

Teaching of psychology in 2016 – progress and important events in the Czech Republic

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Firstly it is important to mention that for a long time now not much attention has been paid to the teaching of psychology in the Czech Republic. Consequently the teaching of psychology is still in the process of developing its methodology (Vasudová & Jezková, 2015), in a similar way to Slovakia (Sokolova et al., 2013). Sadly psychology is taught only as part of social science which is included in some secondary school curricula (high schools), and this does not help the didactics of psychology (Staněk, 2015). We are therefore at the starting point for the solution to didactical issues and questions in teaching psychology: who and what to teach, why and how to teach and how to improve the teaching of psychology (Chrzą, Nohavová & Slavík, 2015).

In 2016 we have had many opportunities to look for the answers to these questions regarding the teaching of psychology. The first important event was the international conference organised by the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA) which was attended by approximately 90 colleagues and experts from 14 European countries. Over 2 days (8th and 9th April 2016) there was the opportunity to share different topics relating to the teaching of psychology and furthermore sharing personal experiences.

The conference was opened with a presentation by Iva Stuchíiková and Alena Nohavová who focussed their discussion on the current situation in the teaching of psychology in the Czech Republic. In their conclusion they stated some of the issues and challenges facing the current research in the teaching of psychology in the Czech Republic. One of the well-received lectures was Guy Sutton's talk about the link between neuroscience and education. In the lecture Dr Sutton mentioned many topics linking the two sciences. For example we noted the expansion of 'neuromyths' in the teaching of psychology. Neuromyths are inaccurate statements about the function of the brain during learning which are often rooted in concrete scientific knowledge (Dekker et al., 2012). For example, the statement that we only use 10% of brain capacity or that learning could be improved if children learnt according to their preferred style of learning.

The lecture given by Aki Puolakka about what teaching and stand-up comedy have in common was also very inspiring. It certainly made all the teachers think about how to grab their students' attention and increase their interest and motivation in teaching the subject. For this purpose some stand-up comedy technique is useful.

In the area of networking, a European project was introduced which focuses on building a network of student teachers of psychology (S. Langler, M. Stueckemann & M. Behrendt). Corry Blades described the International Baccalauréate (IB) programmes which offer courses in psychology in many countries. Joe Cocker introduced delegates to his proposal for an international student project on gender equality, inspired by the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and her book *We Should All be Feminists*. Networking was also discussed during a workshop where Jonathan Firth and Hannele Puolakka introduced projects focusing on the international cooperation between teachers of psychology and students.

A wide range of topics and methodologies for teaching psychology were covered in the workshops. All the conference delegates took part in an 'Active Classroom' workshop focusing on practical teaching tasks, for example the making of simple neurons or drawing an experiment without using words; (workshops were led by Dorothy Coombs, Mette Eggertsen, Harpa Hafsteinsdóttir, Andy McCarthy, Jock McGinty, Jackie Moody, Hannele Puolakka, Ann Skinner, Lenka Sokolová and Morag Williamson). Jackie Moody introduced delegates to the possibility of using quizzes (the inspiration came from a TV programme) for the teaching of psychology. Udo Kittler introduced the idea of using novels for the teaching of psychological phenomena. Additionally, Renate Schrepf presented us with a model to help students to move between different types or areas of psychology. How to teach students in real life situations, including advantages and

disadvantages of this type of teaching was presented by Fay Short and Tracey Lloyd. Jacqui Taylor and Julie Hulme showed us how to develop psychological literacy. We experienced a sheep brain dissection where Guy Sutton discussed the similarities and differences between the brains of sheep and humans. It is questionable if this activity is transferable to practical teaching of psychology (how many brains would have to be provided?).

From a different angle, the brain topic was explored by looking at the brain function and psycho-pedagogical support of cognitive activity in pre-school children (Raisa Chumicheva & Olga Zvereva). Different challenges and ways of teaching in different countries were mentioned in the workshop led by Lenka Sokolová & Evie Bentley who also introduced the issues of psychological research and its sensitivity and respectfulness.

As is common practice, many of the workshops ran parallel so participants had to choose and therefore missed some valuable workshops. For that reason some of the presentations and news from the conference were put on the EFPTA website¹ and in the 2016 Newsletter².

