

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES: AN ATTEMPTED REDEFINITION AND RESULTING FUTURE TASK FOR ORTHODIDACTICS•

A. S. du Toit
University of Pretoria

1. Introduction

Today, the concept "learning difficulties" has become part of the general vocabulary, not only of pedagogics, but also of a considerable number of related disciplines. Therefore, a general description of this idea is not easy to formulate, simply because different contents are continually attributed to this concept from a variety of perspectives. However, the aim is not to establish a generally accepted description of the concept; from a pedagogical perspective, it has become urgently necessary to localize the problem more precisely. There are two reasons for this:

1.1 Pedagogical research on "learning difficulties" presently is seriously hindered by a definition of this concept which is too narrow.

1.2 The development of pedagogical thought [in South Africa] has resulted in a greater clarity of the scientific status of orthodidactics. In its turn, this has contributed to a more accurate description of its task and terrain. Since the whole problem of learning difficulties closely involves orthodidactics, this concept must be brought in line with these new developments. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to bring greater clarity to this concept, and to sketch some guidelines for future orthodidactic research.

2. Review of the current non-pedagogical approach to learning difficulties.

It is not the aim to provide a thorough evaluation of the current approach to learning difficulties, thus, to the practice of "remedial teaching". This is not to underestimate the comprehensive and insightful contributions of the current approach to children with

learning difficulties. However, ever since pedagogics has taken responsibility for a child with learning difficulties, it has been critical of the current view and practice. Authors who eagerly associate themselves with the points of criticism and who have discussed the matter, are pedagogues such as Sonnekus¹, Gouws² and Stander³. For the sake of an orientation, however, a few remarks are made.

Because of the entwinement of pedagogics with philosophy, an essential pedagogical contribution to the problem of learning difficulties remained long overdue until recently, and it was especially psychiatry, and later psychology (both empirically established sciences), which had taken the lead with respect to the fallow field of learning difficulties. The establishment of psychiatric clinical syndromes, their etiology, symptomatology, and therapy⁴ allowed insight into a child with learning difficulties to thrive. The application of psychiatric and psychological insights to teaching children with learning difficulty, for conspicuous reasons, is known as "remedial teaching." Still later, insights from various sciences were applied to this practice, and remedial teaching quickly became a potpourri of often one-sided, and even contradictory practices.

True to its origin, remedial teaching provides evidence of an underlying naturalistic [philosophical child] anthropology, which is characterized best by its almost feverish subjection of a child with learning difficulties to objective testing, with the help of an "arsenal of scientific apparatuses and measuring techniques"⁵. With a characteristic relationship of objectivistic knowing, a child is "kidnapped" from his/her existential landscape, but even more, he/she becomes a person reduced to an object. Thus, *ipso facto*, there is no encounter with a child-in-distress, and no pedagogical penetration of his/her experiential world. The high premium put on exact, verifiable data makes subjective involvement with him/her almost impossible.

From these [so-called] "objective" results--the sum of which are assumed to be knowledge of a child with learning difficulties--a program of remedial teaching is planned, which amounts to little more than remedying defective functional aspects should these appear in the tests as symptom-images.

Certainly, one of the most important criticisms of this approach is that a child with learning problems can scarcely be understood in

his/her essence, that he/she, thus, is not viewed as a child-in-educating, but as an automaton with a constantly repetitive nature. Therefore, such an approach all too often results in the diagnosis and treatment of symptoms. Theoretically, the pedagogical, indeed, is recognized as a causative factor among numerous exogenous ones, but practice shows a disconcerting lack of the pedagogical. In such cases, "pedagogic" is equated with "teaching" ("educating") which, in its turn, is degraded to methods, techniques, and artificial recipes. If it seems necessary from the diagnosis, this is supplemented with a psychotherapeutic program for treating feelings of inferiority, diminished self-confidence, apathy, and weakened interest⁶. In summary, it appears that a child with learning difficulties is viewed as someone who cannot achieve at school because of functional deficiencies, or emotional disturbances which can appear over the entire range of his/her being. After determining what they are, remedial programs then are established and directed to them such that the deficiencies or disturbances are removed.

