

Book Review

Frameworks for Practice in Educational Psychology (Second Edition)

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The first edition of *Frameworks for Practice in Educational Psychology*, now almost ten years old, has been one of the go-to texts for anyone with a professional interest in educational psychology. It had an extensive, yet accessible, overview of Psychological approaches and frameworks for application to practice. The book scaled its way to the top of educational psychology course reading lists, undoubtedly bringing greater cohesion to the profession. Ten years on, the second edition builds on the strengths of the first, preserving the original chapters and introducing new ones that reflect the development of the profession in recent years.

The main executive frameworks in the first edition, such as the Mosen problem-solving model, the constructionist model of informed and reasoned action (COMOIRA) and the Woolfson et al. integrated frameworks remain largely untouched in this new edition, as do the legislative, ethical, therapeutic, theory and research-oriented frameworks. The chapters have been reordered, and five new ones have been added. These include increased emphasis on the role of evidence and the science of implementation in educational psychology (Chapters 2 and 5). As a scientist–practitioner profession, the importance of evidence-based approaches is clear, and the new Chapter 2 unpicks the nature of research, helpfully prompting towards the levels of “evidence awareness” to offer further reflection on the judgements we might make about information and how we use it. The ability to affect change is a fundamental aspect of the profession, so Chapter 5 on how best to create and sustain effective change in real-world contexts, is also valuable.

Another addition, “Organisational Psychology as a Framework for Practice in Educational Psychology” (Chapter 12), contributes important perspectives for educational psychologists (EPs) to work at an organisational level. It argues that there are often more pupils in need of individual support than support available, so if work can be done at an organisational level, it can potentially benefit more pupils and even prevent later difficulties. Also, with the changes to the educational landscape, such as authorities offering traded services, it is helpful for EPs to think about further ways to sell their services to schools. Schools may not realise that EPs can support at a “whole-school” level, and it may not be a role that EPs have fully realised themselves. Therefore, the chapter offers what is clearly some much-needed perspective of EPs’ roles as potential organisational change agents.

In the last ten years there has also been significant dialogue about mental health needs in society, which has prompted EPs to reflect how they are supporting the mental health of young people, and in schools. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014) makes it a statutory right for all children with an Educational, Health and Care plan to have their “social, emotional and mental health” needs assessed and supported. As such, it is timely to have a framework for practice specifically for promoting mental health in schools, especially one which gives a lot of realistic and helpful multi-dimensional perspective.

Anyone with a professional interest in educational psychology should consider this a fundamental text to be revisited throughout their career. To its credit, there are not many books specifically related to EP practice, so it is refreshing to have a book which offers an essential update on the profession as well as some perspectives to challenge the current paradigms of thinking. There is a good use of diagrams throughout, which offer an essential breakdown of the key models. All of the chapters have a strong theoretical or evidence-based rationale and were conceived by some of the leading scholars and practitioners of the profession.

However, to its detriment, it is a more academic read, so the casual reader might find other texts on the subject more accessible. It could also be said that many of the frameworks in the book are overly theoretical and hypothetical and, despite their efforts, do not relate to practice “as it really is”. It is still unclear how much the implementation of a framework in EP practice makes a positive impact. It is difficult to evaluate the amount to which they are used, and therefore their effectiveness and efficiency in practice (Wicks, 2013). It is hard to know how much EPs find the frameworks directly relevant to their practice, as in one study less than half of the EPs reported that they follow every stage of a framework (Kelly, 2006).

Overall, this book builds on the strengths of the first edition, preserving the original chapters and introducing new, highly relevant chapters. Bringing multiple paradigms of practice together in one volume, this text keeps up to date with the current thinking in the profession and offers new perspective, all the while attempting to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It will undoubtedly move the profession forward, and I have already seen it inspire discussion and reflection amongst service delivery and doctoral training cohorts.

References

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