



Pearson

# The Mind's *Eye*



Issue 9



# From the Director's desk

## Philip Kurian

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings!

This month's newsletter focusses on the topic of 'Memory and Cognition' which is one of the most researched aspects of human psychology as the impact that it can have in the lives of individuals in all walks of life is quite great. We understand that assessing one's ability to learn, think, and recall is vital to be productive in life. Research on this topic has unlimited application in the fields of education, health care, technology, etc.

Although there are some individuals who have great memory and cognitive abilities who go on to be very successful in life, there are many individuals who are not so lucky. As we know, cognitive difficulties can range from Mild Cognitive Impairments (MCI) which causes a slight but noticeable and measurable decline in cognitive abilities to more severe difficulties, as in Alzheimer's Disease. This is being

identified more often, and mental health professionals around the world are trying to help these individuals cope with these challenges. Like all mental health issues, early identification of these difficulties can help individuals avoid serious problems later in life. Pearson assists professionals in their roles, by providing research-based tools to help the early identification, monitoring and treatment planning for individuals who present with these difficulties. Our endeavour is to continue to work with professionals in the field, in order to ultimately provide the required tools, to assist in this process.

With good wishes,

**Philip Kurian**  
Director and Country Manager  
Pearson Clinical and Talent Assessment



# Professional of the month

## Reena Sharma, M.Phil

Founder, The Mind Practice  
Psychologist | Rehabilitation & Forensic Psychology

Reena Sharma is the Founder & Practicing Psychologist of The Mind Practice. She has more than fifteen years' industry experience in Administration, Human Resources, and behavioral skill Training & Psychological therapies. She is a RCI, qualified Rehabilitation & Forensic Psychologist with expertise in psychological & forensic psychological therapies/Assessments as well as investigative techniques. She has undergone training for clinical psychology from Fortis Escorts Health care and has interned in Psychology division of Directorate of Forensic Laboratory, Gujarat. She is a registered Rehabilitation Psychologist with RCI, India.

Reena Sharma is currently a PHD scholar in Criminology involves working with violent offenders at Sabarmati Jail Ahmedabad. She is Master of Philosophy in Forensic Psychology, she is a trained therapist working in area of Addiction management and dealing with addictive behavior. She specializes in forensic psychology, rehabilitation psychology and counseling Psychology Hypnotic Modalities for Behavioral Resolutions Regression Therapies. She holds diploma in Integrated Clinical Hypnotherapy. An MBA in HRD. Additionally she has worked closely with Tihar Jail, New Delhi and Bhondsi Jail, Haryana as Consultant psychologists for convicts and Jail Management.

Reena has transformed the concept of clinical practice into a multifaceted program for transformation with customized responses, professional training modules and Forensic & psychological interventions using innovative techniques. She emphasizes a holistic approach towards intervention by addressing the emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and personal beliefs and spiritual dimensions of the client's program. She is

also working as a consultant Psychologist with various firms such as Optum, Sharan Foundation, City Police of Ahmedabad & Gandhinagar. She has been executing the Psychological Profiling for Police personnel Ahmedabad City Police on said projects referred by the commissioner's office. She has been involved in developing and training the police personnels on Victim Support Program for Ahmedabad City Police and have also established Psychological cell in police stations. Besides the same she has developed Prison Mental Well-being Program for Sabarmati Central Jail, and have established a Psychological cell inside the Sabarmati Prison. This cell works on various initiatives on the Mental Well Being of the Prisoners and Prison staff.

A prolific writer, her works have regularly been published in various newspapers and magazines like 'DNA Gujarat, The Suburb', lifestyle magazine, as well as in wellness column and Speaking Tree columns of 'The Times of India.

Her organization-The Mind Practices which is also an authorized training center for Pearson Clinical & Talent Assessments and work with various educational institutions like school and colleges for providing psychological solutions. With a firm vision Reena is attempting to integrate mental health into the psyche and experience of a society in such a way that mental health is given as much importance as Physical health and where mental illness is not stigmatized and misunderstood.

[connect@themindpractice.in](mailto:connect@themindpractice.in)





## Featured institute of the month

University of Kerala, Department of Psychology, Thiruvananthapuram

The Department of Psychology was started in 1957 in the University college campus at Palayam. The Department was shifted to Kariavatom in 1968. This was the pioneering Psychology Department in the State. Dr. E.I. George was the founding Head of the Department. Dr.P. Gopala Pillai, Dr. K. Devadasan, Dr. V. George Mathew, Dr. B. Dharmangadan, Dr. Krishnaprasad Sreedhar, and Dr. H. Sam Sananda Raj were former Heads.

The first course in the Department was M.A in Psychology. The Department has so far produced about 125 Ph.Ds. Over 200 scientific papers have been published in journals and the Department itself brings out a journal, "The Creative

Psychologist". About 200 Psychological tests have been standardised in the Department.

Members of the Department have authored popular academic books. The teachers write in popular periodicals and take part in television and radio programs as part of the extension work.

The Department has had several research projects on varied topics like:

- Role of Personality factors in academic achievement
- Measurement of family size norms

- Needs and problems of students
- Student unrest
- Psychological consequences of vasectomy
- Effect of unemployment on youth
- Educational problems of SC/ST students
- Developmental norms of children
- Aptitude tests
- Psychological interventions in Epilepsy and so on.

