

CHAPTER 4

THE PRACTICE OF ORTHOPEDAGOGIC EVALUATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Nel (174, 90) emphasizes that the physical presence of the adult and child is necessary in a situation of orthopedagogic evaluation (diagnosis). This is required for implementing the pedagogical relationship, sequence, activity, and aim structures, and the ground forms of orthopedagogic evaluation.

The orthopedagogue takes the initiative to physically approach the child to communicate with him/her. He/she allows the child to act by assigning tasks to be carried out. The assignments are systematically directed to him/her to deal with relevant materials by means of conversation, play, and example. Also, where necessary, limitations and prohibitions are imposed.

Van Gelder (288) emphasizes that the conversation with the child need not be verbal, but can also occur through requesting him/her to play, to draw, to write, etc. As to the means at the orthopedagogic evaluator's disposal, Van Gelder (286, 47) says they are the same as what, as a rule, are available to the pedagogue and, in this regard, he distinguishes three forms of activity, i.e., communicating, allowing some activities, and setting limits, or not allowing others.

When a restrained child is involved in the evaluative situation, the orthopedagogue selects from the ground forms. In conjunction with these forms, aids also are available. In this regard, Langeveld (135, 55) distinguishes among six aids available to the orthopedagogic evaluator:

- (i) works which the child him/herself brings up, e.g., schoolwork, drawings, written texts, etc.;
- (ii) learning abilities, as are manifested with the help of intelligence media and scholastic tests;
- (iii) his/her physical development and condition;

- (iv) the educative circumstances he/she is in;
- (v) projective and other techniques for determining how he/she subjectively faces life;
- (vi) how he/she is constituted hereditarily, and structurally.

Ter Horst (258, 104) emphasizes that the orthopedagogic evaluator him/herself must be considered as primary because he/she involves him/herself professionally. Indeed, he/she must model correct fundamental pedagogical relationships. Therefore, he/she must continually work on him/herself and try to improve his/her own shortcomings. Moreover, Ter Horst (258, 105 [in Dutch]) stresses that, "Love is the precondition for orthopedagogic activity".

To summarize, an orthopedagogic conversation, this evaluative (diagnostic) activity is initially subjective, and includes a subjective movement or a merging with (co-experiencing) the world of the child restrained in becoming adult. It is a pedagogical situation because an adult and child are with each other, and authentic pedagogic aids are implemented to allow the conversation to flourish.

For the sake of convenience, orthopedagogic evaluation is differentiated into four phases, i.e.:

- (i) On a **pre-scientific** level, the evaluator enters the child's experiential world, e.g., in the playroom, by letting the child draw, etc.;
- (ii) the evaluator acquires a **provisional** person-image, or a provisional image of the child's experiential world, where the different impressions from the pre-scientific phase are now organized;
- (iii) the orthopedagogue implements specific **exploratory media** to investigate aspects of the child's experiential world. Here, one thinks of media such as:
 - (a) specific play media;
 - (b) media for evaluating intelligence;
 - (c) observation media, such as the Guide-it, Kohs blocks, and Wiggly blocks;
 - (d) projective media;
 - (e) graphic expression [drawing] media, among which are the human figure, trees, etc.;
 - (f) language media; and

iv) The evaluator establishes a summary person-image, during which there is an objective distancing, analysis, and interpretation, by which the acquired data are integrated.

During the entire orthopedagogic evaluative (diagnostic) conversation, pedagogical observation and intuition play a prominent role.

2. PEDAGOGICAL OBSERVATION

In implementing the ground forms, it also is necessary that the evaluator accurately notices what the child means, in less "deliberate" ways because, in addition to what he/she wants to consciously communicate about him/herself in his/her conversation, play, etc., he/she allows much more to be seen by one who knows **what** to look for, and **how** to look (see 81, 193). The more a child gets into a task, the more intensely involved in the "work" he/she becomes, and the more his/her ways of working emerge (see 150, 43-44).

