

Foreword

In searching for answers to several questions of concern to those who try to deal with children with learning problems, the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria offered a week-long symposium during August of 1976. Its emphasis is on the practice of providing orthopedagogic help and reflects new developments regarding the special educating of a few types of restrained children. This collection includes papers presented during the symposium and ought to be meaningful to anyone involved in orthopedagogic work.

Successful learning by a child includes the pedagogically adequate actualization of his/her learning potentialities so he/she can adequately understand the relevant life contents with which he/she is educatively confronted.

The various contributors take their point of departure in the problematic educative situatedness of a child with learning problems, and they consider whether this problem stems from one or some combination of a child's limitations, his/her under actualizing his/her learning potentials, or inadequate guidance by adults. There especially is an attempt to clarify theory forming and the embracing practice of providing help.

Because "special" help is necessary for a specific restraint, in the first four papers, specific attention is given to restrained children, and the "exceptional" teaching tasks which arise. The emphasis falls particularly on "different" methods for allowing the pupils to communicate as effectively as possible with reality.

In the opening address, the Honorable Dr. Koornhof, Minister of National Education, discusses the origin and organization of special education in South Africa. Mr. Theron then reflects on the special teaching required for the physically restrained child, and Mr. Pauw, and then Dr. **Steyn*** consider the latest developments in teaching blind and deaf children, respectively.

* Names in bold type are the ten (of the fourteen) authors whose papers I have translated. The translated papers do not appear in the order mentioned above. (G.D.Y.)

Irrespective of the fact that there is relatively general agreement that a child with learning difficulties is a pupil who does not adequately actualize his/her learning potentialities, there still is a lack of agreement regarding the point of departure when one tries to provide help. With the aim of greater clarity in this regard, Prof. **Van der Stoep** deals with the question of who a child with learning problems is.

Because learning problems are educative problems, the final questions must be asked and answered by orthopedagogics. In this regard, its central task is to abolish these problems by correcting the problematic educative situation as such. In the sixth contribution, then, **Van Niekerk** pays close attention to the relation between educative and learning problems, and he indicates the orthopedagogic tasks which arise.

Since the orthopedagogue continually tries, as far as possible, to make what gives rise to learning problems controllable, a multidisciplinary approach is necessary. With reference to **Sonnekus'** contribution to this matter, it is concluded that, in a historical respect, whatever identification of learning problems is made, be it neurological, psychological, psychiatric, or any other scientific area, in the end, an educative task is included and particularly an orthopedagogic one, with the aim of answering meaningfully the question of how this child should now be dealt with so that he/she will learn as he/she ought to so he/she can adequately become an adult.

Indeed, the orthopedagogue is continually confronted with tasks within a general practice of providing help. Successfully intervening with a child with learning problems also assumes that there be a move to an authentic macrostructure, which is present in the orthodidactic situation as a general interpretive guideline or tendency, and that a plan of action continually be designed for practice in terms of it. By integrating all available data, the orthopedagogue determines in what respects the child and/or the teacher participate inadequately in the lesson event. Concerning orthopedagogic diagnostics, e.g., the "differentness" (as not adequate) of actualizing his/her learning potentialities by the child him/herself must be disclosed, and the inadequate guidance by the adults must be gauged. Considering this, plans are made for further action.

Regarding diagnostics, a penetrating pedagogical conversation with the parents and others is necessary. This matter is dealt with by **Ferreira**.

Aspects of this approach in practice are clarified by three co-workers who have intervened with the same child. **Mr. du Toit** discusses the pedagogical investigation as such, and with respect to a child's problematic educative situatedness, **Miss Visser** proceeds to establish an orthodidactic plan of action. She also discusses one lesson which is designed as part of this plan. **Mrs. Kellerman** follows by illustrating how occupational therapeutic intervention with this same child is integrated into the plan of action.

In addition, about authentic orthopedagogic assistance, pedotherapeutic intervention also has an integral place in eliminating problems. **Mrs. Olivier** considers image and play therapy as forms of specialized educative help, and **Dr. Pretorius** discusses conversational assistance as such.

The collection is concluded with a contribution by **Mr. Olivier** about specialized assistance to pupils with specific learning problems by the Transvaal Education Department.

It is hoped that this collection will contribute to a better understanding of the child with learning problems in his/her problematic educative situation and, with this, to an adequate practice of providing help.

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