

# Special issue: “Educational Psychology and Development in the 21st Century”

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MARIO FERNANDO GUTIÉRREZ R.

Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia  
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3452-8658>

HERNANDO TABORDA

Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia

LEONIE KRONBORG

Monash University, Australia  
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7100-2164>

GONZALO SALAS

Universidad Católica del Maule, Chile  
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0707-8188>

CLAUDIA CORNEJO

Universidad Católica del Maule, Chile  
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8054-9487>

TOMÁS CAYCHO-RODRÍGUEZ

Universidad Privada del Norte, Perú  
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5349-7570>

This special issue aims to contribute to the current knowledge about educational psychology, enriching the idea of the psychological subject within the educational field, including the complex phenomena that affect performance in the educational context. Through the dissemination of theoretical and empirical research, providing elements for the disciplinary discussion, this special issue expects to discuss the mutual relationships that take place in the educational act, with the potentialities and restrictions generated by cognitive development.

The relationships between psychology and education have been critical to the development of educational psychology as a particular discipline. Educational psychology had its prolegomena at the end of the XIX century with the work of the English psychologist James Sully, who published two critical works launching the first threads, which would create this important area of scientific psychology. These works are *Outlines of Psychology. With Special References to the Theory of Education* (Sully, 1884) and *The Teachers Handbook of Psychology* (Sully, 1886). The next decade Sully published two additional works. However, they were more related to child psychology (Sully, 1896, 1906). Darwin and Spencer

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influenced Sully's work, and he involved himself as a committed evolutionary psychologist.

At the very end of the XIX century, in the United States, the famous psychologist William James was also one of the precursors of the field when he published *Talk to Teachers* (James, 1925). This publication was a compilation of important conferences published by Longmans, Green and Co. In this work, James strongly emphasized that knowing about psychology is not enough for an educator. However, he declared that knowing about psychology would help to foresee what kind of methods could go wrong, providing more clarity to planning and making decisions within the classroom. Years later, Edward Lee Thorndike, who was a disciple of Williams James, and supervised in his doctoral thesis by James McKeen Catell, joined the *Teachers College* of Columbia University as an academic for the subject called "School Hygiene" (Ruiz, Sanchez, & De la Casa Rivas, 1998). Thorndike published a book directly entitled *Educational Psychology* (Thorndike, 1903), where he mentioned exceptionally gifted children, proposing pioneering ideas for that time.

Meanwhile, in Europe, it is important to acknowledge the significant contributions developed by Alfred Binet, who in collaboration with Theodore Simon developed the first intelligence test (Binet & Simon, 1904). This test has had a significant influence on student assessment around the world, being still relevant through the Wechsler tests, from 1931 until today (Wechsler, 1939).

Educational Psychology as an applied field of disciplinary development in psychology, especially cognitive and developmental psychology, in its current form, is very different from its origins (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2014). Complementing the original psychometric tendency, which was in search of the measurement of intelligence, educational psychology today has expanded its horizons, assuming a systemic vision of individuals and their learning processes within the educational system (Berliner & Calfee, 2013), presenting

itself as natural support of the proposals developed by the pedagogy.

Relationships between education and development have been equally important to the design of better pedagogical practices in the classroom. Child developmental psychology provides, in the first place, detailed knowledge about how children learn. Without this knowledge, the pedagogical strategies are led by preconceptions or partial perspectives from the educational agents about which are the better ways to teach the diverse school content. For instance, repetitive activities to memorize arithmetic operations usually ignore the importance that conceptual understanding has for children in gaining mathematical fluency (Baroody, 2006). Secondly, child developmental psychology provides essential knowledge about the diverse learning trajectories that children could follow (Clements & Sarama, 2014). During the development, the learning process of school content does not go forward in a disorganized way but can be observed by taking different routes. Knowing these routes allows the educational agents to design better focused and structured activities respecting the thinking characteristics of children.

Understanding the individual within the educational area as someone who is continually changing, it is possible to establish the importance of which variables affect the educational process, as well as how they are affecting, and accept that these influences have effects on them within an interactive social place on multiple levels (Kuhn, 2015). Within this dynamic, the concepts of cognitive development, cognitive change, and dynamic systems emerge as fundamental concepts, which underpin the educational dynamic *in situ*, establishing as bridges, the connection between psychological and educational knowledge (Turner, 2017). That is how the conception of the subject as multicausal, multidimensional, and interactional arises, making the notion of the educational act as something complex.

The current special issue of *Universitas Psychologica* presents articles that investigate relevant topics to educational psychology and its

development, such as the reliability and validity of the instrument, Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (Caycho-Rodríguez, et al., 2018), the relationships between psychology and education in Chile between 1860 and 1930 (Salas, Scholten, Norambuena, Mardones, & Torres-Fernández, 2018), the educational provisions for gifted and highly able students in Victoria, Australia (Kronborg & Cornejo-Araya, 2018), the pedagogic strategies used by educators, which stimulate the development of active contexts in vulnerable environments (Sandoval, Moreno, Walper, Leguizamón, & Salvador, 2018), the self-construals as a differential predictor of meaning in life among Filipino university students (Daep-Datu, & Salanga, 2018), school engagement and its relationship with academic success (Gutiérrez, Sancho, Galiana, & Tomás, 2018), the effects of teachers' abuse on peer school harassment (Reyes, Valdés, Vera, & Alcántar, 2018), the psychometric properties of a cyberbullying questionnaire in an Argentinean sample (Resett & Gámez-Guadix, 2018), the self-concept and religious tendency in university students (Zurita-Ortega, et al., 2018), teachers' practices and representations on curricular materials (Soto & Travé, 2018), the relationship between core knowledge systems, growth and environmental variables (Rueda-Posada, Quiroz-Padilla, & Giraldo-Huertas, 2018), socioscientific argumentation and model-based reasoning (Gutiérrez, 2018), the transformation of motor conflicts through cooperative games in primary school (Sáez de Ocariz, Lavega, March, & Serna, 2018), and finally the perception of ability, challenge and relevance as predictors of cognitive and affective engagement in Colombian high school students (Ochoa-Angrino, Montes-González, & Rojas-Ospina, 2018).

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