

CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIM AND PROGRAM OF STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The concept "emotional problems"

Children with "emotional problems" is a phenomenon unique to contemporary times. The existing seriousness and distress about this matter are clearly seen in the increasing degree to which provisions are made by facilities such as school clinics, child guidance clinics, and institutes, as well as church and private organizations, where assistance can be given to these children.

In this study, when there is reference to children with "emotional problems", this does not mean the emotionally unstable "personality" (a clinical classification of a personality disturbance), or emotional instability, as a symptom of one or another organic or psychotic condition. Reference to these psychopathic conditions generally is found in the literature on psychopathology (see 1; 4; 10; 14).

However, children with "emotional problems" is a concept whose usage is so general in the scientific and popular literature that it is easy to give the impression that this is one or another clinical classification of children who show a specific group of symptoms. It is evident that this confusion can easily arise, and it is necessary to be clear about what precisely ought to be understood by the concept "**emotional problems**".

Although it is a concept with broad utilitarian value, and the literature on this topic is readily available, there are very few authors who venture to give a clear description of it. Jarlais [in English] (31, 311) says, in this connection, " (t)he definitions of emotional disturbance are even more vague for children than they are for adults". In addition, it is evident that a variety of concepts are used to indicate this phenomenon in children. Thus, for example, there is reference to the child who is a "problem",

"difficult", "nervous", "emotionally disturbed", the child with "psychological problems", the child with "behavioral deviations", the "maladjusted" child, the child with "developmental problems", the child in "emotional conflict", etc. (see 2; 7; 9; 11; 12; 13; 21; 32; 51). However, whether these concepts are used as synonymous is now considered.

As mentioned, children with "emotional problems" is not a clinical classification based on a clearly defined group of symptoms. Nonetheless, the following are some behavioral manifestations (see 2, 199; 5; 31; 40, 46-100; 41; 50; 51, 28) which can generally be qualified as "emotional problems": being a bully, aggressiveness, brutality, moodiness, stealing, encopresis, enuresis, phobias, tenseness, stuttering, hysterical outbursts, tearfulness, shirking homework, being infantile, shyness, learning problems, lying, laziness, criminality, obsessiveness, under achievement, dishonesty, disobedience, overdependence, sexual derailment, nervousness, timidity, untidiness, truancy, diminished self-confidence, prematurely dropping out of school, reserved, wild outbursts, etc.

Again, there are many overarching concepts in terms of which the above **symptoms** are described. Thus, to avoid confusion, a clear description is given of "emotional problems", and any of the other current concepts relevant to the stated aim of this study.

The following are some of the descriptions which are acquired from the literature on this topic: "If he (a person) has been referred to a clinic, and is attending for treatment" is, according to Scott [in English] (13, 7), a general way in which the "mental illness" of children is defined.

According to Lippman [in English] (21, 3), a child is in "emotional conflict whenever anything interferes with the satisfaction of his instinctual drives and his frustration produces a state of tension". Rogers (see 31, 242) uses the concept "psychological maladjustment", and he says this exists whenever "the organism denies to awareness, significant experiences, which consequently are not accurately symbolized and organized into the gestalt of the self structure, thus creating an incongruence between self and experience". Erikson has adopted and expanded Freud's view of psycho-sexual development. According to him, there are eight stages of "development" which characterize a person. Each of these stages is viewed as a life crisis to be overcome. "Emotional

disturbances" result from an unsatisfactory solution to these life crises (see 31, 231). According to Herbert [in English] (31, 3), the concept "emotional problems" is applicable to children "who create problems for themselves, their parents and their teachers as they grow up". For Gelfand (13, 18), problem behavior is the product of "social learning experiences". Hutt and Gibby (13, 23) describe "emotional difficulties" of children in terms of "problems of adjustment".

As can be seen from the above, the definitions and descriptions of "emotional problems", and related concepts, are extremely vague and varied in nature and, thus, are unsuitable as a point of departure for this study. Thus, to avoid confusion, our own description is provided of what, for the purpose of this study, is understood by children with "emotional problems". By this, it is not claimed that any of the above descriptions are untrue, but only that they are not specific enough and, therefore, are not applicable in this study.