Observation is a **fundamental** method for exploring a child (174, 91-92). However, Van Strien (302, 137) emphasizes that, "a child is more than a trusted 'house pet', whose every whim we have learned to know from long experience. He is free, he is a **person** and even if we know him, in a certain sense, he continually remains a stranger to us--a being with his own experiential world which he never allows to be completely mapped out, because he continually transcends himself" (302, 137 [in Dutch]).

Buytendijk (28, 129) distinguishes **expressive movement** and **action**. Expressive movement manifests a state of emotion. Here, movement is an **image**, i.e., a meaning which becomes observable in a Gestalt. This expression itself has a meaning and essentially is not goal-directed; it also represents feelings or moods. For example, a smile represents a positive emotional experience, and a gesture can indicate displeasure. Also, motor movements often express emotional states, agreement or irritation (28,131).

Linschoten (141,187) differentiates **instrumental** and **expressive** movements. **Instrumental** movements are directed to a goal or destination and, thus, represent a resolve, and refer to the **will** to accomplish something; they have an effect in view. **Expressive** movements express a person's emotional participation in the world.

While observing another, these distinctions should be seriously considered. Moreover, Van Strien (302, 255) emphasizes that the impressions we make on fellow persons are not determined only by the way we show ourselves in our appearances, but also in what is "additional" or "co-given" in our "exterior". One person exudes a warmth which attracts many, another person pushes others away without wanting to; one elicits personal outpourings, and another inspires sober, matter of fact behavior. It can happen that a person does not want to be so, but this simply is the manner of his/her being in the world. Van Strien says, "One can accept the appeal one directs to others, such as the girl who has sex-appeal and discovers that this is emphasized in the ways she dresses herself and uses makeup" (302, 255 [in Dutch]).

It is also necessary that the orthopedagogue free him/herself from any biases based on "superficial" appearances, or opinions about the nature of the child's problematic behaviors, instead of carefully observing him/her (see 305, 8-9).

During pedagogical observation, there is pedagogic conversation in attempting to gain insight into the child's experiential world. Thus, the orthopedagogue takes part in the child's **situation** by observing. He/she is encountered in all his/her anxiety, insecurity, aggression, feeling threatened, and helplessness in the conversational, play, or image, e.g., drawing world which he/she designs.

Pedagogical observation cannot be reduced to a "mechanical registering of stimuli" (302, 83) because the child's actions we perceive are more than a series of movements, expressions, or a configuration of facial lines. This is not a **clinical observation**, because the clinician emphasizes the richness and nuances of his/her personal observations. Also, it is not the observation of a statistician, who stresses the objectivity of his/her measured observations (302, 107).

Pedagogical observation also is not merely perceiving a child from behind a one-way mirror, and it is not an objective inspection, a distanced "observation of behavior, in the behaviorist sense of the word, where supposedly this involves an 'objective' outsider who views a child from 'no situation' and 'without dialogue'" (243, 82 [in Afrikaans]). Rather, there is an attempt to see reality as the child

sees it. This implies a subjective penetration of his/her situation, in contrast to a distanced observation.

Van Strien (302, 83) says that the human subject must be observed in other ways than the rest of reality. Knowledge of a person is not **derived** exclusively from observing him/her; rather it also rests on a **special interpretation** of him/her. In an evaluative situation, the child is **not** perceived as "something", as a "thing", as an "object", but as **someone**, as a **subject**, as a **conversational partner**. He/she is not viewed as "abnormal", "compulsive neurotic" or "anxiety hysterical", but as a **person** (see 312, 218).

Stander and Sonnekus (243, 83) emphasize establishing a relationship of association and encounter during pedagogical observation. For Gouws (77, 160 [in Afrikaans]) this involves a "partnership of shared responsibility".

An important aspect of observation is the evaluator and the child being observed working together. For example, if the orthopedagogic evaluator lets the child play, this no longer merely has a cathartic value, but the orthopedagogue must also **participate** in the play. The playing must progress within a sphere of intimacy and trust, for the child to be understood in his/her play. The orthopedagogue must participate in and enter the world the child has designed in his/her playing. Lubbers (150, 106) says the orthopedagogic evaluator cannot expect the playing child to later be able to explain to an outsider what he/she has played.

