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Editorial. The *International Journal of Educational Psychology*: Psychological Research for the Twenty-First Century

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Editorial. The *International Journal of Educational Psychology*: Psychological Research for the Twenty-First Century

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It is increasingly acknowledged that research should serve the public good. The international scientific community mainly agrees that scientific inquiry should inform ways to address the most important social challenges. This priority has left behind the old debate between descriptive and normative science, and between basic and applied research. The discussion is now focused on how to make scientific findings more relevant and useful in everyday life. Commitment to this social turn is a central reason for the emergence of the *International Journal of Educational Psychology (IJEP)*.

More than fifteen years ago, in *The Culture of Education*, Jerome Bruner (1996) stated that research about teaching and learning processes in pursuit of particular goals that takes into account the cultural setting of development is the stuff not only of *good policy research* but *good psychological science* (p.176). It is that kind of psychological research and science which IJEP aims at disseminating. IJEP publishes works that do not only provide new insights about the psychological mechanisms involved in most pressing problems in education, such as school failure and disengagement, but the journal is mainly concerned with what is –in Bruner’s words- *Possible*, that is, IJEP shares how we can successfully tackle developmental threats to ultimately foster all students’ learning. It is the *Possible* what administrators, policy-makers, educators, children, adolescents, and their families need to know for their activities in all the myriad of environments where learning and development take place every day and for every individual around the world. Accordingly, scientific

studies of both qualitative and quantitative nature that deepen on psychological and socio-cultural strengths, actions, and programs that overcome threats to learning and development and open up opportunities for better education are of much interest for the *International Journal of Educational Psychology*.

Under any circumstance no child or adolescent should be deprived from an education that aids flourishing all her or his capacities and developing strongly at social, cognitive and emotional levels. Yet this right is rarely performed universally. One reason is because despite we have accumulated much understanding about how people learn and develop best, up to date, this knowledge has not been applied enough into creating suitable teaching and learning approaches, learning environments, and curricula. This disconnection between scientific research and practice in the field of learning and instruction is quite alarming. Unless instruction in schools takes into account evidence from research in educational psychology and in other educational sciences, educational systems will keep failing students from most vulnerable groups and will discourage their educational expectations. As researchers in educational psychology we should address this detachment between scientific research and educational practice. The *International Journal of Educational Psychology* is committed to do so. It contributes to keep lifting some educational practice above the level of supposition through publishing theoretical analyses and empirical studies of school and non-school learning environments that have proved to be *tools*, in Vygotsky's (1978) sense, that boost development. The final aim is that IJEP articles and reviews aid effecting evidence-based changes in education.

All the aforementioned principles (social utility of psychological research, the need for studying the Possible, and evidence-based education) are reflected in this inaugural issue, which starts "on the shoulders of giants" (Merton, 1965) with an article written by Dr. Jerome Bruner. Bruner sets the bases for the psychological study of educational processes; he claims that culture or mind cannot be understood without taking into account how they interact with each other in a given context, as it is through culture that we transcend our biological constrains. Accordingly, Bruner warns us that the study of mind apart from the "possible worlds" created by culture falls short to understand cognition. The *International Journal of Educational Psychology* acknowledges this dialectic and provides a forum for the communication and discussion of new "possible worlds" created through scientific discovery and which make positive development and enhanced learning available to all. This translates into the

publication not only of analyses of existing problems and constrains for better learning and development –the *Established*, for Bruner-, but also, and mainly, of social and cultural creations that can transcend those barriers –the *Possible*-.

This dialectic approach is evidenced in the findings reported in the article by Stephen Quintana. In his study of sojourner children's understanding of nationality from a developmental point of view, Quintana found that such understanding was influenced, on the one hand, by chronological age and, on the other hand, by degree of cross-national experience. Issues of national, racial, and linguistic identity were found to be affected by age, but culture played an influential role as identifications based on racial salience were different depending on degree of exposure to different cultures. This finding illustrates another central postulate in Bruner's article: the need for psychology to study behaviour and mind in their context. This idea finds its roots in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of development, and today it is supported widely among central developmental psychologists (Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Quintana's paper also illustrates the aim of IJEP of publishing articles that move us forward in the state of the art regarding central educational psychology issues and social challenges. Quintana presents a new developmental model of sojourner children's understanding of nationality, a relevant topic in societies which are increasingly diverse and require intercultural understanding to advance.

The article by Robert Sternberg shows another central principle of IJEP discussed before: the need for education to be grounded in research findings. In his article, Sternberg argues that much teaching is ineffective because it is not applied in an ethical manner. The shortcoming of schools for developing ethical reasoning in children has had negative effects in society. But Sternberg's analysis goes beyond shedding light on the problem. Sternberg announces both the *Possible*: ethical reasoning can be taught across the curriculum, and the tool to turn the possible into experience: an eight-step model of ethical reasoning. Schools do not need to try out ways to enhance the development of ethical reasoning in children; now they have an evidence-based model to be effective in that regard.

This possibility approach is also well illustrated in the article by Rocío García. Her paper presents the theory of dialogic learning, an innovative learning theory in line with the contemporary dialogic turn of the learning sciences. García deepens into this theory through analyzing specific ways in which some principles of the theory manifest and which have proved to be successful in raising the academic achievement of children from vulnerable

backgrounds. Further, García's article responds to another core principle of IJEP, the one about making research relevant for the public. García proves that the inclusion of the voices of people from ethnic minorities in the research process, in close dialogue with researchers, eventually improves students' learning and the school-community relations. As a whole, García's article combines what Bruner refers as *good psychological science* and *good policy research*.

IJEP also publishes reviews of books that share a new sight on central psychological and educational issues. As a first example of this, Molina reviews Gardner's book *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed. Educating for the Virtues in the Twenty-First Century*. Dr. Gardner claims that as societies have undergone tremendous changes over the past decades, the three classical virtues that have guided human thoughts and behavior throughout history have also experienced an important transformation. Therefore, Gardner claims that if schools are to cultivate these virtues in society, the teaching of truth, beauty, and goodness should be re-conceptualized. Importantly, Gardner shares how this can be done.

Overall, the set of articles and the book review that make up this first issue of IJEP serve the general commitment of the journal to contribute from scientific research in psychology to an education that simultaneously provides excellence in learning and enables personal development for all. For IJEP, this commitment is not a question of choice but the task of psychological research for the twenty-first century.

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