3. Contemporary pedagogical thought about learning difficulties

Since pedagogics has assumed responsibility for learning problems, an entirely new approach to the problem has been advocated and followed. In contrast to an atomistic-mechanistic plan of action, a child is now approached in his/her individuality as a situated person: in agreement with the [philosophical] anthropological fact of being human, of which the pedagogical event is an undeniable experiential fact,⁷ a child's experiential world is explored in terms of pedagogical criteria, with the aim of maximally understanding it. In contrast to a functional-remedial approach, the educability of a child with learning difficulties is made primary and, thus, these difficulties are viewed as ways in which deeper causes manifest themselves, and not as causes themselves.

From this approach, the orthodidactician, under which the problem falls, has provided interesting research results on a theoretical and practical level⁸. Thus, research was done to establish *personal images* of children with learning and educative problems (epileptic, deaf, poor sighted, etc.). Despite this, there were still highly contentious problem areas into which orthodidactics was not able to venture until recently. Perhaps because of a one-sided and truncated view of the practice of providing help, orthodidactics failed in establishing an accountable theory for designing programs

for giving help, and authentic orthodidactical diagnostic techniques. The dilemma in which orthodidactics found itself is directly related to the local [University of Pretoria] historical development of pedagogical thought, in general, and, particularly, to the "dependence" of orthodidactics on psychopedagogics, and didactic pedagogics.

3.1 The role of the psychological pedagogic

In the Republic of South Africa, the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria took the lead in practicing and developing pedagogics as an autonomous science. Especially psychopedagogics had engaged in the arduous struggle to emancipate itself from psychology. Highpoints of this struggle are aptly described by the various labels by which this perspective was known--from educational psychology, as an area of psychology applied to education, through psychological pedagogics (Nel), as an acknowledged pedagogical discipline, but clearly functioning with psychological insights*, to psychopedagogics (Sonnekus). which was crystallized into an autonomous pedagogical part-perspective on the reality of educating. According to Sonnekus, the proclaimed area of study of psychopedagogics is "the totality of everything which appears regarding the psychic life of a child, as they are actualized in a child's pedagogic situation"⁹.

Under the regime of psychological pedagogics, viewed as an autonomous part-perspective of pedagogics, the traditional master-slave bond between psychology and educational psychology (along with remedial teaching) continued to a large degree. Still, an important difference was that the idea gradually began to take root that reflection on children with learning and behavioral problems is a distinctly unique terrain which justifies a specialized part-theory under the roof of the pedagogical. Consequently, orthopedagogics and orthodidactics were proclaimed to be part-perspectives of pedagogics, and research was pursued in this terrain, but it still took place under the jurisdiction of psychological pedagogics. It is contended that exclusively psychological pedagogical insights were used to interpret and assimilate the orthopedagogic-orthodidactic situation.

* For example, Van Parreren's learning theory and Frankl's Logotherapy, with a few changes, were transformed into Psychological Pedagogical pronouncements.

Not for a moment are the contributions of psychological pedagogics to orthodidactics denied or called into question. Still, their monopolization of the problem of learning difficulties had the additional effect of limiting learning difficulties to inadequate acts of learning resulting from "somatic or psychic or spiritual deviations"¹⁰. In other words, learning difficulties were not studied within the context of a disharmonious teaching situation, but rather as an isolated *learning* problem. Obviously, based on such a one-sided approach, orthodidactics could not arrive at an accountable design of orthodidactic diagnostic techniques, and programs of assistance.

3.2 The role of the didactic pedagogical

Corresponding to the then current description of orthodidactics as that aspect of orthopedagogics which reflects on re-educating a didactically derailed child by means of specialized, corrective didactic measures¹¹, the emphasis is on "re-educating" rather than on the "didactic measures".

Viewed against this background, Van der Stoep¹² accomplished an interesting breakthrough when he proclaimed that orthodidactics is an aspect of didactic pedagogics, and that the task of orthodidactics is to investigate and describe the nature, essentials, and problems of teaching situations which have a corrective or exceptional character. In this way, he tried to shift the focus from the learning restrained child to the teaching event, as the juncture between the events of teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, at this stage, orthodidactics was not yet able to make such a shift in emphasis. The most important reasons for this are that neither psychological pedagogics nor didactic pedagogics had at their disposal categorical structures which then could serve as structures for reflecting on learning problems¹³. In addition, the insights of didactic pedagogics on teaching, and psychopedagogics on learning had not yet been built into an integrated structure, and any intersecting planes which existed between them were merely haphazard. Only after the lesson structure was described by didactic pedagogics, in which the scientific findings of the other part-perspectives were blended into a unitary structure, was orthodidactics able to make this necessary shift in emphasis regarding the problem of learning difficulties. This establishment of

a lesson structure is implicit evidence of the progress which pedagogical thought had made toward categorical thinking.

