Contemporary Issues In Educational Psychology
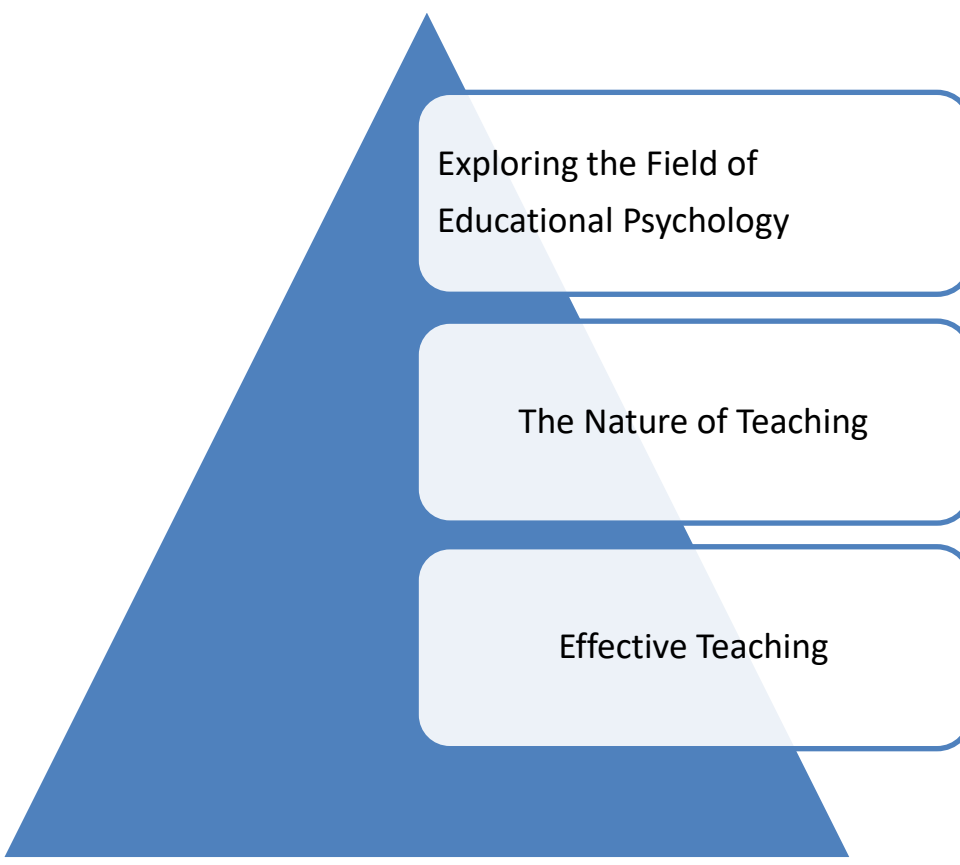
For M.Phil Psychology

By Dr Najma Iqbal Malik

Educational Psychology is the branch of psychology that specializes in understanding teaching and learning in educational settings.

THE NATURE OF TEACHING

Teaching Is Multidimensional

One reality of teaching is that many events occur simultaneously and in rapid-fire succession (McMillan, 1997; Sumara, 2002). Events happen quickly in the classroom.

Teaching Involves Uncertainty

In the hectic world of the classroom it is difficult to predict what effect a given action by the teacher will have on any particular student. Often teachers must make quick decisions that have uncertain outcomes and hope that they have made the best move for that moment.

Teaching Involves Social and Ethical Matters
Schools are settings in which considerable socialization takes place. The social and ethical dimensions of teaching include the question of educational fairness.

When teachers make decisions about routine matters such as which students to call on, how to call on them, what kinds of assignments to make, or how to group students for instruction, they can create advantages for some students and disadvantages for others.

- **Teaching Involves a Diverse Mosaic of Students Your classroom will be filled** with students who differ in many ways. They will have different levels of intellectual ability, different personality profiles, different interests, varying motivations to learn, and different family, economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. How can you effectively teach this incredible mosaic of students?

The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.
Robertson Davies
Canadian Novelist, 20th Century

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

- Teachers must master a variety of perspectives and strategies, and be flexible in their application. This requires three key ingredients: (1) professional knowledge and skills, (2) commitment, and (3)professional growth.

