

SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR TEACHERS EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Nigeria, educational psychology is faced with the challenge of providing knowledge and services that contribute to national development. A teacher must know the growth and development of the child and his requirements at different levels. Educational psychology helps the teacher to study the ability, interests, intelligence, needs and adopt different techniques of teaching for effective communication. This paper examines the importance of educational psychology in teachers' education and national development in Nigeria. The meaning of educational psychology, the scope of educational psychology. Teachers' Education and National Development in Nigeria were highlighted. And recommendations were made for effective implementation of educational psychology for teachers' education programmes.

Keywords: Education, Psychology, Teachers' Education, Development, Behaviour

National development may be described as the continuous economic, political, and technological improvement of a nation, culminating in improved standard of living of its citizens. Nigeria is a nation well-endowed with enormous natural and human resources yet; Abang, May-Chiun, and Maw, (2009) reported that more than 50% her population live in poverty with corruption and poor infrastructure as the main obstacles for future sustainable development. From the academic platform, various ideas and contributions on ways to achieve Nigeria's national development goals have been brought to the fore by different disciplines in the sciences, arts and the social sciences; however, this paper emphasizes the relevance of educational psychology to national development in Nigeria.

For years, teacher educators have written about the purposes, aims, and goals of educational psychology and have stressed the relevance of the field for the practice of teaching and learning (Alexander 2004; Berliner 1993; Brophy 1974; Woolfolk Hoy 2000). However, as Sternberg (1996) noted, educational psychologists seem to be having more and more trouble explaining to educators what they do and why educators should care. It becomes obvious to note that educational psychology is the life wire of all the educational programmes as education is the bedrock of national development.

Meaning of Educational Psychology

Educational psychology is a combination of two words, "education "and "psychology". Education may be seen as the attempt to shape or modify behaviour of an individual with a view of equipping him or her with desirable skills, habits and attitudes to adequately adjust to the communal life and contribute effectively to its growth and preservation (Upadhyya & Singh, 2008). The Institution which is specifically charged with this responsibly is the school. The word psychology is derived from Greek psyche' (mind, soul or spirit) and 'logos' (discourse or study). Literally, then, psychology is the 'study of the mind'. In simple terms \ Psychology can be defined as the science of mind and behavior (Nairne, 2009). It concerns itself with how and why organisms do what they do. Why birds sing; why some insects fly and not; others; why plants transpire; why children learn and so on. All these are behaviours and psychology is the science that studies them. It is the science that seeks to understand behaviour and mental processes and applies that understanding in the service of human welfare.

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior. It is a scientific study because scientific observation is objective, systematic and repeatable. Psychologists study such phenomena as perception, cognition, emotion, personality, behavior and interpersonal relationships. Some, especially depth psychologists, also study the unconscious mind. Psychological knowledge is applied to various spheres of human

activity, including issues related to everyday life—such as family, education and employment—and to the treatment of mental health problems. Psychologists attempt to understand the role of mental functions in individual and social behavior, while also exploring the underlying physiological and neurological processes. Psychology includes many sub-fields of study and applications concerned with such areas as human development, sports, health, industry, media and law. Psychology incorporates research from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. A person who studied or practiced psychology is called a psychologist.

The term behaviour includes all the motor activities (like walking, swimming, dancing etc.), cognitive activities (like thinking, reasoning, imagining etc.), and affective activities (like feeling happy, sad, angry etc.). It also includes not only the conscious behaviour and activities of the human mind but also the subconscious and unconscious. Consequently, it covers not only the overt behaviour but also the covert behaviour involving all the inner experiences and mental processes. It is not limited to the study of human behaviour. The behaviour of animals, insects, birds and plants is also covered in psychology. In a nutshell the term behaviour refers to the entire life activities and experiences of all the living organisms.

