RESEARCH ARTICLE

Study on some critical issues of educational psychology

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Doi Serial https://doi.org/10.56334/sei/8.7.17

Keywords Grammar Teaching, Some critical issues, educational psychology

Abstract

Critical directions in contemporary educational psychology are outlined, covering issues such as learning, intelligence, motivation, `self esteem`, assessment and research methods. Implications for educational psychologists are also drawn, particularly for issues of disabilities and inclusion. The field of educational psychology is still in many ways far from the critical project in psychology, but there are interesting voices of critical work in a number of fields that could benefit from more juxtaposition and dialogue. The critical project in educational psychology could also benefit from more attention to deconstructing discourses about individuals, their abilities and motivation, and from more attention to cultural/historical practices that are part of educational psychology`s normalizing gaze in education.

Citation

Grigoryevich Y.F. (2025). Study on some critical issues of educational psychology. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(7), 150-159; doi:10.56352/sei/8.7.17. https://imcra-az.org/archive/365-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-7-volviii-2025.html

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Received: 12.02.2025 | Accepted: 07.03.2025 | Published: 01.06.2025 (available online)

Introduction

Traditionally, educational psychology has sometimes been a bewildered traveler at the crossroads of Psychology and Education. Educational psychology can be defined as any area of education which is informed by psychological theories or techniques. At its broadest outlines, this field encompasses a number of areas related to student learning and individual difference considered to be crucial knowledge for teachers in training requiring more in-depth knowledge for managing difficult students or for their own professional development. There is a focus on the normative learner, with a tendency to position students with `special educational needs` as exceptions to the norm. Professional educational psychologists (or school psychologists, in some countries) tend to be employed by education authorities and to work with students who have been identified as having learning or behavioural difficulties in the school system. Such psychologists receive postgraduate training in educational psychology with more emphasis on dealing with disabilities. Professional educational psychology (cf. Thomas, 1992) includes applications of research in educational psychology but also overlaps with clinical fields of child and adolescent psychology. Teachers who undergo further postgraduate training in special education would also receive grounding in these issues, but with specific emphasis on applying knowledge to the classroom.

The influence of the parent discipline can be seen throughout educational psychology, particularly in the emphasis on psychology as a `science`. Many contemporary textbooks lean heavily upon `scientific method`, especially experimentation and objectivity (e.g., Child, 1993; McCormick and Pressley, 1997). Thomas (1992, p. 52), writing critically of British practice, argued that professional educational psychologists `are steeped in the view of themselves as applied scientists`. The field may be marked by some fears of being `not scientific enough` to count as a real branch of psychology, creating tensions regarding the status of the field (see also Swann, 1985).

Within education, educational psychology has sometimes been seen as an atavism, a reminder of earlier times and

values. During the 1960s and early 1970s the debates between `behaviorism` and more humanistic views of learning and emotion left their scars on the visage of the field. Today some tertiary education programs in New Zealand and Australia have no courses titled `Educational Psychology`; instead they offer similar material under more general titles such as `social contexts of learning`.

Critical Foundations for Educational Psychology

In general terms, the field of educational psychology is in many ways one of the furthest from the critical project in psychology mooted by overviews such as provided by Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine (1984) or Parker and Shotter (1990). There has been a longstanding focus on the individual as the source of problems in the classroom, since the under-achieving child was put under scrutiny by Cyril Burt, a founder of psychological services for education in England (Wooldridge, 1997). In my view, a more critical educational psychology would provide more possibilities for innovative practice by deconstructing notions such as normality, competence and coping. Important foundational texts would include Foucault`s (1977) work on discourses involved in the history of western schooling, and Walkerdine`s (1984) use of Foucauldian analysis to critique `child-centred` discourses in modern pedagogy (see also Burman, 1994).

The critique of individualism in psychology (e.g., Sampson, 1983) can be applied par excellence to educational psychology, which has so often spotlighted the struggling individual in the classroom, whether an unmotivated learner or a child with `brain damage`. Earlier this century such a child might be labeled as deviant, while in more recent times there have been attempts to ensure that some children get extra help. This individualist bias led in the past to an unbalanced emphasis on individuals as causal agents of their problems.

