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Introducing Psychology in the Classroom

The goals for this introductory chapter are two-fold. Firstly, it is designed to provide the reader with an understanding of the scope of psychology as it applies to educational practice. This is undertaken through examining the question '*What is psychology?*', before providing a *very brief history of psychology*. The second aim is to inform the reader about *the psychology of education* and *about this book*. This chapter concludes with a selective and annotated list of *further reading* and *useful websites*.



What is Psychology?

Defining Psychology

In the *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, under the entry for 'psychology', Arthur S. Reber (1995) asserts that 'psychology cannot be defined; indeed, it cannot even easily be characterised'. He argues that definitions such as "the science of mental life", "the science of behaviour" . . . reflect the prejudices of the definer more than the actual nature of the field', but does state that 'psychology is what scientists and philosophers of various persuasions have created to try and fulfil the need to understand the minds and behaviours of various organisms from the most primitive to the most complex' (p. 617).

Reber's (1995) assertions are certainly well-made, given the diversity of the field of psychology, its areas of inquiry, and its applications. However, a shorter – and,

I would argue, broadly acceptable – defining statement is that psychology is ‘the science of mind and behaviour’ (Gross, 2010), which applies to most modern (and especially experimental) psychology. However, even at this early stage we run into problems. The scientific method, to which we shall return below, and again according to Reber (1995), is characterised by: (i) a clearly defined problem being stated in a way that (ii) ties it in with ‘existing theory and known empirical fact’ (p. 458), (iii) leading to the formulation of a testable hypothesis and (iv) the determination of investigatory procedures, which lead to (v) the collection and analysis of data which, when analysed, in turn lead to (vi) the support or rejection of the hypothesis, and ultimately to (vii) the modification of the existing body of scientific knowledge to accommodate the new findings. With this in mind, one can see how the scientific method may be more easily applied to the study of ‘behaviour’, which is, after all, external, physical, observable and measurable, than it might be to the study of the ‘mind’, which is, of course, an internal, metaphysical, non-observable entity with no clear means of direct ‘measurement’. Yet Gross’s (2010) definition comes at least close to incorporating, in a single sentence, an accurate description of the ways in which modern psychology is, or at least should be, conducted (the ‘scientific method’), and the broad areas with which psychologists have concerned themselves. Indeed, the roots of the word ‘psychology’ come from the Ancient Greek *psyche*, meaning ‘the mind’ (notice this prefix in many related terms, such as ‘psychiatrist’ and ‘psychoanalyst’), and *-ology*, meaning ‘the study of’ (again, notice this common suffix in the names of many academic fields, e.g. ‘biology’ and ‘sociology’).

A respectable proportion of what trainee teachers learn in both theoretical and methodological modules in their pre-service education is informed by the discipline of psychology. However, psychologists who are proud of their discipline’s contribution should be aware that education and teaching are informed by many disciplines, of which psychology is just one (which is one reason why pre-service teacher training can be challenging). In order to see how psychology can be related to other disciplines, we will now turn our attention to the origins of psychology.

The Philosophical Background of Psychology

How can psychology, as a discipline, be framed within the more general field of human inquiry? Indeed, how can the field of human inquiry itself be systematised? In terms of the latter, few have tried; but one attempt is particularly well known. In 1946, the British philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote his *History of Western Philosophy*, based on the series of lectures he had given during the war years in the United States. The book seems to divide commentators: Ray Monk

says it ‘remains unchallenged as the perfect introduction to its subject’ (Russell, 1995); Richard H. Popkin (1999a) describes it as ‘most engaging as Russelliana, but hardly as a history of philosophy’. Be that as it may, the book is an attempt to connect western philosophy with ‘political and social circumstances from the earliest times to the present day’, and is structured into three divisions that, helpfully for this discussion, constitute three major time periods within both western thought and political/social history:

- > *Ancient Philosophy* (corresponding to the period of Classical Civilisation) (ca. 500 BC – ca. 400 AD);
- > *Catholic Philosophy* (corresponding to the Middle Ages (ca. 400 AD – ca. 1600 AD); and
- > *Modern Philosophy* (corresponding to the Modern, post-Renaissance Period (ca. 1600 AD – the present day).

