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A Content Analysis of Developmental Psychology Sections of Educational Psychology Textbooks Used for Teachers' Education in Turkey

İbrahim Keklik[a]*

[a]Hacettepe University Faculty of Education, Department f Educational Sciences, Division of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Ankara 06800, Turkey

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental psychology sections of the most commonly used educational psychology textbooks with respect to; their use of politically correct language, epistemological styles, breath/depth of content, scope and utilization of up to date information. Content analysis was used to examine the textbooks. Results showed that the existing textbooks significantly lacked concern about non-discriminative/politically correct language; they were places in dualism; content typically introduced basic concepts and classic developmental theories. Findings, limitations of the study and implications for future studies and teachers education were discussed.
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1. Introduction

Countries allocate great deal of effort in improvement of their educational system in an effort to meet challenges of today's world. Part of this effort involves quality teachers' education. High quality training for teachers is believed to bring about desirable transformation in educational systems. As a developing country with a considerably large population of school aged-children, Turkey has been striving toward improvement of its educational system over half a century. In 1982, educational psychology was one of the mandated courses for basic teachers' education in Turkish faculties of education.

Considering that in almost every university in the country a faculty of education exists, the demand for text books in areas of basic teachers' education has raised considerably. As a result, last couple decades have witnessed a blooming in the number and variety of textbooks in development and learning psychology, guidance, appraisal and evaluation, principle and methods of education and other domains of teachers' education. In fact, due to this demand, some textbook publishers have published multiple books with the same tittles knowing and hoping to reach greater numbers of sales. On the other hand, the increased number in the books has also brought about some concerns. Faculty members teaching courses such as educational psychology are often confused as to which text to

* İbrahim Keklik. Tel.: 90-536579 63 01; fax: 90(312)297 85 50/51/53/54.
E-mail address: keklik@hacettepe.edu.tr

choose. Some are of the belief that majority of the books have no unique differences and are of almost identical content. Added to this concern is the fact that as an area drawing from a rich spectrum of disciplines, the field of educational psychology is one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving areas. The scope of this paper is limited to developmental psychology part of educational psychology textbooks will be discussed.

Textbooks are one of the most important elements of teaching and learning experiences. Despite growing diversity in educational resources and technologies, textbooks remain as the single most important support for teachers and students. Some authors go further to claim that "a singular testimony to the state of a science at a given time is an introductory textbook, which presents the field" (Mestre, Tortosa, Samper & Nácher, 2002. p. 810). From this line of reasoning, it could be hypothesized that developmental psychology textbooks taught in faculties of education are indicative of the state of the field of developmental psychology as understood by teachers' educators. An examination of developmental psychology sections of educational psychology textbooks will provide essential insight about the content of developmental psychology new generation teachers in Turkey are being taught. Thus, it can contribute enrichment of teachers' education by providing such feedback. Teachers' education in Turkey is provided at undergraduate level. This study is in part based on the premise that any efforts toward improvement of teachers' education can benefit from incorporating college student developmental theories (i.e., Perry, 1970; 1981). As such, the purpose of this study was to examine developmental psychology sections of educational psychology (or developmental and learning psychology) textbooks The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental psychology sections of the most commonly used educational psychology textbooks with respect to; their use of politically correct language, epistemological styles, breath/depth of content, scope and utilization of up to date information.

2. Methods and Procedures

This was a qualitative study using content analysis to examine 10 most popular educational psychology textbooks taught in colleges of education for teachers' training in Turkey. Since the estimated number of educational psychology (or developmental and learning psychology) books is between 10-20, examination of most commonly used ten books was determined as sufficient in being somewhat representative of books of their kind. Therefore, three popular bookstores in the city of Ankara were asked about their books with bigger numbers of sales. A number of ten books was determined based on their reports. It is worth noting that these tens books are among the most commonly used books and there is no definite evidence that they are the most popular books of their kind.

