

C. THE ORTHOPEDAGOGICAL WITHIN THE PEDAGOGICAL*

P. A. van Niekerk
University of Pretoria

1. PEDAGOGICS AS A SCIENCE

As a **science**, pedagogics purposively, radically and systematically searches the reality of educating for pedagogical categories as **illuminating** means of thinking about the essential characteristics of the phenomenon of educating.⁽¹⁾ Its **complexity** has led pedagogues to concentrate on particular distinguishable phenomena within this complexity, and this has given rise to the establishment of various pedagogic part-perspectives. However, this creates the possibility that the different part-perspectives artificially can do research along side of each other, and it can be argued that one part-perspective has nothing to say to another, that their problems have separate identities and that the **unity** in the multiplicity of perspectives can be lost.⁽²⁾

2. PROBLEMATIC EDUCATING

A child **always** finds himself in an educative **situation** as the totality of concerns with which he and an adult have to deal. During an educative **event**, the possibilities of acting momentarily become actualities when the adult and child participate together in actualizing the fundamental pedagogical structures.

In a problematic educative **situation** there are noticeable moments of aggravation in the relationship between child and adult that have to be dealt with **adequately**. In a problematic educative **event**, indeed there are activities but they are **inadequate** and it can be qualified as an **event** where a child's **becoming adult is actualized inadequately** under the **guidance** of an **adult** and on that basis he is **conspicuous**.

That a particular child's becoming adult does not occur as it should usually is noticeable because on the basis of particular behaviors he

* South African Journal of Pedagogy (1979), Vol. 13, No. 1, 183-191.

becomes **conspicuous**, especially in the sense that they are not in accord with what can be expected of him in everyday interactions. Being rebellious, telling falsehoods, neglecting obligations, manifesting learning and/or behavior problems indeed make a child conspicuous. These symptoms are nothing more than an indication of a **gap** between his **achieved** level of becoming adult and his presently **achievable** level. Also, this is a summons to the adults to now engage in "special" intervention with him and to help him with "his problem".

Any practical problematic situation asks for clarification--also whether there is a **founded** theory that can serve as a point of departure. Thus, for example, Adam did not ask Eve what problematic educating is but what now has to be done with Cain.

The age-long **hit-and-miss** intervention with a child in a problematic educative situation especially is attributable to existing inadequacies in fundamental notions regarding the **phenomenon of educating** as such.

To be able to help a child effectively in a problematic educative situation, first he has to be understood as a personal actualizer (Dasein) in his being educatively situated. Only then can the educator determine **where** the educating is "distorted", **how** the educative **guidance** and **under actualization** of potentialities have let a child become pedagogically "distorted" and how this "becoming distorted" possibly can be abolished.

3. ORTHOPEDAGOGIC PRACTICE

Orthopedagogics is directed to a **problematic educative situation**. As pedagogics, it also poses fundamental questions about the essentials of becoming adult with the aim of disclosing what is **problematic** regarding this becoming. A search is directed to everything that belongs to a particular educative problem and distress and what their possible prevention or rectification includes. Thus, an orthopedagogical **theory** is the result of a scientific fathoming and description of the essential characteristics of the educative situatedness of a particular child restrained or retarded in becoming adult and, as such, it is essential knowledge of his problematic educative situation.

However, in the first place, a problematic educative situation remains an **educative** one and cannot be explained and described in terms of categories other than **pedagogical categories**. Even so, there is no problematic educative situation where the educative essentials appear the same because each is a **particular** situation within which the adult and child participate in the event in **particular** ways and, more specifically, in **inadequate** ways. The fact of inadequate educating implies that the pedagogical categories do not appear as they ought to and then there is mention of **distorted** or **attenuated** appearances of the pedagogical essences.

A child who in one or another way is restrained in his becoming adult finds himself in a **different** educative situation than a child who adequately is **becoming** adult. Orthopedagogical work, as **theory forming**, rightly is directed to this **different** situatedness as a **problematic situatedness**. The cardinal question is how such a child's becoming adult is actualized **differently** (inadequately) under the guidance of an adult and how this **confusing situation** can be rectified.

For example, to determine **how** a particular child actualizes his being-a-person-in-education there is a linking up with psychopedagogics and **how** the guidance and teaching are actualized is determined by connecting up with fundamental and didactic pedagogics, respectively. Only then can purposive, planned assistance be given so the gap [between the achieved and achievable levels of becoming] can be **bridged**. **Among other things**, this means that a child has to be given "special" support to a "new" **readiness** to venture, as a purposive resolve to **want** to enter a life situation and alter its meaning--with respect to his related possessed experiences--so that the meanings he gives to educative content are in agreement with his potentialities.