4. The rise of a categorical pedagogical structure as a necessary step for clarifying both the problem of learning difficulties and the status of orthodidactics as a science

4.1 The fundamental pedagogical

With the rise of fundamental pedagogics, proposed by Oberholzer, and established by Landman, the possibility emerged for meaningfully coordinating the explanations and interpretations of the different areas of [pedagogics as a] science. Thanks to the phenomenological method, Landman indisputably shows the autonomy of pedagogics as a " ... pedagogics with a distinct and unique perspective on the lifeworld from a pedagogical situation, and which is not reducible to anything else"¹⁴. By pedagogical perspective is meant an "engagement" with the reality of educating, which asks that it show itself as it essentially and universally is, as viewed from this particular [i.e., pedagogical] standpoint¹⁵. From this perspective, the disclosed real essences are then expressed as scientific judgments or categories. The complexity of the educative reality makes part-perspectives possible [and necessary] as focal points within the framework of the pedagogical perspective¹⁶. The categorical structures, illuminated in this way, are intertwined with each other in life reality¹⁷, and this ensures that the different pedagogical part-perspectives cannot degenerate into compartmentalized findings without doing violence to the pedagogical.

A categorical pedagogical structure is a necessity for a meaningful scientific practice. The following quotation by Landman acknowledges this fact. "Pedagogics must be a pedagogics of essences, otherwise, it is not a pedagogics which can claim to be scientific."

The categorical pedagogical structure, viewed as overarching the various categorical structures of the different part-perspectives, has far-reaching implications for orthopedagogics (respectively orthodidactics), because the question of an accountable approach to a child with learning difficulties in a teaching situation, necessarily, must be aligned with these structures.

4.2 The didactic pedagogical

Following closely the lead of fundamental pedagogics, Van der Stoep, in his accounting for the real essences of didactic pedagogics, designed its own categorical structure. He succeeded creatively in describing the essences of teaching and eliminated the unwholesome separation between educating and teaching. Indirectly, this dealt a blow to those who wanted to describe the didactic in terms of things other than teaching itself and, in doing so, they undermined the autonomy of didactic pedagogics.

Convinced that an accountable didactic-pedagogical theory, in practice results in a lesson, Van der Stoep and co-workers, such as Van Dyk, Swart, Louw, and others turned to the lesson structure as an original experiential datum, with the consequence that constructing a lesson structure, as encompassing the basic data for planning, or designing the teaching of a lesson, is elucidated. Considering the above, it is almost unnecessary to emphasize the importance of the lesson structure for orthodidactics.

4.3 The psychopedagogical*

Concerning psychopedagogics, it is especially thanks to Sonnekus that it has acquired independence [from psychology] within an autonomous [science of] pedagogics. Sonnekus proposes the psychic life of a child-in-educating as the area of focus of psychopedagogics.¹⁸ However, the emphasis falls clearly on the psychic life as an event of actualization, which occurs by means of "becoming" and "learning", as equally primordial structures of a child's psychic life. As potentialities, becoming and learning are actualized in terms of a stream of "actualizations" which, on closer analysis, presume a subtle nuancing between self-actualization and guided actualization. To show how a child actualizes "becoming" and "learning", Sonnekus has identified in the psychic life modes of being, i.e., experiencing, lived experiencing, willing, knowing and behaving, which, in their meaningful relations, are modes for actualizing "becoming" and "learning". On this basis, self-

* This heading was added by me (G. Y.). The author had only **4.2 The didactic pedagogic and psychopedagogic**. I added 4.3 merely to emphasize that a comprehensive pedagogic perspective, at minimum, has to included the part-perspectives of fundamental pedagogics, didactic pedagogics and psychopedagogics.

actualization and guided actualization are possible, and arise in the educative situation¹⁹.

Keeping in mind that a child announces himself as a learning person in a teaching situation, it is obvious that the categorical structure of psychopedagogics is of inestimable value for orthodidactics.

In summary, it is emphasized that, although separate part-perspectives are a scientific necessity for a more penetrating investigation of the educative event, Landman stresses that *the disclosed essentials (being-structures) are intertwined r in life reality*; in addition, the actualization of the essences disclosed by one part-perspective, are a precondition for actualizing the essences revealed by another part-perspective.²⁰ *As will be evident later, the lesson structure, in many respects, reveals the subtle interplay among fundamental-, didactic-, and psycho-pedagogical essences.* In fact, a functioning lesson is the juncture for actualizing pedagogical essences.

