



## REVIEW ARTICLE

# A Short Review of Psychoeducational Therapy

Kok Hwee CHIA 

Merlion Paediatric Therapy Clinic, Singapore  
Managing Principal Educational Therapist

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Corresponding author's email: [dr.chia@merlionpaediatric.sg](mailto:dr.chia@merlionpaediatric.sg)

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## ABSTRACT

Psychoeducational therapy (PsyEdTx) is a type of therapeutic approach that combines elements of psychotherapy with education. Generally, it is applied to help patients better understand themselves and, more importantly, to manage their specific mental health issues or socio-emotional challenges. However, it has also been used to treat learning and developmental challenges too. In this paper, a brief historical development of PsyEdTx from the beginning of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century AD through the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD and into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century AD is provided. The author has examined the differences among the three domains of PsyEdTx, psychoeducation and educational therapy (EdTx). In addition, he also elaborated briefly on what PsyEdTx has to offer. Finally, the author went on to introduce the Cattell-Horn-Carroll theory of broad and narrow cognitive abilities and how PsyEdTx has utilized the theory to its advantage in diagnostic assessment and understanding of an individual's cognitive pattern of strengths and weaknesses so that better treatment plans can be designed, intervention programs customized and appropriate educational strategies selected to meet the unique needs of individuals with learning disabilities, developmental disorders and/or behavioral challenges.

**Keywords:** CHC Theory/Model, Cognitive Abilities, Educational Therapy, Psychoeducation, Psychoeducational Therapy

## 1. WHAT IS PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL THERAPY?

Psychoeducational therapy (PsyEdTx) is a therapeutic approach that combines psychological counseling or therapy with education. Its aim is to provide individuals with knowledge and skills to better understand and manage their emotional, behavioral, or mental health issues. The approach in this form

of therapy often focuses on teaching coping strategies, communication skills, and self-awareness to help individuals improve their mental wellness and overall quality of life (i.e., sense of coherence). It can be particularly useful for individuals dealing with conditions such as anxiety, depression, or ADHD.

## 1.1 The Historical Development of Psychoeducational Therapy

The origin of PsyEdTx has a rich history that has evolved over time. Its historical development can be divided into the following seven phases (see Figure 1):

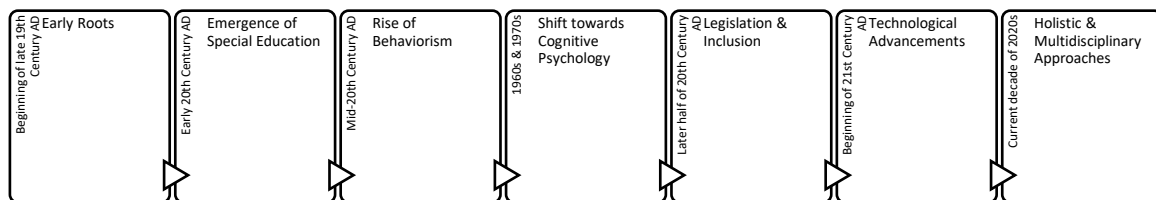


Figure 1. Historical Development of psychoeducational therapy

### *Phase 1. Early Roots (Beginning of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century AD)*

The origins of psychoeducational therapy can be traced back to the late 19th century when pioneers, such as Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard (b.1774-d.1838), a French physician born in Provence (Itard, 1801, 1806), who is perhaps best known for his work with Victor of Aveyron, and Maria Tecla Artemisia Montessori (b.1870-d.1952), an Italian physician and educator, who is also best known for her philosophy of education and her scientific writing on pedagogy (Montessori, 1965). Both Itard and Montessori had worked with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their respective approaches laid the foundation of PsyEdTx for understanding how tailored instruction could benefit such populations (Itard, 1802; Montessori, 2013).

### *Phase 2. Emergence of Special Education (Early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD)*

In the early 20th century, the field of special education (SpEd) began to take shape. Institutions for individuals with disabilities were established, and educators started to experiment with various teaching methods to address the unique needs of these students with special needs.

### *Phase 3. Rise of Behaviorism (During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century AD)*

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century saw the dominance of behaviorism in the field of psychology. This influenced PsyEdTx as it emphasized observable behaviors and led to the development of behavior modification techniques. The work of Burrhus Frederic Skinner (b.1904-d.1990), an American psychologist, behaviorist, author, inventor, and social philosopher (HBA, 2021; Skinner, 1948, 1972; Smith & Woodward, 1996), was particularly influential in this regard. The Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology at Harvard University (1958-1974), Skinner was considered the father of behaviorism.

