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Psychology of Education: Theory, Research and Evidence-Based Practice

Janet Lord (Editor)

London: Sage Publications Ltd (2022)

592 pages; £33.99

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Reviewed by Dely L Elliot

Psychology of Education, a book edited by Janet Lord, is a timely collection of 24 chapters encompassing conceptualisations, practices and application of psychological theories in learning and teaching contexts. While most topics are within educational psychology per se, this book also features relevant and contemporary topics including the history of education, professional learning of teachers, the use of digital technology and social media in learning, and many others. This makes each chapter a standalone resource for practising psychologists, academics, teachers and other professionals who work in the field of Education, Psychology or more specifically in Educational Psychology. Evident in each chapter is the strong link between theory and practice. As Lord explains in conclusion, while the majority of these chapters characterise how practice informs theory, it is worth noting how the connection between theory and practice tends to be bi-directional. This can be observed as many chapters illustrate how theory informs practice, too, and thus, offers a wealth of evidence-based resources in Educational Psychology.

Considering that Educational Psychology is regarded as both an academic discipline and an area of professional training, it is defined as ‘applying psychological theories, ideas and methods to education and to understandings of teaching and learning, both in the classroom and beyond’ (p. xv). Behind this simplified definition lies the wider scope and complexity that this terminology entails, which was carefully explored. In turn, the book covers a lot of ground to help equip students of education, psychology or educational psychology with a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of educational psychology theories, associated concepts and ideas as well as the general trends within this disciplinary area.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 consists of four chapters that offer contextualisation through understanding the history and policies that informed the educational debates, the existing approaches and ideas in the current educational system in the UK as well as the research methods employed in Educational Psychology. Part 2 has eight chapters devoted to delving deeply into psychological theories at the centre of learning and teaching practices employed in the classroom. This part covers a range of theories – from early language and literacy development to social and emotional development, cognitive development, models of learning, personality and individual differences, cultural differences, motivation and collaboration in learning contexts, among others. As for Part 3, the twelve chapters focus on how psychology is strategically applied in various other educational settings, e.g., professional development of teachers and other educational professionals, application of neuroscience in ‘modernising the classroom’ and learning evolution brought about by online education or management of social media practices. With a focus on the wider educational application of psychological concepts, it comes as no surprise that the age range covers early years, school, adult education and

lifelong learning. The book has also notably taken into account teachers' and other professionals' professional learning and development.

The book has its distinct structure. Each chapter has its own introduction, chapter map, key words, learning objectives, embedded critical questions interspersed in the chapter narrative, case studies, key research/reading for deepening one's understanding of the subject, a conclusion and an annotated bibliography. Notably, readers are guided with carefully-explained concepts that typically ends with a checklist of what they have learned from each chapter. Not only is the adopted structure helpful in alerting readers to what to expect in every chapter, the literature and research-based chapter narrative models the evidence-based writing required in the discipline while simultaneously prompting analytical and critical thinking through the featured 'critical questions'.

What is more, each chapter is presented with a 'teaching tone' and has a manageable length that affords adequate space for exposition and exploration of ideas. Even the discussion of seminal theories has a contemporary feel, making it relevant to recent contexts and today's issues. Yet, each chapter remains standalone and has its nuanced focus and arguments that typically leads to newly elucidated insights – whether in the area of understanding children's social and emotional development in Chapter 6, accommodating and celebrating multicultural education in Chapter 10, understanding the effects of disadvantage in Chapter 17 or the ever-increasing role of digital technology and how it is changing education in Chapter 19. Its easy-to-follow explanations are particularly instrumental in bringing different psychological-related concepts together and inviting the readers to be part of the discussion and debate, e.g., the nativist vs behaviourist perspective on how young children learn to talk (see Chapter 5), or how lessons from neuroscience can contribute to interdisciplinary research that offers a more holistic understanding of learning (see Chapter 18).

While there are some observable overlaps, e.g. Chapters 3 and 4, which contain discussion of psychological research methods, or discussion of collaborative and cooperative learning in Chapters 1 and 12, the book as a whole takes a comprehensive approach. It is also worth noting that whereas key and seminal theories are revisited and discussed, the book also incorporates more contemporary topics. Chapters then carefully elucidate new insights, e.g., recent debates and findings in motivation research (Chapter 11), clarity of understanding the differences among pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy and their associated practices (Chapter 13), how gesture is used as 'a pedagogical tool' in relation to learning mathematics (Chapter 18), a more nuanced perspective on well-being (Chapter 21) or differentiating second language acquisition from second language development and their implications (Chapter 22).

I see this as a much-needed book that purposefully combines foundational psychological knowledge from the last 120 years with more recent and developing concepts in psychology. In so doing, this has successfully presented a wider and evidence-based conceptualisation of Educational Psychology, highlighted its interdisciplinary nature and its relevance to today's issues and recent contexts. This book will serve as a crucial resource for practising psychologists, teachers, academics and other professionals working in both educational and psychological settings.

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