

CHAPTER I

STATING THE PROBLEM, AIM AND PROGRAM OF STUDY

1. INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 Preliminary clarification of concepts

1.1.1 *“Preschool child”*

For the purpose of the present study, a preschool child is that child who might be allowed into a preschool where preschool teaching occurs and, thus, such a child is older than three years, but younger than a school going child. ⁽¹⁾

1.1.2 *“School child”*

A school child is described as that child who, for the first time, receives formal instruction in a primary school and, thus, is from five and a half to seven years old. This pupil is found in grade I or sub A. ⁽²⁾

1.1.3 *“Preschool to school child”*

The fact that there is mention a transition from a preschool to a school child points to the dynamic nature of becoming. This becoming does not occur spontaneously but shows continuity. Although this change, as an elevation in level in the direction of adulthood shows continuity, it does not progress uniformly, but shows streams of acceleration. ⁽³⁾

One such period of accelerated becoming occurs between the late preschool years and the age at which school teaching is compulsory. According to Nel, the period between 5 and 6 years deservedly is labeled a phase of transition. ⁽⁴⁾

The specific nature of the actualization of this progression, as learning and becoming, is given attention in this study.

1.2 Introductory statement

Recently, an awakening regarding the importance of preschool educating and schooling has been brought home. More than ever before, this led to the serious and important notion that these children, who are extremely susceptible to formative influence, must be integrated into the surrounding milieu in responsible ways. The success with which they are going to be linked up later with the situation of formal teaching, and, thereby, acquire to a greater degree, the cultural heritage of their people, as well as their eventual integration into society as a responsible adult, depend in large measure on the quality of educating in the preschool years. Arnold Gesell correctly explains: "Even the elementary schoolteacher might profit by more familiarity with the psychological development of the first five years of life, the most fundamental and formative years in the cycle of the child's growth".

(5)

In this light, the various Provinces in South Africa have made a beginning with preparing preschool teachers and even in establishing provincial preschools. At the University of Pretoria, which has offered preschool teacher preparation for many years, in 1974 elevated such preparation to a degree course. With the establishment of more and improved teacher training facilities, and supporting educative facilities for preschool children, a great step forward has been taken, but there must still be a vigilance against the danger of viewing preschool children as "miniature, or little school children". In the report of the research mission directed at preschool education in overseas countries and released by the Transvaal Education Department, it is mentioned that, where preschools and primary schools are at all connected (with one principal for both), the true nature of preschool education is going to be lost because its informal character gets lost, and excessive emphasis is given to teaching. ⁽⁶⁾

The contemporary socioeconomic climate has resulted in increasingly greater numbers of mothers required to be wage earners outside the home. The consequence is that now more preschool aged children are exposed to preschool education. Educating by natural educators (parents), thus, is supplemented with persons in whose care a child is placed during the absence of his/her parents. Entry into a preschool is optional, but it represents

a child's first acquaintance with milieu influences such as a classroom group, play group, non-parental educating, learning contents, and learning and teaching aids, as well as sharing possessions and fellowship with persons outside the intimate circle of family and friends.

A preschool child experiences this situation and lived experiences it as either positive or negative. This problem is considered in more detail later. Eventually, contents are added to his/her possessed experience which directly influence the meanings he/she gives to entering school and the course of his/her learning there.

Thus, it is necessary that the realization of the psychic life of a child-in-education be carefully investigated during the period of progressing from a preschool child to a school child. Whittle says: "We also know that fundamental physical and psychic changes occur during this time period such that afterwards a child looks [physically] different as well as shows a different attunement to the world".⁽⁷⁾

The fact that not all children, on entering school, show this change in attunement, i.e., all are not "school ready", which has resulted in a readiness-making program being followed during the first few months of a school year. In the Transvaal, such a program is compulsory for the first quarter of the year. It aims at making pupils, who are not yet ready for school, ready to successfully participate in the event of schooling.

Also, this event is experienced and lived experienced by a child and, in this way, is given sense and meaning, and then he/she will or will not participate in subsequent learning events. Thus, it also is important to know how a school beginner's realization of his/her psychic life progresses during this period.

Didacticians also find that the anticipation of learning problems can greatly limit or even eliminate later provision of orthodidactic help. In addition, it seems many learning problems and deficiencies lead back to gaps in the learning event during the teaching of beginners. Hence, the successful progression of this period of beginning instruction is of cardinal importance.

“School readiness” and its attendant problems is not a new area; on the contrary, it is as old as compulsory school attendance. Comenius (1592-1670) himself was concerned with this.

As a society increases in complexity, higher and disturbing demands are placed on a child, especially a school beginner. To get the best of this problem, today school readiness research is applied in one form or another at almost every primary school for identifying possible problem areas, and for evaluating the level of readiness. Also, scientific school readiness research is being done at child guidance institutes and school clinics.

Successful transition from being a preschool to a school child is not only necessary for good school progress, but also for eventually reaching full-fledged adulthood. In this regard, Ilg and Ames say: “Possibly the greatest single contribution which can be made towards guaranteeing that each individual child will get the most possible out of his school experience is to make certain that he starts that school experience at what is for him the ‘right’ time”.⁽⁹⁾

The actual problem has emerged from this problematic, i.e., what is included in a transition from preschool child to school child, in terms of actualizing the psychic life of this child-in-education.