From this, the problem of learning difficulties cannot be explained [or interpreted] by a commitment to a single pedagogical perspective. An accountable view of learning difficulties, in my opinion, lies in an interpretation and elucidation of the categorical pedagogical structures. In other words, *a collective pedagogical perspective on learning difficulties is the only alternative for reaching an accountable view.*

When orthodidactics stakes itself on a procedure of this [pedagogical] nature, the result is a penetrating reflection on the status of orthodidactics as a science. On the one hand, such a procedure is interpreted as findings provided to orthodidactics from other pedagogical perspectives; on the other hand, it is argued that orthopedagogics loses its scientific status because it does not disclose essences but, by means of interpreting pedagogical essences, ways of responding appear. This problem is considered later, and attention now is directed to describing learning difficulties.

5. The disharmonious teaching situation

The primary experience, as the original involvement of being a person within reality, shows unambiguously that the educative

event takes its course by means of lesson situations. Thus, educating occurs by means of lessons, as a necessary form of actualizing a sequence structure²¹. In addition, this implies that educating is actualized in teaching, and that the meaning of teaching is rooted in educating (Van der Stoep), because giving a lesson presents life contents in terms of which a child is guided to proper adulthood.

However, a child also shows his/her own participation in the lesson event by a willingness to learn the life contents presented. Thus, the teaching event progresses by means of two clearly distinguishable acts, i.e., a guided actualization and a self-actualization, where the life contents (now learning contents) coincide. If it is remembered that pedagogical essences are constitutive of the educative reality²², it is a necessity that the lesson structure not only makes it possible to implement these essences--as disclosed by the different part-perspectives--but that their implementation indicates that there are relationships among them. The relationships among the various pedagogical essences shown by the essences of their contents are, thus, preconditions for a harmonious lesson situation.

A harmonious lesson situation means there is a harmony between form and content, as set in motion by the didactic modalities. This implies that guided and self-actualization will harmonize with the lesson content, which is only possible if there is a balanced interplay among the lesson- and learning-aim, principles of actualization, teaching- and learning-aids, etc. Then, a child gains access to an elemental* in such a way that it changes into a fundamental, i.e., there is an adequate learning effect. This also implies that fundamental pedagogical, didactic pedagogical and psychopedagogical essences are harmoniously actualized in the lesson situation.

The above explanations of a harmonious lesson situation clearly indicate that the current idea of "learning difficulties" is a narrow concept, not only in its name [denotation], but also in its contents [connotations]. In fact, the concept "learning difficulties" reflects

* Elemental means contents reduced to their essentials by a teacher; fundamental means those reduced contents that have been learned, assimilated by a child and made his own in a functional, usable way in everyday life. These concepts are part of Klafki's theory of categorical forming, or double unlocking. See Kruger²⁵. (G. Y.).

very precisely the current approach where a child, viewed as an inadequate learner, is placed at the center of interest. Hence, learning difficulties still too often are described as defective modalities of learning, such as perceptual-motor or auditory-verbal problems²³, or in terms of educative difficulties²⁴ and, although there often are indirect references to pedagogic-didactic factors, learning difficulties are not brought into an integrated relationship with distorted lesson structure essences.

According to the above description of a harmonious lesson situation, a disharmonious situation is one with *disturbed relationships among the essences of educating, teaching, learning and the contents, which result in the disturbing appearance of the essences of the lesson structure.*

If the idea of learning difficulties is played out against the background of a disharmonious lesson situation, then it is obvious that this concept has a much broader connotation, especially in so far as learning difficulties now are seen basically as leading back to a disharmony in the event of double unlocking [See my previous footnote--G. Y.].

Even so, learning problems cannot be entirely equated with a disharmonious teaching situation simply because all such situations do not necessarily result in learning difficulties. Normally, adequate learning effects still emerge and, indeed, by means of (a) redesigned lesson(s) which, on the one hand, implies that a teacher, after gauging the effect of his/her teaching, teaches with greater insight, proficiency, and purposefulness. On the other hand, this also implies that he/she can anticipate other modes of learning, and that a learning child links up with the unlocked contents. Thus, every disharmonious situation cannot be typified as a situation of learning difficulties. However, it is equally true that a disharmonious lesson situation (or situations) is at the basis of every learning difficulty. Consequently, the concept "learning difficulties" requires a further particularization through a disharmonious teaching situation.

