John Carroll UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY QUESTIONAIRE

DIRECTIONS:
Please provide a brief paragraph for each question below. Use a separate sheet if needed. Mail or fax completed form back to the Office of Graduate Studies.

1. Describe your experiential and academic background.

2. Explain your interest in becoming a school psychologist.

3. What skills and attributes do you feel you could bring to the profession of school psychology?

4. What do you perceive to be the role(s) of the school psychologist?

Most of our school psychology students earn the M.Ed. in School Psychology enroute to obtaining school psychology certification. Please read the attached seminal article which presents one perspective on the relevancy of educational psychology and comment on the extent to which you embrace and/or reject this perspective.

Please mail or fax completed questionnaire to:
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The Relevancy of Educational Psychology

By Arthur P. Coladarci

From *Educational Leadership*, 1956, 13:489-492.
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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 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*. [48]

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. [51] It appears, now, that the focal task for the teacher 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. [17]

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 [12] 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.

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.

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. 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 [35] discussed the ways in which educational psychology relates to curriculum development; the second [4] considers the nature of educational psychology and its general place in teacher education; the third [36] give detailed attention to the ways in which specific areas of educational psychology can be helpful to the prospective teacher; the last report [37] 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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