CHAPTER 4

THE RESTRAINED CHILD

1.   INTRODUCTION

From the previous chapters it is clear why from its beginning educational psychology was seen merely as the application of psychological insights and techniques to teaching practice (see Thorndike, 1913) and why some view it as "a recently established branch of applied psychology" (Gates, Jersild, McConnell and Challman, 1950).

Gradually the practice itself demanded that there had to be intervention from a "specialized" region with children who manifest **problems** regarding their personality development and becoming adult. Help was provided to such children by means of counseling, psychotherapy, remedial teaching and other ways and gradually the **professional** practice of educational psychology emerged as an identifiable profession.

Also, here the various names reflect the underlying different accents of explanations of a child's developmental problems and the practice of providing help for them.

From a clinical psychological perspective the intervention with child deviancies also is viewed in a developmental context. Wicks-Nelson and Israel (1984: xviii) say [in English] that "although present knowledge limits this approach, facts about typical developmental sequences and processes will increasingly aid in the elucidation of disturbed behaviour (sic)".

The current literature on child behavioral deviancies, in general, recognizes the complexity of human behavior and although psycholgy is emphasized strongly it does reflects the multidisciplinary nature of the field.

The following are some examples of themes about topics covered (Wicks-Nelson and Israel, 1984: vi-xv). **Normal development:** the genetic relation, the child as a physical being; the child as an intellectual being; early experience and critical events; vulnerability

and psychopathology; perceptions of child behavioral deviations: **the biological/physiological perspective:** genetic influences, biochemical influences; structural and physiological impairments; **the psychodynamic perspective:** cognitive structure; psychosexual phases; anxiety and defense mechanisms; the group/social learning perspective; **some other perspectives:** the cognitive behavioral approach; the psycho- educational perspective; the family systems approach; **basic research procedures:** simple descriptive methods; correlation research; experimental research; mixed designs; classification and evaluation; classification and diagnosis; clinically based classification systems; empirical approaches to classification; syndromes; the dangers of labeling; **evaluating:** evaluating physical functioning; behavioral evaluation; eating disturbances, sleep disturbances; internalized deviations; child psychosis, intellectual retardation; hyperactivity and learning problems; behavioral deviations; **psychological factors that influence physical states:** asthma, tumors; psychological consequences of chronic illness; psychological changes from physical functions facilitated by medical treatment; **matters of prevention**: Rochester's primary mental health project; "Head start" and early help; child abuse and its appearance; crisis intervention; the sudden death syndrome; prevention of schizophrenia.

Clearly, there is a linking up with psychological descriptions of anxiety, tenseness, insecurity, psychopathic conditions, etc. Also, in this respect, there is a significant increase noticed in the professions of clinical psychology and child psychiatry. Increasing importance is attributed to a child's early development and the early disclosure of problems is emphasized but there only is incidental reference to a child's education. It also is conspicuous that not one of the mentioned disciplines takes into account the **dynamics** of educating that underlie a child's personal thriving, especially since it is considered that deviant children have the particular attention of various disciplines because their development, their future perspectives are threatened or even obscured by noticeable problems in the educative situation.

As a psychologist, De Vos (1981) says that with respect to school problems, his subject area cannot have an independent contribution because it is intertwined with all of the didactic and pedagogic problems of the school. He then distinguishes three areas in psychology that serve teaching:

* Pedagogic psychology that has a bearing on the problems related to the educative guidance given to a child in school;
* general didactic psychology that is relevant to problems, in the narrowest sense, that affect the teacher; and
* social psychology that has a bearing on the problems that arise in the relationships among children as a group, among family, school and society.

This brings us to a more **educationally** oriented perspective on developmental problems. However, it also is characterized by a variety of approaches, each having its own accent. In this respect, the following examples are noted:

* **The teacher psychologist:** He functions mainly within a relationship to schools and especially in schools for special education where he concentrates on supporting a retarded child to learn and develop optimally.
* **Clinical school psychologist or orthopedagogue:** He usually is responsible for a number of schools which are assigned to him to assist children with behavioral and general developmental problems. Among others, his task includes determining the nature of and reasons for a child's personal restraint in terms of the disharmonious dynamics of educating (see section 2.2 below) and via intervention strategies to again harmonize the dynamics of educating and support the child to modify meanings (see Chapter 9).
* **Clinical school psychologist** (remedial teacher) **or orthodidactician:** He concerns himself mainly with a child with learning problems and directs himself especially to the state of a child's cognitive structure by taking into account his affective and normative structures. An analysis is made of the disharmonious moments of teaching (see Chapter 14) and he uses harmonizing strategies in this regard in order to allow a child's progress in school to proceed more adequately (see Chapter 15).
* **School counseling psychologist or vocational orienter:** He involves himself mainly with pupils with **problems** of subject matter, school and career **choice.** He guides youths and their parents in groups and/or individually with the primary aim that the youths become aware that they themselves have to arrive at a meaningful and adequate self

actualization regarding work in general and vocational choices in particular (see Chapter 20).

