INTRODUCTION

LEARNING OUTCOMES

When you have completed this chapter, you should be able to:

1   describe the purpose of this book
2   explain why it is important to study various psychological theories of learning and human behaviour
3   describe the structure of this book.

KEY TERMS

academic contexts

adolescence

child development

educational psychology

motivation

positive psychology

psychology in the
    school

school settings

theories

Donny is enrolling in first year in a Liberal Arts degree. His long-term aim is to finish the degree with honours and then go to medical school. He admits to his best friend, Devo, that this is his parents' wish—that is, for him to go to medical school. Donny also confides to Devo that he really wants to major in social psychology and, hopefully, eventually work as a social worker. Working with homeless people has always been his passion. With this interest, Devo encourages Donny to take some psychology units. The Liberal Arts degree, as Donny discovers, is flexible and allows students to choose eight elective units. One unit that comes to mind, 'Introduction to psychology in the school', introduces first-year students to the disciplinary subject of educational psychology. Donny is interested in enrolling in this unit in order to learn more about the importance and operational functioning of psychology in school contexts.

Donny wants to do well and gain mastery of this unit. For preparation, he is looking to purchase a couple of undergraduate textbooks. Interestingly, at the university bookshop there are more than ten different titles on educational psychology. Of the ten books, however, one stands out. *Psychology in the School: An applied approach* focuses on the application of different psychology theories in school contexts. The book is concise and has a number of unique characteristics, such as a 'Pause & reflect' section at the end of each theme discussed. Donny finds that this brief section is effective, as it provides opportunities for students to reflect on their understanding.

1   Why might any student undertake a course in psychology?

2   How will understanding of psychology assist Donny in his career trajectory, from your point of view?

3   Might a textbook or article that is concise have advantages over textbooks and articles that are more detailed?

4   Would you recommend for Donny to consider any units other than psychology units? Why or why not?

INTRODUCTION: *TEACHING, LEARNING AND PSYCHOLOGY*

Thank you for choosing *Teaching, Learning and Psychology*. This book is unique in its emphasis on the expansion of theories of psychology in school contexts. Other scholarly books available (e.g. *Educational Psychology*: Woolfolk, 2013) make reference to the disciplinary area of educational psychology. Our contention, however, is that the term 'educational psychology' is somewhat limited, as it does not take into account the full gamut of psychological and psychosocial experiences that exist in schools. Educational psychology, for us, is too restrictive, perhaps for its focus on *teaching and learning processes*

and *individual variations*. Successful schooling is more than just academic performance or what occurs inside a classroom. The complexity of school, in general, suggests there are complex processes and psychosocial factors that operate to influence a child's development.

Our book reflects the totality of successful schooling in general. Successful schooling, in this sense, is not simply concerned with academic performance. Successful schooling, for us, also entails the importance of different academic and non-academic experiences, and how students come to derive these enriched experiences. At school, students make friends and enjoy social relationships with teachers, peers and others. Social relationships, in turn, may serve as relevant sources of information and form the basis for students to develop different forms of subjective well-being. We need to be cognisant, then, that school serves as a central portal of communication and a place where students acquire knowledge in order to become active citizens of the world. Our contention is that school is a beacon for lifelong learning. Principals, teachers, educators and school administrators all play different roles to ensure students gain different types of knowledge; for example: procedural knowledge, declarative knowledge, conditional knowledge and lifelong knowledge.

It is important, then, that we focus on the totality of school. For us, this entails the operational functioning of different psychological and psychosocial processes, which then serve to account for and explain a child's development. This theoretical positioning postulates that *schooling does not restrict itself to the classroom*. Not everything about schooling exists inside a classroom. Successful schooling for any child may reflect positive social relationships with others, the enrichment of subjective well-being experiences and proactive engagement in extracurricular activities. At the same time, of course, we need to recognise that, aside from principals, teachers, educators and school administrators, others in schools and in the community play important roles too. The active process of human agency also involves, in this case, the potent influence of the immediate family. Family members may assist in creating a social climate at home that is positive and conducive to learning in general. In a similar vein, the community may work closely with the school and the immediate family to inform children in their decision-making. The community imparts specific sociocultural philosophical beliefs, ethos and values, which all act to influence a child's development. For example, it has been noted that Asian students tend to learn and perform well academically. Why is this the case? Scholars have contended that, perhaps, this exceptionality is grounded in the Asian philosophy of *filial piety*.

