

Book Review

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL LANDMARKS, (author) Elena Ancuța Santi. (PSIHOLOGIA EDUCAȚIEI. REPERE TEORETICE SI PRACTICE) University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018, 317 pages,

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The book *Educational Psychology. Theoretical and Practical Landmarks* by Elena Ancuța Santi PhD is structured as a psychology manual intended for both students and specialists in social and human sciences. The book is an introduction to psychology and its secrets. It privileges the great psychological and educational paradigms and stands out for its applicative character. The theories and concepts presented in this book may represent the starting point in the educational practice of the teachers.

With regard to the plan of the book, the author presents in 9 chapters some theoretical and practical landmarks of the educational psychology. The first chapter is dedicated to the general aspects relating to defining educational psychology and its role in the system of educational sciences. The next two chapters focus on the mental development of the child and getting to know their personality. These chapters include a presentation of factors influencing development, on the one hand, and cognitive, moral and psychosocial theories of the mental human development, on the other hand. In other three chapters the author presents aspects which relate to learning, in general, and efficient and personalized learning, in particular. There are also references to the impact of the learning theories on teaching and the psychological characteristics which may generate differences in learning. Two other chapters address the diversity of pupils and the implications of the self-image, self-esteem and self-knowledge on learning and general development of students. The last chapter is dedicated to the teacher and their role in the didactical process.

The book is written in a clear, comprehensible scientific language and highlights the author's expertise in the field of psychology. The list of documents and bibliographical sources used by the author to write this manual is substantial and increases the reader's confidence in the validity of the scientific content of the book. Moreover, it is extremely easy for the reader to verify the information in which they are interested, as the sources to which the author refers are mentioned in an appropriate manner. The scientific articles included in the bibliography, the books or the websites to which the author Elena Ancuta Santi refers emphasize a large variety of the bibliography both in terms of scientific publications and their actuality.

We will continue by reviewing below the themes discussed in each chapter of the book *Educational Psychology. Theoretical and Practical Landmarks*.

Introduction to Educational Psychology is the first chapter of the book in which Elena Ancuța Santi offers an overview of the system of educational sciences, the place of the educational psychology within this system, alongside other disciplines such as school psychology, pedagogical psychology, school and vocational psychology etc. Educational

psychology is defined by presenting some themes and concepts specific to educational situations. The theoretical and practical importance of Educational Psychology in preparing teachers for this career is also presented in line with the objectives of this discipline.

In chapter 2 *Psychogenetic and Psychodynamic Landmarks of Students' Development*, the author forays into the development of the human being from a biological, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual perspective, and indicates the role of the psychogenetic landmarks in identifying the child's normal mental development. The stadial nature, pictured as a psycho-behavioural image specific to a certain stage in the child's development, is presented from the perspective of the cognitive development (Piaget), psycho-social development (Erikson), and psycho-moral development (Kohlberg), and the author also highlighting the educational implications of such psychological theories.

In chapter 3, *Getting to Know the Student's Personality*, the author defines both the concept of personality, as integrating mental structure, and its main components which render each person different and unique. Getting to know the student's personality has a double stake: the teacher should have the basic knowledge required to understand different types of personality and learning profiles, knowledge which will enable them to adapt their pedagogy to the pupils with whom they work; as for the student, self-knowledge is a process bringing about benefits for identifying how they may get better at learning and, in particular, for identifying the aspects pertaining to the instructional act so as to improve them. To this effect, Elena Ancuța Santi defines, describes and analyses in relation to the educational process the structuring elements of one's personality such as temperament, character, aptitudes. Special attention is attached to intelligence, as general ability, as well as to creativity.

There are 3 chapters dedicated to learning and to mental and regulating mechanisms involved in learning: *School Learning* (chapter 4), *Energizing Mental Mechanisms of School Learning: Motivation and Emotionality* (chapter 5), and *Regulating Mechanisms of Learning* (chapter 8). Given that most behaviours are either acquired or influenced by learning, one of the themes favoured in the educational psychology is learning. When introducing this theme, the author uses a gradual presentation of the issues relating to learning: after providing explanations on their defining concepts, the author enumerates the main learning theories (behaviourist, cognitive, theories of social learning such as organizing theories) and then she covers the issues of metacognition. Elena Ancuța Santi defines the concepts of the learning psychology (in education), the basic principles in the learning process and the various learning types and styles.