### *Phase 4. Shift towards Cognitive Psychology (1960s-1970s AD)*

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a paradigm shift towards cognitive psychology. This shift brought about a greater emphasis on understanding the cognitive processes involved in learning and problem-solving, leading to more individualized and cognitive-behavioral approaches to psycho-educational therapy.

### *Phase 5. Legislation and Inclusion (Later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD):*

Throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, legislation like the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA or EHA; PL 94-142), a federal law that was enacted in 1975 requiring all public schools in the United States to provide equal access to education for children with disabilities (now renamed as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-2004). Since the implementation of the EHA (later IDEA), inclusive education has been widely promoted with the provision of federal funding for special education services. This legal framework has helped to shape the field of PsyEdTx by emphasizing the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities.

*Phase 6. Technological Advancements (Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD)*

The 21st century brought significant technological advancements, enabling the use of assistive technologies and innovative teaching methods to enhance PsyEdTx. Virtual reality, online learning, and personalized educational software have expanded the possibilities for tailored interventions.

*Phase 7. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Approaches (Current decade of 2020s AD)*

Today, the PsyEdTx has evolved into a holistic and multidisciplinary field. It integrates elements of psychology, education, counseling, and therapy to address a wide range of learning and emotional challenges faced by individuals of all ages.

In summary, the PsyEdTx has a diverse and evolving history, shaped by changing educational philosophies, psychological theories, legislation, and technological advancements. It will continue to change by adapting to the unique needs of learners, aiming to provide tailored support and promote optimal educational and emotional outcomes.

**2. PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL THERAPY VS PSYCHOEDUCATION**

The psychoeducation refers to the process of providing individuals (especially the caregivers) with information and education about psychological and mental health topics. It aims to increase their understanding of mental health conditions, symptoms, treatment options, coping strategies, and ways to improve overall well-being of those who are under their care. The psychoeducation is often used in therapy and support settings to empower individuals with their caregivers (often they are the family members and may include teachers) and vice versa to better manage their mental health and make informed decisions about their care. The psychoeducation for parents and teachers and the PsyEdTx for clients with special needs serve different purposes as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between psychoeducation and PsyEdTx

	<b>Psychoeducation</b>	<b>Psychoeducational Therapy</b>
<b>Abbreviation</b>	PsyEd	PsyEdTx
<b>Target Audience</b>	It is aimed at parents and teachers who interact with individuals with special needs, such as children with learning disabilities, autism, or behavioral challenges.	This therapy is designed for individuals with special needs themselves, such as children or adults with developmental disorders, emotional issues, or cognitive challenges.
<b>Purpose</b>	The goal is to provide knowledge and information about the specific condition or needs of the individual. It helps parents and teachers understand the condition better, its impact on the individual, and effective strategies for support and intervention.	Psychoeducational therapy aims to provide therapeutic interventions and support to clients with special needs. It focuses on improving their emotional well-being, coping skills, and overall functioning.
<b>Content</b>	Psychoeducation for parents and teachers typically covers topics like the nature of the condition, its symptoms, best practices for teaching or caregiving, and available resources.	The content of psychoeducational therapy can vary widely based on the individual's needs but may include social skills training, emotional regulation techniques, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and specific interventions tailored to the

In summary, the psychoeducation for parents and teachers primarily provides knowledge and guidance to support individuals with special needs, whereas PsyEdTx directly works with clients to address their emotional and developmental challenges. Both are valuable in helping individuals with special needs lead fulfilling lives, but they serve different roles within the support system.

### 3. PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL THERAPY VS EDUCATIONAL THERAPY: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Very often, the field of PsyEdTx is mistaken or confused with that of the educational therapy (EdTx). The respective developmental histories of both fields also overlap such that it is at times difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between the two (see Chua & Chia, 2023a, 2023b). The EdTx is a specialized form of therapy that focuses on helping individuals, typically children and adolescents, who are experiencing learning challenges or difficulties (Chia, 2000). The goal of EdTx is to address and overcome these challenges by providing targeted interventions and personalized support (see Kaganoff, 2001, for detail).

There are several differences between psycho-educational therapy (PsyEdTx) and educational therapy (EdTx). In the PsyEdTx, it combines the elements of both psychotherapy and education to address emotional, behavioral, and psychological issues that may be affecting a person's ability to learn and succeed in an educational setting. It also focuses on understanding and addressing underlying emotional and psychological factors that can impact learning, such as anxiety, depression, trauma, or attention disorders. Moreover, psycho-educational therapists often work with individuals who have learning disabilities or emotional challenges that affect their academic performance.

