

## EFPTA Newsletter September 2010

### Editor's note

In Bratislava, Slovakia in April 2010 the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Association (EFPTA) held a conference under the name *Teaching Psychology in Europe Beyond University: Sharing good practice, learn from experts!* Around 60 participants were registered from countries all over Europe, from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Russia, Germany, England, Scotland, Spain, Holland, Austria, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.

A little volcano in Iceland unexpectedly affected the conference greatly since some of our speakers, and other participants, never made it to Bratislava due to the flight disruption that followed the volcanic eruption. Despite that there were a lot of interesting presentations and workshops on the programme. This Newsletter brings you brief summaries of what we heard and discussed.

I want to thank all those who have contributed to this issue of the Newsletter, all of you who wrote the summaries and Ondrej Pristaš for the photos from the conference.

Harpa Hafsteinsdóttir, editor, [harpah@mh.is](mailto:harpah@mh.is)



Eyjafjallajökull, Iceland (Ólafur Eggertsson)

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## President's Report

Dear all,

the last conference in April 2010 in Bratislava was influenced by the volcano eruption in Iceland. Some of the participants were not able to fly in and nobody was able to fly out after the congress. The psychology teachers who participated enjoyed two wonderful days with lectures and workshops. It was that kind of congress that we had in mind to organize when we started the EFPTA organization some years ago. Psychology teachers who are exchanging best practice and who are discussing the methods and purpose of psychology programs.

We felt all very welcome in Bratislava by the very good care of the Comenius University. The teachers and students of the University did a wonderful job in making the impossible possible. On behalf of all the participants and EFPTA I want to express our gratitude for all the work they did.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2010 we will have a seminar with a board meeting in London. In this board meeting we will make the preparations for the next congress in July 2011 in Istanbul. As an affiliate member of EFPA we will participate with our own strand in the EFPA congress.

Some participants of Bratislava did see their stay prolonged to 10 days or more because of the volcano trouble, but as I said in my closing remarks of the congress: We are now all part of history!

Best regards,  
Hans Reijnierse  
President EFPTA



Hlavné námestie, Bratislava

**Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. 2010**

## **EFPTA Research Project: Where do we go from here?**

Renate Schremppf, EFPTA Vice-President, Germany  
Lenka Sokolová, Comenius University, Slovakia  
Morag Williamson, Napier University,  
Association for the Teaching of Psychology, Scotland

### **The research project – the story so far**

In spring 2009, three EFPTA members - Renate Schremppf (Germany), Lenka Sokolová (Slovakia), and Morag Williamson (Scotland) – formed a research team to conduct an online survey into various aspects of pre-university psychology teaching in Europe (PUPEE), on behalf of EFPTA. Renate and Morag reported on the early findings at the EFPTA event in Edinburgh in April 2009. At Bratislava, Renate presented an update, including a detailed database of pre-university psychology education, and proposals for follow-up research.

### **The EFPTA context**

EFPTA aims, activities and plans were discussed at the EFPTA event in Seville in the autumn of 2009. In response, Renate produced an overview in the form of a “mind-map”; EFPTA activities are seen as being divided into three categories:

- **learning & teaching** projects, including student and teacher exchanges
- **research**, including the online survey, and projects (planned or ongoing) on the cross-cultural aspects of pre-university psychology and a comparison of textbooks”
- **campaigning**, including the aims of ensuring that every pre-university student in Europe should have the opportunity to study psychology, and that psychology teachers should have access to teacher training courses in psychology.

### **Summary of Stage 1 outcomes of the research**

The Stage 1 survey obtained information on the pre-uni psychology curricula in nine European countries/ regions. As a result, a database has been established showing:

- Types & percentages of institutions where pre-uni psychology is taught
- Availability of ISCED level 3 psychology course(s) (c.16 years+)
- Availability of ISCED level 2 psychology course(s) (c.11 -15 years)
- Whether courses are compulsory or optional
- Teachers’ views on:
  - whether psychology course(s) should be AVAILABLE for all young people
  - whether any psychology course(s) should be COMPULSORY

The **nature of these psychology courses** is also described in the database: whether national or regional, academic or vocational, typical proportion of a student's timetable, and types of assessment. Details can be found in the full presentation on the EFPTA website.

Comparisons of particular interest across countries /regions:

- There are differences in emphasis on the **value of a qualification / award** in psychology: in some cases many students take the course but few take the exam, whilst in other countries EVERY student who takes the course is expected to take the exam to obtain the award
- Opinion is divided on whether psychology should be taught at **lower secondary level** (ISCED 2, c.11-15 years)
- There are large differences between countries in requirements for **teaching qualifications** for psychology.