Contemporary critical work has begun to move away from the intense focus on the individual, acknowledging that such a focus misses not only the interactions amongst people in a group, but the complexities of lived culture and language. A critical educational psychology informed by a more collective focus should be reflexive about its progressivism and normalizing tendencies. Critiques of western views of development by indigenous scholars who question the focus on the individual are emerging in the Pacific (see Tupuola`s, 1998, critique of western ideas about adolescent women). My own institution has begun to consider seriously the indigenous Maori perspectives on human learning and development. These are oppositional to views of the individual based on Cartesian dualisms of mind and body. A Maori view of human existence encompasses corporeal and spiritual aspects of the whole family or tribal group, including both the living and the dead (see Pere, 1997).

This work could go further, in interrogating the facile dichotomy often assumed between hereditary and environmental factors (`nature/nurture`) which contribute to individual differences. For example, there are deconstructive possibilities for considering competence as something beyond the internalised abilities of individuals. Contributing forces appear different when the lens is widened to take in a larger group of people, and considering those influences that are not so readily visible, such as influences of parents (even imagined/ previously voiced expectations of long gone caregivers) and the impact of particular government policies about delivery of the curriculum or of welfare benefits to sole parents. A critical educational psychology informed by other post structural questioning about the individual self in western culture (e.g., Marsella, DeVos and Hsu, 1985) must also put at the forefront a consideration of language and social practices that create multiple possibilities for subject-positionings in the classroom and beyond.

Given the diversity of topics in the field of educational psychology, it is worth considering each separately, to give at least a Cook`s tour of some critical possibilities. There are several broad areas covered by educational psychology: learning, intelligence/abilities, education for special needs, motivation (with some mention of `self esteem` and personality issues), educational assessment and empirical research methods. There are developmental aspects of many of the above fields, though developmental psychology is another complex sub-discipline of psychology.

Abilities and intelligence

Earlier this century there was more focus on describing individual differences amongst students, in order to help teachers to work with different students. Cyril Burt was influential not only for his studies of the heritability of intelligence, but for his typology of `backward children` (1946) which included the `lazy`, and the left-handed as well as the `dull` student. There has been a long history of critique of intelligence testing and its tendencies towards labeling of individuals (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Gould (1981) has written a sobering account of the nefarious activities of researchers determined to prove the heritability of intelligence.

Recent work on the `architecture` of intelligence has expanded from the focus of Spearman on a single gen-

eral factor of intelligence (thought to be largely hereditary) towards more complex models (e.g., Sternberg, 1985). One model that has become influential with educational psychologists in New Zealand and the US is Howard Gardner`s theory of `multiple intelligences` (Gardner, 1983). Gardner has expanded the idea of intelligence beyond the narrow versions favored within the traditional psychometric approaches to include linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

Though Gardner recognized the importance of cultural input in determining the value of one domain of competence, his seven intelligences are tied to an unproblematic `biological` basis.

MI [Multiple Intelligence] theory is framed in light of the biological origins of each problem-solving skill. Only those skills that are universal to the human species are treated. Even so, the biological proclivity to participate in a particular form of problem solving must also be coupled with the cultural nurturing of that domain.` (Gardner and Walters, 1993, p. 16).

The focus on culture seems undercut here by the search for a `universal` underpinned by the `biological`. The dichotomy of the social and biological has been subject to critique for some time (see, e.g., Riley, 1983). A critical educational psychology could be strengthened with a focus on multiple competencies if this were extended by a critique of nature/nurture as a socially constructed dichotomy.