Above it is noted that an adequate learning effect assumes a change in the elemental (contents). Kruger²⁵ elaborates further on this when he says, "Future involvement with reality rests on the meaning of the contents which speak as an 'extension of the elemental'. A child's participation in future situations, thus, implies enlisting the contents already at his disposal". From the perspective of

experiencing, Ferreira²⁶ agrees with this when he says, "The insights a child acquires in the act of learning, on the basis of previous experiences, are always qualified and changed in order to continually anticipate new reality. Experiencing, then, continually is turned back on itself in the act of learning in judging the possibilities of new experiencing". Thus, from different perspectives, both authors mention the importance of *adequate possessed experience* drawn from previous lesson situations with the aim of understanding future teaching situations. The implicit meaning which the above discussion holds for particularizing learning difficulties is clear. Disharmonious teaching situations normally are a matter of learning difficulties when inadequate learning effects accumulate into additional inadequate learning effects, i.e., when there is inadequate possessed experience, thus, when there is a history of failures.

Ter Horst, explains that there are learning difficulties if both teacher and child experience the disharmonious teaching situation as being without perspective, meaningless, and menacing, and where professional help appears to be necessary to clear up the situation. In this sense, the disharmonious teaching situation is an area for orthodidactics.

With the above discussion as background, the problem of the scientific status of orthopedagogics (respectively orthodidactics) is considered next.

6. Orthopedagogics (respectively orthodidactics) as an independent part-perspective of an autonomous pedagogics

Primordial (original) experience shows unquestionably that the pedagogical is seen as a practice whose actualization varies from adequate to inadequate. Pedagogic activities are inadequate when their essences are attenuated, distorted or contradictory²⁸ because of misdeeds, mistakes, and incorrectly anticipated activities.

Fundamental pedagogics, didactic pedagogics, and psychopedagogics bring pedagogical essences to light because of their awareness of them (Landman), and [each] casts [its own] perspective on the reality of educating, where the pedagogical essences are adequately realized. Seeing pedagogical essences always presumes their adequate actualization, simply because what

is not cannot be seen. Viewed in this light, a harmonious educative event is "more primordial" than a disharmonious one.

When orthopedagogics takes responsibility [for dealing with] an inadequate educative event, it follows logically that the scientific aim of disclosing essences is not possible because attenuated-appearing essences cannot be disclosed in their essentiality. The aim is not to give the impression that there is no actualization of essences at all in a disharmonious educative situation. However, when such essences appear in inadequately actualized forms, it is meaningless to describe them from an orthopedagogic perspective because, as real essences, they have already been described from other perspectives (i.e., fundamental, didactic and psychopedagogical). If it were possible to redescribe in its essentialities an already described essence, this would imply that either the essence had not originally been described in its real essentiality, or that the essence in its universally formal structure has changed in the disharmonious situation--both of which imply a *contradictio in terminis*.

The same reasoning holds for attenuated-appearing essences. No attenuated-appearing essence can make a claim to categorical status, simply because it is named differently from an orthopedagogical perspective. The adequately actualized essences are always "more primary" (or primordial), in the sense that they are seen first; it must be that they are seen first in their adequate actualization, although [in a disharmonious situation], their appearance can be typified as attenuated, distorted, or contradictory.

The dilemma of orthopedagogics, then, is that the disharmonious really implies a "degenerate" harmonious situation²⁹ which, because of this, the orthopedagogic cannot seek essences, and that the design of its own categorical and criterial structures is not possible. Thus, in accordance with the accepted norms for an autonomously functioning part-perspective, orthopedagogics fails methodologically.

The above arguments carry the same weight when the orthopedagogical situation--that within which the reflections on a disharmonious educative event must result in corrective activities--is in focus.

To avoid the risk of any entanglement in specific theories* and methodologies, the orthopedagogic situation, as it occurs in primordial experience, is put under a magnifying glass by the orthopedagogue. From this, it is very clear that the orthopedagogic event is and can be nothing more than educating³⁰. After all, what other supporting and helping intervention can be provided to a child by an adult which ultimately is not typified as educating? In its essential structure, the orthopedagogic event is nothing more than educating, and where educating is already described and interpreted in its essential structure, it is, thus, meaningless for orthopedagogics to also be a seeker of essences.

