Educational Psychology

Learning, Instruction, Assessment

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Preface

s active researchers in the field of educational psychology, we have often been disappointed that the texts available for our undergraduate educational psychology courses did not correspond very well to our understanding of current thinking about the processes of learning and teaching. It seemed to us that the typical approach taken in educational psychology texts had not changed much in twenty years and had certainly not kept pace with contemporary perspectives in theory and research. *Educational Psychology: Learning, Instruction, Assessment* fulfills our vision of a text written for undergraduates that reflects advances in the understanding of effective teaching and learning—what we believe to be essentially a "new look" in educational psychology.

This book is organized around the theme of promoting good information processing: helping students construct and use strategic knowledge, develop their metacognitive abilities, acquire knowledge of the world and its cultures, and stay motivated. A good information processing framework is informed by traditional and contemporary theory, by research in educational psychology, by current thinking in curriculum and instruction, and by both conventional and reform-oriented thinking about assessment and individual differences. We believe that the approach taken in this book can be used as a framework for understanding new developments in the field of educational psychology well into the next century.

This text is part of a series of books on educational psychology. The first book, Advanced Educational Psychology for Educators, Researchers, and Policymakers, is aimed at advanced graduate students, practicing educational researchers, and policy makers who have a need for state-of-the-science information about educational psychology. The second book, Cognition, Teaching, and Assessment, is an abridgement of the first book that focuses more on current theories of education, whereas the advanced book discusses more extensively where the field is moving. This book, the third in the series, introduces students to educational psychology by showcasing the best new research and theories and making the case for their relevance for future educators. One of our reasons for developing the trio of books was our awareness that many graduate students are asked to teach introductory courses in educational psychology. If they have read either the advanced or the intermediate text as part of their graduate study, they will be ready to teach with Educational Psychology: Learning, Instruction, and Assessment.

Text Organization

The first part of this book describes the *foundations of good thinking*, with chapters on motivation, representation of knowledge, strategies and metacognitive regulation of strategies, and the role of knowledge in thinking. Students are introduced to a variety of strategy-oriented interventions, from basic strategies to enhance memory to the most up-to-date strategic approaches for developing reading and problem-solving skills. With Chapter 5's detailed coverage of the role of knowledge in teaching, learning, and problem solving, students are also exposed to the full range of ways that knowledge is represented in the mind.

The second part of the book introduces different theoretical perspectives on the construction of knowledge. It begins with a chapter on the biological foundations of

learning and thinking, an issue of increasing prominence in educational psychology. Following this is a chapter describing traditional learning and developmental theories relevant to educational settings, all of which provide valuable insights into the classroom. Yet another chapter focuses on theories of social interaction as it affects mental development.

The third part of the book examines the *classroom context*. One chapter discusses social influences in the classroom. Another details effective classroom practices and management. Since many classroom practices are specific to content domains, two chapters outline instructional techniques for the content areas of reading, writing, math, and science. Many of the educational interventions designed improve increase reading and writing skills apply to other content domains as well. Similarly, the reasoning and problem-solving skills developed through math and science interventions are germane to other instructional content.

The last part of the book identifies important *student characteristics*. Three of the chapters address student assessment, focusing on traditional assessment techniques (Chapter 13), alternative assessment techniques (Chapter 14), and teacher-designed assessment techniques (Chapter 15). While the implications of student diversity are considered in every chapter, the last chapter deals specifically with the diverse characteristics of learners in the classroom.

Throughout the book, explicit connections are made to our general theme: the challenge of developing good information processing in students. We discuss the significant roles quality of teaching and other environmental variables play in cognitive development and academic achievement.

Text Features

Each chapter begins with a *chapter outline* providing an overview of the topics discussed and concludes with a *chapter summary* in which the major points made in the chapter are briefly reviewed. Key terms are defined in the text, and also in a *glossary* at the back of the book. There are also a number of special features in each chapter.

- Classroom Predicament. Students are presented with a classroom dilemma at the beginning of each chapter. These "classroom predicaments" allow students to use critical thinking and reading skills to resolve each situation appropriately by using the concepts and tools provided within that chapter.
- Return to the Classroom Predicament. At the end of each chapter, students are presented with ideas to consider as appropriate responses to the predicament that appeared at the start of the chapter. These suggestions act as something of an open-ended "answer key" in which potential applications of the tools gained in the chapter are considered. Students may find ideas that mirror their own thoughts or perhaps offer an alternative resolution.
- *Focus on Research*. These features provide in-depth coverage of research studies, along with questions for students that inspire them to approach the research critically. The ultimate goal is to encourage students to become informed consumers of research findings.
- Building Your Expertise. These sections build bridges between newly introduced theoretical concepts, ensuring that concepts taught in one chap-

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ter do not get left behind in studying the next. Students learn to approach the text as a holistic resource with intertwining topics and applications rather than as a series of autonomous lessons to be memorized.

- "What Do I Do on Monday Morning?" These practical applications of the material addressed in the text are provided to help students make connections between theory and practice and develop the knowledge base necessary to generalize to new situations.
- *Diversity*. These sections discuss the influence of culture and development on the particular educational issues presented in the chapter, complementing the general discussion of student diversity found in Chapter 16.

While we were writing this book, we tested portions of the text on students in our courses at the University of South Carolina, the University of New Mexico, the University of Maryland, and the University at Albany, State University of New York. Our students seemed to grasp the intimate relationships among theory, research, and educational practice. They learned that, as future educators, they would not benefit from a step-by-step, "Here's the recipe" approach to topics in educational psychology. It is not worthwhile for any teacher or text simply to list what educators need to know, no matter how skillfully. Instead, learners must derive their understanding of principles from a base of solid research. They must develop their knowledge, expand their repertoire of strategies, hone their metacognitive abilities, and motivate themselves—in short, they must become good information processors. Our students reported being particularly impressed by the following features of the text:

- The focus on strategies and strategy instruction.
- The emphasis on social interactional theories of learning and development.
- The application of current theories of cognition and instruction to school subjects.
- The proactive emphasis on engaging students in discussions of classroom management.
- The extensive coverage of student assessment—one of the topics they felt they needed the most.
- The integration of issues of development and diversity throughout the text.
- The presentation of Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the behavioral perspective on learning, and social learning theory in a single chapter.

Ancillaries

- The Instructor's Manual, written by Ruth Wharton-McDonald of the University at Albany, State University of New York, provides chapter outlines, learning objectives, concept maps, key terms, teaching and lecture suggestions, and case studies for each chapter.
- The Electronic Portfolio, faculty version, by Harry Noden of the Hudson, Ohio, school system, provides a range of computer network options.

- The Test Bank, written by Barbara L. Snyder of the University of Western Ontario, provides 50 multiple-choice, 20 short-answer, and 5 essay questions per chapter. The Test Bank is also available on TestMaster for DOS or Macintosh-based systems.
- The Student Study Guide, written by Pamela El-Dinery of Georgetown University, includes exercises keyed to learning objectives for each chapter in the text. Learning strategies help students remember important concepts, and practice tests help students prepare for exams.
- The Electronic Portfolio, student version, by Harry Noden, encourages
 extensive student interaction with the text, offering experimental applications of theories in the classroom and self-review of progress through
 written responses recorded in an interactive computerized portfolio. It
 is available for either DOS or Macintosh-based systems.
- Educational Psychology Video provides examples of classroom interactions, including "First Day of Class," "Small Group Instruction," "Classroom Behavior Management," "Working with a Discouraged Learner," and "Parent/Teacher Conference."

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Christine B. McCormick Michael Pressley

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