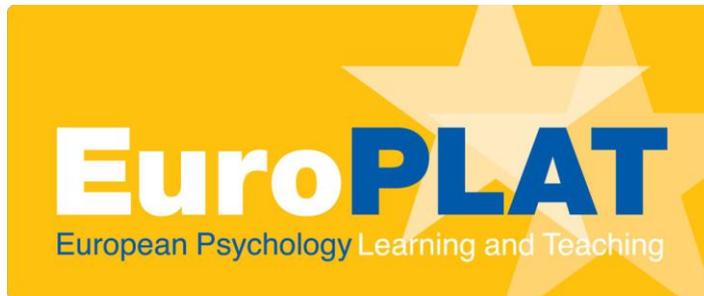




EuroPlat newsletter

December 2014



Seasonal greetings to all Europlat members!

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News

Jacqui Taylor (Associate Professor at Bournemouth University, committee member and former Chair of the British Psychological Society Division of Academics, Researchers and Teachers in Psychology, and former Honorary Editor of *Psychology Teaching Review*) is leading on the new Europlat funding application. There will be more news on progress in the New Year when the application is to be submitted.

In our last newsletter (March 2014) we reported that the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) was interested in greater contact with higher education in the rest of Europe. Dr Julie Hulme, the HEA's Discipline Lead for Psychology was hoping to set up a webpage and to re-launch Europlat activity with a view to offering a Europlat conference during 2015. Sadly, the HEA faced major and unexpected funding cuts shortly afterwards and have had to further reduce their commitment to supporting learning and teaching in individual disciplines. Julie has left the HEA but continues to be actively involved in learning and teaching at Keele University.

Undergraduate education in Europe

Many Europlat members contributed information that led to the article (Reddy, Dutke, Papageorgi and Bakker, 2014) reprinted here by kind permission of the British Psychological Society. Thanks for input go to:

- Mercè Clariana Muntada, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
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- Vesna Vlahović Štetić, University of Zagreb
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- Nebi Sümer, Middle East Technical University
- Daniel Süss, Zurich University of Applied Sciences
- Jörg Zumbach, University of Salzburg.

Educating psychologists in Europe has been challenged – at the level of education policy stimulated by the political aims of the Bologna process and at the level of structuring study programs in psychology stimulated by the European Federation of Psychologists' Association (EFPA) and the project of establishing a common European qualification framework for psychologists, the European Certificate in Psychology (EuroPsy). How have universities, students and the labour market reacted to these changes?

This article is based on information about 16 European countries kindly offered by members of the European Network for Psychology Learning and Teaching (EUROPLAT) and EFPA's Board of Educational Affairs. These experts were asked to provide informal descriptions of how psychologists are educated in their countries, how they are integrated into the work force, and what the most pressing issues are in educating the next generation of psychologists. Their answers were geared to a list of questions generated by the authors. Although all contributors made use of numerous official data bases they were also free to present individual opinions based on their profound knowledge of the respective national education system.

Psychology is popular!

In all countries, psychology is a popular subject, often with still increasing numbers of psychology students. In Turkey, for example, the number of freshmen accepted in psychology departments increased from 305 in 1986 (Başaran & Şahin, 1990) to 4896 in 2013 (Student Selection and Placement Centre, 2013). In most European countries, the number of interested students outnumbers study places.

How universities react to this imbalance, however, differs substantially across Europe. In most countries, university entry in psychology is restricted and competitive either on the basis of school grades (e.g., in Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany) or on the basis of university entrance tests (e.g., in Finland or Turkey) or a combination of the two (e.g., in Cyprus). The admittance rates may be extremely low (under 10% e.g., in Finland). In other countries, admittance is less competitive. For example, in Spain there are thought to be 1500-2000 new psychology graduates per year, but

psychology is offered in many universities, both public and private, and high entry grades are not necessarily needed. Also in France university entry is not selective. Between the extremes of high and low restrictions alternative pathways are explored. Some Dutch universities are currently trying out a 'matching' procedure, both to help students select a Higher Education program that 'fits' their interests and abilities, and to increase the probability of admitting students who will successfully finish the program. Thus, the probability of getting a place to study psychology differs substantially across Europe though it is an attractive subject for many students in many places. However, psychology is not equally attractive for women and men. Most psychology students are women, approximately 80% in Croatia, Switzerland and Finland, 75% in Germany, 90% in Slovenia, over 80% in the UK, the majority in Cyprus and Poland. Attempts at harmonizing study structures across Europe have improved student mobility so that students from countries with high university entrance restrictions (e.g., Germany) successfully seek study opportunities in neighbouring countries with lower restrictions (e.g., in Austria and The Netherlands).

At what level do psychology students generally graduate?