Viewed in this light, some of the problems that western *philosophers* have been engaged with over the last 2,500 years (e.g. the nature and scope of knowledge, questions of belief and of the best way to live, how we perceive and reason, the nature of the mind, the nature and usage of language and so on) are also engaged with today by *psychologists*. The feature that is unique to the discipline of psychology is *how* these problems are engaged with. To my mind, therefore, the chief demarcation point of psychology – at least, as a research discipline – from its parent discipline of philosophy is in the methods of inquiry that it uses. Whereas in philosophy one might use logical analysis, introspection, rational argument and so on, the methods that psychologists use belong to the modern period, and in particular to the methods of *science*.

Important Philosophical Ideas in Psychology

The scientific method, as it applies to psychology, owes a good deal to the philosophy that is known as *British Empiricism*. ‘British’ here is used in a geographical sense, referring to the British Isles origin of its original proponents, and to the region in which it first attained greatest popularity and influence. In a curious correspondence with many schoolyard jokes, these ‘original proponents’ were an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman – respectively, John Locke (1632–1704), George Berkeley (1685–1753) and David Hume (1711–1776). All were interested in the nature and limits of human knowledge; all argued that knowledge was dependent on *experience*. This opposed the philosophy of René Descartes (1596–1650), which asserted that ‘there were fundamental truths innate in the human mind only awaiting identification by an active intellect’ (Rogers, 1999). For example, in book one (*Of Inmate Notions*) of his *Essay Concerning Human*

Understanding (1689), Locke argued there was no *a priori* knowledge; the mind, at birth, is a *tabula rasa* ('blank tablet', or 'blank slate'), upon which knowledge, gained solely through life's experiences, may be written. An image for teachers arises here – of an empty blackboard/whiteboard/exercise book, which is filled with (hopefully) useful knowledge as is, as a consequence, the student's mind. One can understand, perhaps, how influential Locke's empiricism has been in informing traditional 'chalk-and-talk' methods of teaching over the past 300 years. As we shall see (below), Locke's arguments were also important for a particular type of psychology known as *behaviourism*.

Berkeley is known for articulating the anti-materialist idea that essence and perception are one and the same; there is no hidden 'real world' behind what we perceive. We can *only* say that we *perceive* chocolate to be brown and sweet; it is an abstraction too far to say that it *is* so. With this principle, he believed he had established a sound basis for the limits of human knowledge (Bracken, 1999). Hume was influenced by Berkeley's writing, and praised his arguments on abstraction; the purpose of his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) was to 'introduce the Newtonian method of reasoning into moral subjects' (Popkin, 1999b). Although Hume expected the book to be a success, it was not well received (Gaarder, 1991); however, he re-worked the material into two more popular presentations, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Human Morals* (1751), and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1777). According to Hume, we can only know, from an inspection of our ideas, things that resemble or contradict each other, and degrees of quantity or number. In Section XII of the latter, Hume asserts:

If we take into our hand any volume – of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance – let us ask, 'Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?' No. 'Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?' No. Consign it then to the flames – for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

This well-known quote has been interpreted both as a caution against metaphysical enquiry (in both philosophy and psychology) and a limit of what we can be said to know (which is perhaps closer to Hume's original purpose). One such limit is *causality* – according to Hume, we do not perceive that one thing causes another, we perceive only the progression of sense impressions in time (Popkin, 1999b), and learn to expect that this sequence will reoccur in future instances. But because we learn to expect things – our experience of the world effectively becomes ridden with such perceptual habits – it is easy to conclude things prematurely, which is surely a point of some importance and caution in

a human science such as psychology. If we are to be genuinely unbiased and scientific in our enquiries, even though we may have seen many and only black crows in our life, for a scientist 'it can be important not to reject the possibility of finding a white crow. You might almost say that hunting for the "white crow" is science's principal task' (Gaarder, 1991, p. 231). This is a point to which we will have occasion to return in a short while.

The skepticism and limits to knowledge and enquiry advanced by the British Empiricists has had considerable influence in the way in which science, and scientific psychology, is undertaken, where Hume's attempt to use the methods of the physical sciences in enquiries into human nature and behaviour remains an ideal. In scientific psychology, as you will see from reading this book, there is a preference for experimental or at least broad-scale survey research methods, and psychological investigations are very carefully designed. 'Evidence' that is gained in other ways – from opinion, literature, introspection, rhetoric and so on – is not, to the scientific psychologist, really evidence at all, and is thus dismissed as 'anecdotal evidence', inadmissible on the grounds of its unreliability, and being impossible to validly generalise from. 'Consign it then to flames', indeed.