Van Strien (302, 49) notes that some consider the concept **observation** to be derived from the original meaning of the Hebrew word **Jadang**, "participating in", "communicating with". Hoefnagels (90, 172) says a person always falls "outside of a dossier" and is properly a person in the way he/she "is put in a sonnet". Thus, observation always involves a subject-subject relationship. This does not mean a **subjectivistic** observation, because **objectivity** is also of extreme importance here. For Behrend (13, 419), this objectivity means that the evaluator must enter a dialogue with the child he/she is observing in the situation which is created by both. Beets (11, 14) says that, "in observing, I must place myself **there** in the child's presence, be entirely there where who I observe is."

Through an **encounter**, the distance in the observation is abolished. Beets says [in Dutch] that, "**The scientific observation of children is**

equivalent to an existential analysis, which aims at a future dimension within an educative relationship, by which the educator must also be a psychologist. This observation is not based on an observer-test object relationship but on an interpersonal encounter, which is its point of departure. The distance, which ought to remain in all observation, is maintained. We find the child by partly looking past the 'blind' facts of the moment, to place them in a broader frame of knowing. What I see happening here and now, as an onlooker, I place against the background of a personal past and future of the young person I observe" (11, 26).

Pedagogical observation should always be viewed as a refined form of everyday educative judgment. That is, it must be **accurate** and **systematic**. Everyday judgments of association can become scientifically deepened by formulating points about which special account must be taken (see 298, 136). Then, the implicit learning to know becomes superseded by directed **observation**.

The evaluator also should not arrive at conclusions which are too hasty. For example, a child who appears to be retiring should not summarily be qualified as someone who experiences him/herself as inadequate. A degree of surety should first be acquired before there is an interpretation. Vedder says, "When one too readily interprets, there is the danger that one relaxes one's observations, because then one assumes that one has seen 'right through' the matter" (305, 12 [in Dutch]). Hence, pedagogical observation is a systematic exploration and purposeful focusing by the orthopedagogic evaluator with the aim of learning to know the meanings of the landscapes, and unique situations of this child who is restrained in becoming adult.

According to Beets (11, 20), good pedagogical observation is the other side of being a good educator, and the reverse. The pedagogical observer's activities with the child continually flow from differentiated and flexible thinking about him/her as one who is educatively situated. This also requires previous thinking about the educative aim, and deliberate choices about what exploratory and educative aids will be implemented. There also is **reflection** on the "responses" the child gives, and these are always pedagogically evaluated (see 77, 38).

To observe a child pedagogically involves the orthopedagogue, by means of systematic and purposeful activity during his/her being with the child, carefully observing his/her **involvement** in his/her educative situation and evaluating what is observed in terms of pedagogic criteria (see 77, 37; 39, 29; 190, 24).

Opportunities for pedagogical observation arise during the entire exploratory investigation. Thus, the possibility of observing is there when the different media are implemented. Finally, some more specific matters for observing are indicated.

Because it is really the child's **behaviors** which are observed, they require the researcher's particular attention. In this respect, for example, his/her **silence** also is a **behavior** which is charged with meaning (302, 115). His/her bodily attitude (see 55, 36) is considered, as are his/her gestures, expressions, what he/she says, and how. He/she "tells" a great deal about him/herself in what h/she says and does (see 105, 14-15). Everything we perceive offers itself with its own meaning, a meaning which is irrevocably lost if there is an analysis of several **stimulus factors**.

How the child acts, hears, looks, touches, grasps, plays, asks are observed. His/her hopes and desires, his/her anxiety, insecurity, rebelliousness, and distress are manifested. Activities such as nail-biting, thumb-sucking, bravado, twisting locks of hair, lapses in attention "say" something, and the orthopedagogue must be able to understand these messages.

Vedder (305, 14) mentions some matters which should be especially considered during observing, i.e., **outward appearance, intelligence, motor movements, volitional life, emotional life, temperament, character, and conduct in general**.

