

# *Educational Psychology*

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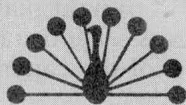
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# *Educational Psychology*

## *Preface*

**T**he study of educational psychology should influence the ways a teacher thinks about the instructional process. The purpose of this textbook is to present to the education student some of the most dependable current knowledge about how children develop, how they learn, how groups of people live together in classrooms, and how the instructional process and its outcomes are measured and evaluated.

The approaches to teaching or methods which teachers find successful and with which they can work comfortably vary considerably. The authors of this book believe that teachers can use the findings of educational psychology best by adapting and applying them to the various kinds of educational decisions they must make numerous times each day, rather than following specific teaching methods. In short, we have attempted to produce a book that will help to shape “the ideas in teachers’ heads” rather than one that is aimed directly at instruction in particular teaching skills or behaviors.

Originally the intention of the authors was to write each chapter of the book as an exposition of a particular topic. There were to be copious illustrations and examples germane to the point under discussion. The writing was to be as nontechnical as possible. References to and citations of supporting or background research were to be sharply limited. One of the oft-heard student criticisms of educational psychology books is that strings of reference citations interfere with the continuity of the discussion, a point with which we agree.

Though we still regard the initial conception as laudable, we found it extremely difficult to implement, and the finished book departs to a degree from the initial plan. One way is in the use of citations of other work as a basis for documenting conclusions. Deprived of a means to relate a contemporary position or point of view to other work and ideas in the field, the first drafts of several chapters seemed weakened from a scholarly standpoint. In the end it was determined

that the authors should have the freedom to build the necessary backgrounds, and so references are cited as needed, to an appropriate extent.

A second way the book departs from the original conception is in the use of textual examples and illustrations. Somewhat to our surprise, early drafts of the chapters seemed to suffer a break in the exposition as a result of the many excellent examples that were given. The problem was solved by the use of the featured boxes, a suggestion offered by Gloria Reardon, F. E. Peacock's development editor. Mrs. Reardon took an active role in the final stages of manuscript editing and preparation and throughout the production phase of the book. The authors owe her a great debt for her many contributions, which we here gladly and publicly acknowledge.

The greatest strength of this book, if I may speak briefly as its senior author and what might be called its "substantive" editor, is the group of co-authors who wrote it. When the publishers, F. E. Peacock and Thomas LaMarre, and I first spoke seriously several years ago about the writing of *Educational Psychology*, it was Ted Peacock's special concern that others who had particular knowledge about and interest in specific areas should be brought into the writing project. Therefore I wrote a statement about the plans and aspirations for the book, named and ordered the chapters that would constitute it, and provided a brief statement about the content of each chapter. In the spring of 1979 Tom LaMarre and I met with each of the co-authors: Gary Phye of Iowa State University; Candace Schau of the University of New Mexico; Gary Theisen, then teaching at the University of Iowa, and now with the Ford Foundation in Indonesia; and Carole and Russell Ames, both of the University of Maryland.

Agreements were reached about the writing responsibilities of each author. Since this is an integrated textbook, not a collection of separate chapters, we agreed that no attribution of authors to chapters was to be made. Chapters were drafted, I read them and offered what suggestions and encouragement I could, and the revision process continued until the manuscript was as clear, accurate, and relevant to our purposes as we could manage.

Although our collective aim was to produce a single, coherent volume, individual authors wrote in their specialized areas, and each of them deserves credit for the chapters that he or she was responsible for. Gary Phye's basic assignment was to write Chapters 2, 3, and 4, all of which deal with human development, and Chapter 5, The Exceptional Learner. Candace Schau assumed responsibility for the discussions of measurement and evaluation that became Chapters 15, 16, 17, and 18. She also wrote Chapter 6 on intelligence. Chapters 13 and 14, devoted to classroom groups and leadership, were

undertaken by Gary Theisen. Carole and Russell Ames wrote Chapter 9, on the learning of attitudes and values, and Chapter 11, on motivation. I wrote Chapters 1, 7, 8, 10, and 12.

I wish to acknowledge the contributions made to this book by several other people. Mrs. Joyce Usher and her staff in the Peacock editorial offices worked with us on the initial selection of photographs as well as in many other ways. Tom Fawell provided the line drawings that grace the introduction to each of the four parts of the text and the chapter logos, and his firm, American Graphics, took all but four of the photographs especially for this book. Patricia Simmons typed the manuscript in whole or in part through several revisions, and Robbie Reardon typed the final edited version.

