

ess as it affects the schools has recently received some attention. Most schoolmen recognize that their programs are affected by the decisions of persons who occupy positions in the community, state or national power system. Although we have considerable knowledge of the formal governmental decision-making process, we have just begun to investigate the process in the less formalized power systems which function throughout the society. Studies of the decision-making processes affecting the educational program are certain to provide important findings. Among these may be the conditions under which public opinion is mobilized to modify or overthrow the decision-making system of a community.

The current situations in many American communities provide oppor-

tunities for the analysis of the local decision-making process with regard to segregation or integration of the schools. If conditions permit, sociologists are likely to focus considerable research attention on this process in the immediate future. The results of such studies should add much to our understanding of power, authority and public opinion as they operate in the school decision-making arena.

This brief discussion has called attention to only a few of the areas in which sociology and some related aspects of social psychology have and are likely to contribute to our understanding of the educative process. Others could be mentioned, but these should indicate the range of social phenomena in education which are the objects of sociological investigation.

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The Relevancy of Educational Psychology

This article indicates two important contributions which educational psychology, as a body of information and as an arena of research activity, can make to education.

THE RELEVANCY of an applied area depends in part upon the definition of the process, institution, or event to which it is applied. The contribution that can be made by *educational* psychology is partially a function of the particular meaning invested in "education." This statement is not merely the

usual innocuous preface to an extended discussion. Indeed, it is our major thesis. Too many teachers and administrators have thought of educational psychology as consisting only of an ordered catalogue of educational prescriptions, which, together with those provided by the other foundational

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fields in education, "tell" the teacher "how to teach" and the administrator "how to administer." The fallacy lies not only in the much too complimentary respect for the status of our knowledge in these areas but, more fundamentally, in the conception of education as a collection of successful recipes—the teacher or administrator is a person who has been armed with a bag-of-tricks into which he reaches for a decision regarding any given specific professional problem. Although this unfortunate orientation becomes an increasingly less frequent one, it still exists and may be partially attributable to the turn-of-the-century efforts to make education "scientific" by attempting to make it merely more *factual*.⁽¹⁾

If one, however, thinks of the nature of the educator's role in another way, educational psychology, and education generally, become more powerful, exciting and rigorous. The conception we have in mind can be described by beginning with a rather coarse but generally acceptable definition of the educator's role: to help the learner change his behavior in specified desirable directions. Although the definition is too ambiguous for detailed analysis, it serves to point out the two basic factors involved: a *process* ("behavior change") and a *criterion* ("specified desirable directions"). Suppose that the educator has clearly specified what he means by "desirable" behavior changes in the form of operationally stated educational goals.⁽²⁾ It appears, now, that the focal task for the teach-

er is to so interact with his pupils, and to so arrange the conditions and materials, that these pupils will change in the hoped-for ways. Put in these terms, the teacher's task can be seen as one of manipulating the learning situation in such a way that the *predicted* behavior changes actually do occur. If, at this point, the educational psychologist could say that we now know which manipulations will produce the desired changes, no problem would exist—we have only to apply the correct recipe. However, educational psychology cannot do this. Any particular combination of teacher-pupil-class-group-community-available materials, etc., is somewhat different from any other combination. There is no general prescription that can be considered to be clearly valid for particular cases. The teacher, then, *must be an active, continuous inquirer into the validity of his own procedures*. As Corey puts it:

Most of the study of what should be kept in the schools and what should go and what should be added must be done in hundreds of thousands of classrooms and thousands of American communities. The studies must be understood by those who may have to change the way they do things as a result of the studies. Our schools cannot keep up with the life they are supposed to sustain and improve unless teachers, pupils, supervisors, administrators, and school patrons continuously examine what they are doing. Singly and in groups, they must use their imagination creatively and constructively to identify the practices that must be changed to meet the needs and demands of modern life, courageously to try out those practices that give better promise, and methodically and systematically gather evidence to test their worth.⁽³⁾

At the risk of belaboring the point, let us put it in somewhat different

form before considering the relevancy of educational psychology. The educator's decisions about methods, materials and curricular procedures should be thought of as *hypotheses* regarding the way in which the desired behavior changes can be brought about. These hypotheses must be *tested* continuously by inquiring into the degree to which the predicted behavior changes actually occurred. This view has been referred to elsewhere by the writer⁽⁴⁾ as "teaching behavior defined as the testing-of-hypotheses behavior." The crucial element is *tentativeness*; ideas and decisions about method and curriculum are to be held hypothetically, continuously tested, and continuously revised if necessary.

Contribution of Educational Psychology

Given this conception of the educator's role, how can educational psychology be brought to bear on it in helpful ways? The contribution can be broken down into two related categories. First, educational psychology, as a body of information and an arena of research activity, can help in the generation of the educational hypotheses. Intelligent hypotheses are not chosen randomly nor are they found full-blown. An intelligent hypothesizer thinks along the lines of the following model: "*On the basis of the best information now available to me, I hypothesize that this procedure will produce this result.*" To translate this into the context of education, we might say, for instance: "*On the basis of what I now know about individual differences and the reading process, I hypothesize that this kind of grouping-for-reading*

will lead to the kind of pupil progress in reading that I would like to bring about."

Educational psychology, as a source of information, contributes to the "on-the-basis-of-what-I-now-know" portion of the statement. It helps provide information on which to base hypotheses for particular purposes and particular children. The teacher or administrator who takes this point seriously will understand that one cannot merely "take a course in educational psychology," but that he must constantly keep informed about those developments in this area that are most relevant to his particular educational responsibilities. The reader may also note that this conception of the interaction between educational psychology and the teacher means that every teacher can *contribute to* educational psychology in the process of testing his hypotheses.

A second kind of contribution which educational psychology can make is that of helping teachers and administrators to acquire the attitudes and skills necessary to intelligent hypothesizing and the testing of hypotheses. Limitations of space preclude an explication of this. Generally, what is involved is learning such skills as how to interpret data intelligently, how to observe accurately, how to avoid common logical fallacies in making inferences, how to make adequate decisions regarding what data should be gathered, ways in which data can be gathered and recorded, etc.

Both of these contributions of educational psychology are shared by all the fields represented in this symposium. In the writer's view, this is the *raison d'être* of any field that purports

to be "foundational" in professional education. Educational psychology, of course, has many additional and somewhat unique values for the educator. We have chosen to overlook those in this discussion since they are covered comprehensively and in detail in the available published literature. Those who are interested are invited to examine the published reports of a committee organized by the Executive Committee of the National Society of College Teachers of Education. The first report ⁽⁵⁾ discussed the ways in which educational psychology relates to curriculum development; the second ⁽⁶⁾ considers the nature of educational psychology and its general place in teacher education; the third ⁽⁷⁾ gives detailed attention to the ways in which specific areas of educational psychology can be helpful to the prospective teacher; the last report ⁽⁸⁾ describes present practices and developments in the teaching of educational psychology.

It is appropriate, in this case, that the final comment should be cautionary as well as benedictory. The writer has stated his position as though there are no responsible competing alternatives to it. Any dogmatic flavor in the statement is more a consequence of brevity than of intent. Many persons will hold that such a conception of education as we have presented here is both impractical and not valuable. Our response would be that the orientation

is at least practical in the sense that many, many educators have learned to behave as inquirers; the orientation appears to be valuable in that where one finds such an educator he usually finds him to be valued by his colleagues, ego-involved in his profession, and able to criticize his procedures rationally. In short, such educators do exist and they appear to make the profession a better one by their membership in it.

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