### **Where do we go from here?**

Various proposals were put forward for Stage 2 of the project, the key consideration being the need to obtain evidence as a basis for pursuing EFPTA's aims.

- **Proposal 1:** seek more detailed info on some aspect that featured in Stage 1, eg curriculum, student numbers, assessment types, teacher-training for psychology, etc.
- **Proposal 2:** investigate perceived outcomes /benefits of pre-university psychology education; does it improve "psychological literacy" in the general population?
- **Proposal 3:** comparison of European countries' key educational objectives /principles / criteria for their school curriculum, and to what extent pre-uni psych education meets these criteria.
- **Proposal 4:** investigate efforts of psychology educators in various countries to develop pre-uni psychology education within their country/region
- **Proposal 5:** survey of pre-university psychology students: their perceptions of the subject, their motivations, learning processes, career aims, etc.

*The research team welcomes feedback and suggestions from all EFPTA members/member associations on the future direction of this research project – please contact [m.williamson@napier.ac.uk](mailto:m.williamson@napier.ac.uk) or [renate.schrempf@t-online.de](mailto:renate.schrempf@t-online.de).*

Morag Williamson

## **"37 who saw murder didn't call the police": The role of psychology teachers in fighting misinformation**

Radomír Masaryk, PhD, assistant professor,  
Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology  
Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia



The presentation discussed the nature of knowledge used by psychology teachers in their instruction. I started with three examples of different ways of thinking – a strange ancient classification of animals, an interview with a child, and the DSM manual. These ways of understanding the world make no sense to some - but perhaps they did make sense in a certain time or when someone was of certain age or they make sense when someone has proper professional training. I argued that the social context was traditionally considered something that “polluted” knowledge. Yet I think this process - when knowledge gets transferred by the public into something different – that this is where it gets interesting for social psychologists.

Then I introduced the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese to document interpretation and misinterpretation of a historical event by media and later by psychology textbooks. The case is often introduced as a prime example of bystander passivity. It is often described as if almost forty people just watched the brutal murder from their windows and failed to intervene at all.

After that I introduced several more examples of legends that are still commonly found in textbooks or within the “folklore” of teachers or trainers. These include the misinterpretation of the 7% - 38% - 55% breakdown of overall communication by Albert Mehrabian; the Eskimo hoax with alleged hundreds of names for snow in the Inuit language; the Mozart effect that motivated the US state of Georgia to purchase CDs of classical music to new mothers; and some additional suspects.

In conclusion, although we have access to many more resources these days, demands on publication quantity may cause that authors cannot thoroughly research every reference in their work; they often rely on secondary resources. As a paradox in the modern era we may be even more vulnerable to legends and hoaxes as in the days when the access to information was a much more complicated matter.

But I tried to make sure my message was more than just the need to debunk myths. We all know that research results produced by social sciences live their own lives and may be subjected to misinterpretations. Given that our systems of thinking about and knowing the world are not „objective reflections“ but they are rather grounded in the social context of a culture or an era, I proposed that analyzing these systems of thinking and the making of scientific legends could give us very valuable insights. What is the role of psychology teachers in all this? Obviously we should be at the forefront in the fight against misinformation. We should focus on methods and critical thinking, and try to present knowledge not as something reified and set in stone but rather as an active and ongoing social process. Most of us do that; I however think we should take one more step. And this means to reflect why is this knowledge made,

what makes it attractive to people, and what it does to society. For example by asking the question why we are so attracted to the negative portrayal of people (e.g. the picture of people as selfish passive bystanders in the Kitty Genovese case) and what makes this image so appealing to teachers and textbook authors. In other words, how exactly does the social context give new meanings to knowledge? I think such questions may lead to very insightful observation about our society and us.

*Radomír Masaryk is currently writing a new introductory textbook on Social Psychology and will be happy to send a copy to anyone who wants to master basic Social Psychology concepts in the Slovak language. To get in touch just send an e-mail to [dzimejl@gmail.com](mailto:dzimejl@gmail.com).*

## **Teaching of psychology: experience and preparation of beginning teachers at (pre)university level**

Aleš Neusar  
Institute for Research on Children,  
Youth and Family  
Masaryk University,  
Brno, Czech Republic

*Motto: "I enjoy teaching very much, but I feel disappointed at the lack of training provided for post grads who teach. I think the students that we teach would be shocked if they knew how little training we had!" (PhD student).*

The presentation firstly focused on the preparation of high school teachers for teaching. It is common that at this level of education nobody can teach anything straight away. In the first instance it is necessary to study the subject taught (in this case psychology) and to have some sort of teaching training which is often part of the university programme or one must attend a special training. To receive so called "postgraduate certificate in education" people must usually take one to three years long course (e.g. in UK, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany). Becoming teacher at high school thus takes quite many years of theoretical and practical preparation.