Thanks also go to Therese Herman for her assistance with the instructors' manual. Her work was instrumental in helping the authors achieve their goal of providing instructors with a manual that includes practical suggestions for teaching the course, as well as the usual set of test questions covering the material in each chapter.

Finally a few words of thanks to Tom LaMarre and Ted Peacock must be added. Without both their efforts to help the authors there simply would be no book. Tom LaMarre was intimately involved in the enterprise, from its earliest planning stages until this moment when the book is about to go to press. Whatever doubts and qualms he felt from time to time he admirably kept to himself. The atmosphere of warmth coupled with high standards of performance that characterizes F. E. Peacock Publishers emanates from Ted Peacock. The authors are proud to have our book bear the Peacock label.

Bryce B. Hudgins

St. Louis, Mo.  
October 1982



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# Contents

## **PREFACE, ix**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, xii**

### **CHAPTER 1**

## **TEACHING AS SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: AN INTRODUCTION, 1**

- The Classroom Society, 1
- Educational Psychology as a Science, 7
- The Instructional Process, 9
- An Interaction Model of the Instructional Process, 13

### **PART I**

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNER, 26**

### **CHAPTER 2**

## **THE DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD, 28**

- Individual Differences, 29
- A Typology of Developmental Domains, 33
- Systems for Classifying Developmental Stages, 36
- Development in Early Childhood: The Years from Two to Six, 39
- The Physical-Motor Domain, 41
- The Cognitive-Intellectual Domain, 43
- The Social-Emotional Domain, 49
- Learning to Learn in Early Childhood, 53
- Chapter 2 in Retrospect, 56

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **DEVELOPMENT IN LATER CHILDHOOD, 60**

- Educational Development Geared to Change, 61
- The Physical-Motor Domain, 63
- The Cognitive-Intellectual Domain, 67
- The Social-Emotional Domain, 79
- Chapter 3 in Retrospect, 90

### **CHAPTER 4**

## **DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE, 94**

- Adolescent Attitudes Toward School, 95
- The Developmental Domains in Adolescence, 96
- The Cognitive-Intellectual Domain, 97
- The Social-Emotional Domain, 102
- Adolescents and Drug Use, 112
- Sexual Behavior and Sex Education, 117
- Chapter 4 in Retrospect, 125

### **CHAPTER 5**

## **THE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNER, 128**

- The Nature of Exceptionality, 129
- Mainstreaming, 130
- The Physical-Motor Domain, 135
- The Social-Emotional Domain, 142
- The Cognitive-Intellectual Domain, 147
- Chapter 5 in Retrospect, 158

**CHAPTER 6****INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION, 162**

- Definitions of Intelligence, 164
- Psychological Approaches to the Study of Intelligence, 166
- The Psychometric Approach to Intelligence, 167
- Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Intellectual Development, 176
- The Information-Processing Approach to Intelligence, 178
- Intellectual Development, 178
- Group Differences in Intelligence, 184
- Intelligence: Given or Gotten?, 190
- Intelligence and School Learning, 197
- Chapter 6 in Retrospect, 198

**PART II****LEARNING, THINKING, AND MOTIVATION, 204****CHAPTER 7****LEARNING AS COGNITIVE ACTIVITY, 206**

- The Nature of School Learning, 207
- The Function of Organization in Learning, 211
- Concept Learning, 214
- How School Lessons Are Learned and Remembered, 226
- Interference as a Source of Forgetting, 235
- Transfer of Learning, 238
- Meaningful Learning in the Instructional Process, 243
- Chapter 7 in Retrospect, 246

**CHAPTER 8****A REINFORCEMENT INTERPRETATION OF LEARNING, 252**

- Evaluation of Cognitive and Reinforcement Learning Theories, 253
- Basic Concepts of Reinforcement and Learning, 255
- The Shaping of Behavior: Acquiring New Operants, 262
- The Maintenance of Behavior: Schedules of Reinforcement, 267
- The Teacher's Role in Reinforcement, 278
- Chapter 8 in Retrospect, 282