EdTx, on the other hand, primarily focuses on the educational aspects of learning difficulties. It is designed to help individuals overcome specific learning challenges and improve their academic skills. Educational therapists work on developing strategies and techniques to enhance a person's learning abilities. This can include remediation of learning disabilities, improving study skills, and adapting teaching methods to an individual's unique learning style.

While EdTx may address some emotional aspects related to learning difficulties, it typically does not delve as deeply into psychological or emotional issues as psycho-educational therapy.

The key distinction between PsyEdTx and EdTx lies in the scope and focus of each respective therapy. The PsyEdTx addresses emotional and psychological factors impacting learning, while EdTx is primarily concerned with improving academic skills and addressing specific learning challenges. The choice between the two may depend on the individual's needs and the nature of their difficulties.

#### 3.1 What Psychoeducational Therapy offers

As a specialized form of therapeutic approach combining elements of psychotherapy with education, the PsyEdTx can be used to help individuals better understand themselves and also to manage their specific mental health issues or emotional challenges. The key offerings of PsyEdTx are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. What psychoeducational therapy has to offer

No.	What PsyEdTx offers	Explanation
1	Education	Psychoeducational therapy provides individuals with information and knowledge about their mental health condition or the challenges they are facing. This includes understanding the symptoms, causes, and potential triggers of their issues.

2	Skill Building	It helps individuals develop practical skills and coping strategies to manage their symptoms or emotional difficulties. These skills can include stress management, problem-solving, communication, relaxation techniques, and more.
3	Self-Awareness	Psychoeducational therapy encourages self-awareness by helping individuals recognize their thought patterns, emotions, and behaviors. This self-awareness can lead to more effective self-regulation.
4	Normalization	Psychoeducational therapy encourages self-awareness by helping individuals recognize their thought patterns, emotions, and behaviors. This self-awareness can lead to more effective self-regulation.
5	Empowerment	Psychoeducational therapy empowers individuals to take an active role in their own well-being. It gives them tools and knowledge to make informed decisions about their mental health and seek appropriate help when needed.
6	Prevention	In some cases, psychoeducational therapy may focus on prevention, teaching individuals how to recognize early signs of mental health issues and take steps to address them before they escalate.
7	Group Support	Psychoeducational therapy may be offered in a group setting, allowing individuals to connect with others facing similar challenges and provide mutual support.

The specific content and goals of PsyEdTx can vary from individual to individual as they depend on individualized needs and the nature of their mental health concerns. This approach is often used in conjunction with other forms of therapy or treatment, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), or medication, to provide a more comprehensive approach to mental wellness care.

#### 4. INTRODUCTION OF THE CHC THEORY INTO PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL THERAPY

Briefly, the Cattell-Horn-Carroll theory of cognitive abilities (also known as CHC Theory in short), was first introduced in the 1960s and 1970s by several researchers, most notably the following three pioneers in the development of the CHC theory: (1) Raymond B. Cattell (b.1905-d.1998), a British-American psychologist, known for his psychometric research into intrapersonal psychological structure; (2) John L. Horn (b.1928-d.2006), an American scholar, cognitive psychologist and a pioneer in developing theories of intelligence; and (3) John B. Carroll (b.1916-d.2003), an American psychologist known for his contributions to psychology, linguistics and psychometrics. The CHC theory is a comprehensive concept or framework that aims to explain and categorize the various cognitive abilities that humans possess (Canivez & Youngstrom, 2019; Schneider & McGrew, 2018).

The CHC theory has become an important concept in the PsyEdTx as it has provided a more refined and detailed understanding of cognitive abilities. It identified different broad and narrow cognitive factors, such as fluid intelligence (Gf), crystallized intelligence (Gc), processing speed (Gs), and working memory (Gwm), among others.

The importance of the CHC theory in the PsyEdTx lies in its ability to help educators and clinicians in their assessment and understanding of an individual's cognitive pattern of strengths and weaknesses. By assessing these specific cognitive abilities, therapists and educators can design better treatment plans, tailor intervention programs and select appropriate educational strategies to meet the unique needs of individuals, especially those with learning disabilities or developmental disorders as well as behavioral challenges.

In essence, the CHC theory has revolutionized how professionals in the field of psychology and education approach screening procedure, assessment protocol, treatment plan design (e.g., as in the Learning Activity System; see Chia et al., 2013) and early intervention program implementation by providing a more nuanced and comprehensive framework for understanding cognitive functioning (Proctor, 2010).

## **5. THE APPLICATION OF CHC THEORY IN PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL THERAPY**

The CHC theory of cognitive abilities can be applied in PsyEdTx to assess and address a wide range of cognitive and learning difficulties in individuals. Below are some ways in which the CC theory can be applied:

### **5.1. Assessment and Diagnosis:**

The CHC theory provides a comprehensive framework for assessing an individual's cognitive strengths and weaknesses (Chua & Singh, 2022; Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011). Psychologists and therapists can use CHC-based assessments to diagnose specific cognitive deficits, such as working memory, processing speed, or verbal comprehension, which can guide in the design of a treatment plan.