The modification of behaviour or learning itself entails behavioural change. In order to do this effectively the knowledge of the science of behaviour and mental processes become imperative. Thus, educational Psychology or Psychology of education is an important aspect of teacher education. Educational psychology is one of the branches of applied Psychology which is an attempt to apply the knowledge of Psychology to the field of education. It is the application of psychological principles and techniques to human behavior in educational situations. Educational psychology emphasizes how human beings learn in educational settings, the effectiveness of educational interventions, the psychology of teaching, and social psychology of schools as organizations. It focuses on a wide range of specialties within educational studies, including instructional design, educational technology, curriculum development, organizational learning, special education and classroom management.

The Scope of Educational Psychology

The scope of educational psychology is quite extensive. It can be expanded into 5 broad areas:

1. Human Growth and Development

In order to get people to learn, it is necessary to understand their capabilities, what they already know, how they think, etc. The various facets of human development - physical, intellectual, linguistic, moral, social etc. are of great interest. Besides, the

authors do know that people are differently endowed and how their environments have made them different. Of special interest are the environmental factors that have been very beneficial in development.

2. Learning and Instruction

Educational Psychology is concerned with the general nature of the learning process, the factors that influence learning, how and when different types of materials are learnt. Do people learn skills? Of particular concern is how to ensure that knowledge acquired in school is transferred to life outside school not just immediately it is learnt but several years after the students have left school.

3. Personality and Adjustment

Educational Psychology is interested in how people develop and maintain healthy personalities and attitudes especially students and teachers. Social relationships and how students adjust to the school situation make friends and interact with everyone in the educational setting as well as character formation.

4. Psychological Measurement

Educational psychology is interested in measuring those psychological characteristics on which individuals are at variance e.g. intelligence, learning ability, and aptitude and in the applications of the results of the measurements to enhance learning and development.

5. Research, Techniques and Methods

The scientific study of educational problems and practices are of interest to Educational Psychologists. The implementation of research findings and techniques in the classroom settings is also of primary importance. Research interest is also focused on how to find.

The content of Educational Psychology covers many other areas of Psychology. These are:

- i. Developmental Psychology
- ii. Experimental Psychology
- iii. Social Psychology
- iv. Abnormal Psychology
- v. Clinical Psychology
- vi. Genetic Psychology
- vii. Psychometrics

Educational Psychology is thus the application of the knowledge gained from these areas to solve educational problems. It is the application of Psychological principles, techniques and other resources of Psychology to the solution of educational problems confronting the teacher as he attempts to direct the process of learning and growth of the child towards the objectives set by the teacher, the school and the society.

Teachers' Education and National Development in Nigeria

Education is a tool for Nation building. Teachers are the drivers of education in all spheres of life, be it capacity building, training and retraining programme in all manners of learning-teachers take the front stage. It is therefore very important to take teachers' education and breeding of teachers very seriously. It is the teachers' education that is assigned the task of producing and modeling the teachers for nursery, primary and secondary education. Education of teachers is not only responsible for the improvement of school education but also for preparing well qualified teachers who are professionally competent, committed, resourceful confident and reproductive to meet the demand of the national development (Okonkwo & Udeze, 2012).

Teacher education in Nigeria is handled by Colleges of Education, Faculties of Education, School of Post-Graduate Studies, Institutes of Education, National Teacher's Institute, and Schools of Education in Polytechnics. Teacher education in Nigeria is under the supervision and control of governmental organizations. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has responsibility for teacher education in Nigeria with respect to Colleges of Education while the universities are under the National Universities commission (NUC). They lay down minimum standards for all teacher education and accredit their certificates and other academic awards (Menyaga & Mohammed, 2014).