Contrary to this, becoming a university teacher does not seem to be so demanding on preparation. Anecdotal data even suggest that many university teachers have not received any formal training or have received a very poor formal training at the beginning of their career. Are these anecdotal data true?



To answer that question the author made (with the help of Douglas Bernstein and Europlat members) an exploratory study which focused on the experience of beginning university teachers (both students and faculty members) with their preparation for teaching. Data were collected by online questionnaire (in summer 2009 and beginning of 2010) in many European countries (e.g. Norway, Portugal, Czech Republic, UK, Belgium, Sweden) all under the auspices of EUROPLAT. Most of the respondents were PhD students (N=108). Teaching was usually not compulsory for them, but it was very common that they did at least some teaching.

Results showed that majority of beginning teachers in our sample did not receive enough training (many no training at all) or support for carrying out their teaching responsibilities.

Finally, comparison was made between pre-university level preparation and university level preparation for teaching with a surprising outcome that beginning teachers at university do not receive as much preparation as high school teachers and quite often they do not receive any preparation. Does it mean that university teachers are good at teaching straight away and high school teachers are not?

*Aleš Neusar is a researcher at the Institute for Research on Children, Youth and Family at Masaryk University (research focus on autobiographical memory, psychology of survey response and teaching psychology at university level) and a university teacher at the Department of Psychology at Palacký University. He is a member and Czech representative of EUROPLAT (European Network for Psychology Learning & Teaching).*

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**Workshop A:  
Who does more work –  
the student or you?**

Chair: Renate Schremppf, Germany  
and Wolfgang Augustin, Germany



Participants were divided into small discussion groups. They were given a few questions to discuss, about the role of the students and the teachers. These questions were prepared by Dorothy Coombs from England, but she was unable to attend the conference because of the flight cancellation due to the volcanic ash from Iceland. Here are summaries from two discussion groups.

**Group 1**

Students are very often very dependent on the teacher, and need to be encouraged to participate. One way of motivating the students is to teach them in a way that is relevant to their lives. However this frequently boils down to getting the best grade possible in their exams in order to go to the University of their choice, rather than them finding interest and self motivation in the subject they are studying!

Psychology has the advantage of being a subject where it is relatively easy to connect student learning to an experience which is relevant to the student's life, something they can relate to.

The information sometimes needs to be broken down so that theories and concepts can be connected to their everyday lives. Other ideas which came up in the group were:

1. Working online - ask the students to choose a task within a topic area, and solve the problem set. They **MUST** work from their own experiences. They have a choice of problems set. This has been tried and tested with Media Psychology. The students are able to choose a favourite TV show or personality and find examples of stereotyping within that framework. Students reveal more about their thinking in these online tasks than they do in a classroom situation
2. Setting a practical. Students are given a choice of hypotheses to choose from and must carry out live research. This allows them to examine the process of Psychology rather than the content. They may need guidance to find background research, and be reminded that information on the internet may not be reliable. This activity is designed to make the students more critical of problems with psychological research and to develop their curiosity about their chosen topic or method

Jacky Childs, UK

## **Group 2**

### **1) Are students too dependent on their teachers for direction rather than being independent in their approach to learning?**

- ☆ Very dependent on teachers because students don't like to think outside of the box
- ☆ Or, is it that students are unwilling to exert themselves, they don't want to try
- ☆ Unwillingness can lead to dependence
- ☆ So the question is not 'dependent or independent?', it should be 'willing or unwilling?'

### **2) Are students self-motivated?**

- ☆ Motivation depends upon circumstance- older learners have different reasons for studying the subject
- ☆ Motivated to complete work in class, but not to do extra – goes back to being unwilling
- ☆ If it is important then they will be motivated, e.g. is it for an exam? Other subjects may be seen as more important to students

### **4) Are the students effective social learners?**

- ☆ Social learning depends on communication skills
- ☆ Older students are more effective – does maturity improve social learning?
- ☆ Girls tend to be more effective social learners

### **5) Do students enjoy challenge, become absorbed in learning and develop different strategies for coping with difficulties?**

- ☆ Some students embrace challenge
- ☆ Other students are more afraid of it
- ☆ This links back to willingness

### **a) How can we ensure that all students are committed and taking part actively throughout lessons?**

- ☆ Committed (self-motivation) – difficult to ensure this for all students
- ☆ All taking and active part?
- ☆ Teachers – is it possible to develop lessons to motivate all students?
- ☆ Majority of students instead – surprise students, something different
- ☆ Pressure on teacher to motivate – to ensure this all of the time would be impossible
- ☆ Variety
- ☆ Students have other commitments too

Lauren Binnington, UK

## **Workshop B: Teaching of psychology – a common gate to Europe? (German and Slovak students' workshop)**

Basically the workshop consisted of two parts:

- 1) our presentation on how to become a teacher of psychology in Dortmund
- 2) a comparison between the studies in Bratislava and Dortmund and subsequently a constructive discussion on how to improve the status of teachers of psychology in general.