* **School social worker or sociopedagogue:** He is focused on a microanalysis of errors in educating within a societal connection and emphasizes social problems.

The significance of the **psychological** orientations of the above disciplines in the structure and practice of teaching is not denied, as is the case in some education departments where any reference to "psychology" in the title of the positions of those who have to professionally help children with developmental problems is eliminated. Existing clinics of "school psychological and guidance services" are transformed into "teaching assistance centers". In these centers educational psychologists are camouflaged as "specialized" teacher advisers in service, and among other things they advise with respect to educational matters (orthodidactic) and career matters (vocational orientation).

The many faces of educational psychology exposes precisely how optimistic the view is that it is an autonomous discipline with its own structure of knowledge and identity and which it should maintain (see Sprinthall and Sprinthall, 1977: xiii) and which is consistent with its essential point of departure.

2. A UNITARY APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

In the **professional** intervention with a child in distress the lack of a **unitary approach** certainly is one of its conspicuous characteristics: so many models, so many practices, so many opinions. The existence of a nearly overwhelming divergence of opinions impedes designing an accountable practice in many respects. There is no real **integration** of psychological and educational insights in practice. "To the educators, ..., the psychologist was a Don Quixote, harebrained, impractical, and virtually useless. To the psychologist, the educator was treated with patronizing condescension, as one not quite ready for admittance to the 'club'" (Sprinthall and Sprinthall [in English], 1977: xii).

Especially purely psychologically oriented professionals in South Africa have not taken too much trouble to acquaint themselves with the educational because their professional position offers them a

"safeguard"; also regarding the deviant child they find protection in the law (Law 56 of 1974: Article 37(2)) in which psychological **treatment** is described as follows:

"(a) the evaluation of behavior or processes of consciousness or personality adjustments or adjustments of individuals or groups of persons by means of the interpretation of tests for determining intellectual abilities, aptitudes, interests, personality structure and personality functioning;

(b) the application of any method or practice that has the aim of helping persons or groups of persons correct personality, emotional or behavioral problems or to promote positive personality change, growth and development; ..." (Law 56 of 1974: Article 37(2) [in Afrikaans]).

This statutory foundation of professional "child psychology" has contributed to the traditional "specialized" intervention with children restrained emotionally, behaviorally, in learning and in other ways, which gradually became characterized as implementing contrivances, techniques and recipes without accounting for the theories on which they are based. Most personality theories are eclectic, a systematic combination of bits and pieces of different existing theories. Each type of psychotherapy has also found application as a child psychotherapy where merely a few situational adjustments are made to facilitate communication with a child without incorporating all of the essentials of a child's situatedness.

Against this background it is understandable why educational psychology arose as an **application** of psychological techniques (see Thorndike, 1913) and many still view it as nothing more than a branch of applied psychology.

That this is a misconception was indicated years ago. Thus, Gates et al. (1950: 3-4) say [in English] that "Educational psychology is, however, not confined to the verification of applications of principles to education. It has built up in several areas programs of study of educational problems which general psychology does not deal with in any comprehensive way. Such areas are the teaching of school subjects and especially of the newest type of school programs or projects, diagnosis and remediation of educational difficulties."

Unfortunately, the area of educational psychology was not specified more clearly and it has intruded into the areas of the didactic, curriculum planning and clinical (child) psychology. The real problem is the rigid application of any principle without interpreting it in the context of a child as a person, i.e., the context of the dynamics of educating is completely and entirely overlooked. The old mistake of viewing only psychology as providing the theoretical basis for teaching and educating as well as for intervening with a child in distress is perpetrated once again.

To be distinct an area needs to do more than merely try to illustrate how to design a specific practice with seemingly relevant models from other disciplines. To some degree each model absolutizes the physical or the psychological, or the social or the educational, etc. while ignoring the relations among these dimensions with repect to a child as a developing person. In this regard, there needs to be more reference to the complexity of a deviant child as a person in terms of the amazing diversity of activities, ideas, feelings, insights and relationships that he can experience and lived experience in his situatedness.