During the conference the President of EFPTA Hannele Puolakka and Vice-President Harpa Hafsteinsdóttir spoke about the current and future activities of EFPTA. One of them is the next European conference which will take place in Reykjavik in 2018. For more information see the website pages of EFPTA³.

One of the most important events for the teaching of Psychology in the Czech Republic was the foundation of the section for the teaching of Psychology attached to the Czech-Moravian Psychological Association (CMPS). The chair of this section is Jan Mareš, vice chair is Miroslava Charvát and the deputy is Alena Nohavová. Amongst the main aims of this section in 2016 was connecting experts during conferences and discussions about crucial topics in the teaching of psychology.

At the 'Psychology Days' event in Olomouc (7th-9th September), an independent section was established in order to focus on particular procedures and strategies in the teaching of psychology – case-based reasoning from the teaching of psychology based on the methodology 3A (A. Nohavová) and possibilities of portrait making in psychology (I. Fabianova). How to involve students to the teaching of psychology using electronic voting systems was presented by M. Charvát and L. Viktorová. L. Viktorová also introduced delegates to the marking of the baccalauréate dissertation of students from the Psychology and Philosophy Faculty of the University in Olomouc.

J. Lukas, K. Bartošová and J. Mares reflected on the changes in teaching at the Pedagogy Faculty in Brno that included the changes in practice in teaching student undergraduate courses in Psychology. The variety of topics suggests that the way forward in the teaching of psychology in the Czech Republic will be gradual. Everyone who is involved in the process is gradually working on a variety of topics. This was also apparent during the *Teaching Psychology* conference in Brno on the 3rd November. This conference has been well established since 2011. Apart from the theoretical considerations for the teaching of psychology (E. Řehulka), some practical examples of good teaching practice were presented through different themes in various sections – individual psychology (L. Sokolová), psychological games and experiments in the teaching of psychology (P. Žičan), metacognitive strategies in teaching (K. Juklová), current questions in psychology for teaching practice (T. Fikarová) and statistics for psychology (H. Klimusová & M. Jelínek). Further topics discussed were reflections on teaching – introduction to psychology for trainee teachers (A. Nohavová) and methodology for psychology students (L. Viktorová & M. Charvát). More topics were discussed from the teacher's point of view: distress in teacher's morale (J. Mares) and wellbeing for newly qualified teachers (J. Mareš). From the students' point of view we looked at the issues of higher education as an established stage for student experience (B. Panková). Further subjects that we discussed with regards to primary and secondary education were – teaching of psychology to primary and nursery teachers (I. Žaloudiková) and how to carry out research on the concept of national identity in children (V. Kolaříková).

It is worth mentioning the programme of the 24th annual conference of the Czech Association of Research in Pedagogy (CAPV) which took place at the Pedagogy Faculty JU in Ceske Budejovice 15th- 16th September.

¹ <http://efpta.org/home/conference-events.asp>

² <http://efpta.org/docs/EFPTA-Newsletter-October-2016-fina-825533-16-10-2016.pdf>

³ <http://efpta.org/home/index.asp?SID=12#45>

The teaching of psychology was discussed with regards to the broader spectrum of the theory of expression in teaching, specifically the issues of functional literacy in the teaching of psychology (J. Slavík) and at the same time practical examples of using expressive teaching leading to psychological literacy (A. Nohavová and V. Chrz). Lenka Sokolová presented on the subject of teaching psychology abroad. From this presentation it was apparent that the teaching of psychology abroad has different concepts, background, history and current methods. On the one hand this is inspiring for us and on the other hand it provides us with the motivation to build our own pedagogy for psychology which will critically reflect the history and tradition of the teaching of psychology in the Czech Republic.

At the same time as looking back at the year 2016, we have to focus on our thoughts on the future. Amongst the main aims for the section of the Teaching of Psychology CMPS, is the support for cooperation and the exchange of experiences during conferences and furthermore to prepare a monograph which will focus on the teaching of psychology. Additionally, it is our aim to raise awareness about EuroPsy within the professional study of Psychology. Last but not least, the sharing of good practice in the teaching of psychology with non-psychological subjects for future psychologists.

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