

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

- What is Educational Psychology?
- Stages of Human Growth and Development
- Heredity and Environment (Nature and Nurture)

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

Content outline: Psychology – Behaviour – Subfields – Theory - Approaches to study of human behaviour – (neurobiological, behaviouristic, cognitive, psychoanalytic, humanistic) – Methods of study (introspection, extrospection / observation, experiment, case study / survey) – Educational Psychology – its focal areas and specific objectives.

Psychology

There are many false notions about psychology and psychologists. Psychology is not mind reading and psychologists are not gifted with mystic powers; they are not demi-gods with spiritual powers. They cannot size up people effortlessly; they cannot assess the character, the personality of the individual at a glance. There are many self-styled psychologists who claim to study personality and thoughts of an individual by his physical features, his handwriting by the way he is seated, by the style of his walking. They are psycho-quacks. Psychology is a science and psychologist is a scientist. Science is a body of verifiable knowledge based on observation and experimentation. Scientists do not take things for granted; they observe, investigate and find truth by themselves. Science begins with observation. The fundamental principle of science is to seek facts rather than depend upon authority or sheer speculation. Scientist begins with questions, looks for relevant data and observes under controlled conditions. He is not trying to prove something; he is testing something; he is impartial and objective; he is intellectually honest and open-minded.

Psychology was once a branch of philosophy. It was defined as a study of soul; then as a study of mind (mental philosophy) and later as a study of consciousness and now as a study of behaviour.

Subfields

Psychology is a collection of several subfields. Some psychologists employ basic research (development of theories) ; Some applied research (testing theories) some provide professional services (teaching, counseling and the like). Basic Research is often employed by Biological Psychologists (focus : links between brain and mind), Developmental Psychologists (focus : growth and development from birth), Cognitive psychologists (focus : how we perceive.. Imagine think, reason and solve problems) and Personality Psychologists (focus : how we perceive influence one another). Applied Research is employed by I/o (Industrial / Organizational Psychologists) and Educational Psychologists. Clinical Psychologists study and assess troubled people: they administer and interpret tests, provide psychotherapy and mental health programmes. They conduct both basic and applied research. Psychiatrists are medical doctors; they prescribe drugs or other methods to treat physical causes of psychological disorders.

A theory is a statement that establishes a cause – effect relationship between factors (variables). A Psychological theory is an explanation through a set of criteria that predicts behaviours,

Behaviour

Behaviour is your response to a situation with which you are confronted. Behaviour may be internal (implicit, covert) or external (explicit, overt). Any behaviour which can be observed, interpreted and evaluated is external - physical movements, gestures and facial expressions, the way we walk, the way we talk and the like behaviours. Internal behaviour refers to our thoughts and feelings which cannot be observed directly. Action is external; Motive is internal. For every action there is a corresponding motive. No action is motiveless. There may be different motives which generate the same action. A motive may cause different

actions. Research studies focus more on internal behaviours than on external ones. Psychologists who attempt to modify or refine external behaviour must investigate and identify the corresponding internal behaviour. Then only their attempts will be effective.

Psychologists view human behaviour as a result of 'inside' forces or 'outside' forces. Inside forces refer to needs, wants, desires, interests, attitudes, feelings and the like. Outside forces refer to attractive or disturbing aspects of the situation, attitudes and expectations of others, social approval or rejection, rewards, dangers, threats and so forth.

Domains of Behaviour

Psychologists identify three domains of behaviour :

- Cognitive domain (thinking - intellectual activities)
- Affective domain (feelings, emotions, attitudes and the like)
- Psychomotor domain (acting or doing, motor activities, - previously called conative domain)

Approaches to Behaviour

There are different approaches to study and interpret human behaviour. Neurobiological approach focusses on the central nervous system (According to Biological Psychologists, any thing psychological is basically biological, „Without your body you are nobody“). Behaviouristic psychologists, (Behaviour means external behaviour which can be observed) believe in 'shaping' behaviour by training. Cognitive approach focusses on our thought processes - sensation, perception, imagination, thinking, reasoning and problem solving. Psycho - analytic approach emphasizes the role of "the unconscious mind" in the study of behaviour (Freudean approach to human behaviour). Humanistic approach has soft corner for the human being. It focusses on current motives and drives.

It gives least importance to genetic influence, historical roots or the unconscious motives.

Neurobiological Approach:

This is the approach of physicians, medical scientists and biological scientists. The human brain (the central nervous system) is the most sophisticated computer system. Psychologists who employ neurobiological approach to study human behaviour try to identify a part or a point in the central nervous system especially in the brain for any human behaviour to be associated with. For any change in that behaviour (appearance or disappearance, improvement or decrease) the particular part or point is to be treated through medicine or exercise; for example the role played by temporal lobe in memory (through memory trace); the role played by hypothalamus in emotion and so on. However this approach is not in a position to change human behaviour completely in several situations.

Behaviouristic Approach:

Behaviourists mean external behaviour when they use the term, 'Behaviour'. According to them only those behaviours which can be seen or observed by others are verifiable and hence they only constitute the study of psychology. They believe in conditioning – classical, instrumental.

They believe in 'shaping' behaviour as advocated by Skinner. They advocate intensive training and physical occupation (rigorous physical exercises) as modes of modification of behaviour. Some psychologists call it a 'black box' approach to human behaviour since it does not take into account what goes on 'inside the organism' (human mind), which, according to them, is largely responsible for behaviour.

Cognitive Approach:

The focus of cognitive psychologist is entirely on cognitive processes like perception, imagination, thinking and reasoning. In addition to those processes behaviour is caused by affective processes (feelings, emotions, drives and urges) too. Hence any approach to study human behaviour entirely on cognition is not likely to be effective.

Psycholo-Analysis:

Freud and his followers highlighted the role of 'the unconscious mind' in human behaviour. We do agree that there are behaviours which are caused by unconscious impulses. But we cannot attribute all behaviour to the unconscious. Further only psychiatrists will be in a position to identify the unconscious motive or drive which is instrumental to a particular behaviour. Psycholo-analysis is theoretically interesting but, in practice, extremely difficult.

Humanistic Approach:

Humanistic psychologists have 'soft corner' for human beings. Freudean observation is: Man is basically bad driven by inhuman motives; he is to be sublimated and refined. Humanistic psychologists are of the opinion: Man is basically good; it is the environment that makes or mars him. Their focus is on the current motives and drives – what has happened right here, right now. Their approach is also called 'here and now' approach. They give least importance to genetic influence, historical roots or the unconscious motives. Counsellors of the day employ humanistic approach to study and modify human behaviour.

Finale:

Modern approach is integrated in nature, a judicious mixture of the most appropriate ones depending upon the nature of the person, the nature of the problem, the nature of the circumstances and such other related factors. These approaches are not contradictory but complementary.