

# education review

a journal of book reviews

[reseñas educativas \(Spanish\)](#)  
[resenhas educativas \(Portuguese\)](#)

This review has been accessed **514** times since June 12, 2008

**Salkind, Neil J. (Ed.) (2008) *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology*, 2 vols. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.**

Pp. 1022 \$350 (hardcover) ISBN 978-1-4129-1688-2

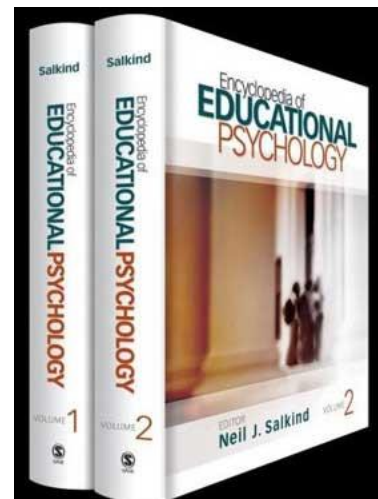
**Reviewed by Paula McMillen**  
**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

**June 12, 2008**

Editor Neil Salkind (University of Kansas) has overseen the compilation of yet another encyclopedia, this one on an area he claims has “few comprehensive overviews” (p. xxix). Further justification for this particular two volume work is that most information on educational psychology is “to be found in scholarly books and scholarly journal articles—usually out of the reach of the everyday person” (p. xxix), a statement that is key to several points in the review that follows. One could argue that the 2005, 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Education and Human Development* (Farenga & Ness, Eds.), Lee’s one-volume *Encyclopedia of School Psychology* (2005), or Salkind’s own 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Human Development* (2005) already offer ample coverage of this admittedly interdisciplinary field. In fact, since the *Encyclopedia of School Psychology* was also available for close examination, a comparison of the list of entries revealed greater than 30% overlap with the entries of this newer encyclopedia.

No actual definition of educational psychology is provided; rather, Salkind states in his Introduction that it is a “special field of endeavor because it strives to apply what is known about many different disciplines to the broad process of education” (p. xxix). He goes on to say that generally it addresses topics such as human learning and development, motivation, measurement and statistics, and curriculum and teaching. Fortunately, one of the contributors, William Wiener, offers a more focused definition in his entry on Ethics and Research. Wiener suggests that, “educational psychology...[addresses] the affective, cognitive, and behavioral attributes of learners” (p. 356). The encyclopedia would have benefited from adhering more closely to this definition in selection of topics.

**Target Audience**



In addition to the publication rationale mentioned earlier, Salkind repeatedly makes clear that the primary audience for this publication is general readers. He states, “A primary goal of creating this set of volumes was to open up the broad discipline of educational psychology to a wide and general audience. That’s why you will find topics that are of particular interest to the general public...” (p. xxx). An additional stated goal “is to share this information in a way that is, above all, informative without being overly technical or intimidating.”(p. xxix) Presumably this determined the editorial decision not to include in-text citations or a list of references for the entries, although this was somewhat inconsistently implemented.

### Topic Selection and Coverage



**Neil J. Salkind**

There are 280 topical entries, with two additional “See” references in the List of Entries. Topics were initially generated by asking “experts in the general field, as well as the more specific areas” (p. xxix). The editor goes on to emphasize his target audience’s role in this process. “The underlying rationale for topic selection [is to] ...share subjects that are rich, diverse, and deserving of closer inspection with an educated reader who may be uninformed about educational psychology... We tried to ensure that these entries included topics that would be of interest to a general readership and not terms that were too highly technical or too far removed from the interests of the everyday reader... That’s why you will find topics that are of particular interest to the general public, such as vouchers, Head Start, divorce, learning communities, and charter schools” (pp. xxix-xxx). There are no biographical entries but several that address the work of major theorists and practitioners such as Vygotsky, Montessori, Maslow, Kohlberg, Piaget, Erikson, and Bloom.

Several topics were not addressed that seem pertinent to this field, such as an entry addressing the relative influence of nature versus nurture or genetic versus environmental factors, a discussion of adjustment disorders, self-concept, and single-parent families. Several topics would seem to warrant longer coverage—such as the barely two-page entry on Acculturation—or are missing key information. For example, it seems critical to discuss the seminal contributions of John Bowlby when talking about Attachment, yet his work is not mentioned in the entry or listed as Further Reading. One would also hope to find some discussion of the impact of single-sex educational settings on learning in the discussion on Gender Bias, or at least a referral to the encyclopedia’s own entry on Single versus Coed Education. Some topics seem too long and/or too technical given the target audience. For example the article on American Indians and Alaska Natives goes into extensive detail on history and socio-political context—more than is needed to understand their import for educational psychology issues with these populations. Likewise the entry on English as a Second Language provides detailed history when the coverage could have been shifted to current issues. There are three lengthy entries on overlapping topics: Communication Disorders, Language Disorders, and Speech Disorders. Reducing redundancy of coverage, for example on specific language impairment, and reducing the overly technical details, especially in the entry on Speech Disorders, could have shortened the entries or even eliminated one. Here’s one particularly nice example of non-general-audience explanation (although there were many possible choices) from Speech Disorders, “Children learning to speak using a vocal tract that is hypotonic, hypertonic, or of varying tone will have a much more difficult time meeting the articulatory postures expected to produce recognizable phonemes” (p. 929). Other topics seem to be redundant or even superfluous such as the admittedly short entry for Calculator Use, which gives a brief history of calculators’ development as statistical analysis tools and concludes by saying they are no longer in use. Likewise the entry on Certification discusses the process without really tying the topic to educational psychology. Often times one would wish that authors had endeavored to make more explicit connections to the central concerns of educational psychology, as was the case with the entry on Expert Teachers.