The Bologna process has led to the widespread, but not universal, application of a 3-year Bachelor's and 2-year Master's pattern. Many, if not most, psychology students in Europe study for five years and leave university with a Master's degree. This tendency approaches EFPA's EuroPsy qualification concept which requires a 5-year, 300 ECTS academic psychology program plus one year of supervised practice as the minimum qualification for independent professional practice in psychology. For example, Croatian psychology students usually graduate after five years with a Master's Diploma and less than 2% switch out of psychology after the Bachelor's level, and similar structures were reported from Cyprus, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. Also most Czech psychology students graduate at Master's level, although the proportion of Master's to Bachelor's graduates has fallen from 3:1 in 2007 to approximately 2:1 in 2013. In the Netherlands professional Master's programs, despite the Bologna agreement, are typically of one year's duration, with the exception of a two-year program in Medical Psychology. As in most other countries, the majority of Dutch Psychology students pursue a full training taking Bachelor's and Master's degrees in succession. Aside from the academic programs, recently 4-year training programs in applied psychology were developed at colleges of applied studies (HBO) leading to a Bachelor of Arts (a similar trend is observed in Germany). For students aspiring to an academic and research career, there are two-year, mostly interdisciplinary, Research Master's programs. In Turkey and in Cyprus, a Bachelor's degree also requires four years and a master's degree is officially two years plus an additional year if needed. Some countries stick to uniform 5-years (e.g., Poland) or 5½-years programs (e.g., Finland) leading directly to the Master's degree. Reports from Turkey and the UK show a different pattern. The majority of psychology students in these countries graduate after three or four years with a Bachelor's degree.

What are typical destinations of psychology graduates?

In all countries considered here a Bachelor's degree does not normally qualify the graduate for independent professional practice, given that the title of Psychologist is not protected everywhere. In some countries psychology education produces 'practice-ready' graduates with preparation for professional practice typically taking place during the Master's phase or in supervised practicum training integrated in the Master's phase (e.g., in Finland and Cyprus). The Finnish psychology program, for example, aims at providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to work as a professional psychologist based on the scientist-clinician model and includes a mandatory 5-month internship (in Cyprus 1,000 to 1,500 hours). In other countries studying psychology is more geared to a basic, scientific understanding of psychology (e.g., Austria, Germany, Turkey, UK) so that practical skills related to specific fields of application (e.g., psychotherapy, traffic psychology, forensic psychology, etc.) often are subject to post-graduate training (e.g., in Germany and the UK).

It seems that in every country most students want to practice as professional psychologists and especially in clinical psychology or in the health sector. In Germany, where psychotherapy is regulated by law and requires a three-year post-graduate training after the Master's degree the majority of psychology graduates work as psychotherapists or in related positions in clinical psychology. In many countries, however, this hope is not fulfilled. In Slovenia, for example, students are mostly interested in clinical work, but only about 10% get positions in health care and specialise in clinical psychology. Similar, though less extreme, situations are reported from the Czech Republic, Spain, and Turkey. Thus, from the public view and in the perspective of most psychology students psychology is still identified with clinical psychology, although this view is not often supported by the reality of the labour market. Job opportunities in other sectors such as in work and organisational psychology and marketing, in the educational or judiciary system are sometimes underestimated. Research and teaching as a perspective for professional activities play only a marginal role in most countries considered here.

With growing numbers of graduates the job situation becomes more difficult in several countries. In Spain there is a surplus of psychology graduates, but some of them find jobs according to their graduation level (e.g., as a personal manager in a company) outside the psychology field. In Turkey about half the graduates work in areas related to psychology, the rest work in non-psychology areas. In Poland preliminary data suggest that just over 50% of graduates work as professional psychologists, around 25% have a job where psychological training is necessary and under 20% work in a sector not related to psychology as a profession. Many psychology graduates in Ireland obtain employment immediately after graduating from their Bachelor's degree but typically building on the transferable skills that they have developed, rather than specific psychology skills. In France almost all psychology Bachelors apply for a Master's place in Psychology, but some of them decide to become teachers in elementary schools (after a specific Master's degree), social workers, or to work with children or adults with disabilities. In the UK the majority of psychology Bachelors graduates go into a wide variety of non-psychology occupations. To summarize, graduating at Master's level increases the chance of working in a psychological field. Graduating at the Bachelor's level, which is the less frequent choice in Europe, often drives graduates into non-psychology domains. Here, their generic skills may help them to be more successful than Bachelors from other disciplines.