For us, then, this book is unique in its emphasis on the introduction and examination of theories that expand beyond the realm of what actually occurs in a classroom setting. Our book covers four major themes throughout (see below). Importantly, however, we place strong emphasis on the paradigms of *positive psychology*, *optimal functioning*, *proactivity* and *student motivation*. This is an innovative positioning and is non-deficit in nature. Reflecting on our own enquiries in recent years, we prefer to focus on understanding pathways and means by which individuals can flourish and develop in life. Deficit approaches, for us,

are negative in terms of their theorisations, and focus on maladaptive functioning and the development of preventive measures to counter detrimental consequences. For example, in the area of motivation, the study of *disengagement* (e.g. why do some students choose to disengage from academic learning?) has been replaced with the study of *proactive engagement* in learning (e.g. what can we do to facilitate students to engage in academic learning?). We contend that a non-deficit understanding of development, learning and human behaviour is more enriching.

TOPICAL THEMES OF THE BOOK

This book reflects a *positive approach* (Phan & Ngu, 2017; Seligman & Csíkszentmihályi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001) to the understanding of learning, human behaviour and development. To ensure that our focus is clear, the book is structured into four distinct yet interrelated themes: Understanding child and adolescent development; Educational psychology of teaching and learning; Positive psychology and education; and Personal well-being. For each theme, in separate chapters we have included a number of theories and research enquiries for you to read and understand. It has taken us some time to consider specific themes and chapters that we believe best reflect recent scholarly trends and research development. For us, as scholars, we want to ensure that you have knowledge of the following, namely:

- that *learning* is lifelong and involves both positive and negative experiences, in and outside of classroom contexts
- that a *positive*, *non-deficit* theoretical approach is more valuable in terms of providing understanding about the operational nature of human development
- that different *types of development*, influenced by the external world, coexist with the psychological process of learning
- that successful schooling encompasses a wide range of academic and non-academic experiences, such as improvement in *motivational beliefs* and the enrichment of *subjective well-being*, which may arise from personal understanding and contributions of society in general
- that the totality of the *schooling process* is complex and involves ongoing dynamics, which may be situated in different environmental settings such as the classroom, the school and the community.

We have positioned this book to include specific topical themes that are not covered in the one book by other texts. This is an ambitious undertaking that emphasises broad understanding of the following areas: 1) different types of *human development* within a specific time frame; 2) the importance of *educational psychology* for classroom learning; 3) the importance of the paradigm of *positive psychology* and its explanatory accounts of the schooling process; and 4) the role of *subjective well-being* in the active process of human agency. These four major themes, as detailed below, are complementary and provide a holistic view of a person's development, situated within an overarching system of change

that encompasses external influences from the contextual environment. The importance of this book resonates via two central foci throughout: *encouragement of a healthy lifestyle* and *considering non-deficit theoretical views of learning*.

Theme 1: Understanding child and adolescent development

Theme 1 consists of four chapters that focus on theoretical understanding of education, learning and different types of development. This topical theme delves into personal development and how it is associated with a person's education and learning experiences. For example, one important emphasis for discussion entails personal characteristics and natures, and the extent to which a person relates to others. This introduction, from our point of view, is interesting and serves to ground discussion of subsequent themes. In terms of relevance and applicability for you as a student, we choose to introduce the subjects of *brain functioning*, *physical development*, *moral and social development*, *emotional functioning*, *cognitive development* and *personality*. Our coverage, in this case, is restricted to the age periods of birth to ~16 years. If you wish to know more about the lifespan, then we encourage you to consult and read other books that cover lifespan development (e.g. *Lifespan Human Development*: Sigelman, Rider & George-Walker, 2016).

At the same time, this theme has an interesting focus on historical accounts of some significant theorists' perspectives on education and learning, spanning the course of three centuries. This enquiry introduces the works of John Dewey, Herbert Spencer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and others. We contend that it is of value to understand their philosophical tenets in relation to formal education and the meaning of quality learning.