1.2 The child's situatedness

Before proceeding to a description of the concept "emotional problems", analogous to Sonnekus' (33, 74) conclusion regarding the child with learning problems, it is asserted that the **situatedness** of the child with "emotional problems" must first be investigated to be able to acquire a totality-image of him/her. A person can only be grasped as a totality if there is an attempt to "understand his behavior from his relationship to his situation" (28, 10). Therefore, it is necessary that the child be viewed in his/her world, as well as in the relationships he/she has established with it. Also, Nel (25, 22) says "a person is ... always in the midst of a whole of meaningful relationships with his world". A person and, thus, also a child, must be seen as "always related to and finding himself within a particular relationship to the world" (53, 25).

From the moment the child enters the world as helpless, he/she is dependent on adults for his/her care and support. He/she is dependent on the help of his/her parents for his/her total physical existence. However, physical existence is not the only aim with the child since, while he/she is a child, he/she "constantly has adulthood as his destination" (52, 1). He/she is not born an adult and, therefore, has the task of becoming a proper adult (38, 50); hence, it also is the task of the adults (parents) to help him/her

reach this destination by means of **educating** (52, 1). According to Ter Horst [in Dutch] (43, 54), educating is "a continual 'conversation' with the child". Pretorius (30, 24) also views educating as an evolving communication between educator and child. Educating, as "help in becoming" (53, 32), in a pedagogical perspective, is seen "as formative dialogue, as dialogue which changes" (54, 68). Or, as Langeveld [in Dutch] (19, 141) says: "Without education, the human child can not become a person".

From this, it is evident that the child not only is dependent on the adult for his/her physical care, but also for his/her **becoming adult**. Hence, becoming adult is not something which occurs automatically (see 15, 25; 36, 4). "Educating ... is ... not a mechanistic occurrence" [in Dutch] (19, 135). It is "an event and not a process" (37, 5). For both Sonnekus (34, 56-57; 35, 3; 37, 31) and Van Niekerk (52, 1), the child's becoming adult, or personal actualization, is a matter which occurs by means of his/her self-actualization, as well as by means of accompaniment or guidance to self-actualization by the adults. Also, according to Landman (18, 31-32), adulthood is attained through the event of guided dependence intertwined with guided independence, with the aim of self-guided independence. From this it also is said that the educative event is not only the responsibility of the adults (parents), but that the child also has a definitive role and responsibility (see 15, 25) in its actualization, since he/she is a "unique individual pursuing his own aims and purposes" [in English] (13, 20).

Although the child has a role in his/her becoming adult, and also has part of the responsibility for the adequate actualization of the educative event, really educating comes from outside the child, and it is continually initiated by the adults around him/her (36, 3-4). Since educating is normative in nature (see 15, 29), it always occurs with a specific educative aim in view. Through adequately implementing the fundamental pedagogical structures (see 27), the adult (parent) accompanies/guides the child **affectively, cognitively, and normatively** (37, 20-28), and does so to attain this aim. However, to avoid unnecessary duplication, this matter is not gone into any further, and only reference is made to existing work in this regard (see 15; 16; 17; 18; 35; 36; 37; 38).

The role of the child in the educative event lies especially in his/her self-actualization of personal potentialities in response to the educative intervention of his/her parents. By actualization is meant

"personal **potentialities** are converted to personal **realities**" (53, 34). The child can actualize his/her personal potentialities because, from the first moments of life, he/she participates in life reality (38, 31) and, in doing so, he/she is busy changing (52, 1) or becoming (38, 32). Becoming (becoming adult) should be viewed as a change toward adulthood (38, 33; 43, 64) and, thus, as an elevation in level of becoming (18, 33-35). When he/she actualizes his/her personal potentialities he/she, indeed, is busy becoming adult. This is only possible because he/she is someone who can **learn**. Through learning, he/she continually communicates with reality, and he/she is always busy changing. This change as becoming adult, is expressed clearly in Langeveld's statement that the child enters a dialogue with the educator but, by mediation by the educator, gradually also with things and others, and ultimately, he/she becomes independent of the educator.