There are also strong normative concerns about the unfolding of each intelligence in Gardner`s approach, since the evidence for these is based on `knowledge about normal development` and `data about the evolution of cognition over the millennia` (Gardner and Walters, 1993, p. 16). What are not considered are the cultural processes that make some domains of endeavor (e.g., the chess players favored by studies of gifted children) higher in status or more indicative of a worthwhile talent than others. For example, much feminist work has considered the ways that mathematics is circumscribed as a domain of male rationality, even when activities of girls and boys may be similar (e.g., Walkerdine et al., 1989). Adding `bodily-kinesthetic` intelligence to a list alongside `logical-mathematical` intelligence does not necessarily make these two equal intelligences for determining future educational or career possibilities. While it is helpful that this model goes beyond narrow cognitive definitions of ability to consider a plurality of talents, many assumptions used by more conventional psychometric theories of intelligence have not been challenged in this work. The concept of multiple intelligences may unintentionally reinforce popular beliefs that intelligence(s) is inherited and immutable.

Given the moves towards widening views of abilities and intelligence in the past 15 years, it is worrying that many contemporary textbooks still make assumptions based on the idea that intelligence is a more or less fixed capacity in individuals, bounded by some biological or genetic capacity. In the fifth edition of a popular UK text, a chapter on `Intelligence` discussed ways to help teachers to be efficient: the detection and measurement of differences are important for the teacher. It would be disastrous for children if we did not quickly recognize their cognitive strengths and weaknesses, because the intellectually dull cannot, in general, cope with the same cognitive tasks as the intellectually bright of the same age...:` (Child, 1993, p. 206).

In this view, there are dull bodies and bright bodies, far from the multiplicities of the postmodern body. A more far-reaching analysis of human `ability` needs to take the deconstruction of the individual further, for example, in making moves towards Deleuze and Guattari`s (1988) idea of `bodies without organs`. The competence of a body in one setting or another does not need to be conceptualized in terms of an internal capacity rooted in biology (as intelligence, personality and other human characteristics are conventionally described). The multiplicities of movement, of skills, can be viewed as belonging to an order beyond the division of individual body and external environment. Instead, a competence such as `emotional stability` could be viewed as an event which occurs in a milieu which includes parts of various kinds, including hands, sound waves, electric lights, papers and pens, grey hair, pink cheeks, wooden surfaces. It would be this collection of various items together which seem to create a recognized performance of `competence`. It is difficult to imagine competence in this way, as something not connected intimately with an individual body. Part of the difficulty in such imagining is that our language is already formatted into subjects and objects, by individuals who take action and meet outcomes. Attempting to broaden language beyond the fixities of individual bodies with set quantities of ability could disrupt stereotypical interactions between students, teachers, parents and psychologists.

Learning

There are interesting moves within the field of `learning` that offer possibilities beyond the focus on individual learners. Learning has become the biggest area in educational psychology, since it encompasses many paradigms.

Approaches to research in learning have been described as a move from the `behaviourist/empiricist` to the `cognitive/rationalist`, with the recent addition of an approach more timely for the critical project, the `situative/pragmatist-sociohistoric` perspective (Greeno, Collins and Resnick, 1996, p. 16).

Research on metacognition, which refers to reflection on or strategic use of cognition, emerged later in the cognitive/rationalist era. When I began to question my `training` as a cognitive psychologist, metacognition was a breath of fresh air in the highly technical world of cognition (cf. Yussen and Bird, 1979). Instead of the view that some children were just born with bright or dull minds, metacognitive work opened up the new possibility that some students had more sophisticated strategies, techniques and management skills for organising and using their knowledge than other students. This has led to an entire field of work with children who have `learning problems` (perhaps better called `teaching problems`, to change the emphasis from the deficit of an individual learner). Such students have been found to benefit from specific instruction or reflection on particular learning strategies and techniques (for a review of research with science students see Mastropieri and Scruggs, 1992).

Much recent work within a developmental framework has also moved away from the Piagetian focus of earlier decades towards a now more fashionable Vygotskiian purview. Vygotsky differed from western developmental theorists in his attention to the social and cultural milieu in which all people, including the newborn, are immersed. Neo-Vygotskian work which takes the emphasis on collective, community understandings of information is Moll and Greenberg`s (1990) study of the transmission of knowledge in a Latin American community in Arizona. A literacy project began in a bilingual Spanish/English classroom, and unfolded into an exchange of information between school staff, researchers, and extended family members throughout the community. Students and their families began to set the agenda for the learning they wanted to document, using the languages of the community.