## **Contributors**

There are 314 names in the list of contributors, accompanied only by an institutional affiliation and no position title. Affiliations are almost exclusively universities with half a dozen exceptions (Rand Corporation, an ESD, a private school, ETS, 3M Company and an “independent consultant”) and contributors are predominantly from the United States with some representation from Canada, England and Australia. The editor claims that the entries are written by “talented experts” (p. xxx), although there is no simple way to verify this. A number of the experts turn out to be students who nevertheless serve as first or second authors on numerous articles. There is also no finding aid to determine which entries have been written by a particular contributor, without going to the end of each entry to find the contributor’s name.

Given the editor’s repeated emphasis on the expertise of the contributors and the lack of information beyond institutional affiliation, the “expert” status of 20% of the entries (every fifth entry,  $n = 56$ ) was checked by conducting author searches, for publications on the topic of the entry, in two major education and psychology databases, ERIC and PsycInfo. GoogleScholar was checked if nothing was found in either of the databases. On topics where it seemed likely that there might not be good representation in mainstream literature, alternatives were sought; for example, the author of *American Indians and Alaska Natives* was searched in *Ethnic Newswatch* as well. Occasionally no publications at all were found for an author (e.g., Altenhofer, Arrington, Clerkin, Drefs, Jackson, Rasmussen, Rouse Arndt); in other instances, the author might have several publications but none appeared to be topically related. For example the authors of the entry on the Cultural Deficit Model had publications on bullying and math blogs. In 41% of the entries examined, the first author was not an “expert” by this set of criteria; 56% of these “non-experts” were sole authors. Of the remaining entries (those with more than one author), 40% of the second authors were also not “expert;” although for one entry (*Early Child Care and Development*), the third author was an “expert.” Using less rigorous criteria to select contributors is particularly troubling because of the editorial decision which precluded the use of in-text citations as evidence for statistics and assertions. One exception to this practice was found (entry on *Home Education*) but even that article did not provide references for all the studies cited. This is not to say that “non-experts,” as defined for this review, can’t write good encyclopedia entries. For example, William Wiener, a prolific researcher on visual impairment, wrote a competent, detailed and useful overview of *Ethics and Research*, even though this is not his area of specialization. Nevertheless, the sample results raise questions about the authority and credibility of contributors.

## **Organization**

The alphabetic List of Entries is followed by a Reader’s Guide, which is a topical arrangement of entries: Classroom Achievement; Classroom Management; Cognitive Development; Ethnicity, Race, and Culture; Families; Gender and Gender Development; Health and Well-Being; Human Development; Intelligence and Intellectual Development; Language Development; Learning and Memory; Organizations; Peers and Peer Influences; Public Policy; Research Methods and Statistics; Social Development; Teaching; Testing, Measurement and Evaluation; Theory. There is a note about the editor, followed by a list of contributors. An Introduction by the editor precedes the alphabetically arranged entries. Each alphabetic section is introduced by a quote, some of which seem pertinent and some merely puzzling, such as these: the B section has this quote from Jacob Braude, “Always behave like a duck—keep calm and unruffled on the surface but paddle like the devil underneath;” this proverb introduces the R topics, “He who lends a book is an idiot, He who returns the books is more of an idiot;” and for the S’s we get “First you take a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes you,” from FSK Fitzgerald. The entries are followed by a lengthy (68 pages) index; encyclopedia entries are in bold, but the numbering system (a volume number followed by a colon and then page number(s)) is not explained at the beginning of the Index which would have been helpful, especially for general readers. In spite of its length, the index was still missing some key terminology. Some examples of terms that would potentially be of interest to general readers and/or important in the field of educational psychology include, for

example, abuse and/or sexual abuse, ability, accommodation, adoption, adjustment disorder, assimilation, attention, environment, genetics, laterality, mastery, nutrition, punishment, psychometrics, resilience, self-injurious behavior, single parent families, television and/or media, and violence. Many of these topics are discussed in various entries, for example, adjustment disorder on p. 239 or punishment on p. 88, or are even the topical entry, for example, School Violence and Disruption, Malnutrition and Development.