This communication, as an event of becoming and learning, "progresses in terms of exploration, emancipation, distantiation, differentiation, and objectification by means of experiencing, willing, lived experiencing, knowing, and behaving by sensing, attending, perceiving, imagining and fantasizing, thinking, actualizing intelligence, and remembering, always as a meaningfully connected total event" (53, 35) (see also 8; 35; 36; 37; 38; 48; 51).

The child is in communication with the learning and educative content because, by means of **lived experiencing** on **affective** and **cognitive** levels. He/she takes a position toward the content, and attributes **sense** and **meaning** to it (see 51, 7). The way in which he/she comes to know the learning content and in so doing, lived experiences it as meaningful or meaningless, as is largely determined by the **nature** of his/her emotional life, which can be **impulsive, labile, or stable** (see 37, 21). The emotional life is closely integrated with a person's total being (51, 7) and, therefore, it has a special influence on actualizing the above-mentioned events of becoming and learning as a totality. (This matter is reflected on chapter 2).

Personal actualization, as a matter of self-actualization is an event which necessarily occurs within educating "because outside of it, neither the essence of the child, nor the actualization of his/her psychic life can be understood" (52, 3). Optimal personal actualization requires "a loving oneness, a pedagogical being present with much heart, unselfishness, and dedication" (24, 62).

Or, as Van Niekerk (51, 2) says: "The child cannot be thought of without **education**, and where educating lapses, the child as such decays". Thus, it is "unquestionable that any child always finds himself in an **educative situation, irrespective of his problem**" (my emphasis) (33, 74).

From the above, the situatedness of the child is **always** a being educatively situated because, as long as a person is a child, "he continually has the world of the adults as his destination" (52, 1) and, this, only can be realized within education. Thus, **any** study of the **child** must consider his/her educative situatedness*. Hence, to arrive at a description or delimitation of the "child with emotional problems", the point of departure must be the educative situation.

1.3 Disharmonious educating

Thus, the child is always educatively situated, hence, he/she continually has the world of the adult as his/her destination. However, the adequate progress of educating is the precondition for attaining this aim. "But it is not self-evident that this aim always is possible for us" [in Dutch] (40, 13). Since educating is a human matter (see 43, 23-24; 45, 6), the child's becoming adult cannot be guaranteed (51, 8), simply because we live in an imperfect world which is populated by imperfect beings (47, 1). "It is true that educating has failed from the earliest of times, and that educative problems are as old as educating itself" (51, 33). "Sometimes educating gets solidly stuck" (43, 12) and ... "as many long-suffering parents know, their children's progress through life is often disorderly and incoherent, and the changes (when change is not being resisted) are not always in the direction of maturity" [in English] (13, 3). Such educative situations arise when either the adult, the child, or both, participate inadequately in the educative event (53, 36). Through this event, his/her communication with his/her parents, and with reality becomes disturbed (see 23, 7; 43, 68). "As soon as there is mention of **inadequate communication**, there also is mention of inadequate educating and, with this, an inadequate **pedagogical** actualization of the child's psychic life (51, 9) "... and such a being situated must be qualified as a problematic educative situation" (53, 37).

* All references to the "child" from now on always mean the child-in-education.

Although not necessarily generalizable, following several authors (see 30, 17; 36, 124-129; 40, 30-31; 41, 6; 42, 6; 43, 78-99; 51, 14-19) reference is made to a variety of errors in educating which bring about what eventually can be qualified as a problematic educative situation. Examples are: lack of security, inadequate physical care, affective neglect, pampering, nonacceptance, rejection, overprotection, unfavorable comparisons, ignoring, over-burdening, too much meddling, underestimating and mishandling the child, as well as defective exercise of authority, inconsistency, interrupted communication, mistrust, lack of love. Briefly, the above amount to an inadequate actualization of the fundamental pedagogical structures.

Ter Horst (43, 30) uses the following six categories to differentiate central and more peripheral factors which lead to disturbances in the child's educative situatedness: (i) personal, (ii) person-world, (iii) environmental, (iv) family, (v) sub-cultural, and (vi) societal structures. These factors vary according to matters such as family composition, health of the parents, intelligence of the child, to housing, social resources, city-planning, available space, business, and industry. Irrespective of the nature of the factors, they are aggravating for educating, and give rise to a disturbed **communication** between parent and child, by which **educative distress** (30, 15; 52, 8), or a **confusing situation** arises (43, 12).