A more recent shift in learning studies, that of situative knowledge, offers further possibilities for considering learning as milieu, rather than as an internal change in a body. The situative approach has been described as viewing `knowledge as distributed among people and their environments, including the objects, artefacts, tools, books, and the communities of which they are a part` (Greeno et al., 1996, p. 17). An interesting example of situative knowledge is found in work on `distributed cognitions` among groups of students and teachers. In work also influenced by Vygotsky, Ann Brown and colleagues (see Brown, Ash, Rutherford, Nakagawa, Gordon and Campione, 1993) considered ways that groups of students share information in working together on tasks in human biology, tracking this through on-line conversations with the tutor and amongst students. A wider field of research on cooperative learning also centres on the functioning of learning outcomes for a group rather than dividing the learning by individuals (see Webb and Palincsar, 1996). This approach has exciting possibilities for moving away from a focus on the individual student as responsible for particular actions, based on his/her capacities. There is more scope for considering learning as a group outcome, in which bodies and other objects play their part. Though much of this work centres on the specific bodies, technologies and curriculum content of a particular learning setting, this could be broadened to consider a wider milieu framed by historically-shaped language and cultural practice.

Motivation

The field of motivation in educational psychology has a well-documented historical narrative. Graham and Weiner (1996) described the change from the `Mechanistic Period: 1930-1960`, which emphasised biological drives and processes, to a cognitive approach (1960-1970), in which the personality variable of achievement motivation became dominant, and finally to `Contemporary Motivation Research: 1970-1990`, centring on attributional approaches to motivation. At present, much research is broadly concerned with the reasoning processes involved in students` attributions about successful or poor performances. The field has branched into concerns beyond controlled testing towards more naturalistic, classroom-based contexts for tapping attributions and expectations. There has been work on widening the cultural context of motivational concerns beyond those of unmarked white, middle class students, in, for example, Sandra Graham`s (e.g., 1994) research with African-American students and teachers.

There are a number of problems with the focus on attributions as the dominant approach to motivation at present, given recent critiques of attribution research. Much of the research of the 1980s was based on written vignettes, which have been criticised for their lack of acknowledgement of textual effects (Parker and Shotter, 1990). The above-mentioned review by Greeno et al. (1996, p. 26) suggested that `Engaged Participation` might characterise motivation from a situative or sociohis-

torical position rather than the cognitive/rational approach of attribution theorists. This seems an intriguing possibility for a critical psychology of motivation. Unfortunately the studies listed in that review did not appear to be studies of motivation, but rather studies of learning influenced by such wider issues as identity and reflection in communities of learners. A major problem that has not been addressed is that motivation needs to be reconceptualised within a critical educational psychology.

Recent work on motivation is still fixed firmly on the individual, even if the context for the individual is considered more interactively than in the past. Part of the problem is that traditional psychological research has defined motivation as an inner property of the individual. This reinstates an uninterrupted dualism of inner self/outer context, which has been the subject of so much philosophical critique in recent times (e.g., Grosz, 1990). This is also a problematic issue for the study of `self esteem`.

The issue of self esteem is usually raised briefly in many educational psychology textbooks, within a section on motivation. There has been a fortunate move away from the psychometric tradition of `self esteem` scales. Contemporary work on self esteem has moved from unidimensional omnibus scales towards work on multiple aspects of self esteem such as academic, sporting and social components (see Snow, Corno and Jackson, 1996, for a review of different approaches). The scaling paradigm has been examined by critical psychologists who have considered other aspects of testing (see, e.g., Rose, 1990). The use of scales to examine self esteem is subject to the same limitations as other simple measurements of this type, such as the reliance on verbal expression to identify an `inner` personality dimension. Given the complexities of theoretical work on the `self` this century, from psychoanalysis through contemporary poststructural theorising (e.g., Gergen, 1991), the attempt to map out a particular individual`s `self esteem` on the basis of a paper and pencil scale seems extraordinary. Perhaps it is an indication that there is still institutional support to be found for researchers who have not ventured outside the psychometric certainties of the 1960s.