**CHAPTER 9****THE LEARNING OF ATTITUDES AND VALUES, 286**

- The Relation of Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values, 287
- The Learning of Attitudes, 288
- Attitude Learning Through Direct Experience: Respondent and Operant Conditioning, 294
- Attitude Learning Through Vicarious Experience: Observational Learning, 299
- Attitude Learning Through Reasoning and Problem Solving, 302
- Learning Attitudes About Oneself: The Self-Concept, 307
- The Learning of Values, 313
- Values Education, 315
- Teachers' Attitudes and Values and the Instructional Process, 327
- Chapter 9 in Retrospect, 332

**CHAPTER 10****THINKING, 338**

- Essential Characteristics of Thinking, 339
- Problem Solving, 342
- Critical Thinking, 360
- Creative Thinking, 369
- Chapter 10 in Retrospect, 379

**CHAPTER 11****MOTIVATION, 388**

- Personal and Situational Factors in Motivation, 389
- The Motivated Student, 391
- Needs Theory, 394
- Achievement Theory, 401
- Attribution Theory, 405
- Increasing Student Motivation, 412
- Motivation in the Instructional Process, 424
- Chapter 11 in Retrospect, 426

**CHAPTER 12****LEARNING-INSTRUCTION  
RELATIONSHIPS, 432**

- Differences in Academic Achievement, 435
- Relevant Variables in Instructional Methods, 438
- Individualized Methods of Instruction, 440
- Group Instruction Methods, 448
- Chapter 12 in Retrospect, 456

**PART III****THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY  
OF THE CLASSROOM, 460****CHAPTER 13****CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP, 462**

- How Society's View Affects the Teacher's Style, 464
- The Teacher as a Leader of the Classroom Society, 466
- Personality Attributes of Classroom Leadership, 475
- Determinants of Classroom Leadership, 477
- Roles of the Teacher as Classroom Leader, 489
- Classroom Leadership Styles, 494
- Chapter 13 in Retrospect, 500

**CHAPTER 14****CLASSROOM GROUPS, 506**

- The Nature of Group Identification, 508
- Primary Group Membership, 511
- Ability Grouping, 513
- Effects of Self-Esteem and Peer Evaluations, 522
- The Classroom as a Bureaucratic Organization, 526
- Individuals and Groups, 531
- Chapter 14 in Retrospect, 539

**PART IV****EDUCATIONAL  
MEASUREMENT  
AND EVALUATION, 544****CHAPTER 15****PRINCIPLES OF CLASSROOM  
MEASUREMENT  
AND EVALUATION, 546**

- Basic Elements of Classroom Evaluation, 549
- Concepts to Ensure Accurate Classroom Measuring Instruments, 555
- Chapter 15 in Retrospect, 560

**CHAPTER 16****EVALUATION WITH TEACHER-MADE  
TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS, 562**

- Planning Tests and Assignments, 563
- Measuring Achievement with Paper-and-Pencil Tests, 565
- Evaluating Processes and Products, 580
- Norm- and Criterion-Referenced Classroom Measurement, 582
- Teacher-Made Test Scores and Score Distributions, 583
- Test Evaluation, 592
- Chapter 16 in Retrospect, 595

**CHAPTER 17****USE OF STANDARDIZED TESTS IN THE  
SCHOOL, 600**

- The Nature of Standardized Tests, 601
- Standardized Intelligence Tests: Format and Use, 608
- Standardized Achievement Tests: Format and Use, 615
- Administering and Scoring Standardized Tests, 625
- Chapter 17 in Retrospect, 634

**CHAPTER 18****SCHOOL EVALUATIONS AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY, 638**

- The Nature of Educational Evaluation, 639
- Accountability in Education, 640
- Evaluation of Students, 645
- Evaluation of Teachers, 654
- Chapter 18 in Retrospect, 665

Index, 671

This is a book about how teachers teach and students learn. We believe the mysteries of teaching can be explained in terms of everyday social behavior, as limited and defined by the special circumstances of the classroom setting. The transmission of learning is a social act that emerges from and is dependent on the relationship between the teacher and the learner.