Outward appearance can "say" something about how the child is being cared for at home, and **perhaps** something about the attunement of his/her mother to him/her. The child who is not cared for, who is shabbily clothed, and unwashed, whose hair is uncombed and messed up, whose nails are filthy, and neglected can possibly be evidence of a mother who has not accepted her motherhood. However, the orthopedagogue must not arrive at such conclusions too hastily, because there are mothers who do not place a very high premium on neatness, and who still are good mothers. From the above example, however, it is concluded that, with respect

to **neatness**, it falls short, as an important component of the life of an adult. Even so, this does not mean that the outwardly well cared for child is necessarily also being adequately educated affectively and normatively (see 238, 8 et seq.).

The child's outward appearance also can give an indication of his/her attunement to him/herself, especially viewed from a longitudinal perspective. A girl in puberty who is untidy in appearance, indicates that she is inadequately developing to adulthood, because her own outward care and, within limits, concern for appearance ought to figure prominently. However, the child in puberty who constantly and exaggeratedly attends to and cares for her outward appearance can, in this way, show evidence of an overconcern for the impressions she tries to make on others. With respect to outward appearance, not only is clothing and neatness attended to, but also bodily conditions are noted, and whether he/she appears to be radiant and healthy, or perhaps pale, sickly, sleepy, and tired (see 305, 16).

Also, expressive motor movements are observed. There is attention paid to his/her mimicry. Is it perhaps rigid, or is it vivid and meaningful, and does his/her face betray a "cognizance" of what is going on around him/her? According to Vedder, the question is "How does the child view the world, and people: as open, harmless, openminded, trustworthy, or suspicious, critical, timid, shy?" (305, 19 [in Dutch]). Moreover, his/her speech is noted. Does he/she speak clearly, or inaudibly? Are there particular sounds which are not pronounced clearly, or are there specific speech defects present? Of note is the possible presence of any unusual bodily movements, such as twitching muscles.

Regarding his/her life of willing, attention is given to how he/she directs him/herself to a goal. Can he/she set a goal for him/herself? Are there perhaps signs of capriciousness? Can he/she work with abandon or is his/her attention easily distracted? Does he/she show persistence by sticking with a task, or does he/she easily lose heart? Does he/she work enthusiastically and remain so, or does it gradually wane?

As far as the child's emotional life is concerned, his/her fundamental attunement can be inferred, and whether he/she is usually animated or depressed, if his/her disposition remains constant or changes (305, 22). Also, feelings of insecurity, anxiety,

and inadequacy can be inferred. For example, the child who is readily discouraged by failure, and responds with "I can't", perhaps is afraid to fail, and then prefers to withdraw from the tasks.

With respect to the child's character, which can be observed, Vedder (305, 26-28) refers to personal inclinations such as being self-reflective, or being more directed to the outer world; if he/she is **open** or more **closed**, perhaps even secretive; if emotional manifestations give an impression of being **authentic** or **inauthentic**; if he/she tries to **draw attention**, and is intrusive, and/or swaggering; if he/she is rude or bashful, shy, timid; if he/she accepts prohibitions, etc.

Pedagogical observation, indeed, is the key to understanding the child's lived experiences. The acquired data also force the evaluator to fill in existing gaps, to complete the whole to arrive at a meaningful explication of the unique child, as a person, as a functioning totality in his/her dialogue with the world. For example, a child who rejects an encounter, also gives evidence by this of an existing problem in establishing interpersonal relationships in general.

It is important that the orthopedagogic evaluator accurately observe his/her **attunement, or disposition**. There also is note of the quality and ways he/she deals with problems. The nature of errors which arise, and their elimination without help are noted. His/her actions reveal the degree of insight which breaks through, and indications can be found of the structure of his/her course of thinking during problem solving.

Also, the level of his/her actualizing his/her intentionality can be observed, e.g., by whether he/she is attuned to communicating with the world in successful ways, as indicated by the degree to which he/she participates in an assignment. His/her methods for establishing relationships can be observed. It can be ascertained if he/she is able to work methodically, independently, whether he/she asks for help, etc. Also, it can be noted if a progression in thinking is evident. Moreover, it is clear whether he/she is comfortable, tense, relaxed; how he/she habitually directs him/herself emotionally and intellectually in constituting his/her experiential world; how he/she deals with his/her problems--coolly, calmly, and systematically, or by following trial-and-error methods.