Furthermore, in the twentieth century, two well-known philosophers independently turned their attention to science, each highlighting (in different ways) that the neutrality and objectivity which scientists pride themselves on may in fact be compromised. Their names were Karl Popper (1902–1994) and Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996), and what they had to say in this respect carries important implications for the self-monitoring way in which scientific psychology *should* conduct itself. The 'white crow' argument outlined above by Gaarder (1991) to illustrate Hume's arguments also exemplifies what Popper had to say about *falsification* and its position as a standard in science. In *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Popper (1959) was critical of a good deal of what passed for human science in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century; in particular, he was dissatisfied with the circularity which abounded in many theoretical positions, such as Marxism (in sociology) and Freudian theory (psychology). With regard to these examples, criticism is difficult to advance to their adherents, as it may be taken to be evidence of 'false' or 'bourgeois consciousness', or 'resistance to uncomfortable truths', respectively. Popper was concerned that any intellectual system which thus defended itself from the testing of its hypotheses necessarily became biased. Falsification is the hallmark of empirical science; as soon as a theory ceases to be falsifiable, it ceases to be scientific – we should always look out for the 'white crow'. Falsification has important implications for the design of psychological investigations, and also for the statistical procedures that psychologists use in the assessment of their data (the latter of which, the non-

mathematically-minded reader may be relieved to know, is beyond the scope of this book). Along these lines, the reader of this text is therefore cautioned against accepting dogmatism of any kind, and will be encouraged to think critically about the material that is presented, and how it may be applied in practical situations.

Thomas Kuhn's use of the notion of *paradigms* (in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962) alerted many to the fact that science does not, in fact, operate in a vacuum of unhindered neutrality – instead it is, as Russell (1946) said of philosophy, influenced by the political and social circumstances of the historical period in which it is conducted. As paradigms influence the entire intellectual climate of a period in time, they are often invisible, or apparently non-existent, until they *change*. For example, until the late-nineteenth century, biologists were informed by a creationist paradigm – their work was essentially about uncovering the wonders of God's masterpiece. Since the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (Darwin, 1859), biologists have been operating under an evolutionary paradigm – they assert neutrality, and yet every piece of evidence seems to confirm a Darwinian position. Of course, whether this is because they are now neutrally uncovering the truth, or are unwittingly participating in the sort of circularity that Popper cautioned against, is something that only time (and potential paradigm shifts in the future) will tell!

Finally, in contradiction to the nod that psychology sometimes gives to the influence of Berkeley (see above), psychologists generally do adhere to the philosophical position of *materialism* – that there is a 'real world' structure which lies behind our perceptions and investigations. Generally, the metaphysical entity of the 'mind' is represented in the physical structure of the brain, which psychologists assume to be the physical 'seat' of mental functioning.

Areas of Focus in Psychology

So what do psychologists do? There are many different possible specialisations, of which the 10 divisions and 14 sections of the British Psychological Society (BPS), the representative body for psychologists and psychology in the United Kingdom, gives an idea. The divisions (open to practitioners in a certain field of psychology; only professionally qualified psychologists are entitled to full membership) comprise the Divisions of Child and Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Counselling Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Health Psychology, Occupational Psychology, Neuropsychology, Sport and Exercise Psychology, Teachers and Researchers in Psychology, and the Scottish Division of Educational Psychology. The sections (interest groups open to all BPS members)

comprise Cognitive Psychology, Community Psychology, Consciousness and Experiential Psychology, Developmental Psychology, History and Philosophy of Psychology, Mathematical Statistical and Computing, Psychobiology, Psychology of Education, Psychology of Sexualities, Psychology of Women, Psychotherapy, Qualitative Methods in Psychology, Social Psychology, and Transpersonal Psychology (British Psychological Society, 2011).

The psychologists that teachers are most likely to encounter in their professional lives are educational psychologists. Elliott et al. (2000) define educational psychology (in a deliberately broad way) as ‘the application of psychology and psychological methods to the study of development, learning, motivation, instruction, assessment, and related issues that influence the interaction of teaching and learning’. They go on to describe the field’s key concepts as: understanding what it means to teach; knowledge of students (cognitive, linguistic, psychosocial, moral and atypical development; the impact of culture, class, and gender); understanding the learning processes (theories of learning and motivation); understanding instructional strategies (and their evidence-basis); and understanding assessment strategies (using measurement tools to identify students who need educational or psychological assistance; helping teachers to develop instructional programmes to facilitate all students’ functioning). In the United Kingdom, status as a chartered educational psychologist (and eligibility for full membership of the BPS’s Division of Child and Educational Psychology) is achieved by completing a BPS-recognised undergraduate degree in psychology (providing the graduate basis for registration with the BPS); having two or three years’ experience working with children, young people and their families (previously, training and working for two years as a teacher); and completing a BPS-recognised three-year professional doctoral programme in educational psychology (British Psychological Society, 2011).