Issues facing us in preparing the next generation

Implications of growth

All report growth in psychology education or strong demand for limited places so there is a need to face up to the implications of growth. In countries where there is a numerus clausus and the number receiving psychology education remains restricted this may drive up entry grades and may relate to professional status being high. This may be the case in Finland where Psychology is one of the most popular academic subjects, entrance for the approximately 270 places available is highly competitive, and teaching aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to work as professional psychologists, who have excellent employment opportunities and are held in high regard. Other examples demonstrate that Psychology can be studied in some countries in the same way that history, sociology, philosophy or perhaps biology can be and in many countries graduate numbers exceed the demand for professional practitioners. Is this a problem or a benefit? An unprecedented level of interest in a discipline has much to commend it, but there are certainly problems. There may not be a clear distinction between the discipline and its professions in the minds of applicants leading to unrealistic student expectations about future career opportunities. In France there is no limit placed on the number of students who may study psychology and so there are many graduates. Psychologists are poorly paid and little respected and it is thought this may in part be a consequence of over-supply. In Spain also there are thought to be too many psychology graduates and a reduction in the number of entrants might result in higher admission grades, better

education and a decrease in graduate unemployment. In the UK there is strong competition at 21+ for professional entry, intensely so for clinical psychology training.

A Swiss view is that it is helpful if psychology students combine their study program with other academic and professional skills and training, because “pure psychology” is less compatible with the labour market than combinations of psychology with education, economics, or media science etc. Furthermore, Psychologists should enter with more confidence into new and innovative professions and fields such as environmental psychology, media psychology, traffic and security psychology. Otherwise psychology as a subject will become more and more integrated into other study programmes (like behavioural economics) and psychologists themselves will remain outside these and other innovative fields. It is interesting therefore that the progressive vanishing of double-subjects (e.g., psychology and sociology) at Bachelors’ level is noted in the Czech Republic, and conversely that almost 25% of Polish psychology graduates declare that in addition to the psychology course, they have been studying (or have completed) another degree.

It is possible that growth is fuelled by misunderstanding the nature of the subject. Students may not only assume that there are more opportunities in counselling and psychotherapy than really exist but see this as the true focus of psychology and fail to appreciate its scientific core. In Ireland the public perception of psychology is thought to impact on psychology education in terms of what students expect when they first come to study the subject. If their expectations are not met, this can have an effect on student engagement and ultimately retention. Actively promoting psychology as a science at every available opportunity is seen as key in tackling this issue.

Education in psychology as liberal education

We need to think about the value of an education in psychology, particularly at Bachelor’s level, for those who do not enter the psychology professions or academia. The UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which safeguards quality and standards in UK universities and colleges, has a subject benchmark statement for (BSc) Psychology that comments:

“...due to the wide range of generic skills, and the rigour with which they are taught, training in psychology is widely accepted as providing an excellent preparation for many careers. In addition to subject skills and knowledge, graduates also develop skills in numeracy, teamwork, critical thinking, computing, independent learning and many others, all of which are highly valued by employers” (QAA, 2010 p.2).

If we accept these points as both true and generally applicable, psychology as a subject of study has much to commend it, and perhaps we should think of it at Bachelor’s level as not only providing the scientific grounding for further professional level study and the competencies valued by employers but also from the point of view of ‘liberal education’. The idea of liberal education is notoriously ambiguous (Barnett, 2009, p. 433) but includes the idea that the process of coming to know, the journey of study itself, brings forward desirable human qualities, the epistemic virtues. For example, offering contrasting perspectives helps to promote openness; teaching that requires students to engage with each other helps to foster respect, generosity and preparedness to listen, and encouragement helps to keep students going forward and to be open to new experience.

Knowledge itself seems increasingly marginal to higher education. Barnett (2009) suggests that higher education has moved from a focus on knowledge to a focus on skills and competencies. As knowledge has expanded and access to knowledge has become easier, the emphasis has shifted away from knowing facts to evaluating evidence. This also accords with that nineteenth century champion of liberal education, John Henry Newman (1852/1982) who suggests that university is for the education of the mind and the cultivation of understanding, not for providing technical skills for the workforce or accumulating knowledge for its own sake. The aim of a university education is to develop students’ critical faculties so that they get to the point, discard irrelevance and detect sophistry. A graduate can then fill any post with credit and approach any subject without fear

(Graham, 2005). Although this argument is debatable it might justify the education of students in psychology even if they will probably never work as psychologists.

Education in psychology as psychological literacy

'Psychological literacy' (Cranney & Dunn, 2011; McGovern, Corey, Cranney et al, 2009) suggests that knowledge of research and theory in psychology allows students to detect false argument better and become better citizens and employees. In some countries a need for "psychologizing" society (e.g., in the Czech Republic) is seen, acknowledging that psychological knowledge might positively influence public and private life. Scientifically based knowledge, for example about educating children, caring for the elderly, leading personnel, communicating effectively, solving problems, learning, etc. may enrich behaviour in the family, in the job, or in public contexts. Thus, psychological literacy might be seen as an effective ingredient of a society developing along the lines of humanistic thinking. Graduates may benefit from studying psychology and promote societal development even if they work in non-psychology fields.

