Editorial

Core concepts in development; perennial issues in education

The two developmental and two educational papers in this issue examine contemporary pathways experienced by our youngest and our oldest citizens in Australian society and changing demands of professional practice, respectively. Reports of two major longitudinal studies in progress, one on early temperament and one on later resilience, explore core concepts within the life-span conceptual framework of our College. Commentaries on future training and on future contexts for employment in educational psychology revisit issues of training and competence in the profession at a time of workplace change.

Pathways, temperament, and resilience

The emerging metaphor of developmental pathways with cascading probabilities and with risks and protections—in which a risk factor for an individual in one context may be a protective factor in another person or another context—translates strongly into educational issues of intervention and susceptibility to positive support at all phases of development from childhood to aged adulthood. Longitudinal studies provide practitioners with contextually relevant rationales for developmentally-appropriate practice and intervention strategies.

Concepts of adaptive coping such as temperament and resilience underpin the literature on individual pathways in development. The construct of temperament is used as a functional tool in the Australian Temperament Study (ATP) of how children and their families progress towards adulthood. Ann Sanson and her colleagues challenge the well-known construct of "difficult" temperament and chart pathways towards internalising as well as externalising behaviours. At the other end of the life course, the ALSA construct of resilience gives insight into how well adults cope as they progress into later life. Mary Luszcz analyses functional maintenance of cognitive and psychosocial pathways.

The richness of longitudinal research is balanced by economic and other methodological compromises (e.g., choice of instruments to start and choice of informant to progress, reflecting beginning era and continuing resources, respectively). For example, after children in the ATP began to self-report behaviour problems, teachers ceased to provide reports. More broadly, there is a need for continuing caution about cultural variations in developmental paths across longitudinal studies, given possible methodological confounds about, for example, data coding.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0816512200027917 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Constructing practice in education

Professional practice is at the core of our heterogeneous membership, training histories, and employment settings. Postgraduate training and university-controlled supervision for registration are being consolidated at a time when the ideology of economic rationalism has attacked the previously dominant public service context of training, supervision, and employment. There is both vigour and turmoil in this situation.

"Change-contingent client creation", the fallout from educational restructuring, may benefit educational psychologists in private practice and in private schools. Both direct service and indirect system management in the government school sector, however, are under pressure. Directly, students with challenging behaviour move into maladaptive developmental paths that are maintained or worsened in the school context. Indirectly, teacher efficacy in coping with challenging behaviours is manifest in, for example, depressive behaviour and high attrition.

The two papers on educational psychology in this issue adopt alternative perspectives on professional practice, but essentially the same conclusion, at this historic juncture. Cuskelly and Gordon argue that graduate training in educational psychology provides a core of knowledge and skills that is relevant across a range of specialisations outside educational psychology as well as a range of domains outside school settings. Denholm and colleagues, in a CEDP-sponsored symposium, argue that future employment hinges on communicating and marketing these skills effectively in a new economy, not only to secure and strengthen practice in existing workplaces but also to explore and broaden the scope for practice to new contexts.

In the traditional school context, the educational psychologist operates within western notions of a school psychologist (with sociohistorical variations of the role in Australia and overseas). At times, the workplace has been rendered uncomfortable by the specialist blurring within the professional network of counsellors, guidance officers, and school psychologists. How does it matter that some colleagues are not registrable as psychologists? Are similarities greater than differences?

A superficial assumption that teachers and teacher-based guidance and counselling professionals share with psychologists a knowledge-and-skill base in the areas of individual differences and developmental change processes is one that requires reflection. Certainly, educational psychologists have shared their expertise with teachers in training, but it is highly likely that such restricted sharing has achieved a broad understanding that orients the teacher to the developing child but may go little further.

It appears that application of psychology in the classroom has been most effective in "constructivising" post-Piagetian curriculum pedagogy. Two-way exchange between teacher educators and cognitive researchers has involved active and useful partnerships, and teachers have been willing to incorporate constructivism into the "new" discipline of educational practice that arose in the post-Dawkins shift of teacher training into the universities. Despite the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0816512200027917 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cognitive foundations of the constructivist curriculum, the bio- and psycho-social foundations have tended to remain obscure in education. There is relatively less focus on individual differences in learning and instruction (e.g., how to teach reading to an "unconstructed" reader). The literature on functional academics tends to be specific to special education.