It is immediately obvious that there are a number of different areas within the field of educational psychology to be distinguished, as is evident from the wide-ranging literature in which the coupling of educational and psychological findings are expressed in a diversity of forms. The question then is what constitutes an accountable basis for designing an educational-psychological practice because without an accountable point of departure for all of these forms, in practice they continually will be discussed from diverse perspectives. Thus, it is obvious that its point of departure be a child as a **person** which directly enters the terrains of education and psychology because, as already indicated, a person, as long as he is a child, actualizes himself as a **person** in an educational situation (see Chapter 3).

However, an ideal state of educating does not exist and also a child does not automatically actualize his potentialities of personal becoming, and it generally is acknowledged that the educative structures can be implemented **disharmoniously** because they imply that the distinct activities of the educator and child be united. Therefore, there is no educative situation, and no moments of a child's personal actualization where the essentials of educating (and also the essences of personality) do not **equally** come into motion

47

in terms of educative activities because each event of educating represents particular dynamics in which the adult and the child participate in particular ways and act in personal ways.

Where there are educative activities that do not include adequately appearing essentials of educating (which also includes the personal essentials of a child), this immediately threatens a child's development because then the **dynamics of educating are disharmonious**, a matter that justifies closer discussion.

2.2 Disharmonious dynamics of educating

It is generally accepted that the structure of educating can be implemented disharmoniously. In this connection, Vermeer (1972: 149-168) says that an educative dialogue always is a point of intersection between the subjective interpretations of the adult and the child where short-circuits can arise.

When, for example, an educator shows a lack of understanding and interest, a child experiences this as confusing and bewildering, and as Muller-Eckard (1966: 48) emphasizes, this lack of understanding can lead to serious problems because with its absence a child becomes disturbed in his entire personal development (see also Den Dulk and Van Goor, 1974: 18; Van Niekerk, 1981 and 1986).

If a child's emotional, knowing and normative meanings are unfavorable, this permeates his behaviors and implies a personal deviation of some kind. Thus, it is clear that the educator's hierarchies of feelings, thoughts and values, as embodied in his educative activities, directly influence a child's moments of personal development in terms of his affective, cognitive and normative interpretation of them.

Where this disharmony is of such a far-reaching nature that it seriously keeps the child's personality development in check, there is mention of educative distress because it leads to a child's personal derailment in the sense that his comportment and behaviors do not tally with what is proper and acceptable according to his developmental potential and level.

In this light, the disharmonious dynamics of educating can be qualified as that event where a child's personality development is inadequately actualized under an adult's guidance, and on that basis

he becomes conspicuous. Then his behavior harmonizes with his unfavorable meanings given to educative contents on emotional, knowing and normative levels and is not in harmony with the behavior that can be expected of him in accordance with his personal potential. Examples of this conspicuousness are bullying, brutality, moodiness, thievery, enuresis, encopresis, phobias, tenseness, stuttering, hysterical outbursts, learning problems, infantilism, shyness, obsessions, dishonesty, psychosomatic deviations and many more (see Chapter 8).