Although the orthopedagogic event often is still described as "re-educating"³¹, rather than viewing this as an orthopedagogic "category", it must be seen as an orthopedagogic *notion* which differs from the normal course of educating, and which emphasizes qualitative accentuations and refinements.,

Despite the argument so far, in no way is it said that orthopedagogics has no right to exist. Indeed, unquestionably, orthopedagogics has a clearly delimited area of study. In addition, it is indisputable that an orthopedagogue is called to a unique practice which is executed in terms of scientific methods³². In striking ways, Ter Horst³³ indicates that orthopedagogics is a practical inquiry directed to actions, and its task is not to practice science for the sake of truth.

The disclosure of the structural, as ontologically given, thus, is beyond the scope of orthopedagogics, *which focuses on the ways the pedagogical constituents are mobilized in an orthopedagogic situation*. Thus, it is justifiable to conclude that orthopedagogics cannot be practiced without the categorical pedagogical structure. In this light, Van der Stoep's postulate acquires increased relevance when he says that the task of orthopedagogics is two-fold, i.e., to interpret generally valid pronouncements (pedagogical categories) for an orthopedagogic situation, and to research the applicability of these findings in an orthopedagogic framework, which is a matter of particularizing them³⁴.

* Compare, e.g., a psychoanalytically founded child therapy and the non-directive methods of Rogers.

What Van der Stoep advocates is precisely what happens in the primary [home] educative situation. In discovering a disharmonious situation, the parents interpret it in terms of an adequate educative event; intuitively they make the necessary adjustments, and accentuations for their situation—and, in most cases, this is effective. The difference which Dumont³⁵ [In Dutch] draws between educating and (pedo-) therapy, reflects, to a large extent, what orthopedagogics is involved with. "In the therapeutic event, there is nothing that is not analogous to educating The difference is that, in the situations called therapy, educating occurs in the same or another manner, more explicitly, more intensely, more emphatically, or with less emphasis, in greater detail, or more briefly, more verbally, or more concretely Thus, it is concentrated educating or, stated differently, educating is itself therapeutic."

With this, orthopedagogics is immediately elevated to a full-fledged, equivalent perspective because, as a perspective aware of the essences disclosed by the other part-perspectives, it accurately focuses on them with the aim of adapting and refining them, as necessary, for its own specialized practice. Its methodological dependence, at least assigns it an inferior status in the range of pedagogical part-perspectives, while its mandated task insures that it, at least, can make claim to an organizational independence. Its mandated task implies a convergence of particularized and subtly nuanced pedagogical essences and relationships, with the aim of eliminating a disharmonious educative situation. Again, this ensures the identity of orthopedagogics, on the one hand, and prevents a possible dividing of its terrain, on the other hand.

For evident reasons, there is an inclination and danger that the orthopedagogic can be reduced to the other part-perspectives of pedagogics in so far as their various categorical structures are interpreted and clarified for orthopedagogics by these autonomous part-perspectives themselves. In such reductive cases, there is mention of psycho-orthopedagogics, fundamental-orthopedagogics, didactic-orthopedagogics, etc.

This inclination is strongly opposed. First, in such cases the autonomous part-perspectives act beyond their power [*ultra vires*]. Using his/her specialized knowledge of the disharmonious educative situation, only an orthopedagogue is explicitly prepared to make pronouncements regarding his/her terrain; merely applying

findings from other part-perspectives would imply that orthopedagogics, as such, does not have a right to exist.

Second, this would mean that a "pure" orthopedagogics cannot exist because it can only be practiced by using the categorical structures of the pedagogical; that is, it must link up with one or another autonomous part-perspective of pedagogics.

However, there is no objection to the use of notions such as fundamental-orthopedagogic *moments*, psycho-orthopedagogic, or didactic-orthopedagogical *moments*, provided it is understood by this that there is an orthopedagogic interpretation and nuancing of the various categorical structures with the aim of harmonizing such essences in an orthopedagogic event. In this context, the idea of a collective perspective and enquiry must be seen because only an orthopedagogician can make orthopedagogic claims through researching and describing his/her terrain. At most, there can be a collective perspective, if the findings attained are orthopedagogically valid, i.e., if such findings remain under the jurisdiction of the orthopedagogical.

The orthodidactic, as an inseparable facet of orthopedagogics, also has the role of interpreting generally valid pedagogical findings with the aim of establishing a very definite practice. Therefore, the task of orthodidactics is to search for ways which will allow children who have become blocked in the formal school situation to enter a presented piece of reality so that their learning of it will be adequate.