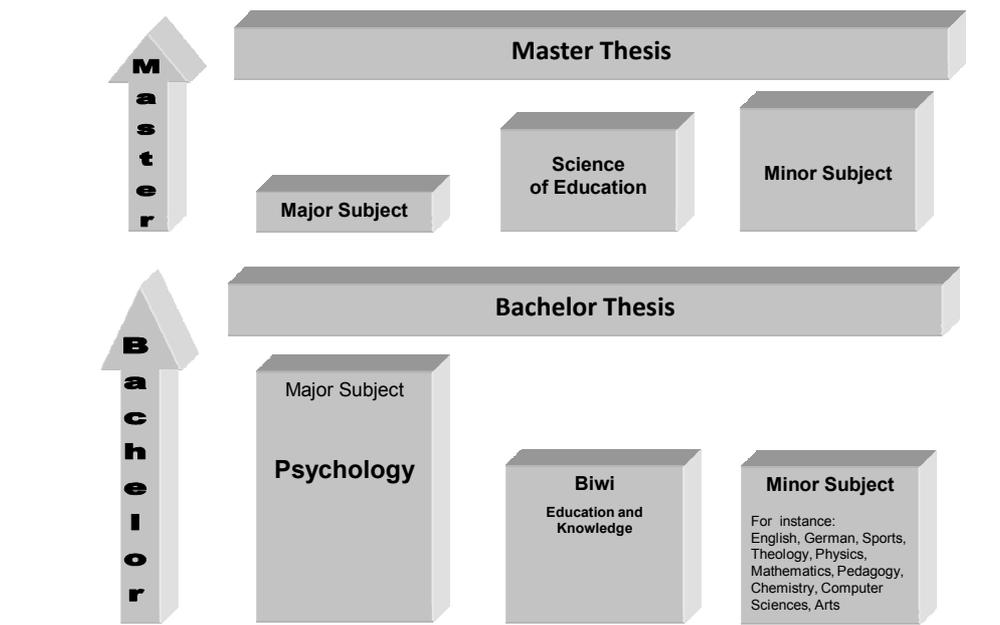
### How to become a Teacher of Psychology in Germany?

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- Firstly you have to go to **Dortmund University of Technology**.
  - Secondly you have to choose a **second subject**.
  - Thirdly you have to decide which is your **major subject** and which is your minor subject.
  - Fourthly you have to decide in which **schooltype** you want to teach (High school or adult education)
- 

EFPTA conference 2010, Bratislava

## Basic Concept of Bachelor/MasterLehrAmt (BAMALA) in Dortmund



EFPTA conference 2010, Bratislava

## Structure of Bachelor

10 Areas (everyone includes 3 courses)

### BASICS:

- 1. Introduction to different areas of psychology and scientific work**
- 2. General psychology and biological psychology**
  - Brainphysiology, Perception, Cognition...
  - Emotions, Memory, Learning, Motivation
- 3. Psychological Research Methods**
  - Statistics, Research Methods, Design and Measurement

Ahmet Atasoy, Germany



**Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. 2010**

## **Psychology in the cinema**

Kristján Guðmundsson, PhD.  
Reykjavík Women's College



Psychology and the cinema is not a typical course in film studies, but an application of the use of psychology in the cinema in general. It is a unique elective course, in the sense that it is not based on any course elsewhere. The students are from 17-19 years, on their way to matriculation examination (entrance to university). The students elect a few courses along the way, usually taking them 4 years in total (from 16 to 20 years of age). This course does not require a prior psychology course.

The course concentrates on three things: 1. Psychology, 2. Form and 3. Genres. 1. Psychology: Films full of psychological content, like mental disorders, insanity, drugs, ... f.ex. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Memento*, ... Here the emphasis is on the alleged truth of the psychology represented in the film. The question I pose is whether the psychological problems expressed in the film is

representative of that specific psychological disorder. 2. Form: Script, roles, acting, ... Here the emphasis is on analysis of good scripts (*Groudhog day*, *Taxi Driver*, ...), the typical roles that appear in films (any film), the methods of acting (f.ex. British vs. method acting in *The Marathon Man*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, ...). 3. Genre: Examines types (genres) of films by asking what kind of psychological methods are used to make the film the genre that it is, f.ex. Horror: *The Exorcist*, *The Shining*, *Jaws*; Romance: *Pretty Woman*, *Notebook*, *Dirty Dancing*; Comedy: *The Party*, *The Mask*, *Amalie* ...