Educational psychology is taught as a foundation course in most teacher education programs, and at least one course on the psychology of human learning is typically required for teacher certification by most states. Typically, in most colleges and universities teacher education majors take a course or courses in the psychology of learning, development, and instruction prior to taking their methods courses, practicum experiences, and to doing their actual teaching in schools. The pattern, sequencing, and methods of teaching educational psychology make implicit assumptions about student teachers' knowledge about learners and learning. An underlying rationale for the timing and format of educational psychology courses is - that teacher education majors need the basic factual information and conceptual knowledge of the psychology of learning, development, and instruction to be able to apply this knowledge in their clinical teaching experiences, in their methods courses,

and, eventually, in their classroom teaching. The teaching of educational psychology as a foundation in teacher education has rested on certain classic but typically, unquestioned, psychological assumptions about the learning and the transfer of learning of the prospective student teacher to teaching.

An important beginning question is how to think about student teachers' knowledge of the principles and theories of learning and development that define much of the domain of knowledge in educational psychology that is relevant to student teachers. Such knowledge is to what comprises most of the texts currently used in educational psychology courses for teachers. It includes what Shulman, (1987) has referred to as knowledge of learners and their characteristics-as well as aspects of what he has identified as pedagogical content knowledge: The conceptual and procedural knowledge that students bring to the learning of a topic, the misconceptions they may have developed, and the stages of understanding that they are likely to pass through in moving from a state of having little understanding of the topic to mastery of it. It also includes knowledge of techniques for assessing students' understandings and diagnosing their misconceptions (Peterson, 1988). The above knowledge clearly concerns the psychology of learning even though it is embedded within a specific subject or content area. Relevant knowledge also includes teachers' content-specific cognitional knowledge or student teachers' awareness of the mental processes or cognitions by which learners acquire subject-specific knowledge through classroom learning.

The Relevance of Educational Psychology in Teacher Education Programs

The contribution of educational psychology to the theory and practice of education is rich and varied. The knowledge of educational psychology is important as it provides teachers with some basic skills and guidelines to solve the problems of teaching- learning process. The knowledge of Educational Psychology has a great relevance for the teacher because it helps the teacher to realize his objective of effective teaching and educating the pupils properly. There are three focal points of education. These are: the learner, the learning process and the learning situation (Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup, 2008). The learner or the child is the first concern of the teacher. In order to know the child, the teacher must understand the psychology of the child's growth and development, including his environment and if possible, his heredity. Again, the learner and the learning process are inter-related.

Educational Psychology tells how the learning process goes on, hence, the utility of the knowledge of Educational Psychology for a teacher. There is the learning situation which the teacher must take into consideration. This includes the school, the class-room environment, the objectives to be achieved, and parental

expectations and so on. These focal points of education demand that the knowledge of Educational Psychology is essential for a teacher (Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2006). Some of the significances of educational psychology in teacher education are itemized

below:

- 1, The teacher who knows psychology can make his teaching very successful while keeping in view innate nature of the child. The child has got natural urges, instincts, potentialities and propensities. These innate qualities are the "Prime movers" of his behaviour.
2. It also helps the teacher in understanding the physiological and psychological basis of behaviour, i.e. nervous system, glands, instincts, emotions, sentiments, motives, play, intelligence, heredity and environment etc.
3. It helps the teacher in giving guidance to the pupils by having an understanding of interests, abilities, aptitudes, achievements, problems, educational and vocational plans of the pupils.
4. It helps the teacher in knowing the unconscious mind of the students and plays very important role in the development of the personality of the individual.
5. It helps the teacher to know about himself. He learns the psychology of being a teacher and acquaints himself with the traits of a successful teacher.
6. Children pass through different stages of development at infancy, childhood and adolescence. These developmental stages have their own characteristics. If the prospective teacher knows the characteristics emerging at different stages of development, he can utilize these characteristics in imparting instruction and moulding their behaviour according to the specified goals of education.
7. No two individuals are alike. The teacher with the knowledge of this kind of individual differences may adjust his teaching to the needs and requirements of the class and thus may be helpful in creating conducive environment in the schools where the students can develop their inherent potentialities to the maximum.