Specific chapter titles for this theme are the following:

Chapter 2: Theories of Education, Learning, Human Behaviour and Personality

This chapter introduces different theories of *education*, *learning*, *cognitive development* and *personality*, in terms of both *historical accounts* (e.g. the work of John Dewey) and more *recent accounts* (e.g. the work of Carl Rogers). This chapter is interesting for its descriptive and detailed focus on understanding some historians of the past three centuries in the areas of education, learning, cognition and personality.

Chapter 3: Understanding Development: Brain, Physical and Cognitive

This chapter focuses on the following types of development: *brain functioning* and the *importance of neuroscience* in teaching and learning; *cognitive development*; and *physical development*. We also discuss other theoretical tenets that emphasise the complexity of development per se. Development, as covered in this chapter, spans the course of the earlier years (i.e. birth – 16 years), which, in our view, are more relevant for you in your course of study.

Chapter 4: Moral, Social and Emotional Development

This chapter focuses on *moral*, *social* and *emotional* development. At the same time, we explore three major *general principles* (e.g. that development is sequential and structured in an orderly manner) that govern our understanding of a person's development. A few

selected *contemporary issues of development* (e.g. the importance of nature versus nurture) are introduced and examined.

Chapter 5: The Self and Personality

This chapter focuses on the importance of a person's *self* and the formation of the self. This emphasis on the self is interesting and forms the basis for further discussion into the self-beliefs system in Theme 2. We also explore the extent to which the self is associated with a person's *sense of identity* (e.g. ethnic identity). This chapter emphasises the importance of personality and the impact of the immediate family.

Theme 2: Educational psychology of teaching and learning

Theme 2 consists of five chapters that focus on the importance of individual variations, cognitive processes and the psychology of effective learning. This theme, we contend, is typical of what is found in many educational psychology textbooks (e.g. the concept of *intelligence*). The scope of this theme is detailed, covering different internal processes as well as external influences that may account for a child's intellectual development and learning experience. In line with our distinctive focus on positive psychology (Phan & Ngu, 2017; Seligman & Csíkszentmihályi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001), we dedicate one chapter to introducing different contemporary theories of student motivation—for example, *academic buoyancy* and *future time orientations*. At the same time, rather unique in our strategic direction, we have included a chapter that introduces the topic of *cognitive load imposition* (Sweller, 2010; Sweller, Ayres & Kalyuga, 2011) and how this influences *pedagogical practices* and *efficiency in learning*. Indeed, from our examination of previous textbooks, we note that this theory of cognitive load imposition has not previously been covered in detail. In a similar vein, we contend that pedagogical practices that depend on effective cognitive processing of information are relevant for understanding.

Specific chapter titles for this theme are the following:

Chapter 6: Behavioural and Cognitive Views of Learning

This chapter focuses on theories pertaining to the concept of *learning*. Learning, as detailed in this chapter, is concerned with a change in behaviour and knowledge. There are different theoretical perspectives that make attempts to explain individuals' learning processes. This evolution in conceptualisations and theorisations has seen complementary approaches in understanding of individuals' learning processes; for example: *behavioural views of learning*, *cognitive views of learning* and *information processing*.

Chapter 7: Individual Differences

This chapter focuses on theories pertaining to the *individual variations* of a person. For us, there are a number of concepts and attributes that reflect individual differences between people that, when applied to classroom settings, have profound influences on the teaching and learning processes. For example, relevant for the purpose of effective learning, we explore the following topics: *intelligences*, *creativity*, *self-regulation* and *reflective thinking*.

Chapter 8: Motivation

This chapter introduces the topic of *student motivation*. Student motivation is relatively popular in the fields of education and psychology. Unlike other textbooks that cover more conventional topics (e.g. intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation), we spend some time detailing the importance of the following theories: the *self-belief system*; *academic buoyancy*; *self-determination*; *expectancy-value theory*; *achievement goals*; *future time orientations*; and *learning styles and learning approaches*.

Chapter 9: Cognitive Load Theory and Implications

This chapter is interesting in its introduction to John Sweller's cognitive load theory. Indeed, to our knowledge, many textbooks do not spend time on this important topic. Our own extensive research in this area of enquiry suggests that this theory of cognition is worthy of discussion. Foremost, in this case, is the impact of working memory and long-term memory upon how people process information and learn. There is also a discussion regarding the three types of cognitive loads (extraneous, intrinsic and germane) that influence the design of instructions.