There is a newer branch of work on self esteem related to attribution approaches. Weiner`s work on educational attributions (see Graham and Weiner, 1996) made clear links between expectations of future success or failure and attributions to stable causes. (In this theory, attributions to stable factors such as ability should lead to expectations to perform similarly in future, while attributions to unstable factors such as effort should lead to more variable expectations of future performance.) This idea was taken further in the `self-worth` theory of Covington (1992) which proposes that students` self-concepts are shaped by their ideas of their `ability`. What is needed in a more critical study of `self esteem` is an analysis of the cultural vocabularies available to construct the kind of self that is characterized by terms such as `ability`.

The related issue of children`s marginalisation at school was the focus of the Disaffected Pupils project (see Barrett, 1989). This English study focused on student `alienation` in schools, relating this to school management rather than interactions solely in the classroom. The work involved teachers, psychologists and researchers. There was a focus on a number of categories of marginalisation for students labelled by disability as well as gender and/or race. I like the word `disaffection`, with its non-punitive allusions to the idea that some children just don`t like school (perhaps for good reason). However, I am less sanguine about the normative assumptions of future happiness for the disaffected pupils. In the Preface to the book, Jones (1989, p. x) provided an overview of the goals of the work on disaffection as inclusion in the normative: `The aim should be that all pupils feel normal, valued, and achieving.` Foucault`s work has surely made norms less attractive as a given standard for acceptability. Perhaps Jones was arguing for a wider definition of normality than conventionally offered, but the concept is fraught with difficult assumptions. Again, the cultural vocabulary relating to norms, happiness and the value of particular people needs more critical scrutiny.

A more critical approach to the whole issue of esteem was taken by the various projects mentioned in Kenway and Willis`s (1990) provocative book. They included whole-school programmes for `self esteem` which go beyond intervention for individual children identified as `low self esteem`. In the project reported by Jonas (1990), an entire secondary school was involved in creating a climate supportive of democratic student processes, which led to formal questioning of the university entrance procedures that disadvantaged their students. This supportive climate was created by policies within the school, no doubt the product of a concerted effort by many teachers, students and senior staff at the school. Instead of focusing on coping of individual students, there could be a wider concern with the practices and resources that are linked with energised, creative action in people working against racism, sexism and `ableism` in schools.

Assessment

Educational assessment is an interesting interdisciplinary field, having its traditions in the psychometric testing field

including IQ testing, but also being well grounded at present in issues of comparative educational policy. One reason for this is that assessment, particularly national assessment in which countries compete for the best test scores in science, maths and other fields, can lead to huge investments of money in particular educational regimes. Researchers and practitioners can become overly grounded in the political fashions and government edicts of the day (perhaps for sound survival reasons). A number of British writers have become influential writers on the purposes and contexts of assessment.

The critique of testing this century has led to great awareness of the problems involved in norm-referenced assessment. While such standardised tests are used for determining university entrance in the US, they have few enthusiasts in the UK, Australia or New Zealand. There are subtle uses of norm-referencing which can be quite influential, however, such as in the use of such tests to `moderate` results across classes or schools.

Caroline Gipps referred to the `paradigm shift` in assessment over the last 25 years or so from a focus on testing towards greater use of more fluid, situation-specific assessment (Gipps, 1994, p. 1). This has meant a turn away from norm-referenced tests towards criterion-referenced, formative and performance-based assessment. She also argued that contemporary assumptions about the learner have changed from the psychometrists` assumption that individual differences are based largely on innate factors. Now there is more recognition of the importance of context, curriculum and pedgagogies in learning.

