

CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIM AND PROGRAM OF STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The concept "emotional problems"

Children with "emotional problems" is a phenomenon unique to contemporary times. The existing seriousness and distress about this matter clearly are seen in the increasing degree to which provisions are made for facilities such as school clinics, child guidance clinics and institutes, as well as church and private organizations where assistance can be given to these children.

In this study, when reference is made to children with "emotional problems" this does not mean the emotionally unstable "personality" (a clinical classification of a particular personality disturbance) or emotional instability as a symptom of one or another organic or psychotic conditions. Reference to these psychopathic conditions generally is found in the literature on psychopathology (see 1; 4; 10; 14).

However, children with "emotional problems" is a concept whose usage is so general in the scientific as well as the popular literature that it is easy to give the impression that this is one or another clinical classification of children who show a specific group of symptoms. It is evident that this confusion can easily arise and that it is necessary to be clear about what precisely ought to be understood by the concept "**emotional problems**".

Although it is a concept with broad utilitarian value, and the literature on this topic is readily available, there are very few authors who venture to give a clear description of it. Jarlais [in English] (31, 311) says in this connection: " The definitions of emotional disturbance are even more vague for children than they are for adults". In addition, it is evident that a variety of concepts are used to indicate this phenomenon in children. Thus, for example, there is reference to the child who is a "problem", "difficult", "nervous", "emotionally disturbed", the child with "psychological problems", the child with "behavioral deviations",

the "maladjusted" child, the child with "developmental problems", the child in "emotional conflict", etc. (see 2; 7; 9; 11; 12; 13; 21; 32; 51). However, whether or not these concepts are used as synonyms will be considered.

As already mentioned, children with "emotional problems" is not a clinical classification based on a clearly defined group of symptoms. Nonetheless, the following are some behavioral manifestations (see 2, 199; 5; 31; 40, 46-100; 41; 50; 51, 28) that generally can be qualified as "emotional problems": being a bully, aggressiveness, brutality, moodiness, stealing, encopresis, enuresis, phobias, tenseness, stuttering, hysterical outbursts, tearfulness, shirking home work, being infantile, shyness, learning problems, lying, laziness, criminality, obsessiveness, underachievement, dishonesty, disobedience, over-dependence, sexual derailment, nervousness, timidity, untidiness, truancy, diminished self-confidence, prematurely dropping out of school, reserved, wild outbursts, etc.

Again, there are a large number of overarching concepts in terms of which the above **symptoms** are described. Thus, in order to avoid confusion it will be necessary to give a clear description of "emotional problems" and any of the other current concepts relevant to the stated aim of this study.

The following are some of the descriptions that can be acquired from the literature on this topic: "If he (a person) has been referred to a clinic and is attending for treatment" is, according to Scott [in English] (13, 7), a general way in which the "mental illness" of children is defined.

According to Lippman [in English] (21, 3), a child is in "emotional conflict whenever anything interferes with the satisfaction of his instinctual drives and his frustration produces a state of tension". Rogers (see 31, 242) uses the concept "psychological maladjustment" and he says this exists whenever "the organism denies to awareness, significant experiences, which consequently are not accurately symbolized and organized into the gestalt of the self structure, thus creating an incongruence between self and experience". Erikson has adopted and expanded Freud's view of psycho-sexual development. According to him there are eight stages of "development" that characterize a person. Each of these stages is viewed as a life crisis to be overcome. "Emotional disturbances" result from an unsatisfactory solution to these life crises (see 31,

231). According to Herbert [in English] (31, 3), the concept "emotional problems" is applicable to children "who create problems for themselves, their parents and their teachers as they grow up". For Gelfand (13, 18) problem behavior is the product of "social learning experiences". Hutt and Gibby (13, 23) describe "emotional difficulties" of children in terms of "problems of adjustment".

As can be seen from the above, the definitions and descriptions of "emotional problems" and related concepts are extremely vague and varied in nature and consequently are unsuitable as a point of departure for this study. Thus, to avoid confusion it is necessary to provide our own description of what, for the purpose of this study, is understood by children with "emotional problems". By this, it is not claimed that any of the above descriptions are untrue but only that they are not specific enough and therefore are not applicable in this study.