Because a child with learning problems is involved with his/her entire being in a distressful situation³⁶, this implies that, *ipso facto*, the orthodidactic task is one which must be carried out within the overarching orthopedagogic. For those who disclaim categorical statements, their burden is to show that (re-) educating, and (re-)teaching are separate entities. By implication, this also means that they must show that learning difficulties are partial defects³⁷, which, as exclusively cognitive problems, can be brought into line with the help of remedial teaching techniques which, in many respects, rest on psychological theories of learning.

The practice of orthodidactics, thus, also implies an interpretation of pedagogical findings with the aim of engaging in a harmonious practice in a specific orthodidactic situation. Because such findings

are not merely applicable to an orthodidactic situation, the analysis of a disharmonious situation is very important. This includes a comprehensive diagnostic, as well as an interpretation of findings from the various auxiliary sciences (e.g., medicine, psychology) which can be of value for his/her specialized practice.

In addition to a grounded knowledge of the categorical pedagogical structures, and findings of related sciences, an orthodidactian must acquaint him/herself with subject-didactic findings. Where it is the task of subject-didactical theory to particularize a lesson, as a practical convergence of the various pedagogical perspectives for a specific teaching practice, it is obvious that orthodidactics relies heavily on subject-didactical theory. Orthodidactic designs must be finely nuanced, particularized lessons and, therefore, subject-didactic designs are of great value.

7. Synthesis and future perspective

The idea "learning difficulties" is described from a collective pedagogical perspective, which implies a more extensive meaning. The idea "learning difficulties" had previously been explained and described from a single pedagogical perspective (psychopedagogy), and this hindered an orthodidactic investigation of certain problem areas. The proposed description of learning difficulties, against the background of the lesson structure, enables orthodidactics to interpret and explain them in the light of the entire categorical structure of the pedagogical.

The status of orthodidactics as a science also is reflected on. This results in a more exact delimitation of its field of study, methods, and tasks. Since orthodidactics is an interpretive, and particularizing science, research is focused on actual problem areas, and time and effort are not wasted on irrelevant matters. It is anticipated that the following matters will receive urgent attention:

1. Where, in the past, learning difficulties were interpreted as beginning and ending with a child, as such, and where educative deficiencies were related to a child's learning world as an experiential world, etc., future research should focus on interpreting a child's learning world within a disharmonious lesson situation. In other words, the inadequate actualization (distorted appearances) of the essences of learning and educating must be interpreted and explained with reference to the inadequate actualization of the

essences of a lesson structure. Thus, research must undergo a shift in emphasis so that the inadequate actualization of the essences of teaching and of contents also are thoroughly considered.

2. Closely connected with the above, orthodidactics must design sophisticated diagnostic measures and media with the aim of disclosing inadequately actualized lesson structure essences. With the necessary interpretations and adaptations, existing media can be used fruitfully. (See, e.g., the Rorschach inkblot medium, where perceptions or visual-perceptual tendencies can give important indications of disturbed lesson structure essentials, especially when these are related to a teacher's specific teaching methods.)

Orthodidactics also must design genuine media for specifically evaluating the above-mentioned matters. Orthodidactics uses psychological media to a large extent, which then are interpreted pedagogically. In advancing this new view of learning difficulties, orthodidactics will become increasingly independent in its diagnostic procedures.

3. Findings of related disciplines, such as medicine, optometry, speech therapy, psychology, sociology must be evaluated carefully [and pedagogically] by placing them in the context of inadequately actualized essences of the lesson structure. Because of a lack of a detailed frame of reference, findings from these sources have often been made absolute, and programs applied them with laborious effort without ever determining whether the problem, shortcoming, or disturbance is related in any way to a disharmonious teaching situation.

4. Concerning orthodidactic assistance, research must focus on orthodidactic designs, within the context of a lesson structure. As a macrostructure (Van der Stoep and Van Dyk), the lesson structure must be particularized, and refined into a microstructure by considering the inadequately actualized essences of, and the disturbed interrelationships within the lesson structure.

Designing an orthodidactic program not only implies particularization, but also general principles and especially a careful reflection on the functioning of the lesson. The importance of the latter is best understood if the question of "future" is taken as an example: it is essentially important to orthodidactic assistance to determine the level on which the teaching should begin because the

reteaching situation is even more sensitive to either too high or too low a level. Since such a matter cannot be left to an orthodidactician's intuition, systematic research and careful reflection are required.

Finally, the author is convinced that the disharmonious lesson situation must be the orthodidactic focal point, and that the methods described above are the only ways in which difficult orthodidactic problems can be solved.

