learning difficulties if both teacher and child experience the disharmonious teaching situation as being without perspective, meaningless and menacing and where professional help appears to be necessary to clear up the situation. In this sense, the disharmonious teaching situation is an area for orthopedagogics.

With the above discussion as background, the problem of the scientific status of orthopedagogics (respectively orthodidactics) is considered next.

6. Orthopedagogics (respectively orthodidactics) as an independent part-perspective of an autonomous pedagogics

Primary experience shows unquestionably that the pedagogic manifests itself as a practice whose actualization varies from adequate to inadequate. Pedagogic activities are inadequate when their essences are attenuated, distorted or contradictory²⁸ because of misdeeds, mistakes and incorrectly anticipated activities.

Fundamental pedagogics, didactic pedagogics and psychopedagogics bring pedagogical essences to light because of their particular awareness of them (Landman}, and [each] casts [its own] perspective on the reality of educating where the pedagogical essences are adequately realized. Seeing pedagogical essences always presumes their adequate actualization simply because what is not cannot be seen. Viewed in this light, a harmonious educative event is "more primary" than a disharmonious one.

When orthopedagogics takes responsibility [for dealing with] an inadequate educative event, it follows logically that the scientific

aim of disclosing essences is not possible because attenuated-appearing essences cannot be disclosed in their essential-ness. The intention is not to give the impression that there is no actualization of essences at all in a disharmonious educative situation. However, when such essences appear in inadequately actualized forms, it is meaningless to describe them from an orthopedagogic perspective because, as real essences, they have already been described from other perspectives (i.e., fundamental, didactic and psychopedagogical). If it were possible to re-describe in its essentialities an already described essence, this would imply that either the essence had not originally been described in its real essentiality or that the essence in its universally formal structure has changed in the disharmonious situation--both of which imply a *contradictio in terminis*.

The same reasoning holds true for attenuated-appearing essences. No attenuated-appearing essence can make a claim to categorical status simply because it is named differently from an orthopedagogical perspective. The adequately actualized essences are always "more primary" in the sense that they are seen first; it has to be that they are seen first in their adequate actualization, although [in a disharmonious situation], their appearance can be typified as attenuated, distorted or contradictory.

The dilemma of orthopedagogics, then, is that the disharmonious really implies a "degenerate" harmonious situation²⁹, that because of this the orthopedagogic cannot seek essences, and that the design of its own categorical and criterial structures is not possible. Thus, in accordance with the accepted norms for an autonomously functioning part-perspective, orthopedagogics fails methodologically.

The above arguments carry the same weight when the orthopedagogical situation--that within which the reflections on a disharmonious educative event have to result in corrective activities--is in focus.

To avoid the risk of any entanglement in particular theories* and methodologies, the orthopedagogic situation, as it occurs in primary experience, is put under a magnifying glass by the orthopedagogue.

* Compare, e.g., a psychoanalytically founded child therapy and the non-directive methods of Rogers.

From this it is very clear that the orthopedagogic event is and can be nothing more than educating³⁰. After all, what other supporting and helping intervention can be provided to a child by an adult that ultimately is not typified as educating? In its essential structure, the orthopedagogical event is nothing more than educating and where educating is already described and interpreted in its essential structure, it is thus meaningless for orthopedagogics to also be a seeker of essences.

Although the orthopedagogic event often is still described as "re-educating"³¹, rather than viewing this as an orthopedagogical "category" it has to be seen as an orthopedagogical *notion* that differs from the normal course of educating and that emphasizes particular qualitative accentuations and refinements.

In spite of the argument so far, in no way is it said that orthopedagogics has no right to exist. Indeed, unquestionably orthopedagogics has a clearly delimited area of study. In addition, it is indisputable that the orthopedagogue is called to a unique practice that is executed in terms of scientific methods³². In striking ways, Ter Horst³³ indicates that orthopedagogics is a practical inquiry directed to actions and that its task is not to practice science for the sake of truth.