General educative mistakes on the part of the educator are rejecting a child, pampering, authoritarian exercise of authority, lack of restraint, inconsistency, indoctrination, lack of love, over-estimating, disorderliness, expecting too much, permissiveness, demand for achievement, and many more.
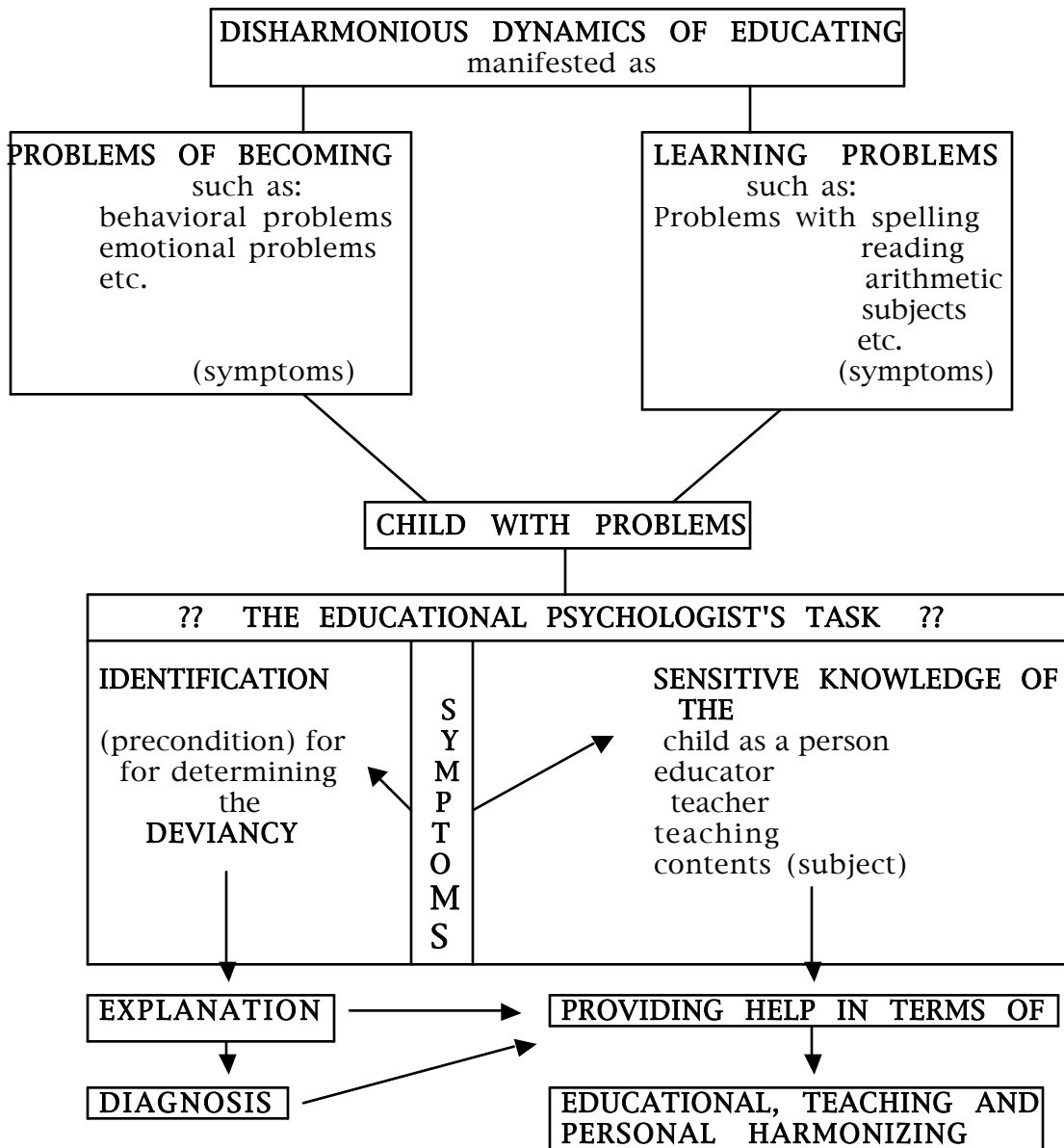
However, labeling the disharmonious dynamics of educating in the above terms is completely inadequate. Each has to be explained continually in terms of their really **functional** activities and with regard to the child's emotional, knowing and normative meanings he attrtibutes to them.

Developmental deviancy in a child accentuates his commitment to education and indeed advances the **orthopedagogic** function of the pedagogic, namely, **corrective** activities for modifying a child's unfavorable meanings in relation to his unacceptable behaviors, in terms of **harmonizing** the disharmonious dynamics of educating (see Chapter 9). It also is noted that this includes the psychology of a child with behavioral and learning difficulties that have lead to the disharmonious dynamics of educating. The following chapter attempts to present an authentic model of educational psychology.

2.3   Synthesis

The results of a disharmonious dynamics of education is schematically represented as follows:

DISHARMONIOUS DYNAMICS OF EDUCATING
manifested as

PROBLEMS OF BECOMING
such as:
behavioral problems
emotional problems
etc.

(symptoms)

LEARNING PROBLEMS
such as:
Problems with spelling
reading
arithmetic
subjects
etc.
(symptoms)

CHILD WITH PROBLEMS

?? THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST'S TASK ??

IDENTIFICATION

(precondition) for
for determining
the
DEVIANCY

SYMPTOMS

SENSITIVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE
child as a person
educator
teacher
teaching
contents (subject)

EXPLANATION ⟶ PROVIDING HELP IN TERMS OF

DIAGNOSIS

EDUCATIONAL, TEACHING AND PERSONAL HARMONIZING

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