Chapter 10: Pedagogical Practices for Effective Learning

This chapter, building on Chapter 9, expands on Sweller's cognitive load theory by focusing on the importance of *efficiency* and *effective functioning*. One particular interest that we have, as educators, is how we can structure and develop our *pedagogical practices* and *instructional designs* to facilitate constructive learning. There is an emphasis on the imposition of cognitive load, which can have negative influences and deter people from engaging in effective learning in a subject. Aside from the importance of pedagogical practices that encourage and enhance problem-solving, we also discuss the theory of *constructive alignment* between teaching, learning and performance outcome.

Theme 3: Positive psychology and education

Theme 3 consists of two chapters that focus on the importance of psychology in the school, and external influences from the immediate family and the community in general. This theme is, in part, a hallmark of this book, emphasising the need to negotiate life with a sense of *positivity* and *proactivity*. Our approach, in this case, is to address and understand a person's learning experience, development and life from a non-deficit perspective. We place strong emphasis on the need to understand and recognise that *optimal functioning* is a central feature of human agency. Successful schooling, we contend, is more than just academic performance. For us, successful schooling also encompasses a person's *internal state of flourishing*, *hope* and *optimism*, and *social relationships with others* at school and in the community. In this sense, we refer back to our earlier rationale that schooling is not simply concerned with in-class learning experiences and performance outcomes but, rather, encompasses the gamut of academic and non-academic experiences. One notable aspect, of course, involves the *contextual social milieu* (e.g. the *school culture*) and people's engagement with their environmental surroundings.

Specific chapter titles for this theme are the following:

Chapter 11: Psychology in the School

This chapter is innovative for its focus on our rationale regarding *psychology in the school*. The chapter reflects, in this case, the importance of the paradigm of *positive psychology*, which emphasises the saliency of proactivity, an internal state of flourishing and personal growth. The theories covered in this chapter are non-deficit, focusing on the need for holistic understanding of a person's growth; for example: *mindfulness*; *hope*; *optimism*; *a perceived sense of belonging*; *school support*; and *the impact of technologies*.

Chapter 12: Families, Communities and Social Support

This chapter differs from other chapters in focusing on the importance of *the immediate family* and *the community* in general. Our emphasis here is that a person's success, both educational and non-educational, depends on non-individualised, social attributes. The important aspect, in this case, entails understanding of *situational* and *sociocultural contexts*. Urie Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems theory*, for example, explains how a person's development is embedded in different sociocultural layers. At the same time, building on Chapter 5, we explore the concept of *attachment*.

Theme 4: Personal well-being

Theme 4 consists of three chapters that focus on the importance of subjective well-being experiences. The schooling process, as we have noted, encompasses much more than just a teacher's remit to impart formal knowledge to students. Again, from our point of view, one notable aspect of our book that makes it different from other textbooks is our introduction of theories that explore the significance of a student's *personal well-being*, both academic and non-academic, in school contexts. There are educational and practical implications that arise from this theme. We contend that this coverage of subjective well-being is innovative, given that recent research trends have identified this topic as a national priority. Successful schooling encompasses optimum achievement in relation to a wide range of academic and non-academic experiences. This discussion has serious educational implications, such as the design, development and implementation of strategies and programs that facilitate both students' and teachers' well-being experiences.

Specific chapter titles for this theme are the following:

Chapter 13: Personal Well-Being

This chapter introduces you to the topic of *subjective well-being*, which has emerged as a popular field of enquiry for researchers, educators and other stakeholders. Successful schooling, as we explain throughout this book, is more than just academic performance. We need to be mindful of students' well-being experiences at school, both academic and non-academic. The chapter also discusses our recent theorisation in relation to the importance of the *psychological process of optimisation* and the achievement of *optimal functioning*.

Chapter 14: Student Engagement, Identity and Social Support

This chapter focuses on the importance of *proactive engagement* of learning in school contexts. At the same time, we bring to the forefront other theories that are of relevance to personal development, namely: *well-being experiences*; *identity*; and *gender formation*.

Coinciding with Theme 4, we also place emphasis on understanding of *disadvantaged individuals* (e.g. cultural diversity) and the extent to which the *home environment* plays a pivotal role. It is often the case that *parental support* at home makes a difference and differentiates one person from another.