To penetrate this problem to any degree, it is necessary to acquire an accountable image of a preschool child in his/her world at home and at preschool; also, an image of the school beginner in his/her unique situatedness in the primordial (home) pedagogic as well as in the confusing derivative school situation. Only then can one arrive at a view of what is involved in this transition. The problematic contained in this transition is briefly outlined in the following section and elaborated on later.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM FROM A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 In search of an accountable psychopedagogical perspective for illuminating the transition from being a preschool child to a school child

Where psychopedagogics, as an independent part-science of the autonomous science of pedagogics, delimits the psychic life of a child-in-education* as its specific area of study, the above discussion implies that the actualization or realization of the psychic life of a preschool child in transition to becoming a school child must be penetrated. In chapter II, there is an explication of the ways in which the psychic life of this child shows itself.

An additional implication is that the actualization of *becoming* and *learning*, the two equally primordial structures of the psychic life, must be described within this period of transition. As explicated by Sonnekus et al.,⁽¹⁰⁾ childlike becoming and learning are mutually and inseparably connected. One implies the other and is a precondition for the other. Differentiations are drawn only to facilitate closer scientific study and to penetrate the phenomenon. In the present study, for reasons which gradually become clear, the accent repeatedly falls on learning, but becoming is continually included in this discussion.

Further, the illumination of and penetration into this phenomenon is also carried out in terms of psychopedagogical categories, i.e., *experiencing* (as described by Ferreira),⁽¹¹⁾ *willing* (as described by Van der Merwe),⁽¹²⁾ *lived experiencing* (as described by Pretorius),⁽¹³⁾ and their reciprocal connection (as shown by Sonnekus in a recent publication).⁽¹⁴⁾

Specifically, it is indicated what significance this unified perspective has for this child under consideration. Thus, there is a penetration into the actualization or realization of child experiencing, willing, and lived experiencing, as well as their reciprocal interactions during the transition from preschool child to school child. This entire matter is discussed in chapter III.

2.2 The transition from preschool child to school child as an educative problem

From a psychopedagogical perspective, the following questions arise:

* Throughout this study “child” always means “child-in-education”.

- (i) What does educating mean for the child under consideration from a psychopedagogical point of view?
- (ii) What is the influence of educating on the transition of concern?

The above questions compelled the researcher to reflect on “educating as accompanying to self-actualization” from a psychopedagogical perspective. This matter is described comprehensively by Sonnekus⁽¹⁵⁾ and, in this connection, he differentiates the following:

- a) Affective accompanying by an educator to affective self-actualizing by a child.
- b) Cognitive accompanying by an educator to cognitive self-actualizing by a child.
- c) Normative accompanying by an educator to normative self-actualizing by a child.

In terms of what is said above about the psychic life of a child, this problematic includes self-actualizing to learning and becoming, as the two are seen during the elevation in level from preschool child to school child.

The three ways of accompaniment to self-actualization are viewed further as simultaneous educating and teaching. These activities also are equi-primordial and, at most, are distinguishable but never separable. The one is paired with the other, and both are realized in terms of content. This matter is discussed in chapter IV as a problem, as are its implications for a child during this transition phase.

2.3 The situatedness of a child during the transition from preschool child to school child, viewed from a psychopedagogical perspective

2.3.1 The *primary home educative situation*

The problematic mentioned in (i) and (ii) above primarily presents itself in the home situation, i.e., the primordial didactic-pedagogic situation. Each child is pedagogically situated. Where educating is realized, teaching also is necessarily realized, and this implicates

content. An educator always educates in terms of something, i.e., contents.

For this study, the entire matter of accompanying to self-actualizing within the home situation is penetrated more closely. In particular, the parents' affective, cognitive, and normative accompanying his/her child to his/her self-actualizing his/her potentialities of learning and becoming are examined.

2.3.2 The *preschool as a school teaching and educating situation*

As indicted in part I of this chapter, today increasing numbers of preschool aged children find themselves in a supporting situation of teaching and educating, i.e., in a preschool. Where such a disturbing and artificially established educative situation shows up, preschool teachers replace the presence of the parents for part of the day. Their contributions to educating a preschool child are supplemental to the home educative situation, and lasts while a parent is absent. (In this regard, see the work of Landman et al. related to the fundamental pedagogical category of periodically breaking away pedagogically).⁽¹⁶⁾

Since the home and preschool (also school) pedagogical situatedness of a child are essentially the same, any differences are to be found only in how they are functionalized or realized, the teachers have the same task as the parents. Thus, attention is given to a preschool teacher's task of teaching and educating in connection with accompanying a preschool child affectively, cognitively, and normatively for realizing his/her psychic life potentialities to an affective, cognitive, and normative self-realizing of his/her potentialities to learn and become in his/her transition to being a school child.

2.3.3 Teaching *beginners as a situation of teaching and educating*

What is stated above in section 2.3.2 about the educative task of a preschool teacher also holds for a teacher of beginners in a primary school. This task of accompanying, once again, does not differ essentially from that of a parent or a preschool teacher. The methods and activities, or ways of accompanying, on behalf of a child's potentialities for self-actualizing, indeed, are more stylized

and formal than in a preschool or at home, but the educative aim, sequence, and relationship [structures] remain unchanged.

Given the above, the role of a teacher of beginners in the realization of a school beginner's psychic life potentialities is disclosed with special reference to her/his functions in accompanying a school beginner to his/her affective, cognitive, and normative self-actualization. This matter of accompanying such a child is discussed fully in chapter IV.

2.3.4 Didactic-pedagogical tasks arising from the preceding viewed from a psychopedagogical perspective

It is anticipated that several didactic-pedagogical implications will arise from the present study which, hopefully, have practical value for a parental home, a preschool practice, as well as for teaching beginners in a primary school.

The findings and conclusion, along with recommendations are presented in chapter V.

3. REFERENCES

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