To be able to answer these questions the orthopedagogue is obliged to inquire into and acquire proficiency in various aspects that are implied by the problematic **educating**.

From a mere psychopedagogical perspective--also in connection with its so-called practical application--the problematic cannot be eliminated but without the underlying psychopedagogical knowledge, the actualization of the psychic life of a child restrained in becoming adult also cannot be understood.

So also, "practically applied" fundamental pedagogics merely can identify the **problem** and solution since it only indicates **what** is involved in **actualizing** fundamental pedagogical structures. However, without such knowledge, the problem cannot be decisively identified or solved.

The various pedagogical disciplines investigate the essentials of the reality of educating. Only when these essentials appear **distorted** and, e.g., there is mention of a **disharmony** among the actualizations of educating, teaching and the psychic life is the field of orthopedagogics entered. Orthopedagogical study implies that already established pedagogical knowledge always is its point of departure.

Today there is no discipline that **integrates** the results of the various part-perspectives into a **unity** and that can be described as postulating categories from a **collective** perspective. Thus, each practically directed pedagogical part-perspective is confronted with the task of converging into a unity all relevant pedagogical knowledge for attaining its practical aim.

Because this especially raises the question of how a unique child who is restrained or retarded in becoming adult now has to be further helped, and since this question cannot be answered from a particular pedagogical **part-perspective**, the orthopedagogue is required to **integrate** all of the relevant moments from all of the various part-perspectives with the aim of decisively answering this question.

When a problematic educative situation is identified by implementing pedagogical criteria, for example, there is mention of the **inadequate** actualization of the fundamental pedagogical structures, on the one hand, and an **under actualization** of a child's psychic life-in-education, on the other hand. In order to determine **how** the pedagogical essences appear as distorted or attenuated in terms of educating inadequately and **how** the child's psychic life is under actualized, the fundamental pedagogical, psychopedagogical and didactic pedagogical criteria, after being integrated by the orthopedagogue, are implemented as **orthopedagogical** criteria.

Thus, orthopedagogical practice requires a collective pedagogical perspective because the orthopedagogue has to be able to pick out

the **ortho-moments** that can be observed with respect to each differentiated discipline and organize them into an orthopedagogical theory to be implemented in the practice of orthopedagogic intervention with the parties in the problematic educative situation.

Functionalizing of orthopedagogical insights thus means designing an orthopedagogic practice of assistance by which all particularities are clarified in terms of their **pedagogic** consequences. The demand that the problematic educative situation poses necessarily has to be met by further specifying how a child underactualizes his psychic life in it, how the adults inadequately guide him and how he must be re-educated.

Orthopedagogic assistance to a child restrained in becoming adult essentially is not different from educative help, but now it is particular educative help that, in various respects and in accord with the immediate aims, has to be put to practice on a differentiated basis.

4. A MACROSTRUCTURAL AND MICRO-ANALYTIC APPROACH

The practical aim of intervening orthopedagogically with a child is to eliminate the problematic educating. This requires an understanding of the problematic, as such.

Van der Stoep⁽³⁾ indicates that all general theories, because of their nature, concentrate on the general or macrostructure. A macrostructure provides a guideline for a practice in the sense that it points to particular tendencies for planning. A macrostructure makes a particular contribution to a person's insights into particular problems by drawing the limits within which such a problem ought to be intercepted.

With reference to Van der Stoep⁽⁴⁾ it has to be stressed that orthopedagogics cannot remain bogged down in the boundaries of the problem, general guidelines or tendencies in implementing its practice. Orthopedagogics is a functionalizing area of problematic educating on the basis of which other demands are made of it than are made of a theoretical discipline such as general didactics.

There is continual mention of a practical educative **design**, a matter of **particularization**, i.e., at least of general pedagogical structures

in compliance with **particular** educative matters [of a specific situation]. The explanation and interpretation, the practice and evaluation that have to flow from this within the framework and tasks of problematic educating, however, are out and out orthopedagogic matters that can be judged **pedagogically** only in the **general** sense of the word.

An authentic macrostructure that, with its pedagogical source, is relevant as a general guideline or tendency thus has to be interpreted and implemented in practice otherwise haphazard success or failure will remain a characteristic of orthopedagogics as a practice oriented science. In addition, such an interpretation is necessary to prevent various scientific areas from infiltrating and claiming orthopedagogical status, without any schooling in fundamental orthopedagogics.