2.1. Procedures

After selection of the books, each book was examined chapter by chapter. Collecting data on the first criterion was done by simply looking at the name/title/number of authors. For the second criterion, each book was scanned chapter by chapter and numbers/dates of citations were recorded. On the other hand, for the remaining criteria chapters were read and examined one by one for each book and notes were taken. Then, information gathered on all the chapters and books, data, was organized interpreted. The books were examined according to the following criteria:

2.1.1. Number and Tittles of the Authors
Number and academic tittles of authors/editors of each book were identified.

2.1.2. Number and Dates of Citations
Textbooks were reviewed chapter by chapter citations were counted and the range of their dates were identified.

2.1.3. Generalizations without empirical support
Statements in the books were reviewed to determine as to what degree claims were made (particularly those of causality) without support of current research.

2.1.4. Use of Politically Incorrect/Discriminating Language
The degree to which textbooks use offensive, judgmental, discriminating language in terms of gender, sexual-orientation, race, social class, culture, disability age and the like were examined. In addition, to what degree books

included needs, characteristics, perspectives and other unique aspects of diverse populations in their discourse were investigated.

2.1.5. Scope of Development

Each textbook's content was analyzed to determine the degree to which it utilizes a life-span perspective in human development.

2.1.6. Breath and Depth of Content

Textbooks were examined in order to identify richness and complexity of their content. More specifically, books were classified in terms of the degree to which they included basic concepts, theories and stages of development; inclusion of literature and findings beyond classic theories; and inclusion of information on how developmental knowledge acquired (methodologies), criticism of theories, critical views on existing theories and sufficient use of recent empirical findings.

2.1.7. Placement in Epistemological Categories

If a book merely presents basic concepts and theories of developmental psychology it was categorized in dualism. Along with doing so, if a book presents multiple points of views about the presented information, it was placed in multiplicity. On the other hand, if a book also highlights how knowledge can be affected by circumstances (contexts), culture, points of view and time, it would be placed in the multiplicity category. For practical reasons only first three categories of Perry were used and the fourth category (commitment in relativism) was not included in the analyses.

3. Results

3.1. Number and Tittles of the Authors

Among the ten textbooks five had 1 author, 1 had two and the remaining four were editorial work with multiple writers. Editors of the texts with multiple writers, single authors and the two authors who wrote 1 of the books were all full professors. Books with editorial work had writers with various academic tittles.

3.2. Number and Dates of Citations

The average number of references used for each chapter of the books ranged between 4 and 21 (Table1). The range of these resources dates was 1932 and 2007.

Table 1 Average number of references used in each chapter and the range their dates

Books	Average #references	Oldest Reference	Newest Reference
Book 1	8	1932	2000
Book 2	7	1962	1990
Book 3	21	1959	2005
Book 4	8	1924	1996
Book 5	11	1943	1994
Book 6	11	1960	2002
Book 7	1	1986	1993
Book 8	18	1965	2007
Book 9	11	1940	1994
Book 10	4	1950	2004

3.3. Generalizations without Empirical Support

Overall, the books appeared not paying sufficient attention to making claims based upon empirical evidence from current research. Some examples are shown below:
Book 1: **c**hapter IV, "Children at this stage (school age) start to identify with their sexual identities" (p.87). Real recognition of social norms and thus social adaptation emerges (in school age children, p. 87).. motivation for industrious behavior comes about and thus their motivated to succeed" (p.87). Book 2: "Older children are less likely than younger ones to be affected by divorce (p. 12-13). Book 3: More use of literature than usual, however most citation are usually from other similar books as opposed to research studies. Book 4: While mentioning authoritarian parenting (p.15) it is claimed that "children who cannot develop a sense of selfhood (due to parental control) will inevitably become dependent and passive individuals." Likewise, while arguing how formal education contributes to cognitive development and thus human development in general, it is argued that (chapter 3 pages 49-50) "science and arts are the most meaningful and elite activities that make human life worthwhile…individuals whose cognitive developments peak have lives intertwined with science and arts..thus the individual can self-actualize by utilizing boundless sources of science and arts." Book 5 uses frequent use of generalizations such as "although education has important contribution to it, individuals with higher cognitive power are more likely to be divergent thinkers and those with lower cognitive power are more prone to being convergent thinkers" (p.173,). Book 6 used significantly more use of references are used, however most citation are usually from other similar books as opposed to research studies. Book 7 introduces classical concepts and theories no evidence regarding their contemporary validity. In chapter 6 one mention of citation on boys' decreased achievement due to authoritarian parenting (the citation mentioned is an educational psychology book in English, 1987). Book 8 presents basic theories, provides more empirical support than usual, however vast majority of the references are similar resources (books) rather than empirical studies. Book 9 provides some research evidence on early maturation (in puberty) and makes several mentions of research evidence for claims on personality development. Book 10 elaborates on entry to puberty without any empirical evidence or no mention of contexts in which early or late entry to puberty occurs (p. 41-42).