A Very Brief History of Psychology

The discipline of scientific psychology has a rather short history compared with that which I have asserted to be its parent discipline, western philosophy: 150 years (British Psychological Society, 2010) and around 2,500 years (Russell, 1946) respectively. Nevertheless, a good deal has occurred since the publication of Gustav Fechner’s *Elemente der Psychophysik* [*Elements of Psychophysics*] in 1860, which may be taken to mark the beginnings of *experimental psychology* (British Psychological Society, 2010). With an eye on what is perhaps most interesting for educators, we can take a brief overview of some of these developments.

For 40 years after the publication of Fechner's landmark publication, he and other *psychophysicists* investigated the human sensory, perceptual and memory systems using careful experimentation. By 1875, experimental psychology had become a transatlantic discipline; Wilhelm Wundt, who published *Principles of Physiological Psychology* in 1874, and William James, who published *Principles of Psychology* in 1890, set up the first psychological laboratories, at the Universities of Leipzig and Harvard respectively (British Psychological Society, 2010). Not all of what passed for 'psychology' at that time, or the then fashionable *anthropometrics*, adhered to Fechner et al.'s diligent experimentalism. Spiritualism, mesmerism, hypnosis, conjuring, clairvoyance, fortune-telling and related areas of charlatany competed for the attention and the wallets of the public at large, as they continue to do so today; however, in the late-nineteenth century, some of these areas achieved varying levels of respectability amongst academic audiences (Szasz, 1978).

One such area was *phrenology*. Phrenologists correctly believed that the mental functions were located in the brain, which as an organ exhibits 'localisation of function' – different parts of the brain are associated with different physical and psychological functions. However, the phrenologists believed – wrongly – that if a psychological characteristic was pronounced in an individual, that a corresponding part of the brain would become enlarged, as would the part of the skull that overlay that brain region. Consequently, phrenologists believed – also wrongly – that it was possible to 'map' these psychological characteristics by examining 'bumps' on people's crania. Hence, they devoted much time to producing schemes through this activity, in the forms of diagrams and busts. No-one seriously believes in phrenology these days (although oddly enough, some psychologists, me included, keep phrenology busts as curios in their offices), and the discipline has been dismissed, at best, as a 'pseudoscience' (van Whye, 2011). One of the few references to phrenology that still exists in everyday life is when a Londoner calls into question someone's sanity by recommending a consultation with a phrenologist – 'You want your bumps feeling, mate!'

Over the first 30 years of the twentieth century, two very different approaches within psychology developed (the *psychodynamic* approach and *behaviourism*), both of which are still influential today (in the psychology of education, chiefly in the areas of understanding motivation and learning respectively). The *psychodynamic* approach began with the astonishingly divisive work of the Viennese neurologist, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939; ever since, people tend to either love or loathe his ideas), who, like those who followed him, was interested chiefly in the workings of the unconscious mind, and conducted most of his enquiries into the human mind via learning from those he treated (as a practitioner of what would become known as 'psychoanalysis', or 'psychoanalytical psychotherapy') and trained. His

masterwork, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, was published in 1900. Freud's views on the primacy of the sexual instinct, how children develop, and his views on culture and religion, continue to challenge psychologists and the broader public to the present day (see Freud, 1940, for an overview).

Behaviourism, on the other hand, was an attempt to base psychology strictly on scientific principles; behaviourists had no tolerance of Freudian speculation about unconscious instincts, and, sometimes invoking Locke's *tabula rasa* and Hume's rejection of metaphysical enquiry (see above), preferred to work from the observation of simple processes of learning in non-human species. Their task was to understand what sort of stimuli and factors positively or negatively reinforced learning, and then how this could be generalised to the human experience. An early view was provided by John Watson (1913); in its mature form, B.F. Skinner developed behaviourism from a data-rich discipline (1938), which as well as being massively influential in psychology, was also influential in education (amongst other things, Skinner asserted that positive reinforcement is more effective than punishment (1968)), to a philosophy in itself (1972).