- **Images of Effective and Ineffective Teachers You have had many teachers in your** life, and soon you will be a teacher yourself. Spend few moments thinking about the teachers you have had and your image of the teacher you want to be. Some of your teachers likely were outstanding and left you with a very positive image. Others probably were not so great.

- Our childhood images of teachers continue to influence us as adults.

- **Professional Knowledge and Skills**

Effective teachers have a good command of their subject matter and a solid core of teaching skills. They have excellent instructional strategies supported by methods of goal setting, instructional planning, and classroom management. They know how to motivate, communicate, and work effectively with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. They also understand how to use appropriate levels of technology in the classroom

- **Subject-Matter**
- Having a thoughtful, flexible, onceptual understanding of subject matter is indispensable for being an effective teacher (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Of course, knowledge of subject matter includes a lot more than just facts, terms, and general concepts.
- It also includes knowledge about organizing ideas, connections among ideas, ways of thinking and arguing, and patterns of change within a discipline; beliefs about a discipline; and the ability to carry ideas from one discipline to another.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS	CHARACTERISTICS OF INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS
Characteristics 1. Have a sense of humor 2. Make the class interesting 3. Have knowledge of their subjects 4. Explain things clearly 5. Spend time to help students 6. Are fair to their students 7. Treat students like adults 8. Relate well to students 9. Are considerate of students' feelings 10. Don't show favoritism toward students	**Characteristics** 1. Are dull/have a boring class 2. Don't explain things clearly 3. Show favoritism toward students 4. Have a poor attitude 5. Expect too much from students 6. Don't relate to students 7. Give too much homework 8. Are too strict 9. Don't give help/individual attention

- *Instructional Strategies The principle of constructivism was at*the centre of William James' and John Dewey's philosophies of education. **Constructivism *emphasizes that individuals actively construct*** *knowledge and understanding. In the constructivist view, information is not directly poured into children's minds. Rather, children are encouraged to explore their world, discover knowledge, reflect, and think critically.*

- ***Goal-Setting and Instructional Planning Skills Whether constructivist or more traditional,*** effective teachers don't just go in the classroom. They set high goals for their teaching and develop organized plans for reaching those goals. They also develop specific criteria for success. They spend considerable time in instructional planning, organizing their lessons to maximize students' learning.

- ***Classroom-Management Skills An important aspect of being an effective teacher is*** being able to keep the class as a whole working together and oriented toward classroom tasks (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Effective teachers establish and maintain an environment in which learning can occur.

- ***Motivational Skills Effective*** *teachers have good strategies for helping students become* self-motivated to learn.

- ***Communication Skills Also indispensable to teaching are skills in speaking, listening,*** overcoming barriers to verbal communication, tuning in to students' nonverba communication, and constructively resolving conflicts.

- ***Technological Skills Technology itself does not necessarily improve students' ability to*** learn. Technology, however, does alter the environment within which learning takes place.

- ***Working Effectively with Students from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds In today's*** world of increasing intercultural contact, effective teachers are knowledgeable about people from different cultural backgrounds and are sensitive to their needs

Impact of Culture on Teaching and Learning

language

norms

CULTURE refers to shared:

behaviors

traditions

perceptions

Student Diversity Defined

- **Culture** shared norms, traditions, behaviors, language, and perceptions of a group.

- **Ethnic Group (Ethnicity)** shared sense of identity usually because of...

- -A common place of origin (such as Swedish, Polish, Greek),

- -Religion (such as Jewish, Catholic), or

- **-Race** (NOT THE SAME AS ETHNICITY) refers ONLY to physical characteristics, such as skin color.

Culture is the Umbrella of:

- Social Class
- Nationality
- Race
- Ethnic Group
- Abilities/Disabilities
- Religion
- Geographic Region
- Gender

A Little History…

- Assimilation
  - Minority group gives up original culture in order to identify with majority culture.

versus

- Pluralism (Multiculturalism)
  - Minority group retains many of its traditions, such as language, religion, artistic expression and social customs AND,
  - Adopts many aspects of the majority culture.

- Suppression-Overtly or covertly segregated from the rest of society, I.e. schools, churches, jobs, housing, restaurants. Holds a "dual consciousness" in order to survive.