Entries are arranged alphabetically and range in length from 1,000 to 5,000 words. A 20% sample translates this to a range from a half page (Mode; Stanine Scores) to seven and a half pages (School Violence and Disruption). Volume 1 covers alphabetic entries A – H; volume 2 repeats the exact same format for entries I – Z, except that the list of Contributors and introductory material are absent. Within each entry, there may be headings—and even subheadings if it is a longer piece—and the name of the author(s) follows the text. As mentioned earlier, an editorial decision was apparently made to eschew in-text citations, probably based on writing this work for non-scholarly readers. Following each entry is a *See also* section which typically lists other entries in the encyclopedia that are related to the topic. However, there were many instances when key topics seemed to be missing from these lists. For example, no reference is made to Intelligence Tests following the entry on Aptitude Tests and vice versa, no mention is made of Conduct Disorders in the *See also* for Behavior Disorders, no mention is made of Goals after the discussion of Failure, and Validity is missing from the *See also* following Reliability. A list of Further Readings closes out each entry; the suggested readings are supposed to support further exploration according to the editor. This was an area where there was a lot of inconsistency in what was provided. Given the publication's target audience, one would expect to find reasonably current, non-scholarly books—that could perhaps be found at a public library—and/or authoritative Web sites. On rare occasion this was true, but more often, the readings were articles in scholarly journals, scholarly edited books, specialized agency reports, and even unpublished dissertations (for example, see the list on p. 8)! In a twenty percent sample of the reading lists, only a handful of the 56 lists provided something approximating the ideal. The readings for Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* consisted of four books, one by Bloom (1956) and one a monographic report from the National Society for the Study of Education; the other two books were current and widely available (per a WorldCat search). The entry on Cliques closed with a list of five books, at least two of which were written specifically for general audiences. And the author of the entry Intelligence Quotient provided an extensive list of ten books on related topics. Some offered a mix of scholarly and popular publications such as the entry on suicide which provided a list with three scholarly journal articles and four books. Overall, these readings lists neither met the stated purpose of the editor, nor provided adequate information with which to verify information in the entry.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, it is a major undertaking and headache to compile and edit an encyclopedia for such a broad and multi-disciplinary subject. There are unending decisions about what to include and what to exclude to stay within certain size parameters. Choices have to be made about who the best people and next best people are to write the entries. A certain amount of arm-twisting and calling-in of favors is involved when the writing is unreimbursed as in this case. Experience tells us that it often becomes a monumental task to get all the contributions in on time and in a version that conforms to pre-determined criteria. That said, the general public (the specified target audience for this publication) looks to such a work for expert summaries of the evidence, research, and/or state of knowledge on the subject. Unfortunately, editorial oversight lapsed in some important ways: typographical errors (e.g., p. 35, *breath* instead of *breadth*; p. 52, *many* instead of *may*; p. 168, “and done by someone”; p. 182, “has pointed that”); repeated or redundant sentences (p. 74; p.483), confusing writing (p. 32, pp. 296-97), contradictory statements (pp. 149-150), overly technical language (entries on Correlation, Descriptive Statistics, and Speech Disorders), inconsistencies in voice (p. 483), less than thorough *See also* references (see previous examples), and the occasional inclusion of in-text citations when clearly the norm was not to have them.

Topics were included that shouldn't have been and potentially important discussions were left out. The authority of authors is undocumented and the choice not to use a more scholarly style of writing means that readers must take the content at face value without obvious avenues for verification of the information. The overall impression one is left with is that the quality is inconsistent. This is an encyclopedia that is probably worth having in larger public libraries or to serve some undergraduate collections if they don't already own the other encyclopedias mentioned. Librarians should caution users that the information should only be considered a starting place, much as we might with someone who wants to use Wikipedia. Since the suggestions offered up in "Further Readings" lists vary from very appropriate and accessible to obscure and nearly unobtainable, readers may need additional help to verify or expand the information provided in the entries.

## References

Farenga, Stephen J. & Ness, Daniel (Eds.). (2005) *Encyclopedia of Education and Human Development*, 3 vols. (2005). Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Lee, Steven W. (Ed.). (2005) *Encyclopedia of school psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Salkind, Neil J. (Ed.). (2006) *Encyclopedia of human development*, 3 vols. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

## About the Reviewer

Paula McMillen, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and Education Librarian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries. Her doctoral work in clinical psychology and her degree in library science have served her well in co-founding the Bibliotherapy Education Project. She has special interests in the uses of multicultural literature in developmental and clinical interventions and has also taught multicultural children's literature. She currently reviews for the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database and writes about bibliotherapy, teaching research skills in the writing curriculum, and information literacy.

Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*.



**Paula McMillen**

**[Editors: Gene V Glass, Kate Corby, Gustavo Fischman](#)**

~ [ER home](#) | [Reseñas Educativas](#) | [Resenhas Educativas](#) ~

~ [overview](#) | [reviews](#) | [editors](#) | [submit](#) | [guidelines](#) | [announcements](#) | [search](#) ~