Kristján Guðmundsson

**“WEB, can you explain the world to me?”  
How to deal with learning processes  
in the cyberspace**

Klaus Stiller  
University of Regensburg, Germany



In the last 20 years, the World Wide Web has developed to an immense source of information with users from all over the world. Information is placed for multiple purposes in order to satisfy multiple needs. A prominent part is dedicated to education, especially to teaching and learning. Teaching and learning by using the web is based on web technologies. Thereby, technology influences the presentation of contents, the didactical concept that can be implemented in a technology based instruction, and the use of the „package“. Three aspects were highlighted from a teacher’s view: (1) the presentational design of instructional units using texts and pictures, i.e. multimedia instructions, (2) the didactical design of complex learning scenarios, and (3) the social design of learners’ activities serving knowledge construction.

(1) The most prominent modes for presenting information are written and spoken texts as well as static and dynamic pictures. Most medial presentations involve at least one of the verbal and one of the pictorial modes. By now, the cognitive load theory has been inspiring research for 20 years that had produced a huge amount of

knowledge about how to integrate texts and pictures in a multimedia instruction in order to foster the construction of transferable knowledge. Hence, this theory and the central split-attention design principle were introduced.

(2) Going beyond this focused view on the optimal design of instructional units (e.g. animations, worksheets, or illustrated texts) a complex web-based course needs some efficient didactics. One can say that the didactics integrates the optimally designed pieces of information into a functioning sequence of teaching and learning processes. There are a lot of didactical theories that can guide a course design; one of them is the “9 events of instruction” by Gagné, Briggs and Wager (1988). This theory was shortly reported because it is a general theory which can also be technologically implemented without much expertise. Furthermore, an online course on media psychology was shown as an example of a course using this theory.

(3) Against the background of a constructivist view on learning and teaching, especially emphasizing the importance of social contexts for knowledge construction, it was shown that a course also needs a social design in order to make use of the advantages of sociality (e.g. working together for finding solutions, testing solutions, communication between learners and with experts). In this context two examples of how to integrate a social partner into an online activity were shown: A task can be designed in a way that allows cooperation and collaboration of learners in front of a screen and via online communication.

Besides, learners in the web might be overwhelmed by the huge amount of learning possibilities and the urge to decide, which “teacher” to trust, i.e. to believe that the teacher offers a “course” appropriate to the art of educating. Hence, the final part dealt with learner characteristics, which are helpful for dealing with the web’s explanations about the world (e.g. domain specific knowledge, self-management skills), and the compensation of deficient characteristics (e.g. system adjustments to learner’s needs).

Klaus Stiller

### **Workshop C: The internet – curse or blessing? The new media and their impact on the teaching of psychology**

Chair: Wolfgang Augustin, Germany

Firstly, it was stated that the internet in the classroom is often a permanent source of attraction and thus of distraction from the lessons. This problem is biggest when every student has a laptop of his or her own. Teachers often don’t have the control over internet usage while teaching, but it was also not intended to degrade teachers to “policemen”. This discussion was not prolonged, because it was preferred to discuss how to deal with learning processes in the cyberspace.

After this introductory blaming of the computer, the situations of teaching psychology in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Slovakia and Spain were shortly presented by the workshop participants. It emerged that the status varies in the countries partly due to curricula. In some countries, psychology is a compulsory subject, and in case it isn't, it seems to get popular among students.

The Danish situation was described broader, because curriculum has changed from a more philosophical (e.g. Freud) to an empirically founded psychology and "hard science" (e.g. experiments, statistics, facts). The focus on empirical psychology and critical thinking was thought to be a good preparation for studying psychology at university. In this context, it was also remarked that the internet could offer "case studies" that allow working on authentic problems and therefore might assure transfer of knowledge.

Against the background of empirical working at school, Wolfgang Augustin presented an example of best practice namely a survey about the importance of psychology as a subject in schools and colleges currently conducted by the German national psychology teachers' association. An international version of the questionnaire program used in this survey is available via internet. We have a diversity of tools that can easily help us to place questionnaires on the internet and thus to enable pupils and teachers to work empirically (e.g. <http://www.my3q.com/>).

Beyond the method of questionnaires, there are also tools and web pages that allow putting psychology laboratories into the web (e.g. <http://wextor.org/wextor/en/>). They often guide experimenters with setting up an experiment. Nevertheless, development of hypotheses and conceptions of experiments still depend on offline work. Working empirically might be simplified by such technologically based tools.