For example, the macrostructure regarding **rejection** is, for understandable reasons, often vague with respect to the generalized insights that it expresses and the orthopedagogue has to eliminate this vagueness in his **own particularizations**. It is within the framework of these particularizations that the distinction between theory and practice is describable.⁽⁵⁾ This means that in so far as the practicing orthopedagogue is called to his practice, he really is called to one or another macrostructural particularization that also has to be a reflection of the nature or origin of the macrostructure, says Van der Stoep.⁽⁶⁾

A problem in becoming adult and an educative problem always are nuanced; that is, the orthopedagogue continually is confronted with particular tasks within the boundaries of the macrostructure. There is mention of different emphases, foci and more. Therefore, the nuanced nature of the inhibitors of becoming adult compels nuances within the framework of intervening in the particular educative situation.

The general macrostructure within which the problem appears only brings to the fore a guiding proficiency on the basis of which the orthopedagogue has to arrive at a microstructure or part-structure, **"and that has to be in accord with the particularities of the specific problem"**.⁽⁷⁾

A general explanation is not interpretable as a matter of particularization. General guidelines regarding phenomena such as over-protection, affective lability, anxiety, rebelliousness, etc. really provide the orthopedagogue only with particular boundary lines within which the pedagogical macrostructure can be brought to the fore with the aim of particularizing it within the orthopedagogic context.

Thus, it is clear that orthopedagogic practice has to work through a particular macrostructure to a microstructure regarding a particular problematic educative situation in order to again make it unproblematic.

5. SYNTHESIS

In orthopedagogics there really is a convergent point of departure from the various part-disciplines in terms of particular macrostructures regarding a problematic educative situation in terms of the distorted or attenuated appearance of pedagogical essences or distinguishable types of educative mistakes such as over-protecting, rejecting, affective neglect, or in terms of teaching errors, or in terms of moments of under actualizing the psychic life such as anxiety, uncertainty, sensory problems, etc.

As a practically directed science that proceeds from the pedagogical as a unitary source of knowledge, orthopedagogics always is required to make a microanalysis of the unique nature of a problematic educative situation and to understand **orthopedagogically** a **particular** child in such a situation and on the basis of this knowledge to proceed to a **particular** design [of a helping practice].

With respect to such a design, all pedagogical essences are figured in although some are more prominent than others. Now, however, by means of a microanalysis, a practical plan of **action** has to be designed so that, e.g., it can be determined **how** an experience of security can replace experiences of anxiety and uncertainty, **how** a child who will not **listen** can hear what a teacher says, etc.

Thus, in addition to a macrostructural description (e.g., of the way an educative conversation is carried out) there also is a move to a **practical** educative conversation with the specific parties in a particular educative situation.

Consequently, an orthopedagogue continually has to see the **nuances** in what didactic pedagogics, psychopedagogics and fundamental pedagogics have noticed are **in harmony with each other** and in connection with them to design not only a general practice but also one for a particular child. Without **integrating** these **nuances** with each other a practice for a particular child cannot be designed.

Now it is obvious that in this convergence of the results of the various pedagogical part-perspectives, on the basis of generalizing, there always is a loss of particulars regarding each distinguishable discipline but then also there is an immediate gain in particulars regarding a unique child in his unique problematic educative situation.

6. REFERENCES

- ⁽¹⁾ Landman, W. W. and Roos, S. G. (1973). **Fundamentele pedagogiek en die opvoedingswerklikheid.** Durban: Butterworths, pp. 56-57.
- ⁽²⁾ See Van der Stoep, F. (1975). Foreword. In Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Onderwyser, les en kind.** Stellenbosch: University Publishers and Booksellers, p. xiii.
- ⁽³⁾ Van der Stoep, F. (1976). Wie is die kind met leerprobleme? In **Nuwe Reeks No. 123**, p. 15.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Ibid
- ⁽⁵⁾ Ibid, p. 17
- ⁽⁶⁾ Ibid, p. 18
- ⁽⁷⁾ Ibid, p. 19

CHAIRMAN OF SYMPOSIUM (W. A. Landman)

The following are of particular importance:

1. Unity can be built up around and through a particular perspective on the reality of educating and orthopedagogics especially lends itself to this. Orthopedagogics can continually provide meaningful syntheses;
2. the possibility of a collective perspective opens the way to unity;
3. practical application can be unity-promoting;
4. to talk of the area of focus of each particular perspective (discipline) of pedagogics can be divisive. Unity-promotion is to talk of the focus of pedagogics (namely the reality of educating

itself in all of the places where it occurs) and then of the **function** of each of these perspective within that focus.