These research projects were sponsored by different agencies like NCERT, UGC, ICSSR and Department of Science and Technology. Teachers also attend and present papers at conferences. The Department itself has hosted several conferences. Some exhibitions for the general public have also been organized by the Department.

The Department has a testing and counseling centre catering to the needs

of the academic community and the society. In addition, a learning disability clinic is functioning in the department, which offers free service to school children having learning problems and their parents. The Department has a well-equipped laboratory and a testing center for assessment of learning disability and related problems. The library of the department has a large collection of back volumes of journals and old books.

The main thrust area of the Department has been Personality and Personal growth which spreads across the three formal specializations of Clinical, Organizational and Educational in the courses run by the Department. In addition, the department also undertakes detailed research on various aspects related to learning disability.



# Cognition & Memory

- Ann Choolackal

Manager- Product Development,  
R & D clinical Assessments.  
Pearson Clinical and Talent Assessment



Illustration by Lauren Rolwing

Often **cognition** and memory are used as synonyms and is even used interchangeably. However, these are, even though inter-related, not essentially the same. Cognition has different definitions and interpretations but so far the most influential is given by Neisser(1967). According to him, cognition refers to the mental process by which external or internal input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. As such, it involves a variety of functions such as perception, attention, memory, coding, retention, recall, decision making, reasoning, problem-solving, imaging, planning, and executing actions. Such mental processes involve the generation and use of internal representations to varying degrees, and may operate independently (or not) at different stages of processing. Furthermore, these processes can, to some extent be observed or at least empirically probed, leading to scientific investigation by means of methods like those used in psychology and cognitive neuroscience.

From the definition of cognition, it is clear that many processes that are assessed and studied in psychology like memory and intelligence are essentially cognitive processes or is part of cognition. Since these cognitive process operate in collaboration or

independently, as per the requirement of the task involved, it is not easy to track, observe or empirically study these processes. William James, father of experimental psychology, argued that a degree of vagueness can be beneficial to science when attempting new research directions (1890/1955). The vagueness that was essential in the early days led to different theoretical concepts and experiments. These variety of theories were tested, polished, revamped and consolidated over the years.

Consider **memory**, which is one of the most studied concepts in cognitive psychology. If we put together the latest understanding of memory we can say that it is a process that involve encoding, storage, decoding and retrieval. Encoding itself involves perception, attention and a myriad of sensory processes. Storage involves reasoning, planning, and rehearsals etc. Decoding involves same/ another set of broad processes like attention, imagery etc and then retrieval involves planning and executive processes. Now, right from sensation and perception to executive functions, a long list of processes are involved when we speak about memory itself.

The latest fMRI studies help us in building our knowledge about the area/brain connectivity involved in the different types of memory processing. This in turn will help us in rehabilitation and maybe in future, prevention of disorders of memory, like dementia. When the fMRI studies highlight the areas involved, the behavioral and emotional processes that are part and parcel of the human psyche, when memory is evoked, is the essential part of cognitive psychology. Thus, the tools that we are testing memory with, require the kind of sophistication to tap into all the sensitive areas that are involved.

Now, another concept that has monopolised attention of cognitive psychologists for decades, is **intelligence**. Hundreds of theories and controversies surround the concept of intelligence and continue to do so. Intelligence (if we try) in consolidation involves memory and most (if not all) other processes of cognition mentioned by Neiser. In a way, we can say intelligence is cognition, what makes it different from or rather only part of cognition is that, over the years we have developed methods by which we can quantify intelligence and the fact that learning from experience/environment and using it in day to day activities, is a major part of intelligence. Intelligence testing has come a long way from Terman's concept of mental age. Most of the tests used these days assess the test taker in different dimensions of intelligence. A set of complex, interconnected and co-ordinated processes are involved in a cognitive process like intelligence. Hence assessment of intelligence should cover (at least attempt) all major areas considered to be involved in the concept of intelligence.

Cognition, in effect, is the umbrella under which all the different processes like memory, intelligence, attention, learning, and executive function crowd together. Thus, when we speak about any of these processes it is cognition that we refer to and brain is the seat of cognition. It is fascinating that a small part of the human body can control, co-ordinate, manipulate, fabricate and add on to the existing or incoming data.

In a nutshell what we still 'know' about cognition for a fact is:

- It is a complex process involving many levels, stages, processes and systems.
- Sometimes these processes work independently and sometimes in an interconnected pattern.
- Further research and studies are essential to gain more understanding of the layers, processes and interconnections.

The current understanding of these processes does not look that different from the early findings. This again consolidates the fact that we need objective, standardized, empirically sound tools and measures to update and upgrade our knowledge of cognitive processes. These sophisticated set of tools will require skilled experts to navigate through human mind to unearth hidden details. Like William James said, let us be vague about the terms, yet methodical, organised and meticulous in our study of these processes.

# Solution Pad

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**WPPSI-IV**  
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**WIAT-III**  
WECHSLER INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT TEST™—THIRD EDITION

**WASI-II** INDIA  
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## Contact Us

**Pearson Clinical and Talent Assessment**

Phone: +91 9243600012 | Email: [info@pearsonclinical.in](mailto:info@pearsonclinical.in) | Website: [www.pearsonclinical.in](http://www.pearsonclinical.in)

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**Pearson Clinical & Talent Assessment**

A Wing 11, DivyaSree Chambers, 7th Floor, O' Shaughnessy Road, Bengaluru - 560 025, Karnataka, INDIA.