Stage 3 of the EFPTA research project:
Whose curriculum is it anyway?

Interim report on findings from focus group discussions on the pre-tertiary psychology curriculum, held during EFPTA Conference, April 2012, Copenhagen

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The round table discussion at the EFPTA Copenhagen conference, April 2012

The aims were:

• to provide all conference delegates with the opportunity to share experiences and views on the psychology curriculum

• To provide ‘focus group’ data for the EFPTA research project (Stage 3)
Method and procedure

- 47 participants, from 10 countries
- divided into 3 parallel groups, each with a mixture of at least 5 nationalities, & each led by a facilitator
- discussion was prompted by a semi-structured schedule of open-ended questions, on 3 key aspects of curriculum:
  - what should be the **purpose** of the psychology curriculum
  - what should its **content** be
  - **who** should design it
- discussion was in English, lasted c.45 minutes & was audio-recorded
- participants also made handwritten responses to some questions
Responses were coded. Sub-themes were identified within the 3 curriculum aspects:

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<th>Purpose ?</th>
<th>Content ?</th>
<th>Who ?</th>
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| - develop a range of transferable skills  
- self-development / identity  
- social awareness / adaptation /communication  
- progression to university | - balance  
- core & options  
- psychology as a science  
- research methods & practical research skills  
- applications to ‘real life’  
- promote student well-being  
- match content to students’ needs/interests  
- integration / inter-disciplinarity | - range of relevant bodies / groups  
- high-level specialist expertise needed  
- top-down national control v. teacher /school autonomy  
- need for dialogue  
- student choice  
- influence of textbooks  
- schools’ resources vary  
- in-house expert support |
Dissemination of findings

Once data analysis is complete, findings may be publicised by various means:

• research report for publication in a journal
• poster which can be printed by any EFPTA association and presented at conferences
• items in our own website and newsletters
• ask other suitable organisations to publicise findings (eg psychologists’ professional associations, education authorities, etc)
Relevance of these findings to pretertiary psychology education (PTPE) in Europe?

Some countries have ‘benchmarks’ or ‘criteria’ or ‘standards’ for pre-tertiary subjects (including psychology). For example:

• England & Wales: ‘The Future of Psychology A-level’, a document from the British Psychological Society, proposes benchmarks for pre-university psychology

• Denmark has established ‘national standards’ for psychology in schools

• The American Psychological Association (APA) has long-established ‘National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula’, in the USA.

‘common benchmarks’ for PTPE in Europe?