The influence of Foucault`s analyses on schooling and disciplinary regimes is found in Patricia Broadfoot`s (e.g., 1996) work on the system by which particular areas of knowledge come to be regarded as higher in status, with assessment functioning as a legitimating authority for particular practices and hierarchical social structures. She has also been an advocate for more use of self-assessment by students. Students who are involved in reflecting on their own learning and performance provide a more open-ended, fluid and ongoing process of assessment closer to a critical educational psychology than assessment centred solidly on technicist concerns about `objective` measurement. It is ironic that the work of British researchers mentioned in this section has been used in New Zealand to argue against the national testing of all children at particular ages (e.g., as done with SATs in the UK) in favour of testing samples of children from different schools. This helps to avoid creating records of individual student achievement based on norm-referenced tests. Unfortunately the New Zealand government is at present planning to follow where Britain leads in introducing national testing of children, under the guise of accountability to parents.

Research Methods

Like traditional research in psychology, educational psychology has been defined by its positivist methodologies, and was earlier aligned with experimental research and quantitative statistical analyses. Fortunately there is now more attention given to introducing both qualitative and quantitative methods in educational psychology textbooks. The clinical case study has also been a key method throughout this century, especially as related to the practising educational psychologist in the field. Though the research summarised by contemporary educational psychology textbooks would not usually refer to interdisciplinary work, there is more openness to post-positivist approaches and a consideration of complexities beyond the old quantitative/qualitative divide.

There are encouraging hints that methodologies in educational psychology are changing as they are elsewhere in the `social sciences`. A critical educational psychology should surely include the diversity of issues and paradigms in qualitative methodologies. Of particular interest would be a contemporary overview of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) as well as an introduction to contemporary tensions regarding crises of legitimation and multiple perspectives (Lincoln and Denzin, 1996). These approaches emphasise reflexive practices in contemporary research informed by postmodern questioning.

The use of reflexivity incorporated as part of a research methodology is more than a contemporary fashion. It is a way to link the conceptual and practical, to make research fit some of the dimensions of `action` research so that educational psychologists, students, teachers and researchers work together on issues of relevance. A good example of this kind of research is Patti Lather`s (1990) study of Women`s Studies students` `resistance` to the liberatory curriculum. During the research, Lather began to question her own practice, and the study changed towards a more collaborative project with students and other staff, questioning the hidden agenda that students would become liberated along a predetermined path of enlightenment. Such reflexive and open-ended exploration of issues such as student power, teachers` agendas, discourses about liberation, and educational goals to-

wards personal development holds much promise for critical educational psychology research.

The field of education concerned with students who have disabilities or other `special` requirements as learners different to the generic `normal child` is an area of central concern for educational psychologists. The creators of the first formal test of intelligence, Binet and Simon, were concerned with differentiating children thought to be capable of benefiting from mass education from those thought to need special educational facilities. At about the same time, the field of child development was being established with strong progressivist views explicitly tied to Darwin`s evolutionary ideas (Morss, 1990). The `normal child` was created as a subject-position in opposition to its `other`, the abnormal child, who did not fit the developmental stages and timetables being canonised by writers such as Gesell (see Burman`s, 1994, critique of developmental ideas). Even today, most textbooks of human development focus on the `normal` child, with little attention to the `outliers` on the IQ distribution.

The field of `special education` is contested ground between parents, teachers, educational psychologists and government policies about funding. Political moves were underway in the 1960s to bring some children formerly labelled as `mildly retarded` into regular classrooms. Special facilities for segregationist residential care were put under scrutiny in many countries. The IQ test had been criticised for its racist biases in the 1960s. Suddenly the dominant medical discourses which defined a divide between the able-bodied and the `handicapped` did not seem so convincing. (See Fulcher, 1989, for an important critique of medical discourses embedded in Australian educational and health policies.)

The political movement for disabled people`s rights provided an alternative to medical discourses: that of social oppression. In the 1970s and 1980s, humanist calls for equal rights began to add disability to the inequities of race, gender, and sexuality (see Barnes, 1996). In education, `mainstreaming`, in which children with disabilities were placed in ordinary classrooms, became a rights issue for students and their parents. Unfortunately, some of these ordinary classrooms did not have facilities to be able to assist students with disabilities with their education. (For an interesting critique of textual rhetoric regarding binary positions on mainstreaming in a range of writers differing in ideological stance see Brantlinger, 1997).