1.2 The child's situatedness

Before proceeding to a description of the concept "emotional problems", analogous to Sonnekus' (33, 74) conclusion regarding the child with learning problems, it is asserted that the **situatedness** of the child with "emotional problems" first must be investigated to be able to acquire a totality-image of him. A person only can be grasped as a totality if there is an attempt to "understand his behavior from his relationship to his situation" (28, 10). Therefore, it **always** is necessary that the child be viewed in his world as well as in the relationships he has established with it. Also, Nel (25, 22) says "a person is ... always in the midst of a whole of meaningful relationships with his world". A person, and thus also a child, has to be seen as "always related to and finding himself within a particular relationship to the world" (53, 25).

From the moment that the child enters the world as helpless, he is dependent on adults for his care and support. He is dependent on the help of his parents for his total physical existence. However, physical existence is not the only aim with the child since, as long as he is a child, he "constantly has adulthood as his destination" (52, 1). He is not born an adult and therefore has the task of becoming a proper adult (38, 50); hence, it also is the task of the adults (parents) to help him reach this destination by means of **educating** (52, 1). According to Ter Horst [in Dutch] (43, 54), educating is "a

continual 'conversation' with the child". Pretorius (30, 24) also views educating as an evolving communication between educator and child. Educating, as "help in becoming" (53, 32), shows itself in a pedagogic perspective "as formative dialogue, as dialogue that changes" (54, 68). Or as Langeveld [in Dutch] (19, 141) says: "Without education the human child can not become a person".

From this it is evident that the child not only is dependent on the adult for his physical care but also for his **becoming adult**. Hence, becoming adult is not something that occurs automatically (see 15, 25; 36, 4). "Educating ... is ... not a mechanistic occurrence" [in Dutch] (19, 135). It is "an event and not a process" (37, 5). For both Sonnekus (34, 56-57; 35, 3; 37, 31) and Van Niekerk (52, 1) the child's becoming adult or personal actualization is a matter that occurs by means of his self-actualization as well as by means of guidance to self-actualization by the adults. Also, according to Landman (18, 31-32) adulthood is attained through the event of guided dependence intertwined with guided independence with the aim of self-guided independence. From this it also can be said that the educative event is not only the responsibility of the adults (parents) but that the child also has a definitive role and responsibility (see 15, 25) in its actualization since he is a "unique individual pursuing his own aims and purposes" [in English] (13, 20).

Although the child has a role in his becoming adult and also has part of the responsibility for the adequate actualization of the educative event, really educating comes from outside of the child and it continually is initiated by the adults around him (36, 3-4). Since educating is normative in nature (see 15, 29), it always occurs with a specific educative aim in view. Through adequately implementing the fundamental pedagogic structures (see 27), the adult (parent) guides the child **affectively, cognitively and normatively** (37, 20-28) and does so in order to attain this aim. However, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, this matter will not be gone into any further and only reference is made to existing work in this regard (see 15; 16; 17; 18; 35; 36; 37; 38).

The role of the child in the educative event lies especially in his self-actualization of personal potentialities as a response to the educative intervention of his parent. By actualization is meant "personal **potentialities** are converted into personal **realities**" (53, 34). The child can actualize his personal potentialities because

from the first moments of life, he participates in life reality (38, 31) and on this basis he is busy changing (52, 1) or becoming (38, 32). Becoming (becoming adult) should be viewed as a change toward adulthood (38, 33; 43, 64) and thus as an elevation in level of becoming (18, 33-35). When he actualizes his personal potentialities, he indeed is busy becoming adult. This is only possible because he is someone who can **learn**. Through learning, he continually communicates with reality and he is always busy changing. This change as becoming adult is expressed clearly in Langeveld's statement that the child enters a dialogue with the educator but, by mediation by the educator, gradually also with things and others, ultimately he becomes independent of the educator.

This communication, as an event of becoming and learning, "progresses in terms of exploration, emancipation, distantiation, differentiation and objectification by means of experiencing, willing, lived-experiencing, knowing and behaving on the basis of sensing, attending, perceiving, imagining and fantasizing, thinking, actualizing intelligence and remembering, always as a meaningfully connected total event" (53, 35) (see also 8; 35; 36; 37; 38; 48; 51).

