

# Educational Psychology

*Meaning, Nature, Importance*

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## Psychology — Meaning

- The term ‘psychology’ has its origin in two Greek words ‘psyche’ and ‘logos’.
- The word ‘psyche’ in Greek language refers to ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ and the word ‘logos’ refers to ‘discourse’ or ‘study’.
- Etymologically, Psychology is the Study of Soul. During earlier times Psychology was considered as a discipline which deals with the study of soul.

## Conceptualization of Psychology

- The earliest attempts at defining Psychology owe their origin to the most mysterious and philosophical concept, namely that of soul. What is soul? How can it be studied? The inability to find clear answers to such questions led some ancient Greek philosophers to define psychology as the study of the mind.
- Although the word mind was less mysterious and vague than soul, yet it also faced the same questions, namely what is mind? How can it be studied, etc. This definition was also rejected.
- Then, Psychology was regarded as study of the consciousness. The description and explanation of the states of consciousness is the task of Psychology which is usually done by the instrument introspection—process of looking within. This definition was also rejected on the grounds that it could not include the study of the consciousness of animals. It was thought that it would not include subconscious and unconscious activities of mind. The introspection method for the study proved that it is most subjective and unscientific method.
- The most modern and widely accepted definition of psychology even today, is the study of behaviour, both humans and animals. This is widely accepted concept was developed by J.B. Watson.

# Definitions of Psychology

- **William McDougall** In his book *An Outline of Psychology* asserted that “Psychology is a science which aims to give us better understanding and control of the behaviour of the organism as a whole”.
- **JB Watson also viewed** Psychology is “the science of behaviour” (taking into account the human as well as animal behaviour).
- From this, we may note that -
  - Psychology adopts systematic and reliable ways and means of studying behaviour in objective manner. Hence, it is a science.
  - Psychology is a positive science. It is concerned with why and how of behaviour.
  - Psychology is a developing science. It is ever growing in its nature.
  - Psychology holds a body of established theories which are open to verification, examination and retest.
  - Psychology has both the theoretical as well as applied scope.

# Educational Psychology

- Educational psychology is one of the branches of psychology to study the behaviour of the learner in relation to his education.
- As specialized branch of psychology, Educational Psychology concerns itself with suggesting ways and means of improving the process and products of education, enabling the teacher to teach effectively and the learners to learn effectively with the minimum effort.
- Educational psychology as a science of education gives key to the 'how', 'when' and 'where of education'.
- It mainly deals with the problems of the students and the teachers in their respective situation of teaching as well as learning. It is the science concerned with behaviour pertaining to education

# Definition of Educational Psychology

- **Skinner stated** - “Educational psychology is the branch of psychology which deals with teaching and learning”.
- **Crow and Crow viewed that** “Educational psychology describes and explains learning experience of an individual from birth to old age”
- **Peel, E.A** defined, “Educational psychology is the science of education.”
- Prof. **William Clark Trow** had stated, “Educational psychology is the study of the psychological aspects of educational situations.”

# Nature of Educational Psychology

- **W.A. Kelly (1941)** listed the nature of Educational Psychology as follows:
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  - i. To give a knowledge of the nature of the child
  - ii. To give understanding of the nature, aims and purposes of education
  - iii. To give understanding of the scientific methods and procedures which have been used in arriving at the facts and principles of educational psychology.
  - iv. To present the principles and techniques of learning and teaching
  - v. To give training in methods of measuring abilities and achievement in school subjects
  - vi. To give a knowledge of the growth and development of children
  - vii. To assist in the better adjustment of children and to help them to prevent maladjustment
  - viii To study the educational significance and control of emotions and
  - ix. To give an understanding of the principles and techniques of correct training

Regarding the nature of Educational Psychology we may point out the followings –

- Educational psychology possesses a well-organized, systematic and universally accepted body of facts supported by the relevant psychological laws and principles.
- Educational psychology employs scientific methods and adopts a scientific approach for studying the learner's behaviour such as observation, experimentation, clinical investigation and generalization, etc.
- The results of any study in educational psychology can be challenged and are modified or altered in terms of the latest explanations and findings. So the findings of any study are never taken as absolute and permanent.
- Educational psychology does not accept hearsay and not take anything for granted. It emphasizes that essentially there is some definite causes linked with a behaviour and the causes of this behaviour are not related to supernatural phenomena.
- Educational psychology is a positive science rather than a normative science.
- Educational psychology is an applied/behavioural science.
- Educational psychology cannot claim the status of a developed positive science like other natural or applied sciences. It is considered as one of the developing positive sciences of the learner's behaviour.