The disclosure of the structural, as ontologically given, thus is beyond the scope of orthopedagogics *that focuses on the ways the pedagogical constituents are mobilized in an orthopedagogic situation*. Thus, it is justifiable to conclude that orthopedagogics cannot be practiced without the categorical pedagogical structure. In this light, Van der Stoep's postulate acquires increased relevance when he says that the task of orthopedagogics is two-fold, namely, to interpret generally valid pronouncements (pedagogical categories) for an orthopedagogic situation, and to research the applicability of these findings in an orthopedagogic framework, which is a matter of particularizing them³⁴.

What Van der Stoep advocates is precisely what happens in the primary [home] educative situation. In discovering a disharmonious situation, the parents interpret it in light of an adequate educative event; intuitively they make the necessary adjustments and accentuations for their particular situation--and in most cases this is effective. The difference that Dumont³⁵ [In Dutch] draws between educating and (pedo-) therapy reflects to a large extent what

orthopedagogics is involved with. "In the therapeutic event there is nothing that is not analogous to educating The difference is that in the situations called therapy, educating occurs in the same or another manner, more explicitly, more intensely, more emphatically, or with less emphasis, in greater detail or more briefly, more verbally or more concretely Thus, it is concentrated educating, or stated differently, educating is itself therapeutic."

With this, orthopedagogics is immediately elevated to a full-fledged, equivalent perspective because, as a perspective aware of the essences disclosed by the other part-perspectives, it accurately focuses on them with the aim of adapting and refining them, as necessary, for its own specialized practice. Its methodological dependence at least assigns it an inferior status in the range of pedagogical part-perspectives, while its mandated task insures that it at least can make claim to an organizational independence. Its mandated task implies an ultimate convergence of particularized and subtly nuanced pedagogical essences and relationships with the aim of eliminating the disharmonious educative situation. Again, this insures the identity of orthopedagogics, on the one hand, and prevents a possible dividing of its terrain, on the other hand.

For evident reasons there is an inclination and danger that the orthopedagogical can be reduced to the other part-perspectives of pedagogics in so far as their various categorical structures will be interpreted and clarified for orthopedagogics by the autonomous part-perspectives themselves. In such reductive cases there is mention of psycho-orthopedagogics, fundamental-orthopedagogics, didactic-orthopedagogics, etc.

This inclination is strongly opposed. First, in such cases the autonomous part-perspectives act beyond their power [*ultra vires*]. Using his specialized knowledge of the disharmonious educative situation, only an orthopedagogue can make pronouncements regarding his terrain; merely applying findings from other part-perspectives would imply that orthopedagogics, as such, does not have a right to exist.

Second, this would mean that a "pure" orthopedagogics cannot exist because it can only be practiced by using the categorical structure of the pedagogical; that is, it has to link up with one or another autonomous part-perspective of pedagogics.

However, there is no objection to the use of notions such as fundamental-orthopedagogic *moments*, psycho-orthopedagogic, or didactic-orthopedagogical *moments*, provided it is understood by this that there is an orthopedagogical interpretation and nuancing of the various categorical structures with the aim of harmonizing such essences in the orthopedagogic event. In this context, the idea of a collective perspective and inquiry has to be seen because only an orthopedagogue can make orthopedagogical claims through researching and describing his terrain. At most there can be a collective perspective if the findings attained are orthopedagogically valid, i.e., if such findings remain under the jurisdiction of the orthopedagogical.

The orthodidactical, as an inseparable facet of orthopedagogics, also has the role of interpreting generally valid pedagogical findings with the aim of establishing a very definite practice. Therefore, the task of orthodidactics is to search for ways that will allow children who have become blocked in the formal school situation to enter into a presented piece of reality so that their learning of it will be adequate.

Because a child with learning problems is involved with his entire being in a distressful situation³⁶, this implies that, *ipso facto*, the orthodidactic task is one that has to be carried out within the overarching orthopedagogical. For those who disclaim categorical statements, their burden is to show that (re-) educating and (re-)teaching are separate entities. By implication this also means that they have to show that learning difficulties are partial defects³⁷, which, as exclusively cognitive problems, can be brought into line with the help of remedial teaching techniques that in many respects rest on psychological theories of learning.