The child is in communication with the learning and educative content because by means of **lived-experiencing** on **affective** and **cognitive** levels he takes a position toward the content and attributes **sense** and **meaning** to it (see 51, 7). The way in which he comes to know the learning content and in so doing lived-experiences it as meaningful or meaningless, is largely determined by the **nature** of his emotional life which can be **impulsive, labile** or **stable** (see 37, 21). The emotional life is closely integrated with a person's total being (51, 7) and, therefore, it has a special influence on actualizing the above mentioned events of becoming and learning as a totality. (This matter will be reflected on in particular in chapter 2).

Personal actualization as a matter of self-actualization is an event that necessarily takes place within educating "because outside of it neither the essence of the child nor the actualization of his psychic life can be understood" (52, 3). Optimal personal actualization requires "a loving oneness, a pedagogic being present with much heart, unselfishness and dedication" (24, 62). Or, as Van Niekerk (51, 2) says: "The child cannot be thought of without **education** and where educating lapses the child as such decays". Thus, it is

"unquestionable that any child always finds himself in an **educative situation, irrespective of his problem**" (my emphasis) (33, 74).

From the above it ought to be clear that the situatedness of the child **always** is a being educatively situated because as long as a person is a child, "he continually has the world of the adults as his destination" (52, 1) and this only can be realized within education. Thus, **any** study of the **child** has to take into account his educative situatedness*. Consequently, in order to arrive at a description or delimitation of the "child with emotional problems", the point of departure necessarily has to be the educative situation.

1.3 Disharmonious educating

It ought to be clear now that the child is always educatively situated since, as such, he continually has the world of the adult as his destination. However, the good progress of educating is the precondition for attaining this aim. "But it is not self-evident that this aim always is possible for us" [in Dutch] (40, 13). Since educating is a human matter (see 43, 23-24; 45, 6), the child's becoming adult cannot be guaranteed (51, 8) simply because we live in an imperfect world that is populated by imperfect beings (47, 1). "It is true that educating has failed from the earliest times on and that educative problems are as old as educating itself" (51, 33). "Sometimes educating gets solidly stuck" (43, 12) and ... "as many long-suffering parents know, their children's progress through life is often disorderly and incoherent, and the changes (when change is not being resisted) are not always in the direction of maturity" [in English] (13, 3). Such educative situations arise when either the adult or the child, or both, participate inadequately in the educative event (53, 36). Through this event, his communication with his parents and with reality becomes disturbed (see 23, 7; 43, 68). "As soon as there is mention of **inadequate communication** there also is mention of inadequate educating and with this an inadequate **pedagogic** actualization of the child's psychic life (51, 9) "... and such a being situated has to be qualified as a problematic educative situation" (53, 37).

* All references to the "child" from now on always mean the child-in-education.

Although it cannot be generalized, still following a number of authors (see 30, 17; 36, 124-129; 40, 30-31; 41, 6; 42, 6; 43, 78-99; 51, 14-19) reference can be made to a variety of errors in educating that bring about what eventually can be qualified as a problematic educative situation. Examples are: lack of security, inadequate physical care, affective neglect, pampering, non-acceptance, rejection, over-protection, unfavorable comparisons, ignoring, over-burdening, too much meddling, underestimating and mishandling the child as well as defective exercise of authority, inconsistency, interrupted communication, mistrust, lack of love. Briefly, the above amount to an inadequate actualization of the fundamental pedagogic structures.

Ter Horst (43, 30) uses the following six categories to differentiate among central and more peripheral factors that lead to disturbances in the child's educative situatedness: (i) personal, (ii) person-world, (iii) environmental, (iv) family, (v) sub-cultural and (vi) societal structures. These factors vary according to matters such as family composition, health of the parents, intelligence of the child, to housing, social resources, city-planning, available space, business and industry. Irrespective of the nature of the factors, they are aggravating for educating and give rise to a disturbed **communication** between parent and child by which **educative distress** (30, 15; 52, 8) or a **confusing situation** arises (43, 12).

