

Why Study Educational Psychology

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| Slide 1 | Hello and welcome to an introduction to educational psychology. This brief presentation will focus on why educational psychology is an important discipline to study for those who are interested in providing learning experiences for learners of all ages. My name is Bill Huitt and I am Professor Emeritus at Valdosta State University and Adjunct Professor at Capella University. |
| Slide 2 | We will begin our investigation on the importance of educational psychology by focusing on a few definitions. |
| Slide 3 | First, education can be thought of in multiple ways. |
| Slide 4 | When thinking about individuals, education can be thought of as developing the capacities or potentials of the individual to prepare for success in a specific society or culture. Over the past several decades educators and policy makers have discussed how to identify those desired outcomes given the impact of globalization and the change from an industrial-age economy to one focused on digitalization and the rapid advance of information. |
| Slide 5 | On the other hand, when thinking about the needs of specific societies or even the global sociocultural context, education can be thought of as the process by which a specific society or perhaps geographical region or even the global society can transmit to new members the values, beliefs, knowledge, and symbolic expressions to make communication possible. Again, there have been multiple discussions over the past several decades regarding the appropriate level of when considering desired outcomes. Should it be the community, the state, the nation, the region, or the entire world? Those who practice educational psychology must consider the impact of rapid technological and sociocultural changes on the goals and processes of learning and teaching. |
| Slide 6 | An additional consideration is the types of education to be considered. There is the traditional configuration of formal education or schooling that generally begins between 4 and 6 years of age and continues through grades 10 or 12 or 14 for most children and adolescents. For much of the 19 th and 20 th centuries, once that schooling was completed people did not engage in further schooling. However, that has changed dramatically in the last several decades and now it is not uncommon for 50% of a population to seek additional levels of formal schooling. |
| Slide 7 | There are two other types of education that are important. First, there is non-formal education that occurs when people are brought together for a specific learning purpose as might occur in a neighborhood or community discussion or perhaps a once-a-week religious institution. Much of workplace education would also fall within this type. |

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| Slide 8 | A third type of education is labeled informal education and starts at birth and continues throughout life. Much of what is learned about adapting to a specific society is learned in this manner. It is important to understand that the concepts, strategies, and techniques developed in educational psychology can be applied for both individual development and the continuation of a society as well as the three types of education. This is one reason why educational psychology is such a popular discipline. |
| Slide 9 | Educational psychology is also a discipline within psychology, where psychology is defined as the scientific study of mind and behavior (or perhaps behavior and mental processes) especially as it relates to individual human beings, although the study of animals is also a focus of psychology. |
| Slide 10 | Being a science means that psychologists start with an observation that begins a process of asking a question, reviewing literature for ideas about what is already known, collecting data that is relevant to the question and designed to fill a gap in the literature, analyze results, and then share those results publicly. Research and theory development are always guided by a paradigm that defines how science should be practiced and how data should be interpreted. |
| Slide 11 | The most dominant paradigms used currently in psychology view the individual as embedded in a variety of sociocultural contexts including family, community, society, and global. |
| Slide 12 | Therefore, educational psychology can be defined as a combination of two separate, though overlapping, fields of study, education and psychology, with a focus on the learning and teaching processes and outcomes involved |
| Slide 13 | in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts. It is an applied discipline with an orientation towards practical applications of theory and empirical research. |
| Slide 14 | There are four major sub-disciplines or orientations within educational psychology. |
| Slide 15 | The first is theory and research in human development although, again, some of the methods and techniques are applied to animal behavior. One focus is on the similarities and differences in teaching and learning processes that are applicable at different stages in the life span. |
| Slide 16 | A second orientation is that of learning theory where learning is defined as the relatively permanent change in behavior or behavior potential as a result of experience or practice. That experience or practice can result from any of the three types of education or perhaps instances where there is no specific educational guidance. Also, learning theory acknowledges that |

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| | change can result from biological maturation, but that is not its focus. Finally, different learning theories focus on different components or domains of learning. For example, behavioral theories focus on overt behavior while cognitive information processing theories focus on internal processing and social cognition theory considers both internal and external factors. |
| Slide 17 | A third sub-discipline within educational psychology is assessment and evaluation where assessment refers simply to collecting data of some sort about the teaching and/or learning processes whereas evaluation refers to making a judgment about the efficiency or effectiveness of those processes. |
| Slide 18 | Finally, there is an orientation of empirical research on what actually works in regard to the teaching and learning process. This orientation is relatively atheoretical although there are some discussions related to what types of data are to be collected. |
| Slide 19 | The Educational Psychology Interactive website is dedicated to organizing what is known in this field and contains hundreds of links to writings and videos related to dozens of topics that are relevant to educational psychology. |
| Slide 20 | Huitt, W. (2019). Why study educational psychology? <i>Educational Psychology Interactive</i> . Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved from http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/intro/whyedpsy.html |
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