Except from Freud's approach to the subject (1908, 1909), most of the major models of *child development* – the approaches of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Erik Erikson – date from the 1920s to the 1950s. Chapter 2 of this book provides a topical overview of this important area of psychology (child and developmental psychology) for teachers. At around this time, the *psychology of individual differences* – first manifested in the testing of intelligence, as we shall see in Chapter 4 of this text – also developed, which would also see the assessment of human personality come under the spotlight (see Phares and Chaplin, 1997). Another influential school of psychological thought that was first developed before the Second World War was *ethology*. Like the behaviourists, ethologists were interested in animal behaviour, but only naturally-occurring animal behaviour, not that which could be created in laboratory experiments. They sought to understand the evolutionary origins and significance of behaviour in non-human animal and human species, and have made significant contributions to our understanding of parenting, attachment, reproductive behaviour, and perhaps most of all, aggression (see Lorenz, 1953, 1966).

After the Second World War, psychodynamic psychology continued in its own right, and predominantly as an influence in the field of psychotherapy, as it does to the present day (Bongar and Beutler, 1995). Behaviourism dominated the world of scientific psychology until the 1950s, when in its radical form – which was preoccupied with learning only, and went as far to deny the existence of mental structures (Skinner, 1972) – gave way to *cognitive psychology*, which inherited

the scientific mantle and experimental research methods of the behaviourists, but could focus on the full remit of psychological functions (see Eysenck and Keane, 2010). 'Cognition' refers to the way in which people think; it includes our mental faculties of perception, attention, memory, planning, reasoning, problem solving, knowledge representation and thought (Minton, 2011). From the mid-to late-twentieth century, there was an explosion of interest in psychology, and psychologists involved themselves in the scientific investigation of any number of mental and social phenomena (see Gleitman, 2010) and, in an applied sense, areas such as education, health and industry. Cognitive psychology remains the dominant influence in scientific/theoretical psychology to the present day, but many applied areas of psychology, especially education, are equally influenced by another approach towards understanding learning and motivation: *humanism*.

In the post-Second World War years, *humanism* (also known as 'phenomenological psychology') became known as the 'third force' in psychology. The first 'force', historically speaking, was reckoned to be psychoanalysis, which critics from a humanistic standpoint felt placed too much focus on the unconscious aspects of the mind, particularly our supposedly 'animalistic' drives. The second 'force' was behaviourism, which humanists have seen as being too reductionistic, placing too much emphasis on animal learning, and attempting – inaccurately – to generalise to human experience from such perspectives (Minton, 2011). What was needed, argued one of the greatest of all the humanistic psychologists, Abraham Maslow, was a new approach – a genuine psychology of human beings (Maslow, 1954). Humanists feel that it is necessary to view the whole human and his or her existence, and focuses on areas such as the construction of identity and personal meaning, and human growth and potential. It is deeply and unapologetically subjective; its main figures, Carl Rogers (1951, 1967) and Abraham Maslow (1954, 1968), were involved in the fields of psychotherapy, personality theory and education, and motivation, respectively.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a fruitful interplay between the disciplines of cognitive psychology and information technology, and an approach known as *cognitive science* was developed. The mind had long been likened to a machine (this approach ultimately dates back to a line of argument developed in the French philosopher René Descartes' *Meditations on a First Philosophy* (1641)). With the development of computers being envisioned and realised by the brilliant, yet tragic, British mathematician, Alan Turing, in the 1930s and 1940s (see Turing, 1950), and microcomputers being produced as broadly affordable systems from the late 1970s, cognitive scientists from the 1970s onwards began to 'model' human psychological functions in artificial intelligence systems as a method of research (e.g. Johnson-Laird, 1980). Of course, it is possible for the comparability

between the very different human and computer intelligence systems to be overstated. Just because such modelling can be undertaken does not mean that this is how a given function operates in a human system – only that this is what *could* be happening. However, from the late-1980s, brain-imaging techniques became more sophisticated (with the development of magnetic resonance imagery, or MRI) and more affordable, and were increasingly applied within psychological research – in order to track what the human brain was *actually* doing. Hence, in very recent times, ‘the methods of experimental psychology are increasingly combined with those of brain imaging, of molecular biology and of pharmacology’ (British Psychological Society, 2010). This now cutting-edge combination of the disciplines of cognitive psychology, information technology and neurology is known as *cognitive neuroscience*.