"The communication between educator and child primarily is an affective (emotional) being bonded" (30, 24) and when family relationships are inadequately established, the child's affective life becomes disrupted. The child's inadequate participation in the educative event and inadequate personal actualization continually lead to a **labile emotional life** (50, 63). Nel (26, 6) says that children with learning and educative difficulties " ... usually are in **affective distress**". Also, Pretorius (29, 51) says that, in the first place, pedagogic distress means affective distress. From this it is evident that **problematic or disharmonious educating especially results in labilizing the child's affective life by which his personal actualization (becoming adult) becomes restrained.**

When a child's becoming adult does not occur properly, this usually is manifested in one or more symptoms that generally are known as "emotional problems". According to Van Niekerk (52, 9) these symptoms are nothing more than indications that there is a gap

between the child's attained and attainable levels of becoming adult, and so-called "emotional disturbances" ... are nothing more than manifestations of **educative problems**" (52, 4). With respect to disharmonious relationships in the family, Benjamin [in English] (3, 12) observes the following: "... an atmosphere of tension is almost unavoidable, and the children will show the effects in **symptoms of mental and emotional strain**" (my emphasis). Problematic or disharmonious educating gives rise to affective lability which then culminates in one or another symptom indicative of a restrained becoming adult.

In light of all of the above, a description now can be made of what currently is understood by a child with "emotional problems". However, the author will indicate beforehand that there is no claim to completeness or that this is the only correct description for delimiting those children to whom this study is directed.

"Emotional problems" are symptoms of the child's labile or impulsive affective life that are brought about by problematic or disharmonious educating. Consequently, the symptoms are an indication that the child is affectively disturbed and is restrained in his becoming adult.

In order to avoid further confusion, from now on reference will no longer be made to the child with "emotional problems" but rather to the child who is restrained in his becoming adult or to the affectively disturbed child.

1.4 The affectively disturbed child: an orthopedagogic task

Viewed in light of the above, it certainly can be asked who is responsible for assisting the affectively disturbed child?

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century "special" assistance has been provided to children with deficiencies or deviations. In particular, this special help was given to the deaf, blind, deaf-mute, weak-sighted--to children with one or another **handicap** and it was provided by physicians, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, etc. However, there was no unitary approach to the "treatment" of these children and it was also mainly directed to their symptoms. Each science studied and dealt with these children from its own perspective "without a thorough reflection on the nature of these children or their worlds" (53, 15). For a more complete exposition

of the course of the history of the intervention with these children, reference is made to the existing literature (see 26, 1-2; 27, 7-10; 53, 14-16).

As already mentioned, from the beginning a child finds himself in an educative situation since, as long as he is a child, he has adulthood as his destination. It was only when it was realized for the first time that the handicapped as well as the restrained child also find themselves in a **problematic educative** situation that intervention with these children occurred from a pedagogic perspective and that this assistance was then placed on a scientific foundation. In this connection, Van der Stoep (46, 46) says: "Which contributions are made in a historical respect regarding the identification of the causes of learning problems from neurology, psychology, psychiatry or any other area of knowledge, the tasks that stem from these eventually become the charge of pedagogics (i.e., orthopedagogics) ... In this connection, it really doesn't matter if one speaks of underachievers and if one indicates the cause to be physical (specifically neurological) in nature, the **outcome** remains a task of education".

Orthopedagogics also clearly is that discipline of pedagogics that is occupied with the child who, because of problematic educating, is affectively disturbed and thus has become restrained in becoming adult (see 51; 52; 53). More or less the same view of the province of orthopedagogics is held by various other scientists. For Stander and Sonnekus (39, 17) orthopedagogics is that theoretical approach within pedagogics, as the comprehensive science, that is directed to correctively educating and guiding the derailed child as a total person with learning and educative defects in his being-educatively-limited, with the aim of optimal independent adulthood within his particular existential situation. Dumont [in Dutch] (6, 3) views orthopedagogics as: "the theory of helping the child in his limited educability or the child in educational distress". Vliegenthart [in Dutch] (55, 23) says: "orthopedagogics is the theory of educative handling offered in behalf of the child who on the basis of his own psychic and organic structure is seriously impeded in his current education". Following Ter Horst (43, 5; 44, 2), Pretorius (30, 9) says: "Orthopedagogics is the science that has as its object the problematic educational situation".