8. The knowledge of educational psychology provides a teacher the knowledge of learning process in general and problems of classroom learning in particular i.e. understand the Nature of Classroom Learning.
9. The teacher by the knowledge of educational psychology can understand the principles of learning and various approaches to the learning process, problems of learning and their remedial measures and also about factors affecting and guidance for effective learning.
10. Educational psychology gives the teacher knowledge of appropriate teaching methods. It helps in developing new strategies of teaching. It also provides the knowledge of different approaches evolved to tackle the problems of teaching at different age levels.
11. By studying educational psychology, the teacher may understand the causes of the Problems of the children which occur at different age levels and can successfully solve them.
12. By studying educational Psychology, the teacher will know various factors which are responsible for mental ill health and maladjustment and can successfully help in Central hygiene.
13. Psychological tools help the teacher to assess the learning outcome of the students and also to evaluate his teaching methods for required modification.
14. Psychological principles are also used in formulating curriculum for different stages. Needs of the students, their developmental characteristics, learning patterns and needs of the society all are to be included in curriculum construction.
15. Educational psychology helps in developing tools and devices for the measurement of various variables which influence the behaviour and performance of students.
16. The teacher training programme aims to develop positive attitude towards teaching profession and provides the prospective teachers with the necessary competencies to meet the classroom challenges. Training colleges provide the knowledge of organizing the subject matter in a sequential order to suit the needs of the class. The trainees are also acquainted with the techniques of motivating children for learning.

17. Educational psychology helps the teacher to recognize the importance of social behavior and group dynamics in classroom teaching learning.
18. With the knowledge of educational psychology teacher utilizes the importance of indirect discipline rather than corporal punishment. It tells the teacher that discipline should be self-discipline, dynamic, positive and constructive through participation in purposeful activity. Pleasure and pain, reward and punishment, praise etc., should be judiciously used. If the teacher is unaware of the principles of educational psychology he may be unable to solve the problems of his students and thereby fail to induce order and discipline among them.
19. Former autocratic method of administration in school and class has been changed by democratic way of life wherein the teachers and administrators are more democratic, cooperative and sympathetic and problems of administration solved by mutual discussion.
20. Educational psychology has helped the teachers to make use of various types as audio visual aids in classroom teaching so as to make the concept clearer, definite and learning to last longer.
21. The knowledge of psychology is helpful to the teacher in preparing time-table. He should keep in main the relative Importance and toughness of different subjects and level and index of fatigue of the students.
22. Activity-centred teaching, discussion method, micro-teaching etc., are some innovative ideas adopted to improve the teaching learning process.
23. Activities like debate, drama, games are given due importance along with theoretical subjects for the harmonious development of the personality of children.
24. Educational psychology has helped in planning of text books according to the intellectual development of children, their needs and interests at different age levels.

Undoubtedly the study of educational psychology may be very helpful to equip our prospective teachers with necessary skills to deal with classroom teaching and learning problems.

Conclusion

Teachers are the engine room and life wire of the educational sector which is the heart of national development. They are professionally responsible for the implementation of educational programmes. In order to do this effectively the knowledge of the science of behaviour and mental processes become imperative. Educational Psychology is an important aspect of teacher education. Educational psychology is one of the branches of applied Psychology which is an attempt to apply the knowledge of Psychology to the field of education. It is the application of psychological principles and techniques to human behavior in educational situations, Based on this justification, this paper reviewed the significances of educational psychology in teachers' education and national development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This paper recommends the following to improve teachers' education for national development in Nigeria:

1. National University Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should put more emphasis on educational psychology during the accreditations of teachers' education programmes.
2. Lecturers handling educational psychology courses in the colleges of education must have the minimum qualification of Master Degree and universities must have Ph.D. in educational psychology. Appointment of the academic staff for teachers' education programme should not by any means be politicized or compromised.
3. Based on the numerous significances of educational psychology to teachers, the management and academic staff should ensure proper implementation of educational psychology courses in teachers' education programme.
4. Student teachers should be widely exposed to all aspects of educational psychology which equip them with psychological theories and principles for effective management of learning environments.

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