Furthermore, it was emphasized that the contents of the web might especially be important for teaching media psychology, but not exclusively for this discipline. A lot of authentic material could be found in the web, despite the fact that the internet is also an instance of media. For example, contents like stereotypes, communication, learning from models, aggression, fears or online identities can be anchored in authentic material from the web. Especially, pupils can produce information by themselves for the internet, so they get experience in how media work.

In Germany, internet technology is used for lessons of all subjects in various ways, e.g. by setting up WebQuests (<http://webquest.org/>) or lessons with the help of Moodle (<http://moodle.org/>). Some examples can be viewed on <http://www.medpaed.de/content/view/380/133/> (only in German; University of Regensburg, degree program "media pedagogy" for teachers), showing that both teachers and pupils can produce and use the internet for learning purposes.

Klaus Stiller



Bratislava

**Workshop D**  
**Best practices: working with video**  
**and film in the classroom**

Chair: Harpa Hafsteinsdóttir, Iceland

Participants, in small discussion groups, shared their experience and ideas on the subject of using films and videos to aid learning of psychology. Here are summaries from two of the groups.

**Group 1**

Together with Kristján Guðmundsson we discussed his way of teaching psychology by using film. Some in our group were not sure if he really would impart the notion of psychology. It seemed that he rather concentrated on film studies. He basically focused on filmic techniques, especially subliminal primes, which are used. Kristján argued that subliminal primes play with emotions, which contributes a lot to the students' affection for the subject itself. Furthermore, some of the students had already psychology in school and some not. This makes preparation of classes even more difficult. We also discussed about the limited space a teacher has. Nowadays it is difficult to run a lesson which is kind of extraordinary and does not ideally fit into the curricula. Due to limited time and students' expectations (they only want to have the facts that are important for their exams) teachers are restrained in their job.

Group members who were still students talked about their experience of watching films in psychology. We found out that it was quite different from Kristján's way of teaching. Most of them watched films in their lessons from time to time. The task usually was to apply the knowledge they gained in the lessons prior to the film. They mainly had to focus on the content and not so much on techniques.

The group also talked about a film called "The good girl" which is a good one for analyzing the different kinds of relationships. Further films, that might be useful for teaching psychology, could be "Good Will Hunting" and "Cast Away".

Ines Mombrei, Germany

## Group 2

Everybody in the group agreed that using videos and films in the classroom is an excellent way to get the students interested and get them to relate to the subject. Many voiced their concern though that using films (especially to show the whole film in class) is very time-consuming and wondered if the time was well spent that way. Some said they had a strict curriculum to follow and thought it would be difficult to find the time in their busy schedule. The use of films obviously depends on the design of the course. The course Kristján described in his presentation is designed around films only but not the more typical form of a textbook and a standardized final exam.

In my experience you can use films to effectively teach about a range of psychological issues. I have taught a psychology course somewhat similar to the one Kristján told us about, with many films but no textbook (but some selected readings), with no final exams but a lot of different (and some quite difficult!) assignments for the students to solve. With this approach almost every student was very interested in the various subjects we covered (cognitive, developmental, social, abnormal and clinical psychology) and I am absolutely sure that they learned a lot. All of my students had some prior psychology knowledge that they could build on.

In our group we agreed that there are a lot of good films that could be used in the psychology classroom. It was pointed out that sometimes just a short piece of the film could be great for starting discussions and other activities or it could follow a lecture about the topic.

Some of the films that came up in our discussion:

- *The Wave (Die Welle)* about a social experiment on autocracy in the classroom, which spins horribly out of control.
- *Das Experiment*, based on the Stanford-Prison Experiment (although it differs from the original experiment in a few significant ways).
- *12 Angry Men*, a great movie to use in psychology as it touches upon a lot of issues, including memory, the reliability of eye-witness testimony, group

pressure, conformity, personality traits, attribution, prejudice, stereotyping and the list goes on.

- *Memento*, a thriller with a twist, about a man suffering from severe short-term memory loss, who has to deal with rather complex situation.
- *Rain Man*, a movie based on Kim Peek, an autistic savant.

There are many good movies about various psychological disorders and therapy; *As good as it gets*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Vertigo* to name just a few. Then it was mentioned that there are a lot of very useful documentaries to be found on YouTube and elsewhere on the Internet.

Finally, in an e-mail Morag Williamson told us about a site that allows you to save permanently any videos that are online (free, up to 100MB). The site is: <http://www.zamzar.co.uk/> and is extremely useful, according to Morag.