Major challenges

Looking at the education of psychologists across Europe is instructive: Psychology is increasingly popular. Some countries react to this growth by restricting university entrance or by restricting later access to post-graduate training that is required for professional practice. The nearly Europe-wide applied Bachelor-Master structure, as a consequence of the Bologna process, provided the opportunity to graduate at different levels of education although the psychologists' associations in Europe agreed that five years of psychology education plus one year of supervised practice is the minimum qualification standard required for independent practice as a professional psychologist. Thus, in some countries students are educated in psychology who will probably never work as psychologist. The major challenges arising from this situation for psychology are (at least) three-fold.

Self-reflection: Where and how is the growth of education in psychology desirable for psychology – for its public image as a scientific discipline and profession, for its standing within universities, for its future development? In some universities psychology is offered based on a simple demand-supply rationale without considering consequences of over supply for students and the psychological professions. At the same time: how can we prepare students to accommodate the needs of tomorrow's society and the changing demands of the labour market?

Self-presentation: Where and why do we give rise to false expectations in young people (the majority female) interested in psychology? What can be done to make the scientific core of psychology salient and to avoid confusion between psychology as a scientific discipline, as a profession, and as an enrichment of individual development? A thoughtful self-presentation can help to prevent false expectations and thereby misdirected growth.

Self-balance: We discussed studying psychology (a) as preparation for a profession, (b) as individual development (liberal education) and (c) as "psychologizing" society (psychological literacy). Psychologists should be aware of all three functions of psychology study programs and acknowledge the need to weight and balance these functions according to a complex network of individual and societal demands and the resources on the side of the universities.

To the extent we accept and act upon these challenges nationally and at the European level, the next generation of psychologists will have the opportunity to be successful and European!

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Use of the Europlat logo and possible accreditation

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Lisboa > 15 de Novembro de 2014
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DATA LIMITE DE INSCRIÇÃO: LISBOA: 03-11-2014 | PORTO: 20-01-2015

CERTIFICADA PELA	INCLUI	INCLUI	CAMPANHA IMPULSO FORMAÇÃO	RECONHECIDO PELA
 APTCC	Equivalências no prosseguimento de estudos na APTCC	ESTÁGIO (OPCIONAL)	Curso de Introdução às Psicoterapias Cognitivo Comportamentais de 3ª geração (Mindfulness)	 EUROPLAT
		24 horas	20% DESCONTO imediato nas propinas de 01 Setembro 2014 a 31 de Outubro de 2014	

One version of the Europlat logo has appeared on the website of an organisation in Portugal as can be seen in the screen shot above. This was kindly drawn to my attention by another institution who thought that certification/accreditation might be a service that EUROPLAT provided and if so, would be interested in applying for it. This raises a number of issues:

- Should Europlat allow or encourage the use of its logo by members?
- Could and should Europlat charge a fee for membership or a certification/accreditation service to help support its work?
- Is there a demand for such a service in a range of countries and universities?
- Could such a service help to leverage our mission of supporting learning and teaching in psychology, for example by requirements for staff training or accreditation, or participation in some way in a community of practice? So far we have been an association of individuals as much as universities, but do you think that universities might be prepared to pay a fee to be associated with Europlat, in return for which they would have the right to, for example, display a certification/accreditation/association logo, receive a regular newsletter, have access to learning and teaching resources and other features through a website, and have reduced fees to attend a regular conference?
- On the other hand what would it mean for Europlat if we took money to allow use of our logo and then the course quality was poor, or worse, there was some sort of malpractice? Could accreditation by Europlat lay us open to legal threat should a student be dissatisfied with their learning and the teaching that they had received and take legal action? Would accreditation be meaningful if we did not carry out some kind of quality assurance? In the UK the British Psychological Society are apparently shying away from international

accreditation unless they can hold a UK partner to account for a UK course delivered overseas, and the APA have apparently refused to entertain the idea.

- Given the risks and the possibilities, should Europlat be looking to work in partnership with another body, such as a national or international organization aiming to promote quality in learning in teaching?

I am convinced that the Europlat mission remains vital for higher education in psychology in Europe and interest in some form of accreditation certainly deserves serious consideration. I would be very interested in hearing the views of all core partners and associates by email.

Forthcoming conferences

- The inaugural ***International Convention of Psychological Science***, Amsterdam, 12th – 14th March 2015 <http://icps.psychologicalscience.org>
 - Includes *Teaching Integrative Psychological Science: A Pre-Conference Teaching Institute* <http://icps.psychologicalscience.org/teaching-program/>
The programme features a keynote address by Michael Eysenck and presentations by Dana Castro, Birgit Spinath and Jörg Zumbach.
- 14th European Congress of Psychology, Milan, 7th – 10th July 2015 <http://www.ecp2015.it>