The Psychology of Education and About this Book

This book is about the application of psychology in the classroom by educational professionals. It is *not* a book on either child or developmental psychology (many excellent texts on these colossal areas exist). For purposes of reliability, and out of respect for the integrity of the disciplines of both psychology and education, it is a book that concerns itself with *scientific*, and *not* popular or ‘self-help’ psychology; it is grounded within the discipline of the *psychology of education*, rather than *educational psychology*. Woolfolk et al. (2008) differentiate these similar-sounding terms in the following way: educational psychology (as we have already seen, above)

can refer to the broad area of training and work of educational psychologists, who apply psychological theories, research and teaching to help children and young people who may be having learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems . . . in contrast, the psychology of education, is the study of how psychological theories and research inform and support the work of educational professionals working across the whole range of teaching and learning settings. (p. 4)

At the time of writing, with my primary training being in psychology, I have spent more than a decade working in school and university settings, providing pre- and in-service training to students of education and educational professionals – more often than not, as I think of it, ‘teaching teachers the psychology they need to know for the job’. I have had the privilege of doing this in my position as a lecturer in the psychology of education at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, at a variety of other settings throughout Ireland, and occasionally

internationally. This book, then, is an attempt to communicate this sort of work to a broader audience. So after introducing the scope of the discipline of psychology as it applies in educational practice (a goal for the current chapter), and taking a topical overview of child and adolescent development (Chapter 2), and before drawing conclusions (Chapter 10), Chapters 3 to 9 inclusively are focused upon seven areas of contemporary concern in education, and showing how psychological approaches can help teachers in these key areas of practice. These areas of contemporary concern are ones that have been the focus of my pre- and in-service training work, and have been arrived at by developments in the fields of both psychology and education, and expressions of need by students of education, teachers and members of school communities. They comprise the self, self-esteem and self-esteem enhancement through educational practice (Chapter 3); intelligence, learning styles and educational attainment (Chapter 4); positive discipline, conflict resolution and co-operative learning in schools (Chapter 5); thinking about special educational needs (Chapter 6); preventing and countering bullying behaviour and cyber-bullying in schools (Chapter 7); dealing with prejudice – racism, homophobia and alterophobia in schools (Chapter 8); and stress and stress management for teachers and educators (Chapter 9).

Each of the seven chapters on ‘contemporary concern in education’ follows a common format. After a statement of *chapter objectives*, the text is interspersed with *activities* for the reader, in which he or she is typically invited to think about the material of the chapter in an applied or critical way (or both), either alone in a reflective exercise or in discussion with colleagues, and occasionally in classroom and school activities with young people. Each chapter also incorporates a *case study* in which good and interesting educational practice, research, legislature or policy is used to illustrate the points that are being made – for the purposes of variety and promoting international comparison, each case study is drawn from a different country. The reflective focus is continued to the conclusion of each chapter in sections on ‘implications for educators’ *to think about* and final *points for discussion*, prior to the provision of short, annotated lists of *further reading* and sometimes *useful websites*.

My aim in writing this book was to produce a text that would be both of practical use to undergraduate and postgraduate students of education, and of interest to educational professionals in practice. No book can hope to cover everything, but it is hoped that through a focus on areas of contemporary concern in education, and how applied psychology can illuminate these, I will be able to both communicate key ideas to pre-service students and to refresh the knowledge of, and even inspire, teachers engaging in in-service training and advanced study.

Above all, I hoped to produce a hands-on and practical book, whilst being true to the scientific principles of psychology, thus reflecting my own approach to the psychology of education (which, as those who know me can testify, is distinctively *not* one of the so-called 'ivory tower'). Only time (and reviews and sales figures!) will tell how successful I have been in achieving these aims, but suffice it to say, I have done my best, and I hope that you will find the book to be enjoyable, interesting, and above all, useful.



As psychology is likely to feature throughout your studies and practice as an educator, I would recommend that you familiarise yourself with a good reference textbook on either general psychology or child and educational psychology. There are a large number available, and the intense competition that exists in the market for undergraduate psychology texts keeps the general standard high. I advise my own students of education to visit the library, or a bookseller, and leaf through the range of such texts in order to find a text they are comfortable with. I repeat this advice to you, the reader. Some of the more popular choices amongst my students have been:

Gleitman, H. (2010) *Psychology*, 8th edn. London: Norton.

Snowman, J., McCown, R. and Biehler (2009) *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 12th edn. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Woolfolk, A., Hughes, M. and Walkup, V. (2008) *Psychology in Education*. Harlow: Pearson Education.



The British Psychological Society. Available at www.bps.org.uk (accessed May 2011). The professional body for psychologists in the United Kingdom, and an important repository of resources for anyone with an interest in psychology.