Harpa Hafsteinsdóttir

## **Psychology in Slovak Secondary Schools: The Short History of a Small Subject**

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The history of psychology teaching at secondary schools started in 1960s, when psychology became an important subject in some vocational study programmes. School system in former Czechoslovakia before 1989 focused on vocational secondary education rather than general preparation for university studies. The number of students in general education (grammar schools) was limited and that is why there was higher percentage of students attending vocational schools. Study programmes were diverse and so was the content of psychology courses. The first courses in psychology were available at pedagogical and health care schools, later also in training for service professions (waiters, hairdressers etc.). The school reform in 1980s brought also the question of teaching psychology and training of psychology teachers. More psychology should have been available in general education. The

Velvet Revolution in 1989 meant more freedom also in education. New schools (including private) and new study programmes were opened. This situation influenced also psychology courses.

About 50 years of psychology teaching in Slovakia means many different study programmes, psychology courses and textbooks. Content of courses covers mainly psychological terminology, main psychology schools, cognitive, social, and developmental psychology, at vocational schools applied disciplines - health and work psychology, psychology in communication, marketing, advertising etc. Despite the diversity, psychology still belongs among “small subjects”. The effort of some Slovak psychologists and teachers to establish compulsory and general psychology course in higher secondary education was not successful. According to the new school law passed in 2008 schools can offer more psychology courses only on the individual level (they can implement new courses in their „School Educational Programmes“).

### **Psychology in Higher Secondary Education (ISCED 3)**

Higher secondary education (ISCED 3) in Slovakia covers grammar schools (general education) and vocational schools. Most of Slovak secondary schools teach basics of psychology only as a part of another subject. Secondary students should get a brief survey of psychology discipline reduced to 17 hours of teaching included in compulsory subject Social Studies (this subject covers sociology, psychology, economics, law, and philosophy). Some schools offer psychology as an optional/facultative subject. Grammar schools can have psychology seminar (one or two year course with possibility of taking final exam (similar to A level) in psychology), which is unfortunately available only in some secondary schools (less than 25%). Even psychology is popular among students only 0.92% of secondary school students attended this seminar in 2007 (in 2003 it was only 0.68%). According to new school law passed two years ago there is a new compulsory personal development subject „Social-psychological training“ at grammar schools.

|                        | 2003   | 2005  | 2007  |
|------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Grammar schools</b> | 100057 | 99758 | 99915 |

| (number of students)  |                |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Number of students attending optional Psychology seminar</b> | 677<br>(0.68%) | 775<br>(0.78%) | 916<br>(0.92%) |

Psychology is a compulsory part of study programme at pedagogical and social academies and medical schools. Business academies and other vocational schools usually teach psychology only as an optional/facultative subject.

| ISCED classification | Type of education and school  | Age      | Available psychology courses   |
|----------------------|---|----------|--|
| ISCED 0              | Pre-primary education (kinder gardens)  | 3 - 6    | x  |
| ISCED 1              | Primary education (elementary schools)  | 6 – 10   | Selected psychological topics are included in optional subject “Ethics”.   |
| ISCED 2              | Lower secondary education (elementary schools)  | 10 - 15  | Selected psychological topics are included in optional subject “Ethics” and in compulsory topics of personal and social development.   |
| ISCED 3              | Higher secondary education:<br><br>General (“gymnazium”)<br><br>Vocational (secondary vocational schools) | 15 – 19+ | 16 hours of psychology included in compulsory subject “ <b>Social Studies</b> ”<br>“ <b>Social-psychological Training</b> ” (compulsory in general higher secondary education) – 1 school year<br>“ <b>Psychology Seminar</b> ” (optional course available at less than 25% of general and vocational schools) – 1 or 2 years<br>Compulsory and optional courses at vocational schools based on given study programme (medical, social welfare etc.)<br>Selected psychological topics are included in optional subject “Ethics” and in compulsory topics of personal and social development. |

|         |   |  |  |
|---------|---|--|--|
| ISCED 4 | Post-secondary, non-tertiary education:<br>(secondary schools and other institutions)   | 19+  | Compulsory and optional subjects at vocational schools based on given study programme (medical, social welfare etc.)   |
| ISCED 5 | Tertiary education<br><br>University education<br>First Degree<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>University education<br>Second Degree | 19+<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>21+ | <b>Bachelor's study programmes (3 years):</b><br>- psychology<br>- social and work psychology<br>- training for teachers of psychology<br>Compulsory and optional courses in psychology are available in related study programmes.<br><br><b>Master's study programmes (2 years):</b><br>- psychology<br>- social and work psychology<br>- training for teachers of psychology<br>Compulsory and optional courses in psychology are available in related study programmes. |
| ISCED 6 | University education<br>Third Degree<br><br>(universities and selected institutes)  | 23+  | <b>PhD study programmes (3 – 5 years):</b><br>- general psychology<br>- general and experimental psychology<br>- clinical psychology<br>- educational, counselling and school psychology<br>- social psychology<br>- social and work psychology  |