Particular attention is given to how he/she speaks, e.g., self-assuredly, if there is a lack of fluency, or confusion regarding linguistic expressions. The state of concentration is easily observed with respect to fluctuations in attending. From his/her actions in the work situation, it can be inferred if and to what degree he/she is absorbed in the task such as a child who is engrossed in his/her work, asks no questions, and does not look around listlessly, and finds inspiration in the task itself. It is determined to what extent he/she seeks help, and if he/she accepts help offered, how meaningfully he/she uses it.

From the child's observable actions, his/her emotional stability or lability, and his/her cognitive order, or disorder is observed. As indicated, the presence of tension and anxiety also are clearly observable. It is true that anxiety can also be observed in a laboratory, but such phenomena as despair, being deeply touched, respect, desire, existential decisions, and profoundly tragic conflicts are missing from such extremely controlled observations (see 318, 17).

The pedagogical observer must implement pedagogical criteria to evaluate and more closely circumscribe what he/she observes. This pedagogical observation is nothing more than a phenomenological penetration of the child in his/her being situated in education. It is a fundamental method of analysis and appropriate interpretations, which are indispensable for understanding the child restrained in becoming adult in his/her problematic educative situation.

3. PEDAGOGICAL INTUITION

The orthopedagogic evaluator is involved as a **subject** in investigating the child restrained in becoming adult in his/her problematic educative situation. This means merging into, empathizing with, and entering his/her experiential world. This does not presume a **subjectivistic** approach, where the evaluator's opinions are absolutized and merely guide him/her. He/she strives to establish an **objective** image of the child, but an objective image in **subjectivity**. Beets stresses that one who is not subjectively involved with another can never be objective.

In truly understanding a child, **intuition** plays a prominent role and is necessary for that understanding to be objective. Intuition is described as the immediate, spontaneous apprehension of a matter

as if by inspiration (224, 367) and indicates the possession of such **knowing** by a person who has the potential to **sense** the matter. Reasoning does not play a prominent role in acquiring this knowing, and it rests on very slim evidence which, moreover, can hardly, or only with great difficulty be affirmed intellectually. Even so, it is truly possessed knowing.

Intuitive knowing also can be qualified as a view or opinion arrived at by a person's subjective merging with the situation of his/her conversational partner about whom he/she has this opinion. Thus, intuition is not an **objective**, but an affective form of knowing, which also is used in orthopedagogic evaluating (diagnosing).

Viewing intuitively, however, requires that one be open to all relevant possibilities. This implies that one wanting to acquire a meaningful intuitive knowing of his/her conversational partner must possess a rich experiential world. In other words, if this knowing is related to the educative reality, and especially the educative relationships of a particular person, the views or opinions arrived at about him/her are determined by his/her **knowledge** about the reality of educating in general.

Following Strasser (248, 148-174), Sonnekus (238, 130-132) qualifies intuitive knowing as the most fundamental initial knowing in the pre-scientific life of a child, which itself, is the origin and onset of all knowing. Intuitive knowing really means "seeing what cannot be seen". It is an attitude of knowing built on an attunement or sense and trust that matters are as they are deemed to be (238, 130). It is based on a pre-scientific, affectively initiated view of the child in his/her situation. This way of knowing is part of each person's dialogue with reality; and, as far as any new problem is concerned, his/her foreknowledge, indeed, is based on intuition. It is related to a person's sensitivity to small details in the lifeworld and, in this regard, one allows oneself to be guided by one's feelings. Furthermore, this knowing is pre-reflective, which necessarily is followed by reflection. This "sensed" knowing leads to forming preliminary hypotheses, which can later be accepted or rejected because of cognitive knowing.

