

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. This is obvious for implementing the pedagogic structures and the fundamental forms of orthopedagogic evaluation.

The orthopedagogue takes the initiative to physically approach the child in order to communicate with him. He allows the child to **act** by assigning tasks to be carried out. The assignments are systematically directed to him 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 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 distinguished three forms of activity, namely, entering into communication, allowing some activities and setting limits or not allowing others.

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

- (i) works that the child brings up himself, e.g., school work, drawings, written texts, etc.;
- (ii) learning abilities as manifests with the help of intelligence media and scholastic tests;
- (iii) his physical development and condition;
- (iv) the educative circumstances within which he finds himself;

- (v) projective and other techniques for determining how he subjectively faces life;
- (vi) how he is constituted hereditarily and structurally.

Ter Horst (258, 104) emphasizes that the orthopedagogic evaluator himself is the primary aid that he has to take into account because he primarily involves himself professionally. Indeed, he has to model correct fundamental pedagogic relationships. Therefore, he has to continually work on himself and try to improve his 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 activity initially is subjective and includes a subjective movement to or a merging with (co-experiencing) the world of the child restrained in becoming adult. It is a pedagogic 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 can be differentiated into four phases, namely:

- (i) On a **prescientific** level, the evaluator enters the child's experiential world, e.g., in the play room, 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 prescientific phase are now organized;
- (iii) the orthopedagogue implements specific **exploratory media** to investigate particular 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 conversation, pedagogic observation and intuition play a prominent role.

2. PEDAGOGIC OBSERVATION

In implementing the fundamental forms it also is necessary that the evaluator accurately notice what the child means in less "deliberate" ways because in addition to what he wants to consciously communicate about himself in his conversation, play etc., he 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 becomes and the more his 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 each whim we have learned to know from long experience. He is free, he is a **person** and even if we know him, in a particular 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 between **expressive movement** and **action**. Expressive movement manifests a state of emotion. Here movement is an **image**, i.e., a meaning that becomes observable in a Gestalt. This expression has a meaning in itself 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, agreements or irritations (28,131).

Linschoten (141,187) differentiates between **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 seriously be taken into account. Van Strien (302, 255), moreover, 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", "co-given", in our "exterior". One person exudes a warmth which attracts many, another pushes others away without wanting to; one elicits personal outpourings, and another inspires sober, matter-of-fact conduct. It can happen that a person does not want to be so but this simply is the manner of his 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 this emphasized in the ways she dresses herself and uses make-up" (302, 255 [in Dutch]).

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

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

Pedagogic 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 personal observations. Also, it is not the observation of a statistician who stresses the objectivity of his measured observations (302, 107).

Pedagogic 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 situation in contrast to a distanced observation.

Van Strien (302, 83) says that the human subject needs to be observed in other ways than the rest of reality. Knowledge of a

person is not **derived** exclusively from observing him; rather it also rests on a **special interpretation** of him. 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 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 pedagogic 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 has merely a cathartic value but the orthopedagogue also has to **participate** in the play. The play has to progress within a sphere of intimacy and trust for the child to be understood in his play. The orthopedagogue has to participate in and enter the world the child has designed in his playing. Lubbers (150, 106) says the orthopedagogic evaluator cannot expect the playing child to later be able to explain to an outsider what he 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 "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 has to enter into a dialogue with the child he is observing in the situation that is created by both of them. Beets (11, 14) says that in observation, 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 also has to be a psychologist.**" This observation is not based on an observer-test object relationship but

on an interpersonal encounter that is its point of departure. The distance that ought to remain in all observation is maintained. We find the child by partly looking past the 'blind' facts of the moment in order 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).

Pedagogic observation should always be viewed as a refined form of everyday educative judgment. Consequently, it needs to 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 that are too hasty. For example, a child who appears to be retiring should not summarily be qualified as someone who experiences himself 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 ones observations because then one assumes that one has seen 'right through' the matter" (305, 12 [in Dutch]). Hence, pedagogic 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 the child who is restrained in becoming adult.

According to Beets (11, 20), good pedagogic observation is the other side of being a good educator and the reverse. The pedagogic observer's activities with the child continually flow from differentiated and flexible thinking about him 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 always are pedagogically evaluated (see 77, 38).

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

Opportunities for pedagogic 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 very briefly indicated.

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

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

Vedder (305, 14) mentions some matters that should be especially taken into account during observing, namely, **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 mother to him. The child who is not cared for, who is shabbily clothed and unwashed, whose hair is uncombed and mussed 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 can be 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 attunement to himself, 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 over-concern 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 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 mimicry. Is it perhaps rigid or is it vivid and meaningful and does his face betray a "cognizance" of what is going on around him? According to Vedder, the question is "How does the child view the world and people: as open, harmless, open-minded, trustworthy or suspicious, critical, timid, sly?" (305, 19 [in Dutch]). Moreover, his speech is noted. Does he speak clearly or inaudibly? Are there particular sounds that are not pronounced clearly or are there specific speech defects present? Of particular note is the possible presence of any unusual bodily movements such as twitching muscles.

