

Course : Educational Psychology

Level : Third Year License

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Educational Psychology: Definition, Nature & Scope

A Summary from Parankimalil (2012)

What is Psychology?

Psychology is defined by William McDugall (1905) as the “Science of Behaviour”. The behaviour generally means overt activities which can be observed and measured scientifically. However, one’s behaviour is always influenced by his experiences. Therefore, in order to study one’s behavior, it is necessary to study his experiences. In this regard, Psychology should be defined as a “science of behaviour and experiences of human beings” (Skinner, 1989)

What is Educational Psychology?

Educational psychology is that branch of psychology in which the findings of psychology are applied in the field of education. It is the scientific study of human behaviour in educational setting. Thus, educational psychology is a behavioural science with two main references– human behaviour and education. Accordingly, Educational Psychology is concerned primarily with understanding the processes of teaching and learning that take place within formal environments and developing ways of improving those processes. It covers important topics like learning theories, teaching methods, motivation, cognitive, emotional, and moral development.. etc. In short, it is the scientific discipline that addresses the questions: “Why do some learners learn better than others?” and “What can be done to improve their learning?”

The Nature of Educational Psychology

The nature of Educational Psychology can be summarized in the following ways:

1. **Educational Psychology is a science:** Like any other science, educational psychology has developed objective methods of data collection. Similar to other sciences, it aims at understanding, predicting and controlling human behaviour.
2. **Educational psychology is a social science:** Like the sociologist, anthropologist, economist or political scientist, the educational psychologist studies human beings and their sociability.
3. **Educational psychology is a positive science:** A positive science deals with facts as they are or as they operate. Educational psychology studies the learner’s behaviour as it is, not, as it ought to be. Therefore, it is a positive science.
4. **Educational psychology is an applied science.** It is the application of psychological principles in the field of education. By applying the principles and techniques of psychology, it tries to study the behaviour and experiences of the learners.

Thus, educational psychology is an applied, positive, social, and practical science, which studies the behaviour of the individual in educational setting.

The Scope of Educational Psychology

The following factors/topics represent the scope of educational psychology:

1. **The Learner:** The learner is the central topic in educational psychology. The related topics include – the innate abilities and capacities of the individuals, individual differences and their measurements, the overt, covert, conscious as well as unconscious behaviour of the learner, the characteristics of his growth and development and each stage beginning from childhood to adulthood.
2. **The Learning Experiences:** Educational Psychology helps deciding which learning experiences are desirable at a certain stage of development of the learner in order for these experiences to be acquired with more satisfaction.
3. **Learning Process:** Educational Psychology investigate the principles and theories of learning. Other items in the learning process are remembering and forgetting, perceiving, concept formation, thinking and reasoning, problem solving, transfer of learning, ways and means of effective learning... etc.
4. **Learning Situation or Environment:** It is the environmental factors and learning situations, which come midway between the learner and the teacher. It includes topics like classroom climate and group dynamics, techniques and aids that facilitate learning and evaluation, techniques and practices, guidance, counselling etc.
5. **The Teacher:** The teacher is a crucial element in the teaching and learning process. Educational Psychology discusses the role of the teacher and emphasizes the need of 'knowing the self' for a teacher to play his/her role properly in the process of education. It includes topics like teacher's conflicts, motivation, anxiety, adjustment, level of aspiration and highlights the essential personality traits, interests, aptitudes, the characteristics of effective teaching to inspire him/her to become a successful teacher.

Though the entire scope of Educational Psychology is included in the above-mentioned five key-factors, it may be further expanded by adding the following:

6. It studies **Human Behaviour** in educational situations. Psychology is the study of behaviour, and education deals with the modification of behaviour.
7. It studies the **Growth and Development** of the child. How a child passes through the various stages of growth, and what are the characteristics of each stage are included in the study of educational psychology.
8. To what extent **Heredity and Environment** contribute towards the growth of the individual, and how this knowledge can be made use of for bringing about the optimum development of the child.
9. Educational psychology deals with the **Nature and Development of the Personality** of an individual. In fact, education has been defined as the all-round development of a well-adjusted personality of an individual.
10. It studies **Individual Difference**. Individuals differ from each other. It is one of the fundamental facts of human nature, which have been brought to light by educational psychology. This one fact has revolutionalized the concept and process of education.
11. It studies the nature **Intelligence and its Measurement**. This is of utmost importance for both teachers and learners.
12. It provides **Guidance and Counselling**: Educational Psychology provides guidance and counselling to the child during his developmental stages.

In a nutshell, Educational Psychology is narrower in scope than general psychology. While general psychology deals with the behaviour of the individual in a general way, educational psychology is concerned with the behaviour of the learner in an educational setting.