***Teaching psychology in Slovakia according to international classification ISCED (Sokolová, 2010)***

**Who are psychology teachers in Slovakia?**

According to official statistics in 2005 psychology as a single (either academic or vocational) subject was taught by about 550 teachers (approximately 15 % of them did not have required qualification). Psychology teachers are often part-time teachers, school psychologists or teachers of related subjects (pedagogy, social studies etc.).

| Psychology courses                                      | Number of Teachers (in 2005) |
|---|------------------------------|
| Psychology as an academic subject (general education)   | 216                          |
| Psychology as a vocational subject (vocational schools) | 340                          |
|   | <b>556</b>                   |

Required qualification for teaching psychology at secondary school is given by law, it is either 5-year university study programme in „training for teachers of psychology in combination with second subject“ (including general and selected applied

psychological disciplines, general teaching methodology, pedagogy + psychology teaching methodology and practice teaching) or 5-year university study programme of psychology (training for psychologists) + 1 year course in general teaching methodology and pedagogy. Training for teachers of psychology is available at three Slovak universities.

### **Psychology as a “Small Subject” and its future**

In spite of about 50 years of tradition Slovak secondary teaching of psychology is still faced with problems, some of them were described almost 25 years ago (Šipöcziová, 1983). These specific issues influence psychology teaching methodology and also teacher's work:

- Courses on psychology are available only at secondary level; there is no continuity from the previous level of education.
- Psychology is taught mostly as an optional subject, number of lessons in teaching plans is low.
- Target group of students is rather heterogeneous, that influences choice of content and teaching methods.
- Psychology lessons should contain personal & social development activities and experiential learning which require specific teaching skills, teachers are often not trained for that.
- Dealing with personal issues requires high standard of teacher's professional ethics.
- Differences in study programmes (general vs. vocational education) influence teaching goals and methods.
- As a “small” subject psychology teaching has low methodological support (textbooks, teaching guides, web portals for teachers, further education for teachers etc.).

### **Literature:**

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## **Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology Faculty of Education, Comenius University in Bratislava**

Faculty of Education represents the largest faculty of Comenius University and the largest faculty of education in Slovakia. It educates teachers for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, special education, health and social service. Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology is one of its 19 departments. Members of the department are specialists in the field of psychology teaching methodology, school and educational psychology and pathopsychology.

In 1993 Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology opened a new study programme “Training for Teachers of Psychology” (study specialization: training for teachers of academic subjects). Since 2005 it has been studied in two degrees (first degree – Bachelor of Arts for 3 years and second degree – Master of Arts for 2 years). Study programme consists of lectures, seminars, training and teaching practice. Course assessment and evaluation is stated in Course Specification Sheets. It might be written or oral exams, assignment, presentation, course work, project, BA thesis and Diploma (MA) thesis.

Since 1993 we have had more than 200 graduates. Graduates are qualified for the following professions:

### **First Degree (BA):**

- Teacher assistant,
- Educator for extracurricular activities of children and adolescents,
- In state administration in education, social affairs, education and prevention in the field of mental wellness,
- School administrator,
- Administrator/ assistant in psychological and social service.

### **Second degree (MA):**

- Secondary school teacher of psychology,
- Methodologist for concrete subjects and subject groups,
- Expert in state administration specialized in primary and secondary education, life-long education, and prevention in mental wellness.

### **Graduate’s Profile (BA)**

First degree graduates (teacher of psychology in combination with another subject) (BA) are ready to study Second degree of the Study Programme. They have acquired basic psychological knowledge; they know the structure and general knowledge of basic psychological disciplines.

They have learned about theoretical foundations of institutionalized education and further relevant issues; system of educational institutions. This enables them to work effectively in institutions supporting education.

**Graduate's Profile (MA)**

Second Degree Graduate (MA) is qualified to become a teacher of psychology (combined with another academic subject) at a level of lower and higher secondary education.

He/she has acquired basic knowledge of psychology as an academic subject, content of psychological disciplines, and methodology of psychological research. He/she has adequate knowledge of selected psychological applied disciplines, namely in education, counselling, social service, education and prevention in the field of mental wellness.

He/she knows theoretical foundations, traditional and alternative teaching methodologies and is able to creatively manage teaching process to fulfil educational objectives. Furthermore he/she is able to participate in research and develop new teaching methodologies.

(Study Programme: Training for Teachers of Psychology, [www.fedu.uniba.sk/?kpp](http://www.fedu.uniba.sk/?kpp))