Introduction to Diversity Debriefing

- **Multicultural Education** is education that teaches the VALUE of cultural diversity…**Is <u>tolerance</u> enough or should we be <u>valuing</u> diversity (difference)?**

Socioeconomic Status
Social Class

- **Social Class**

  (Socioeconomic Status-SES) is defined in terms of an individual's income, occupation, education and prestige in society.

How Does Socioeconomic Status Affect Student Achievement?

(Differences are true only on the average)

- **Children from low-income families receive an upbringing that is LESS consistent with what they are expected to do in school (middle class values). For example:**

- 1.Difficulty following directions,

- 2.Difficulty explaining and understanding reasons,

- 3.Difficulty comprehending and using complex language,
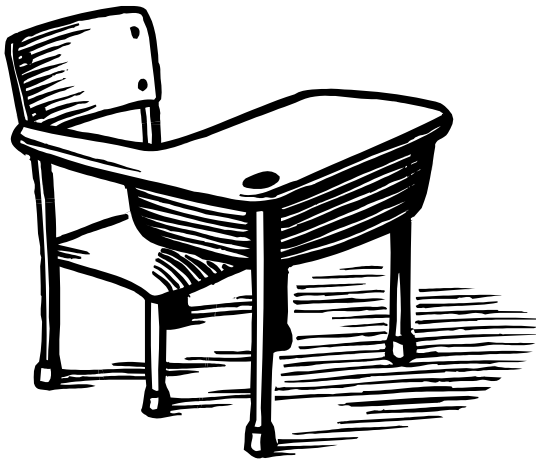
- 4.Poor access to health care,

Examples Continued:

5.More susceptible to disease, i.e. lead poisoning,
6.Less likely to have received good prenatal care,
7.Less opportunity, likelihood of engaging in school like activities over the summer, and/or
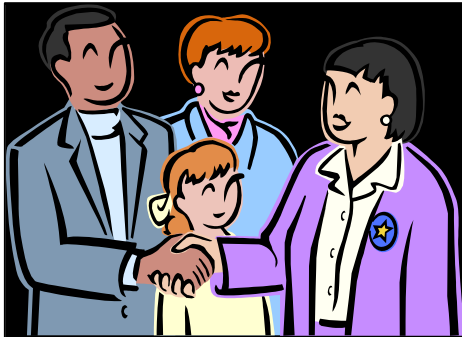8.Less willing to compete and more interested in cooperating with their peers.

Schools Value:

- Individuality

- Future Time Orientation

- Competition

↓

Mismatch

↓

Cooperative Orientation of Many Lower Class & Minority Group Children.

Is the Low Achievement of Children from Low-Income Groups Inevitable?

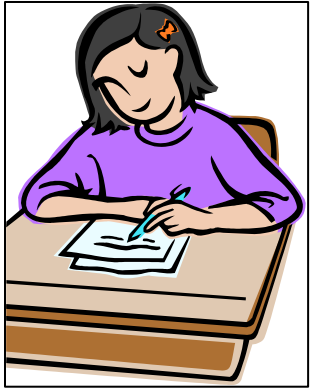**Factors that Can Improve Student Achievement:**

1. Intensive <u>EARLY</u> Interventions

    - Reading Recovery-1st graders w/low achievement in reading.

    - Success for All-i.e. tutoring, family support services.

2. Significant Reductions in Class Size

3. Health and Social Interventions Beyond the School

Implications for Teachers

- Vary Instructional Practices

- On-Going Assessment

- Get to Know Students

- Avoid:
  - **Stereotyping**
  - **Low Expectations**
  - **Self-Fulfilling Prophecies**

Language Differences and Their Affect on Student Achievement

- Why should we discuss language differences in education?

- 1999, 17% of Americans ages 5-24 were from families in which the primary language spoken was not English. By 2026, forecasting 25%.

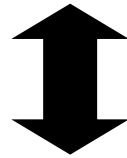# Defining Language Differences

- **Language Minority**-native speakers of any language OTHER than English.

- **Limited English Proficient (LEP)-**AKA English Language Learners; Possessing limited mastery of English; unlikely to success in an English-only program.

- **English as a Second Language (ESL)-**is a subject taught for students who are not native speakers of English.