The school is recognized by sociologists and social psychologists as second only to the family as an agent of socialization. This is the process whereby children are introduced and indoctrinated into the appropriate behavior expected by members of the society in which they are being reared. The school provides continuing knowledge of the past, vocational skills, and exposure to cultural attitudes and values. Moreover, the effects of the school on personality, through the continual interactions of students with teachers, administrators, and peers, are far-reaching (Williamson, Swingle, & Sargent, 1982). In the school the child learns to behave as a member of a group, to wait for attention, and to tolerate being denied or frustrated. The child is introduced to a more structured evaluation than was provided in the home and must learn to take orders from a more distant authority (Jackson, 1968).

For the teacher, classroom behavior is guided by personal ideas about teaching that have taken hold as a result of the teacher's background of development and interpersonal relations, familiarity with the demands of the subject matter, and professional knowledge and educational expertise. The teacher's specialized knowledge and roles—as group leader, communicator, tutor, and so on—are unique to teaching. Nonetheless, the setting for teaching is a social one, and it is largely conducted through the social medium of language in its numerous forms. The process of teaching, therefore, should be thought of as a type of everyday social interaction, rather than as a distinctive or specialized type of human behavior.

## THE CLASSROOM SOCIETY

The social setting for the interactions between teachers and students is the classroom—a busy, confining, verbally demanding, decision oriented, and intense mini society or subculture. Exactly what it is like to be a teacher in a classroom depends on the grade level of the students, the subject matter being taught, and the larger environment in which the school is placed, among other considerations. In the main, however, teachers' classroom experiences have similar characteristics.

All classrooms tend to be busy places. Learning may be easy or difficult, interesting or boring, but it is going on constantly in classrooms. The

outward manifestations of this lively interaction are the activities that take place in the classroom: reading, writing, giving demonstrations, conducting and participating in recitations, correcting homework assignments, discussing quiz papers, and all the rest. Both students and teachers are involved in these activities, but in most classrooms, most of the time, the busiest, most involved person in the room is the teacher.

Classrooms and schools are also confining. Students frequently complain about this, especially secondary school students who may have only four or five minutes between classes and a continuous string of classes each day. Teachers have somewhat more freedom, but not much. They can move around in the classroom more easily than students can. A high school teacher will not be given detention for being a few minutes late to class, as a student may be. But school days demand the teacher's presence in the designated place at the designated time. To arrive an hour late or leave an hour early requires special arrangements, and going out to lunch is a rare event in the lives of most teachers. The degree of confinement teachers experience is indicated by the sense of emancipation they feel when an occasional in-service workshop day or teachers' convention breaks the pattern.

Classrooms are also highly verbal settings. Education seems to be transacted mostly through the spoken word, and the principal speaker is the teacher. Beginning teachers, especially, can expect to have sore throats by the end of the school day. There have been reliable estimates that someone is talking about two thirds of the time in the classroom, and two thirds of that time it is the teacher. The talk is not all of the same kind, of course. The teacher gives directions, defines norms, sets expectations, makes assignments, explains ideas, offers reassurance, hears answers to questions, and provides evaluations.

This verbal behavior is one reason the teacher's classroom life is decision oriented. The teacher must decide whether an answer is correct or incorrect, whether to praise or blame a student. She or he must decide whether the classroom's noise level is acceptable, indicating task-oriented hustle and bustle, or whether it is spilling over into disarray and chaos and needs immediate control. The teacher also must make a host of decisions about classroom work. Is too much or too little being expected? Is the pace rapid enough, or too fast? Are homework assignments frequent enough, or too burdensome? Are the teacher's standards too high, or not high enough? Are grading policies too tough or too lenient? The list of decisions the teacher is called on to make is endless.

Finally, there is a moment-to-moment intensity about classroom teaching that denies teachers the luxury of quiet reflection before taking action. That is not true of all aspects of teaching, of course. Teachers have time after school to plan the next day's work, to score tests, and to write helpful notes in the margins of students' papers. But during the

interactive phases of teaching, when teachers and students work together those five or six hours of each school day, what teachers say and do, what they permit or disallow, what they accept or reject must ordinarily be decided and acted on quickly—not automatically, but with very little time to ponder and debate. The overall quality of these decisions has a great deal to do with what the students in a teacher's charge learn and how well they learn it. By the same token, it helps to shape the teacher's success.

