

CHAPTER I

STATING THE PROBLEM, AIM AND PROGRAM OF STUDY

1. INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 Preliminary clarification of concepts

1.1.1 *“Pre-school child”*

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

1.1.2 *“School child”*

Also, for the purpose of this study 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 *“Pre-school to school child”*

The fact that there is mention of a transition from a pre-school 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 continually shows streams of acceleration.⁽³⁾

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

The particular nature of the actualization of this progression as learning and becoming gradually will enjoy attention in this study.

1.2 Introductory statement

Recently an awakening regarding the importance of pre-school 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 education in the pre-school years. Arnold Gesell correctly explains: “Even the elementary school teacher 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 pre-school teachers and even in establishing provincial pre-schools. At the University of Pretoria, which has offered pre-school 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 pre-school children, a great step forward has been taken but there still must be a vigilance against the danger of viewing pre-school children as miniature or “little school children”. In the report of the research mission directed at pre-school education in overseas countries and released by the Transvaal Education Department, it is mentioned that where pre-schools and primary schools are at all connected (with one principal for both), the true nature of pre-school 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 of the home. The consequence is that now more pre-school aged children are exposed to pre-school education. Educating by natural educators (parents) thus is supplemented with persons in whose care a child is placed during the absence of his parents. Entry into a pre-school actually is optional but, indeed, it represents a child’s first acquaintance with secondary 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 pre-school child experiences this situation and lived experiences it as either positive or negative. This problem will be considered in more detail later. Eventually contents are added to his possessed experiences that directly influence the meanings he gives to entering school and the course of his learning there.

Thus, it indeed is necessary that the realization of the psychic life of a child-in-education be investigated carefully during the period of progressing from a pre-school 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., not all of them are “school ready”, 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 as a consequence he will or will not take part in the subsequent learning events. Thus, it also is important to know how a school beginner’s realization of his psychic life progresses during this period.

Didacticians also find that the anticipation of learning problems can greatly limit or even eliminate later provision of orthodidactical help. In addition, it seems many learning problems and deficiencies lead back to gaps in the learning event during beginning teaching. 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) had already concerned himself with this.

As a society increases in complexity, higher and disturbing demands are placed on a child and also a school beginner. To get the best of the 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 pre-school 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 the transition from pre-school child to school child in term of actualizing the psychic life of this child-in-education.

In order to penetrate this problem to any degree, it is necessary to acquire an accountable image of a pre-school child in his world at home as well as at pre-school and also of the school beginner in his unique situatedness in the primordial (home) pedagogical as well as in the confusing second-order 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 pre-school 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 pre-school child in transition to becoming a school child must be penetrated. In chapter II the author will attempt to explicate the ways in which the psychic life of this child manifests itself.

An additional implication is that the actualization of *becoming* and *learning*, the two equi-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 inseparable connected. One implies the other and, indeed, also 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 that gradually will 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 also will be 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 connections as shown by Sonnekus in a recent publication.⁽¹⁴⁾

Specifically, there will be an attempt to show what significance this unified perspective has for this child under consideration. Thus, there will be an attempt to penetrate the actualization or realization of childlike experiencing, willing and lived experiencing as well as their reciprocal interaction during the transition from pre-school child to school child. This entire matter is discussed in chapter III.

2.2 The transition from pre-school child to school child as an educative problem

From a psychopedagogical perspective, the following questions arise here:

* 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 has been 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 was said above about the psychic life of a child, this problematic includes self-actualizing to learning and becoming, as the two manifest themselves during the elevation in level from pre-school child to school child.

The mentioned ways of accompaniment to self-actualization are viewed further as simultaneous educating and teaching. These activities also are equi-primordial and at most can be distinguished but never separated. 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 of concern.

2.3 The situatedness of a child during the transition from pre-school 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 didactical-pedagogical situation. Each child is pedagogically situated. Where educating is realized, teaching also necessarily is realized and this

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

For the purpose of this study this means that the entire matter of accompanying to self-actualizing within the home situation will be penetrated more closely. In particular, the parents' affective, cognitive and normative accompanying to their child's self-actualizing his potentialities of learning and becoming will be examined.

2.3.2 The pre-school as secondary teaching and educating situation

As indicted in part I of this chapter, today increasing numbers of pre-school aged children find themselves in a supporting situation of teaching and educating, i.e., in a pre-school. Where such a disturbing and artificially established educative situation shows up, the pre-school teachers replace the presence of the parent for part of the day. Their contributions to educating the pre-school child are supplemental to the primary educative situation and lasts while the 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 primary and secondary pedagogical situatedness of a child, and in the present case, more specifically, a pre-school child, essentially are 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 pre-school teacher's task of teaching and educating in connection with accompanying a pre-school child affectively, cognitively and normatively for realizing his psychic life potentialities to an affective, cognitive and normative self-realizing of his potentialities to learn and become in his transition to being a school child.

2.3.3 Teaching beginners as a situation of teaching and educating

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

and formal than is the case in a pre-school or at home, but the educative aim, sequence and relationship remain unchanged.

In light of the above, the role of the 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 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 a number of didactic-pedagogical implications will emerge from the present study that, hopefully, will have practical value for a parental home, a pre-school practice as well as for teaching beginners in a primary school.

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

3. REFERENCES

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