Chapter 15: Teacher Well-Being

This chapter, as the final chapter of this book, focuses on the *subjective well-being* of teachers in their workplace. You need to be mindful about your role as an educator or teacher. Your personal growth and experiences, in this case, have reciprocal influences on students' learning and on the community in general. *Teacher self-efficacy*, in this sense, is a dominant factor that may influence your professional conduct and well-being experiences. At the same time, teacher self-efficacy may positively influence your relationships with students and colleagues alike.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

To assist you in your understanding of different educational and psychological theories, we have structured the book to include a number of key features to complement the subject contents. We have made a concerted effort to stimulate your interest, reading and understanding of the unit materials. In particular, for every chapter of this book we have included the following:

Opening scenario

At the beginning of each chapter, we include a brief real-life scenario for you to read and reflect upon. This is purposely written to provide a specific school-based or life context that is associated with the contents of the chapter. As you read the scenario, you may consider and derive some initial understanding of the chapter in its totality. At the end of this section, we have also incorporated some reflection questions for you to consider—for example, what would you do as an in-service teacher to address a particular issue?

Glossary definitions

This book is extensive in content and consists of a number of theoretical topics. Annotated glossary definitions are placed in the side margins throughout, and collected in a Glossary at the end of the book, to provide brief summaries of theoretical concepts for you to take note of. These definitions will be useful, especially when you need to review a concept quickly for a quiz or exam. We advise you to use these glossary definitions as a guide to assist you in your reading.

Pause & reflect

It is important that you build on your understanding and knowledge as you read this book. Aside from the glossary definitions, we have also included a Pause & reflect section in appropriate places. This consists of open-ended questions that serve to consolidate your understanding of the unit materials. At the same time, the purpose of these questions is to guide you in your reflection on the subject contents. We encourage you to record your answers when you are reflecting on your understanding of each topic. Of course, it is up to you to decide how much detail you want to include.

Suggestions for teaching

A strong emphasis of this book is practical educational applications. We strongly believe that, as pre-service teachers (or in-service teachers), you need a good grasp of how a particular theory or concept can be applied in school contexts. Incorporating a Suggestions for teaching section where appropriate emphasises the nexus between research development and in-class teaching practices.

Check your understanding

To ensure your learning is constructive, we have included an activity component that requires you to work individually or with others to solve questions posed. These activities are thought-provoking and reflect the importance of mastery and deep learning. Some may require you to present your responses to the rest of the class. You are encouraged to consult other sources of information (e.g. the internet) to assist you with these activities.

Implications of research

We want to encourage mastery and deep, meaningful learning. We hope that this book will initiate and foster your personal interest in knowing more about this field of study. To encourage you to focus in depth, we have incorporated a component of research case studies, which introduces notable research undertakings by scholars in the respective fields. Summaries of empirical research, both quantitative and qualitative, are provided for you to consider reading in full. Where appropriate we have included summarised statistical analyses and empirical results to inform you about the significance of the research. However, we do not expect you to have comprehensive understanding of statistical techniques or to know how to read these statistics.

Chapter summary

We have a section in every chapter, the Chapter summary, which summarises the coverage of the chapter. It provides a synopsis of the chapter in point form that may assist you in your reflection on and consolidation in understanding of the subject. The Chapter summary can also be used as a checklist to ensure that you have fully covered and understood the contents of the chapter.

Revision questions

We have included Revision questions at the end of each chapter for you to use as another summary. These questions are intended for the purpose of personal reflection and consolidation, seeking your understanding of the contents of the chapter in total. You should treat this as a form of preparation and revision for any forthcoming quiz or test. Use this as another checklist to reference your understanding.

Further reading

Each chapter provides a Further reading list that contains the notable references we have used. These are also combined in the References at the back of the book. You may wish to check out some of these references online or at your institution library. With the advent of technology, many of the mentioned journal articles, book chapters, conference papers and so on can be downloaded from the internet. Many institutions worldwide have electronic databases (e.g. ERIC) that collect scholarly research outputs from authors.

FURTHER READING

Phan, H. P., & Ngu, B.H. (2017). Positive psychology: The use of the Framework of Achievement Bests to facilitate personal flourishing. In A. A. V. Boas (Ed.), *Well-being and Quality of Life* (pp. 19–33). Rijeka, Croatia: IntechOpen.

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