The practice of orthodidactics thus also implies an interpretation of pedagogical findings with the aim of engaging in a harmonious practice in a particular orthodidactic situation. Because such findings are not merely applicable to the orthodidactical situation, the analysis of the disharmonious situation is of great importance. This includes a comprehensive diagnostics as well as the interpretation of findings from the various auxiliary sciences (e.g., medicine, psychology) that can be of value for his specialized practice.

In addition to a grounded knowledge of the categorical pedagogical structures and findings of the related sciences, the orthodidactian has to acquaint himself with subject didactical findings. Where it is the task of subject didactical theory to particularize a lesson, as a practical convergence of the various pedagogical perspectives for a specific teaching practice, it is obvious that orthodidactics relies heavily on subject didactical theory. Orthodidactic designs have to be finely nuanced, particularized lessons and, therefore, subject didactical designs are of great value.

7. Synthesis and future perspective

The idea "learning difficulties" is described from a collective pedagogical perspective that implies a more extensive meaning. The idea "learning difficulties" had previously been explained and described from a single pedagogical perspective (psychopedagogics), and this hindered the orthodidactical investigation of certain problem areas. The proposed description of learning difficulties, against the background of the lesson structure, enables orthodidactics to interpret and explain them in the light of the entire categorical structure of the pedagogical.

Also reflected on is the status of orthodidactics as a science. This resulted in a more exact delimitation of its field of study, methods and tasks. Since orthodidactics is an interpretive and particularizing science, research can focus on actual problem areas and time and effort do not have to be wasted on irrelevant matters. It is anticipated that the following matters will receive urgent attention:

1. Where in the past learning difficulties were interpreted as beginning and ending with a child, as such, and where educative deficiencies were related to a child's learning world as an experiential world, etc., future research should focus on interpreting a child's learning world within a disharmonious lesson situation. In other words, the inadequate actualization (distorted appearances) of the essences of learning and educating have to be interpreted and explained with reference to the inadequate actualization of the essences of a lesson structure. Thus, research needs to undergo a shift in emphasis so that the inadequate actualization of the essences of teaching and of contents also are taken thoroughly into consideration.

2. Closely connected with the above, orthodidactics will have to design sophisticated diagnostic measures and media with the aim of disclosing inadequately actualized lesson structure essences. With the necessary interpretations and adaptations, existing media can be used fruitfully. (See, e.g., the Rorschach inkblot medium where perceptions or visual-perceptual tendencies can give important indications of disturbed lesson structure essentials, especially when these are related to a teacher's specific teaching methods.)

Orthodidactics will also have to design genuine media for specifically evaluating the above-mentioned matters. Orthodidactics uses psychological media to a large extent that then are interpreted pedagogically. In advancing this new view of learning difficulties, orthodidactics will become increasingly independent with regard to its diagnostic procedures.

3. Findings of related disciplines such as medicine, optometry, speech therapy, psychology, sociology will need to be evaluated carefully [and pedagogically] by placing them in the context of the inadequately actualized essences of the lesson structure. Because of a lack of a detailed frame of reference, findings from these sources have often been made absolute and programs applied them with laborious effort without ever determining whether the problem, shortcoming or disturbance is related in any way to a disharmonious teaching situation.

4. Concerning orthodidactic assistance, research will have to focus on orthodidactical designs within the context of a lesson structure. As a macrostructure (Van der Stoep and Van Dyk), the lesson structure has to be particularized and refined into a microstructure by considering the inadequately actualized essences of and the disturbed inter-relationships within the lesson structure.

Designing an orthodidactic program not only implies particularization but also general principles and especially a careful reflection on the functioning of the lesson. The importance of the latter can best be understood if the question of "future" is taken as an example: it is essentially important to orthodidactic assistance to determine the level on which the teaching should begin because the re-teaching situation certainly is even more sensitive to either too high or too low a level. Since such a matter cannot be left to the orthodidacticians intuition, systematic research and careful reflection are required.

Finally, the author is convinced that the disharmonious lesson situation has to be the orthodidactical focal point and that the methods described above are the only ways in which difficult orthodidactical problems can be solved.

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