### **5.2. Individualized Treatment Plans:**

Once cognitive pattern of strengths and weaknesses has been identified, therapists can design individualized treatment plans to customize individualized education programs to meet an individual's unique profile (Chua & Singh, 2022). For example, if a child has a deficit in working memory, the PsyEdTx might focus on strategies to improve this area.

### **5.3. Targeted Interventions:**

The CHC theory can inform the selection of appropriate interventions and strategies. For instance, if a child struggles with reading comprehension due to a weakness in phonological processing (a CHC factor found in the broad abilities of Ga-Auditory Processing), interventions can be designed to improve phonological skills.

### **5.4. Progress Monitoring:**

Regular assessment using CHC-based measures can track an individual's progress during therapy. This allows psycho-educational therapists to adjust their intervention programs and goals/objectives as needed to ensure optimal outcomes.

### **5.5. Educational Planning:**

The CHC theory can inform the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with learning disabilities (Chua & Singh, 2022; Proctor, 2010). It helps educators as well as therapists tailor instruction to meet a student's/client's specific cognitive needs.

### **5.6. Identifying Giftedness:**

The CHC theory can also be applied to identify gifted individuals by recognizing their exceptional cognitive abilities in specific areas (Warne, 2016). This can lead to more appropriate educational placements and enrichment as well as enhancement programs.

### 5.7. Career Counseling:

Understanding an individual's cognitive strengths can aid in pastoral care and career guidance (Beinicke, 2017; Metz & Jones, 2013). For example, a young adult with strong spatial reasoning skills (a CHC factor that can be found in either Gf or Gv) might be guided toward careers in engineering or architecture.

### 5.8. Rehabilitation:

In cases of brain injury or cognitive decline, CHC-based assessments can guide cognitive rehabilitation programs to help individuals regain their lost or impaired cognitive functions (Khalilabadi, Tajrobeh Kar, & Moghadam, 2020; Kotyrba et al., 2022).

### 5.9. Parent and Teacher Education:

Educating parents and teachers about the CHC theory can empower them to better support their children or students with learning difficulties (Lynch & Warner, 2013). It can lead to more effective teaching strategies and parental involvement.

In summary, the CHC theory of cognitive abilities offers a valuable framework for assessing, diagnosing, and treating cognitive and learning difficulties in the PsyEdTx. By understanding an individual's cognitive profile, psycho-educational therapists can tailor interventions and support to maximize his/her potential for improvement.

## 6. CURRENT TOPICS OF INTEREST IN PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL THERAPY

With the advancement of science and technology (especially in medicine and Artificial Intelligence) in the new millennium of this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the field of PsyEdTx is also growing and changing rapidly to catch up and tap on new discoveries (e.g., how neuroscience has unwrapped the mysteries of the human brain) and inventions (e.g., cloud-based video conferencing such as Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Voov, etc.), with key hot topics of interest that are being pursued in research and also for further development in the field. These selected topics of interest are listed in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Hot Topics of interest in PsyEdTx

No.	Topic of Interest	Description
1	Online & Teletherapy	The integration of technology in therapy, especially given the rise of online and teletherapy services.
2	Mental Health in Schools	Focusing on addressing mental health issues among students and creating supportive environments in educational settings.
3	Trauma-Informed Care	Approaches that recognize and address trauma as a critical factor in mental health and learning.
4	Neurodiversity	Embracing and supporting individuals with diverse neurological profiles, including ADHD, autism, and dyslexia.
5	Social & Emotional Learning (SEL)	Strategies to enhance emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills among students.
6	Cultural Competence	Ensuring therapists are culturally sensitive and aware of the unique needs of diverse populations.
7	Parent-Teacher Collaboration	Promoting effective communication and collaboration between parents and educators to support children's mental health.
8	Resilience Building	Techniques and interventions to help individuals, especially children, develop resilience in the face of challenges.
9	Assessment & Diagnosis	Ongoing research into improved assessment tools and diagnostic criteria for various educational and psychological disorders.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The field of PsyEdTx is still evolving and will continue to grow and change over time, so there may have been new developments or paradigm shifts in emphasis in the next few decades to come. It is always important for professionals in the field of PsyEdTx to continue to read, write and attend or participate in conferences, symposia, forums, workshops ... to keep themselves abreast of the latest knowledge and advancement made in this specialized domain of therapy.

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## 9. COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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