LITERATURE CITED

1. Sonnekus, M. C. H. Die vraagstuk van remedierende onderwys as pedagogiese aangeleentheid. *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir die Pedagogiek*, July, 1969, pp. 30 et seq.
2. Gouws, S. J. L. 'n Besinning oor die ondersoek van kinders met leermoeilikhede, pp 4-14.
3. Stander, G. in Stander, G. and Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Inleiding tot die ortopedagogiek.** pp 26-51.
4. Van Gelder, L. **Een orientatie in de orthopedagogiek,** p 10.
5. Gouws, S. J. L. **Pedagogiese diagnostisering van kinders met leermoeilikhede,** p 10.
6. Schonell, F. J. **Backwardness in the basic subjects,** p 494.
7. Oberholzer, C. K. **Prolegomena van 'n prinsipiele pedagogiek,** p 13.
8. See:
 - (i) Engelbrecht, C. S. **Die samehang tussen liggaamsbeleving en leerprobleme by die kind: 'n ortopedagogiese studie.**
 - (ii) Nel, B. F. and Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Psigiese beelde van kinders met leermoeilikhede.**
9. Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Psigopedagogiek: 'n inleidende orientering,** p 9.
10. Nel, B. F. in Nel, B. F. and Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Psigiese beelde van kinders met leermoeilikhede,** p 8.
11. *Ibid,* p 8
12. Van der Stoep, F. in Van der Stoep, F. and Van der Stoep, O. A. **Didaktiese orientasie.** pp 41-42.

13. Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Onderwyser, les en kind**, p 75.
14. Landman, W. A. **Denkwyses in die opvoedkunde**.
15. Ibid, p 48.
16. Landman, W. A., Roos, S. G. and Van Rooyen, R. P. **Die praktykwording van die fundamentele pedagogiek**, p 161.
17. Landman, W. A. **Denkwyses in die opvoedkunde**, p 48.
18. Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Psigopedagogiek: 'n inleidende oriëntering**, p 11.
19. Ibid, p (not given)
20. Landman, W. A., Roos, S. G. and Van Rooyen, R. P. **Die praktykwording van die fundamentele pedagogiek**, pp 165 and 185.
21. Van der Stoep, F. **Didaskein**, p 131.
22. Landman, W. A., Roos, S. G. and Van Rooyen, R. P. op cit., p 161.
23. See:
 - (i) Johnson, D. J. and Myklebust, H. R. **Learning disabilities**
 - (ii) Kephart, N. C. **The slow learner in the classroom**.
24. See:
 - (i) Nel, B. F. and Sonnekus, M. C. H. **Psigiese beelde van kinders met leermoeilikhede**.
 - (ii) Van Gelder, L. **Ontsporing en correctie**.
25. Kruger, R. A. **Die betekenis van die begrippe Elementare en Fundamentele in die didaktiese teorie en praktyk**, p 75.
26. Ferreira, G. V. **Ervaring as psigopedagogiese kategorie**, p 69.
27. Ter Horst, W. **Een ortopedagogisch gezichtspunt in Verduisterd perspectief**, p 5.
28. Landman, W. A. unpublished notes.
29. See: Van Niekerk, P. A. **Die problematiese opvoedingsgebeure**, p 60.
30. See: ibid, p 62.
31. See: Kotze, J. M. A. Die ortodidaktiek taak, terrein en plek binne die pedagogiese in **Die leermoeilike kind**, p 43.
32. Van der Stoep, F. D. Ed. colloquium, 9 September, 1975.
33. Ter Horst, W. **Prove van een ortopedagogisch theorie-concept**, p 12.
34. Van der Stoep, F. D. Ed. colloquium, 9 September, 1975.
35. Dumont, J. J. **Orthopedagogiek, pedotherapie en opvoeding in Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir die Pedagogiek**, Vol. 3, No. 2, p 54.
36. See:
 - (i) Vliegthart, W. E. **Op spannen voet**, pp 146-147.
 - (ii) Gouws, S. J. L. **Pedagogiese diagnostisering van kinders met leermoeilikhede**, p 2.
 - (iii) Van Niekerk, P. A., op cit., p 58.

- (iv) Van Goor, R. and Den Dulk, C. **Inleiding in de orthodidactiek en in de remedial teaching van het dyslectische kind,**
pp 27-30.
37. See: Dumont, J. J. **Leerstoornissen,** pp 118-120.