Application of psychology has been least effective in "deconstructing" empirically unsound or unproven policy initiatives and in promoting developmentally desirable policy directions. The papers in this issue make it clear that lack of influence on policy making rather than lack of interest in or contribution to decisions has been the reason. Policy makers in educational administration have not consulted with educational psychologists. Hence, there is little exchange between education and psychology, and the challenge is how to change this tendency to ignore "evidence-based" input to policy formulation and implementation.

Distorted exchanges have characterised application of psychology to development and behaviour in the classroom. This situation, in one sense, is like an alien fetal growth of psychology that nauseates and threatens the education host. The classroom is disputed territory, presumed alien to the psychologist; indeed, effective consultation is one of the skills now central to postgraduate training, in order to engage teachers and school community in change processes. There is a long history during which psychologists have been marginalised and supplanted by (a) educational consultants with credibility rather than credentials (To be competitive, the psychological practitioner has to clearly establish social validity for the specific school setting in the language of the educational policy initiative as well as to explicitly and positively promote the discipline-based benefits of a psychological consultant. Certainly, clients may be prompted about "caveat emptor" issues, problems in selective or pre-emptive justification in the literature, and possibilities beyond pragmatic and "grounded" offerings, but the psychologist's vigilance in these matters of ethical practice must be tempered by recognition that consultancy is a workplace activity rather than a setting for instruction about the workability of a project.); (b) educational classroom packages that are attention-getting and motivating potential to users but have weak outcomes and generalisation; and (c) educational "anti-psychology" ideologies (e.g., the 1980s' mechanistic demonising of behaviourism: better to be unskilled than to learn creative manipulation of behaviour; the 1990s' sociological discourse analysis of hyperactivity: "a figment of postmodernism"). Yet teachers often cite high workload and poor fit of the student to their classroom as reasons for exiting students with problems empirically capable of in-class resolution.

Teacher and teacher-based guidance personnel may be informed by their introduction to psychological science in their dealings with the student as a person with developmental needs for (a) behaviour management, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills; and (b) for specialist learning support. However, their capacity to apply systematic psychological methodologies

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0816512200027917 Published online by Cambridge University Press

without specialist support has yet to be established. Indeed, psychological instruction in undergraduate teacher preparation and in inservice training appears in need of radical enhancement at a time when—despite massive advances in the psychological practice base—teacher training curricula are curtailing psychological input and "designers" of educational curriculum are virtually unaware of applications of psychology in education. Although consultation and collaboration between educators and educational psychologists are clearly a challenge, the CEDP practitioner may be able to convert this distorted exchange into a viable workplace setting for direct and indirect servicing.

Members practicing in this college cross boundaries between psychology and school-context education and between schools and other institutional contexts (e.g., business, welfare). The core of our professional skills is the developmental and educational skills and knowledge that apply across those territories. As borders shift, the processes of change and upheaval may become the focus of new elements of practice.

Errata

AEDP, 15 (1), pp. 55, two corrections

1. Table 5, ANOVA section
   Victims (weekly) vs. other victims $F = 2.03$, $p > .05$, not $p < .05$
2. Discussion, line 1

"Amount of bullying experienced", not "Amount of bullying experimented"

Fiona Bryer
Editor

Australasian Human Development Association (AHDA) Conference

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Sydney will host the 11th AHDA conference on July 7–10, 1999 in the new Faculty of Education Building, University of Sydney. Santa Sophia College provides accommodation. Abstracts are required by 26th February, 1999. Keynote addresses will be given by Giyoo Hatano, Tokyo Professor of Educational Psychology and by Dr Judy Cashmore, NSW Child Protection Council.

Student awards for posters are available: Up to five awards will be made for poster submissions. Students wishing to be considered must submit a full draft of their poster (1,500 words) in addition to the abstract, by 21st May, 1999.

Registration for ADHA members costs $210 (non-AHDA $260; students $110). Membership fees for a 2-year period are AUD$50 (student = AUD$20) for the period May 1, 1998 to April 30, 2000. Application and a cheque or money order, payable to the "Australasian Human Development Association Incorporated", can be sent via snail mail to Dr Denise Chalmers (AHDA Secretary), Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI), University of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld 4072.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0816512200027917 Published online by Cambridge University Press