When cognitive knowledge of the matter is added to what initially is merely intuitive knowing, there is an **ordering** of the intuitive knowing, which gradually leads to acquiring greater clarity on a cognitive level. By cognitively interpreting, ordering, and

classifying facts, the initial vagueness of intuitive knowing is gradually diminished, on the one hand, by eliminating unacceptable ideas or opinions and, on the other hand, by corroborating reality.

Hence, intuitive knowing is not the same as sensory perception, but functions on a level of sensing which includes a decidedly cognitive moment. All perceiving, thinking, and understanding rest on this pre-scientific knowing (238, 131). Intuition figures prominently when two persons are with each other. With the first sight of another, an appeal emanates from each, which makes an impression on both, and which usually is not verbalized, but remains implicit. The appearance and impression accompanying actions, i.e., the person's **appearance** to us, is a source of knowledge. Kouwer (109, 284) speaks of an immediate physiognomic appeal.

Van Strien (302, 140) says it seems that the "surface" of another enters a conversation with our "surface" in a unique language. "Naturally, our sense organs mediate here, but this involves something entirely different from perceiving another's course of action" (302, 140 [in Dutch]). The personal emotionality of the perceiver functions as an emotional barometer for the affective appeal emanating from another person.

Also, the intuitive method particularly involves considering the smallest details in the investigation and, thus, the evaluator should not regard them as unimportant.

In an orthopedagogic evaluation, **pedagogical** intuition is used specifically as an aid for unraveling the experiential world of the child restrained in becoming adult. This means the evaluator's emotional knowing his/her problematic educative situation must also be continually evaluated with pedagogical criteria. It is in pursuit of the aim to disclose this unique child's educative situation which, during the evaluation, the orthopedagogue continually and intuitively questions such matters as the actualization of trust, understanding, and authority in the family relationships in terms of their presence or absence, and their quality. Intuition is extremely important for acquiring knowledge about the parents' real attitudes, approaches, and insights regarding their educative tasks.

Sonnekus (238, 131) indicates that intuitive knowing includes moments of understanding, but also of misunderstanding, and it is the source of misunderstanding or understanding all experiences

and lived experiences. Thus, there are dangers, and there must be definite reservations in using this form of knowing in evaluation.

In the first place, the orthopedagogue must be thoroughly schooled in general pedagogics; he/she must primarily be a phenomenologist; and he/she must have experience in implementing this method, simply because it is not a matter of mechanically interpreting quantitative facts, and the conversational partner can so easily be "misunderstood".

Just as one wouldn't judge a person only by his/her outward appearance, and then make him/her a victim of the appeal emanating from him/her, because this gives rise to bias, and then the **person**, indeed, is deprived of his/her freedom because he/she is reduced to something he/she is not, and will not be, so the orthopedagogue would not limit him/herself **only** to his/her intuition, because then his/her conversational partner also can become the victim of an unjustifiable subjectivistic misjudgment.

Lack of bias during an orthopedagogic evaluation is essential, and the orthopedagogue must approach the child in his/her situation without prejudgments. Also, at the slightest doubt, intuitive knowing must be ignored. The search is always for an understanding of a problematic educative event, and one must guard against acquiring a "distorted" image.

As a pre-scientific "understanding", intuitive knowing, then, must always be supplemented, and it can only serve as a point of departure for additional, more cognitive forms of knowing (238, 131). This occurs in many ways, among which are verification, and cross-comparison of the results from the various media and other **factual** data, by which an **objective** judgment is made. By implementing specific exploratory media ["tests"], comparable situations are created, and the orthopedagogic evaluator tries to protect him/herself from subjective conclusions. Then the acquired intuition is amplified, deepened, and enriched (see 76, 25).

However, if the orthopedagogic evaluator cannot administer these media, he/she cannot arrive at real objectivity because the child restrained in becoming adult is a subject who also makes him/herself knowable by means of emotional expressions. His/her dialogue with life contents, thus, is usually very pathically-affectively colored.

Implementing intuition as an exploratory medium does not first begin when a relationship is entered with the child him/herself, but already when the appointment for the investigation is made. The use of specific exploratory media is always an extremely important component of orthopedagogic evaluation, and this matter is considered in the next chapter.