In the 1980s there was a more postmodern move towards the idea of `inclusion` in education. There was a shift in perspective away from the idea that some students with `mild` or `moderate` disabilities should be moved into ordinary, business-as-usual classrooms. Instead, inclusion began to consider the processes by which a student becomes a member of the classroom group, in a two-way process in which both `regular` and `disabled` students learn to get along and work with each other.

Recently the work on inclusion in education has become more critical about the dualism of able/disabled as another socially constructed divide. Stone (1993) and others argued that inclusive approaches may hide an assumption that there is still a dominant group which makes the decision about which children will be `included`. Inclusion, in this view, is a more sophisticated strategy of assimilation. The `disabled` must still `fit in` to a reconstituted `diverse` classroom or be excluded from school life.

One future project in a critical educational psychology could be to consider the similarities between political aspirations of groups who wish to claim an identity based on disability with peoples from minority ethnic groups. Deaf parents have lobbied in several countries against forcing non-hearing children to assimilate to the norm of spoken language, arguing that it is a suppression of Deaf culture. This has some similarities to the kura kaupapa movement in New Zealand, which is a parallel schooling system for indigenous students who are taught in the Maori language. In future there could be more attention paid to the preferences of students with disabilities regarding the kinds of classrooms and facilities they would prefer. There might also be further critical deconstruction of the able/disabled dichotomy that could lead to more recognition that each person has multiple selves that may be abled or disabled at different times and places in life. The local and national context for considering issues of special need is directly affected by government policy changes. As Dessent (1992, p. 37) noted regarding the situation in the UK, educational psychologists now do not just focus on defining which children are special and deciding how to work with such children; they must also work towards `defining resource-worthiness`. New Zealand has undergone similar policy changes. Resourcing of special needs has become the province of individual advocacy, making it harder for communities to work together to create schools that make room for all kinds of difference amongst students. These policy moves point to the urgent need for critical work in educational psychology which challenges these individualising assumptions. There are already strong links between people working together towards more responsive, inclusive education across various countries (see Booth and Ainscow, 1998).

Forward Moves

Some emerging examples in practice are already around to show what educational psychology might look with a stronger critical direction. Rather than focus on the specific areas identified earlier as crucial parts of educational psychology (e.g., learning, motivation, etc.), a challenging possibility for the future is to create more fractures across areas. A more radical deconstruction of the individual would have huge implications for reconceptualising areas such as learning, abilities, motivation and self esteem.

There could also be new kinds of relationships between research and practice, between writing, reading, deciding, acting, discussing. Research in educational psychology could become part of the ongoing revisioning of the field and its place in the lives of children and adults as part of lives reflective about their governing circumstances. Bringing together collaborative research groups with some of the new methodological techniques provides other possibilities. There could be a widening of the collaborative research process to include children and young people as well as researchers, teachers and educational psychologists, all providing different perspectives on problems of mutual concern.

What I have focused on in this paper are some of the innovative directions taken in the here-and-now by concerned people struggling within the broad boundaries of `educational psychology`. The people to whom I have referred in this paper have been mostly English-speaking writers whose work can be linked in some way to the British-American origins of the field earlier this century. This is to some extent inevitable in writing about a particular `discipline` which, as Foucault suggested, contains the production of its own future. I have also mentioned the work of some indigenous writers and people further from the discipline`s barbed-wire boundaries. To expand critical educational psychology with further energies will require more voices of innovation from around the world, and from a diversity of educational and cultural communities. Part of this work will involve western teachers, researchers and academics who have been entrusted by the governments of developing countries with the training of their future elites. A greater focus on critical work in educational psychology will provide an interruption to the cycle of academic cloning whereby traditional ideas about IQ testing, normed assessment and the culture of positivism are sent to another generation in southeast Asia or Africa. Such a shift - which would lead to more equitable dialogue between parts of the world about issues such as special needs or assessment - would be much more troubling for the discipline. And surely unsettling the discipline so that it becomes more reflexive about its positionings and unforeseen consequences is what critical psychology is all about.

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