"The communication between educator and child is primarily an affective (emotional) being bonded" (30, 24), and when family relationships are inadequately established, the child's affective life becomes disrupted. The child's inadequate participation in the educative event, and inadequate personal actualization continually lead to a **labile emotional life** (50, 63). Nel (26, 6) says that children with learning and educative difficulties " ... usually are in **affective distress**". Also, Pretorius (29, 51) says that, in the first place, pedagogic distress means affective distress. From this, it is evident that **problematic or disharmonious educating especially results in labilizing the child's affective life, by which his/her personal actualization (becoming adult) becomes restrained.**

When a child's becoming adult does not occur properly, this usually is manifested in one or more symptoms which are generally known as "emotional problems". According to Van Niekerk (52, 9), these symptoms are nothing more than indications that there is a gap between the child's attained and attainable levels of becoming adult,

and so-called "emotional disturbances" ... are nothing more than manifestations of **educative problems**" (52, 4). With respect to disharmonious relationships in the family, Benjamin [in English] (3, 12) observes the following: "... an atmosphere of tension is almost unavoidable, and the children will show the effects in **symptoms of mental and emotional strain**" (my emphasis). Problematic or disharmonious educating gives rise to affective lability, which then culminates in one or another symptom indicative of a restrained becoming adult.

Considering the above, a description now is made of what currently is understood by a child with "emotional problems". However, the author indicates beforehand that there is no claim to completeness, or that this is the only correct description for delimiting those children to whom this study is directed.

"Emotional problems" are symptoms of the child's labile or impulsive affective life, which are brought about by problematic or disharmonious educating. Hence, the symptoms are an indication that the child is affectively disturbed and is restrained in his/her becoming adult.

To avoid further confusion, from now on, reference no longer is made to the child with "emotional problems", but rather to the child who is restrained in his/her becoming adult, or to the affectively disturbed child.

1.4 The affectively disturbed child: an orthopedagogic task

In view of the above, it is asked who is responsible for assisting the affectively disturbed child?

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, "special" assistance has been provided to children with deficiencies or deviations. Specifically, this special help was given to the deaf, blind, deaf-mute, weak-sighted--to children with one or another **handicap**, and it was provided by physicians, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, etc. However, there was no unitary approach to the "treatment" of these children, and it was mainly directed to their symptoms. Each science studied and dealt with these children from its own perspective "without a thorough reflection on the nature of these children, or their worlds" (53, 15). For a more complete exposition of the course of the history of the intervention with these

children, reference is made to the existing literature (see 26, 1-2; 27, 7-10; 53, 14-16).

As mentioned, from the beginning, a child finds him/herself in an educative situation since, while he/she is a child, he/she has adulthood as his/her destination. It was only when it was realized that the handicapped, as well as the restrained child also find themselves in a problematic **educative** situation, that intervention with these children occurred from a pedagogical perspective, and that this assistance was then placed on a scientific foundation. In this connection, Van der Stoep (46, 46) says: "Which contributions are made in a historical respect regarding the identification of the causes of learning problems from neurology, psychology, psychiatry, or any other area of knowledge, the tasks which stem from these, eventually become the charge of pedagogics (i.e., orthopedagogics) ... In this connection, it really doesn't matter if one speaks of under achievers, and if one indicates the cause to be physical (specifically neurological) in nature, the **outcome** remains a task of education".

Orthopedagogics is clearly that discipline of pedagogics which is occupied with the child who, because of problematic educating, is affectively disturbed and, thus, has become restrained in becoming adult (see 51; 52; 53). The same view of the province of orthopedagogics is held by various other scientists. For Stander and Sonnekus (39, 17), orthopedagogics is that theoretical approach within pedagogics, as the comprehensive science directed to correctively educating and guiding the derailed child, as a total person with learning and educative defects in his/her being-educatively-limited, with the aim of optimal independent adulthood within his/her existential situation. Dumont [in Dutch] (6, 3) views orthopedagogics as: "the theory of helping the child in his limited educability, or the child in educational distress". Vliegthart [in Dutch] (55, 23) says: "orthopedagogics is the theory of educative handling offered on behalf of the child who, because of his own psychic and organic structure, is seriously impeded in his current education". Following Ter Horst (43, 5; 44, 2), Pretorius (30, 9) says: "Orthopedagogics is the science which has as its object, the problematic educational situation".