Bilingual Education

- Instructional program for students who speak little or no English in which some instruction is provided in the native language.

Types of Bilingual Education, p. 113

1. English Immersion

  2. Transitional Bilingual Education

3. Paired Bilingual Education

4. Two-Way Bilingual Education

How to Handle Language Differences

- Do you believe in the existence of any of the Bilingual Education Programs outlined in the previous slide, if yes, which one(s) and why? How would you address any problems this (these) programs may encounter? If you don't believe in the existence of any of these BEP, why not? What do you propose as alternative solutions?

Do Males and Females Think and Learn Differently?
Pgs. 118-119

Within

• Content Areas of Difference (often because of)
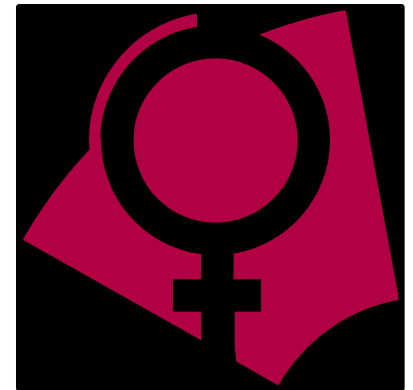
(overestimate)   (underestimate)

Sex-Role Stereotyping and Gender Bias

Different Experiences (due to).

- Reinforcement for Behaviors, i.e. pink and blue by adults.

- Socialization (during school years).

- Subtle Differentiation, i.e. girls play house, boys play with blocks.

Avoiding Gender Bias in Teaching

Teachers Should:

↓

Avoid Stereotypes

Promote Integration

Treat Females & Males Equally

Avoiding Gender Bias in Teaching Cont'

- **Avoid Stereotypes-**Teachers should avoid promoting sexual stereotypes; i.e. assign jobs in the classroom w/o regard to gender, avoid automatically appointing males as group leader and females as secretary, ask both male and females to help in physical activities, refrain from statements such as "boys don't cry" and/or "girls don't fight", and encourage students who show an interest in activities that don't correspond to cultural stereotypes.

Avoiding Gender Bias in Teaching Cont'

- **Promote Integration-**Create classes in which cross-sex collaboration is encouraged; children will have less stereotyped views of the abilities of males and females. For example, encourage friendships with the opposite sex, organize activities, sporting events with opposite sex, and organize physical structure of classroom integrating both sexes.

Avoiding Gender Bias in Teaching Cont'

- **Treat Males and Females Equally-** Interact with both sexes equally, i.e. encourage participation, ask questions, leadership opportunities, and implement all types of activities.

Classroom Uses of Reinforcement

- The behavioral learning principle most useful for classroom practice is also the simplest: Reinforce behaviors you wish to see repeated.

- This principle may seem obvious, but in practice it is not as easy as it appears. For example, some teachers take the attitude that reinforcement is unnecessary, reasoning, "Why should I reinforce them? They're just doing what they're supposed to do!"

- The main guidelines for the use of reinforcement to increase desired behavior in the classroom are as follows (see Baldwin & Baldwin, 1998; J. E. Walker & Shea, 1999; Wielkiewicz, 1995):

- .

- Decide what behaviors you want from students, and reinforce these behaviors when they occur. For example, praise or reward good work.

- Do not praise or reward work that is not up to students' capabilities.

- As students begin a new task, they will need to be reinforced at every step along the way. Close approximations of what you hope to accomplish as a final product must receive positive feedback.

- Break down new behaviors (classroom assignments) into smaller parts and provide adequate rewards along the way.

- Tell students what behaviors you want; when they exhibit the desired behaviors and you reinforce them, tell them why. Present students with a rubric that itemizes the criteria you will use when evaluating their work and include the point value for each criterion.
- Students then will be able to discriminate their own strengths and weaknesses from the feedback they receive from you.

❑Reinforce appropriate behavior as soon as possible after it occurs. Delayed reinforcement is less effective than immediate reinforcement.

❑When you are grading an assignment, present feedback to the students as soon as possible. It is important that students know how they are doing in class, so don't delay with their grades.