3.4. Use of Politically Correct Language

In all the ten books, no mention of sexual orientation was found. Likewise, aside from few brief mentions of Gilligan's (1982) criticism for Kohlberg's theory, there was no discussion of gender with respect to topics covered. Aside from a few mentions of Kohlberg's theory being tested in several countries no significant evidence for a multicultural view of life span development was found in the textbooks. Furthermore, sufficient attention was not paid in the use of nonjudgmental, nondiscriminating language. Some examples are illustrated below: Book 1uses the phrase "opposite sex" whenever the mention of sexual or romantic relationships is made (i.e., p.113). Book 2 refers to children with down syndrome as "handicapped" (p. 4) ("özürlü" in Turkish). In book 3, while explaining the genital stage of Freud, the author notes that "the emergence of romantic relations with the opposite sex occurs at this stage" (p.215). Book 4 states that   "individuals' seek relationships with the opposite sex with the intent of marriage" (p.98) while elaborating on young adults' developmental task/needs. Book 5 refers to physical postures as "good" and "bad" posture as opposed to healthy/unhealthy (p.75); refers to the issue of overweight as "fatness" ("şişmanlık" in Turkish. p.101). In book 6 the author does make special effort to note that individuals do not merely establish intimacy with romantic partners but also can have friends from the same sex, he or she uses the term "opposite sex" while referring to intimacy with romantic sexual nature (p.132). In book 7, while elaborating on Erikson's last stage the author states that: "at this stage, individuals become more religious, they go to Haj and more involved in religious activities" (p.97) (Haj: (pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia) without any mention of who does so and their cultural specificity. In book 8, the author states that "the first function of this stage is to individual's task to establish closeness/intimacy with another person which can eventually lead to marriage" (p.120) while discussing Erikson's stage for young adulthood. In book the phrases such as "our country" (p. 104) and "our society" are used while referring to Turkish and society in Turkey. In book 10 the author discusses that "the individual leave aside his/her adolescent approach/view of the opposite sex and seeks/needs to establish a marriage on the foundations of real love and sharing" (p.68) while elaborating on Erikson's developmental crisis for young adults.

3.5. Scope of Development

With the exception of only one textbook in which cognitive development also included adult development stages of Kegan and exception of Erikson's stages, there was no mention of development beyond adolescence.

3.6. Breath and Depth of Content

Three categories of books were identified in terms of richness and complexity of their content: (a) books with basic concepts/theories, (b) books with information beyond basic concepts/theories and (c) complex/contemporary book which refer to books with basic concepts/theories, information about methodologies used, criticism of existing theories and views, multicultural and nondiscriminating language/content and empirical findings. The first group was books which simply introduce basic concepts, theories and stages of development (book #1; book# 2; book# 3; book# 6; book#8 book#9; book# 10). Such books merely presented this content without adding any discussion, raising any questions or significant criticisms or incorporating research and developments of last several decades. These books were typically consisted of five chapters: basic concepts/principles of development; physical development; cognitive/language development; personality development and moral development.