The study of the fundamental learning combines notions of memory, motivation, knowledge, skills, strategies, contexts, differences and differentiations. The author dedicates the entire chapter 5 to motivation and emotionality and makes a statement from the very beginning on the importance of identifying the factors which may motivate students and facilitate their adjustment in school. The presentation of the theoretical aspects concerning motivation and emotionality is closely related to the purpose of their application in the instructional context with a view to optimising the didactic endeavour. Therefore, we see that the author lays emphasis on the role of the teacher toward increasing motivation for learning. The emotional state of the students is another factor which may influence the quality of students' participation to the teaching-learning process. The fear of school, the frustrations following the student's hypertrophied self-appreciation or the emotional stress emerged in a special school-related situation are only some of the aspects presented by Elena Ancuța Santi in order to pinpoint the involvement of the affective processes in learning.

Self-regulated learning continues to be a challenge in ensuring the students' success in school, a challenge which teachers may not escape. Knowing the main aspects regulating the school learning activity and their exploitation in the educational context is the main objective underlying the presentation of attention, will and language in chapter 8.

In students' view, the issues regarding learning implicitly lead to the study of differences and diversity. This is the reason why Elena Ancuța Santi presents certain learning situations and the strategies recommended to students using certain learning styles so as to facilitate coping with such situations in a better way. Chapter 6 focuses on *Diversity of Students* and provides at the end a presentation of the gifted children and their educational needs, without neglecting however the learning difficulties and the strategies recommended to students having such difficulties in order to be successful in school.

In chapter 7 the author remains loyal to the same perspectives of approaching students' learning. This time she lays emphasis on getting to know the student's personality and on optimising their personal development, as well as on the potential implications of self-image and self-knowledge, in general, on learning and general development of students.

The teacher-student relationship as stimulative educational factor is tackled in the last chapter of the book, entitled *Teacher's Personality*, where the author focuses on understanding the fundamental role of the teacher in the didactic process and in shaping the students' personality. The author speaks of redefining the role of the teaching staff, referring to the teacher's attitude to their students, to the teaching-learning act and even to themselves, in order to face up to the present challenges of the education.

In the Romanian scientific literature the books on educational psychology try to support and contribute to the development of this new field. There are numerous authors who feel the need to publish some papers; most of them focus on concepts and theories of reference in the educational psychology, on the one hand, and on application of such theories in the educational practice, on the other hand. The effort made by each author who has made significant contributions to the field of educational psychology is worthy of appreciation. A bibliographic research of the Romanian publications marketed over the last 20 years has helped me to become aware of the effort made by specialists in the field of psychology and educational sciences to publish over 30 books on educational psychology. By way of example, I have chosen a publication for each year, i.e.: Radu (2000); Jurcău (2001); Jude (2002); Cristea (2003); Crețu (2004); Sălăvăstru (2004); Dumitru & Ungureanu (2005); Albu & Petrescu (2006); Radu, Ionescu & Vasile (2007); Stănculescu (2008); Cozărescu & Ștefan (2008); Crahay & Chiriacescu (2009); Neacșu (2010); Anghel (2011); Paloș (2012); Cojocaru (2013); Cace (2014); Porumb, Negreanu & Crăciun (2015); Popescu-Mitroi (2015); Pânișoară, Sălăvăstru & Mitrofan (2016); Stănilă Anghel (2017); Neacșu (2018); Glăveanu & Chiracu (2018); Enea (2019).

The professors of all universities around the country have elaborated courses on educational psychology. Nevertheless, the results of their work have not been very visible. A possible explanation would be that the activity of the educational psychologists lacks the support of the Ministry of Education. The number of psychologists working in the educational field is insufficient in relation to the educational needs. Every year there are more and more learning and education-related challenges to face up to. They start in kindergartens and continue all the way through college. The intervention programmes concerning improvement of school performances, reduction of school absenteeism, reduction of aggression in schools, and the programmes oriented on students' personal development are only some of the interventional programmes which should be implemented in schools for the

common good of learning and education (Enea, 2019). There is a very high need of educational psychologists and every book mentioned above tries to make a contribution to this sensitive domain.

The book *Educational Psychology. Theoretical and Practical Landmarks* is meant to provide the basic notions that the students need in order to acquire the skills required to successfully manage learning. It is also a useful instrument for the teachers who seek to form or develop their skills required to adapt their teaching to the needs and characteristics of their students.

In conclusion, what characterises the book *Educational Psychology. Theoretical and Practical Landmarks* is beyond any doubt its pedagogical value, as it reflects the scientific maturity of the author, Elena Ancuța Santi PhD, who takes pride in a good career as university professor and a promising educational path in the field of psychology and theology.

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