❑When constructing an assignment, you should always consider the grading scheme that you will use and how long it will take you to provide the intended feedback

- Practical Reinforcers
- Anything that children like can be an effective reinforcer, but there are obvious practical limitations on what should be used in classrooms. One general principle of positive reinforcement is that it is best to use the least elaborate or tangible reinforcer that will work. In other words, if praise or self-reinforcement will work, don't use certificates. If certificates will work, don't use small toys. If small toys will work, don't use food. However, do not hesitate to use whatever practical reinforcer is necessary to motivate children to do important things. In particular, try all possible reinforcement strategies before even thinking of punishment (described next). A few categories of reinforcers and examples of each appear here (also see Alberto & Troutman, 1999; Martin & Pear, 1996; Schloss & Smith, 1998; Wielkiewicz, 1995). These are arranged from least tangible to most tangible.

- **Self-reinforcement**. Students may be taught to praise themselves, give themselves a mental pat on the back, check off progress on a form, give themselves a short break, or otherwise reinforce themselves for completing a task or staying out of trouble.

- **Praise**. Phrases such as "Good job," "Way to go," "I knew you could do it," and other verbal praise can be effective, but the same message can often be delivered with a smile, a wink, a thumbs-up signal, or a pat on the back. In cooperative learning and peer tutoring, students can be encouraged to praise each other for appropriate behavior.

- **Attention**. The attention of a valued adult or peer can be a very effective reinforcer for many children. Listening, nodding, or moving closer may provide a child with the positive attention she or he is seeking. For outstanding performance or for meeting goals over a longer time period, students might be allowed a special time to visit with the custodian, help in the office, or take a walk with the principal.

- **Grades and recognition**. Grades and recognition (e.g., certificates of accomplishment) can be effective both in giving students positive feedback on their efforts and in communicating progress to parents, who are likely to reinforce good reports themselves. Public displays of good work, notes from the principal, and other honors can have the same effect. Quiz scores, behavior ratings, and other feedback given frequently can be more effective than report card grades given for months of work.

- **Home-based reinforcement**. Parents can be explicitly included in a reinforcement system. Teachers can work out with parents an arrangement in which parents give their children special privileges at home if the children meet well-specified standards of behavior or performance.

- **Privileges**. Children can earn free time, access to special equipment (e.g., soccer balls), or special roles (such as running errands or distributing papers). Children or groups who behaved well can simply be allowed to line up first for recess or dismissal or to have other small privileges.

- **Activity reinforcers**. On the basis of achieving preestablished standards, students can earn free time, videos, games, or access to other fun activities. Activity reinforcers lend themselves particularly well to group contingencies, in which a whole class can earn free time or special activities if the whole class achieves a standard.

- **Tangible reinforcers**. Children may earn points for achievement or good behavior that they can exchange for small toys, erasers, pencils, marbles, comic books, stickers, and so on. Tangible reinforcers usually work better if children have a choice among several options (Fisher & Mazur, 1997). Food. Raisins, fruit, peanuts, or other healthy snacks can be used as reinforcers.

- Observational Learning

Have you ever tried to teach someone to tie his or her shoes? Imagine explaining this task to someone without the use of a model or imitation! Such a simple task, and one that many of us take for granted, can be quite a milestone for a kindergartner. Learning to tie our shoes is certainly a prime example of how observational learning works.

Acquiring new skills by observing the behaviors of others is a common part of everyday life. In many situations children watch others talking and acting, and they witness the consequences of those activities as well. Such observations provide models that teach children strategies to use at other times and places.

Although the major focus of research on observational learning has been on specific behaviors, studies have also shown that attitudes, too, may be acquired through observation (Miller, 1993). Teachers and parents alike are concerned with the models emulated by children. The value of these models goes beyond the specific abilities they possess and includes the attitudes they represent. In the classroom the teacher must be certain to exemplify a standard of behavior consistent with the expectations he or she has for the students. For instance, if promptness and politeness are characteristics the teacher wants to foster in the students, then the teacher must be certain to demonstrate those traits.

In cooperative learning groups, the success of the group may depend on the models present in that group. Peers have a strong influence on the behaviors of the individual. For example, when teachers place students in math groups, it may be just as important to include students who possess a high motivation for learning in a group as it is to include students with strong math skills. The attitudes and behaviors that accompany high motivation will be imitated by fellow students.