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

As far as the child's emotional life is concerned, his fundamental attunement can be inferred and whether he usually is animated or depressed, if his 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 really afraid to fail and then prefers to withdraw from the tasks.

With respect to the child's character that can be observed, Vedder (305, 26-28) refers to particular personal inclinations such as being

self-reflective or being more directed to the outer world; if he is **open** or more **closed**, perhaps even secretive; if emotional manifestations give an impression of being **authentic** or **inauthentic**; if he tries to **draw attention** and is intrusive and or swaggering; if he is rude or bashful, shy, timid; if he accepts prohibitions, etc.

Pedagogic observation is indeed 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 in order to arrive at a meaningful explication of the particular child as a person, as a functioning totality in his 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 **attunement or disposition**. There also is note of the quality and ways he deals with problems. The nature of errors that arise and their elimination without help are noted. His actions reveal the degree of insight that breaks through and indications can be found of the structure of his course of thinking during problem solving.

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

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

seeks help, and if he accepts help offered, how meaningfully he uses it.

From the child's observable actions, his emotional stability or lability and his cognitive order or disorder is observed. As already 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 pedagogic observer has to implement a number of pedagogic criteria in order to evaluate and more closely circumscribe what he observes. This pedagogic observation is nothing more than a phenomenological penetration of the child in his being situated in education. It is a fundamental method of analysis and appropriate interpretation that are indispensable for understanding the child restrained in becoming adult in his problematic educative situation.

3. PEDAGOGIC INTUITION

The orthopedagogic evaluator is involved as a **subject** in investigating the child restrained in becoming adult in his problematic educative situation. This means merging into, empathizing with and entering his experiential world. This does not presume a **subjectivistic** approach where the evaluator's opinions are absolutized and merely guide him. Clearly, he 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 can be 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 that, 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 on the basis of a person's subjective merging with the situation of his conversational partner about whom he has this opinion. Thus, intuition is not an **objective** but rather an affective form of knowing which also is used in orthopedagogic evaluation.

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 conversational partner has to 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, it is obvious that the views or opinions arrived at about a particular person will be determined by his **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 prescientific life world of a child which, as such, 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 prescientific, affectively initiated view of the child in his situation. This way of knowing is part of each person's dialogue with reality; and, as far as any new problem is concerned, his foreknowledge indeed is based on intuition. It is related to a person's sensitivity to small details in the life world 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 that later can be accepted or rejected on the basis of cognitive knowing.

When cognitive knowledge regarding the matter, that initially was merely intuitive knowing, is added, there is an **ordering** of the intuitive knowing which gradually leads to acquiring greater clarity on a cognitive level. On the basis of 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.

Consequently, intuitive knowing is not the same as sensory perception but rather functions on a level of sensing that includes a

decidedly cognitive aspect. All perceiving, thinking and understanding rest on this prescientific knowing (238, 131). Intuition figures prominently when two persons are with each other. With the first sight of another an appeal emanates from him which makes a very particular impression on us 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 into a conversation with our "surface" in a unique language. "Naturally, our sense organs mediate here but this has to do with 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.

The intuitive method, in particular, also involves taking into account the smallest details in the investigation and consequently the evaluator should not regard them as unimportant.

In an orthopedagogic evaluation, **pedagogic** intuition is used specifically as an aid for unraveling the experiential world of the child restrained in becoming adult. This means that the evaluator's emotional knowing of his problematic educative situation also has to be continually evaluated in terms of pedagogic criteria. It is in pursuit of the aim to disclose the particular child's educative situation that during the evaluation the orthopedagogue continually and intuitively questions such matters as the actualization of trust, understanding 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 aspects of understanding but also of misunderstanding and it is the source of misunderstanding or understanding all experiences and lived experiences. Consequently, there are real dangers and there have to be definite reservations in using this form of knowing in evaluation.

In the first place, it is obvious that the orthopedagogue has to be thoroughly schooled in general pedagogics; he primarily has to be a phenomenologist; and he has to 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 outward appearance and then make him a victim of the appeal emanating from him because this gives rise to bias and then the **person** indeed is deprived of his freedom because he is reduced to something he is not and will not be, so the orthopedagogue would not limit himself **only** to his intuition because then his conversational partner also can become the victim of an unjustifiable subjectivistic misjudgment.

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

As a prescientific "understanding", intuitive knowing, then, always has to 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, comparable situations are created and the orthopedagogic evaluator tries to protect himself from subjective conclusions. Then the discursive knowing acquired intuition is amplified, deepened and enriched (see 76, 25).

However, if the orthopedagogic evaluator cannot administer these media he cannot arrive at real objectivity because the child restrained in becoming adult is a subject who also makes himself knowable by means of emotional expressions. His 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 himself but already when the appointment for the investigation is made. The

use of specific exploratory media always is an extremely important component of orthopedagogic evaluation and this matter will be considered in the next chapter.