# Importance of Educational Psychology

- **1. To understand the Stages of Development:** Psychology has clearly shown that human life passes through different stages of development before it reaches adulthood. They are infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Psychologists have also thoroughly studied the characteristic behaviour patterns in these different periods of life. Identification of these periods with different sets of characteristics and attributes as regards physical, mental and emotional development greatly help educationists to design curriculum and determine appropriate methods of teaching for students at different stages.
- **2. To Know the Learner:** The child or the learner is the key factor in the teaching-learning process. Educational psychology helps the teacher to know his interests, attitudes, aptitudes and the other acquired or innate capacities and abilities; to know the stage of development linked with his social, emotional, intellectual, physical and aesthetic needs; to know his level of aspiration, his conscious and unconscious behaviour; his motivational and group behaviour; his conflicts, desires and other aspects of his mental health. So that perfect guidance and help can be provided and positive attitude towards the learner can be formed.
- **3. To Understand the Nature of Classroom Learning:** Educational Psychology helps the teacher to adapt and adjust his teaching according to the level of the learners. A teacher is teaching in a class but a large number of students do not understand the subject-matter which is being taught. To deal with the students effectively in the class the teacher must have the knowledge of the various approaches to the learning process, principles, laws and factors affecting it then only he/she can apply remedial measures in the learning situation.

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- **4. To Understand the Influence of Heredity and Environment on the Child:** Educational psychology helps the teacher to know that the child is the product of heredity and environment. They are the two sides of a coin. Both play a prominent part in the all-round development of the child. While the child is born with a number of hereditary qualities, environment helps them to be modified according to the requirements of the society.
- **5. To Understand the Mental Health of the Child:** Educational Psychology helps the teacher to know what are the factors responsible for the mental ill-health and maladjustment of a student and to suggest improvement thereof. Besides this, it also provides the teacher with necessary insight to improve his own mental status to cope up with the situation.
- **6.. To Understand the Procedure of Curriculum Construction:** Curriculum is an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Curriculum should be child-centred and fulfil the motives and psychological needs of the individual because child capacities differ from stage to stage. Educational psychology helps the teacher to suggest ways and means to curriculum framers to prepare sound and balanced curriculum for the children.
- **7. To Provide Guidance and Counselling:** Today guidance to a child at every stage of life is needed because psychological abilities, interests and learning styles differ from person to person. Similarly, what courses of study the child should undertake in future is also a vital question. All these can be answered well if the teacher knows the psychology of children.

# Contributions of Educational Psychology

- Educational Psychology enriches the teacher with the basic laws and fundamental theories that explains the educational process and control it, in order to apply them scientifically and objectively in the school environment and classroom, and provide these theories possible suggestions for some problems that may be exposed to the teacher or student during different educational situations.
- It provides the necessary understanding in order to achieve the most important information and skills to educational staff; exclusion of educational theories and opinions based on personal impressions and inaccurate and subjective observations.
- Educational Psychology provides assistance to individuals in charge of the educational process, in order to identify the inputs and elements of the educational process.
- Educational Psychology helps to understand the characteristics of the learners and the educational environment, and their outputs of assessment and measurement tools, and educational tests.

- It also provides the teacher with the skills of scientific description, and the theoretical understanding of the educational process, through the achievement of the objectives of general educational psychology and its components, and predict the outputs, and try to control.
- It enrich the teaching staff with the skill to take advantage of the relevant psychological theories in the process of growth, and developmental characteristics that follow the age stages, in addition to studying the motives of learning, mental skills, intelligence, thinking, remembering and problem-solving, to understand the mechanism of learning and teaching.
- It provides the teacher with the foundation of the correct rules and laws and theories of learning and education, which enables him to choose the applications of psychological principles and the relevance of a specific educational situation, so that the teacher to assess the appropriate method according to the school environment and psychological characteristics of the teacher and student.