The second group of books (book# 4; book#5; book#7) include, in addition to the content mentioned for the first category of books, detailed information on perception, memory, anatomical information ranging from skeleton system to pancreases; emotion development; sexual development; detailed information on sexual education; styles of reasoning/perception; theories of intelligence etc. Books in this category often incorporated information about from other areas of psychology or education. With the exception of some chapters of the 10 books, content that can be included in this category was not closely related to developmental psychology or recent developments and research in the field.

Only a few chapters (of book #8) could hardly be included in the third category but no books could be fully included in this category. For example, in order for a book to be included in this category, the information presented should not only include typical content of contemporary books of life-span development but also every claim made in the content should be discussed based on up to date empirical evidence.

3.7. Epistemological Style

The reviewed textbooks were examined according to epistemological positions of William Perry. For practical reasons, only the first three main categories of Perry were used instead of nine categories: (1) dualism; (2) multiplicity; and (3) relativism. Majority of the ten textbooks were placed in the dualistic category (book #1; book# 2; book# 3; book# 5; book# 6; book# 7; book# 9; book# 10), a fewer number was identified as books of multiplicity (book# 4 and book#8) and none were placed in further categories of Perry.

4. Discussion

Since no studies on content analysis of developmental psychology books were found, comparisons with previous studies are not possible. Therefore, results will be discussed briefly without inclusion of such comparisons. Authors of books being full professors could be due a publishers' preference so as to enhance their chances in marketing of the books. Overall, citations (references) used in the textbooks were old, usually dated earlier than 1990. However, the study could have used mode instead of range. Mode would provide a better measure of common dates of references. Given that empirical support for claims made in the books was highly scarce, this might reflect a view of undergraduate textbooks as nonscientific educational resources. In other words, author might view a developmental psychology textbook as essentially introducing basic concepts without much input from empirical work in an effort to keep these introductory books simple for undergraduate students. Given that no significant care was found regarding use of a politically correct, nonjudgmental, nondiscriminating and multiculturally sensitive language could be a reflection of a lack of such a contemporary understanding of human diversity. The finding that books did not have room for adult development might be in part be due to the understanding and assumption that education has to do with kindergarten through high school and thus educational psychology should deal with human development until the end of adolescence in order to contribute to teacher's understanding of their students' developmental needs. A second reason could be that traditionally scientists and even developmental psychologists (i.e., Freud, Piaget etc.)

viewed human development as a process of becoming adults. Thus in a sense they presumed that development was completed at the end of adolescence. Hence, there was no need for examination of developmental changes beyond this stage. Another reason could be that authors of the textbooks are perhaps not from the area of educational/developmental psychology thus may lack a contemporary life-span view of human development as well as knowledge of the work done beyond classical theories most of which had come about prior to 1970s. On the other hand, one can argue that providing a life-span perspective on human development can provide a more well-rounded perspective. Furthermore, as contemporary developmental psychologists often claim, an integration of findings of developmental psychopathology can also inform normative development and deepen teachers' understanding on complex processes of development. Overall, developmental psychology textbooks introduced basic concepts and theories of development. There was a lack of theories and concepts that came about since the 1970s such as temperament, pruning, equifinality, multifinality, shared and nonshared environments, contextual and multicultural approaches to life span development. The ways in which information is presented exemplifies a certain way of relating to knowledge. In other words, if merely traditional theories of development are presented without information on their methodologies, crosscultural validity, criticism and a presentation of information from multiple perspectives, the reader is essentially viewed as a receiver of information rather than a maker of meaning. Such a way of presenting information thus is likely to perpetuate and promote a dualistic way of approaching knowledge, which is not sufficient for university graduates (teachers) of 12th centuries. Hence, the examination of 10 developmental psychology textbooks (sections) revealed a remarkable need for books written from contemporary perspectives so as to promote quality of teachers' education. Several limitations of the study are worth mentioning. One, the study was done only by one researcher and thus lack presence of multiple perspectives. Two, books were not directly compared to best examples of their kinds (from other countries). Three, multiple epistemological views could be incorporated along with Perry's theory. Finally, inclusion of perspectives and evaluations of some of the authors of the books could also provide valuable insight.

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