For the purpose of this study, the author holds the view of Van Niekerk (51, 37; 53, 64) that, in particular, orthopedagogics is

concerned with a child restrained in becoming adult in a problematic or disharmonious educative event.

With the above as background, it is obvious that giving assistance to the affectively disturbed child from orthopedagogics should occur because scientific help to "the child with 'problems' ... must take its point of departure from the problematic educative situatedness of the particular child" (53, 18). Concerning the nature of this assistance, it is clear from the above that it primarily amounts to **stabilizing the affective life** of the affectively disturbed child since problematic education especially influences his emotional life (see section 1.3).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the preceding section it was shown that the child with "emotional problems", who traditionally was the responsibility of psychology, indeed is a child who has become affectively disturbed because of problematic educating and, therefore, really falls within the province of orthopedagogics. Because this is a somewhat unusual view, it is logical that a few questions will arise that need to be dealt with during the course of this study.

As noted in the concluding part of the previous section, assisting the affectively disturbed child has to be directed to affective or emotional stabilization. But then the question is whether this statement is not an over generalization. Can an affective disturbance indeed be eliminated only by stabilizing the child affectively? Must there not be some attention given to the particular symptoms manifested by a specific child? Since there is so much emphasis on stabilizing affective lived-experiences, it is necessary to be clear about its role in the child's total personal actualization.

For a great many years sciences other than orthopedagogics have intervened with children who are restrained in their becoming. That some of them have been very successful certainly cannot be denied. If these sciences have not taken the child's educative situatedness as the point of departure, what then can be the reason for their success? Might it be that, possibly even unconsciously, they nevertheless in one way or another affectively stabilize the child educationally? To what extent are the essentials of educating actualized by practitioners of other sciences when they intervene with a child? Thus, clarity also needs to be attained about what the

reasons are for the success of current means of assisting restrained children.

An additional question to which a decisive answer has to be given is whether orthopedagogics has a "method" or "technique" at its disposal by which a child can be affectively stabilized. Is it possible to present some guidelines that can serve as a macrostructure in terms of which there can be intervention in pedagogically accountable ways with the affectively disturbed child? In addition, is it also possible, in light of and with the aid of this macrostructure, to design a number of microstructures by which a specific child in his particular problematic educative situation can be helped?

Since the affectively disturbed child finds himself in a problematic **educative** situation, it also is only logical that there will be questions about the degree to which the parents of the child have to be involved in providing assistance.

It might be that there are still other questions that will crop up from the previous introductory section but since the above mentioned questions appear to be the most relevant, gradually an attempt will be made to answer them.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

From the introduction and statement of the problem, it is clear that there is a two-fold task for any person who concerns himself with the affectively disturbed child. On the one hand, the disharmonious event of educating must be eliminated and, on the other hand, the affective lability and impulsivity that arise from this have to be stabilized. **No** intervention with these children can have any hope of success if provision is not made for these two matters.

Therefore, the aim of this study, first, is to show the place and importance of the affective life and of affective educating in the child's adequate personal actualization and, second, to present some guidelines for designing an accountable practice of giving assistance by which the lived-experiences of the affectively disturbed child can be stabilized and in doing so to guide him to personally flourish optimally.

4. PROGRAM OF THE STUDY

In light of the statement of the problem, an attempt is made [in Chapter 2] to present an image of the role of the affective life in the child's personal becoming. From this it also ought to be clear why so much emphasis has been placed on stabilizing his emotional lived-experiences when providing help.

In Chapter 3, existing practices of giving help are reflected on in order to be able to answer the question of what their success can be ascribed to.

As indicated in the aim above, in Chapter 4, some guidelines are given for establishing a pedagogically accountable **practice of providing assistance**. Also, particular attention is given to guidelines for designing **pedotherapy sessions**.

In Chapter 5 an example is given of how these guidelines figure in practice, and in Chapter 6 a summary of the findings as well as some recommendations are presented.

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