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHING BEHAVIOR**

While all teachers have similar experiences in classrooms, an individual's teaching behavior is as distinctive as any other aspect of his or her personality. Basically, we suggest, there are four factors in a teacher's background that influence the kinds of behavior that will be adopted as a vehicle for that teacher's classroom interactions with students. In order of diminishing influence, these factors are:

1. The temperament and disposition of the teacher and the teacher's own cumulative history of social and interpersonal relations.
2. How the teacher was taught.
3. The teacher's acquaintance with the special characteristics of the subject matter being taught.
4. The teacher's professional knowledge about education and teaching, including the applied social science of educational psychology.

Although we place educational psychology within the domain of professional education knowledge and place that category at the bottom of the list of factors that shape teachers' behavior, this does not mean that we consider its function in the teacher's classroom life to be either trivial or irrelevant. We do think such placement is realistic, however, and it may give teachers a clearer understanding of the contribution that educational psychology can make to teaching. Throughout this chapter we will indicate ways in which the study of educational psychology can furnish unique, significant knowledge to be applied in the conduct of education.

As an adult human being, the teacher has a history of social relationships with other people. When teaching is viewed as a matter of social relationships, as it is in this text, the teacher's own cumulative history can be regarded as an influence on teaching because it is transferred to the teacher's relationships with pupils in the classroom. Some teachers, like people in general, are by temperament warm and relaxed in relationships with others, and some are aloof, cool, and distant. A wide range





*As one child tries out the teacher's role with another, how she "teaches" will be affected by how she has been taught. In the same way, real-life teachers' behaviors are shaped by the ideas in their heads about teaching and other factors in their individual backgrounds.*

of classroom relationships can yield satisfactory results, without providing either a breakdown of necessary discipline or a rebellion against classroom authority. Each teacher has a characteristic style that is related to her or his temperament. The teacher is more likely to be comfortable with this style than trying to alter it to take some recommended approach to leading a group or working with a class of pupils.

Teachers also are likely to teach as they were themselves taught. This is understandable, since they were exposed to certain models of teaching for 14 or 15 years before they started studying teacher education. Unless a teacher education program offers a highly distinctive approach, its precepts and methods are likely to be blended with the earlier models to which the student teacher was exposed.

A third influence on teachers' behavior is the content they are teaching. Content may be more relevant at the secondary level, where its structure is more differentiated than in the elementary school, in which

virtually all subject matter is reducible to reading. The task of teaching introductory French vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar to eighth- or ninth-graders, for example, calls for different methods than teaching English literature or American history to the same students.

The effects of these three factors—the teacher's temperament and background, how the teacher was taught, and the demands of the teaching field—are powerful determinants of teacher behavior, and they are virtually independent of any specialized or technical knowledge about teaching. Nevertheless, we think, the study of educational psychology can make a difference in how teachers or others engage in the instructional process. The assumption is that knowledge about the topics of educational psychology becomes integrated into the teacher's views of how teaching is best conducted or how it should or ought to be conducted.

Suppose a recent college graduate who had majored in French but had not studied education or observed teaching in high school classrooms were asked to teach beginning French to a class of high school students. In planning and attempting to teach this course the graduate would soon recognize the need for a conception—we might very informally call it a *theory*—of how people learn. That conception would be heavily influenced by the first three influences on teaching behavior, or variations on them. The novice teacher would bring to the task an idea of how to approach it derived from his background of relationships with others. He would consider by inference what views of learning his various teachers have held, and he would surely make an assessment of any special characteristics the French language has with regard to learning.

Can a teacher whose knowledge about teaching is derived from such personal, unscientific sources succeed in the classroom? Of course. Evidence of such successes is all around us. Teachers in many private or independent schools have received little if any formal study of education. Professors in most departments of colleges and universities have been thoroughly schooled in their disciplines, and not at all in educational psychology or formal teacher education. Some departments attempt to fill this need with seminars which offer practical suggestions and guidelines for teaching various introductory courses. There are many splendid, inspiring teachers who have not studied the specialized content of educational psychology.

Many years ago John Dewey observed that there are teachers with little professional training who succeed, and others who may have abundant knowledge of educational psychology and history and methods of teaching who are not good teachers. In fact, as Stephens (1967) has pointed out, both teaching and learning are general, pervasive forms of human activity. Most people encounter occasions when they must "teach," even if they are not professional teachers. If we had had to wait for the