For this study, the author holds the view of Van Niekerk (51, 37; 53, 64) that, in particular, orthopedagogics is concerned with a child

restrained in becoming adult in a problematic or disharmonious educative event.

With the above as background, giving assistance to the affectively disturbed child by orthopedagogics, should occur because scientific help to "the child with 'problems' ... must take its point of departure from the problematic educative situatedness of the particular child" (53, 18). Concerning the nature of this assistance, from the above, it primarily amounts to **stabilizing the affective life** of the affectively disturbed child, since problematic education especially influences his/her emotional life (see section 1.3).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the preceding section, it is shown that the child with "emotional problems", who was traditionally the responsibility of psychology, indeed, is a child who has become affectively disturbed because of problematic educating and, therefore, really falls within the province of orthopedagogics. Because this is a somewhat unusual view, it is logical that a few questions will arise which need to be dealt with in this study.

As noted in the concluding part of the previous section, assisting the affectively disturbed child must be directed to affective or emotional stabilization. But then, the question is whether this statement is not an over generalization. Can an affective disturbance, indeed, be eliminated merely by stabilizing him/her affectively? Must there not be some attention given to the symptoms manifested by a specific child? Since there is so much emphasis on stabilizing affective lived experiences, it is necessary to be clear about its role in the child's total personal actualization.

For a great many years, sciences other than orthopedagogics have intervened with children who are restrained in their becoming. That some of them have been very successful, certainly cannot be denied. If these sciences have not taken the child's educative situatedness as their point of departure, what then can be the reason for their success? Might it be that possibly, even unconsciously, they nevertheless, in one way or another, affectively stabilize the child educationally? To what extent are the essentials of educating actualized by practitioners of other sciences when they intervene with a child? Thus, clarity also must be attained about

what the reasons are for the success of current means of assisting restrained children.

An additional question to which a decisive answer must be given is whether orthopedagogics has a "method" or "technique" at its disposal by which a child can be affectively stabilized. Is it possible to present some guidelines which can serve as a macrostructure in terms of which there can be intervention, in pedagogically accountable ways, with the affectively disturbed child? In addition, is it also possible, in the light of, and with the aid of this macrostructure, to design some microstructures by which a specific child in his/her problematic educative situation can be helped?

Since the affectively disturbed child finds him/herself in a problematic **educative** situation, it is only logical that there are questions about the degree to which the parents of the child must be involved in helping.

It might be that there are still other questions which will crop up from the previous introductory section, but since the above questions appear to be the most relevant, gradually an attempt is made to answer them.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

From the introduction and statement of the problem, there is a two-fold task for any person who concerns him/herself with the affectively disturbed child. On the one hand, the disharmonious event of educating must be eliminated and, on the other hand, the affective lability and impulsivity, which arise from this, must be stabilized. **No** intervention with these children can have any hope of success if provision is not made for these two matters.

Therefore, the aim of this study, first, is to show the place and importance of the affective life, and of affective educating in the child's adequate personal actualization and, second, to present some guidelines for designing an accountable practice of giving assistance, by which the lived experiences of the affectively disturbed child can be stabilized and, in doing so, to guide him/her to personally flourish optimally.

4. PROGRAM OF THE STUDY

In the light of the statement of the problem, an attempt is made [in Chapter 2] to present an image of the role of the affective life in the child's personal becoming. From this it also ought to be clear why so much emphasis is placed on stabilizing his/her emotional lived experiences when providing help.

In Chapter 3, existing practices of giving help are reflected on to be able to answer the question of to what their success can be ascribed.

As indicated in the aim above, in Chapter 4, some guidelines are given for establishing a pedagogically accountable **practice of giving assistance**. Also, attention is given to guidelines for designing **pedotherapy sessions**.

In Chapter 5 an example is given of how these guidelines figure in practice and, in Chapter 6, a summary of the findings, as well as some recommendations, are presented.

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