

# Working together to develop the psychology curriculum in European schools

**Morag Williamson**

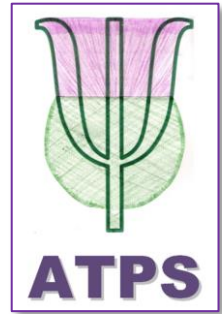
Association for the Teaching of Psychology, Scotland

**Jukka Oksanen**

The Finnish Psychological Association

**Teija Jokinen-Luopa**

Eira High School for Adults, Helsinki



EFPTA 2021 Conference, 15-17 April, Online/Bratislava



# What is curriculum?

“An ideological selection from a range of possible knowledge...The curriculum is ideologically contestable terrain”  
*(Cohen et al, 2000)*

“The subjects that are studied or prescribed for study in a school”  
*(Concise Oxford Dictionary)*

“A complex system involving teachers, students, curricular content, social settings, impinging matters...[and] how it all works together”  
*(Connelly, 2013).*

An everyday understanding might be that curriculum is simply “what we teach”, including content and assessment of courses

# Curriculum in theory and practice

- Many key **theorists** in US and European education, e.g. Dewey (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), Bobbitt (1921) Tyler (1949), Habermas (1972), Goodlad (1979), Doyle (1992)...et al.
- As **teachers** – anywhere in the world - we think and talk about, and ‘create’ curriculum constantly, in our staffrooms, classrooms, meetings, conferences (Priestley et al, 2021)
- Global context: OECD, UNESCO
- European context, e.g. EU European Schoolnet

# EU / Europe context – the EQF

“The EU developed the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** as a translation tool to make national qualifications easier to understand and more comparable.”



A screenshot of the EQF Levels comparison tool, showing the mapping of national qualifications from Italy and Finland to EQF levels. The tool is divided into three main sections: Italy, EQF Levels, and Finland.

Italy	EQF Levels	Finland
<b>NQF 8</b>	<b>EQF Level 8</b>	<b>NQF 8</b>
Research doctorate - Dottorato di ricerca		Universities' and National Defence University scientific and artistic postgraduate degrees (licentiate and doctor degrees) (Yliopistojen ja Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulun tieteelliset ja taiteelliset jatkokutkinnot (lisansiaatin tutkinnot ja tohtorin tutkinnot)
Academic diploma for research training - Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca		General staff officer degree (yleisesikuntaupseerin tutkinto, generalstabsofficersexamen)
Specialisation diploma - Diploma di specializzazione		Specialist degree in veterinary medicine (erikoiseläinlääkärin tutkinto, specialveterinärexamen)
Second level university master - Master universitario di secondo livello		Specialist training in medicine (erikoislääkärikoulutus, specialistiläkärexamen)
Academic specialisation diploma - Diploma accademico di specializzazione		Specialist training in dentistry (erikoishammaslääkärikoulutus, specialistandiläkärexamen)
Higher specialisation diploma or master - Diploma di perfezionamento o Master		
<b>NQF 7</b>	<b>EQF Level 7</b>	<b>NQF 7</b>
Master degree - Laurea magistrale		Master degrees at universities (ylemmät korkeakoulututkinnot, höhere högskoleexamen)
Second level academic diploma - Diploma accademico di secondo livello		Master degrees at universities of applied sciences

# Curriculum Making in Europe

Policy and Practice  
Within and Across  
Diverse Contexts



Edited by

Mark Priestley  
Daniel Alvunger  
Stavroula Philippou  
Tiina Soini

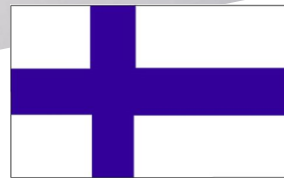


**Mark Priestley** is Professor of Education at the University of Stirling, and Director of the Stirling Network for Curriculum Studies, Scotland.

**Daniel Alvunger** is Associate Professor in Education and Dean of the Board for Teacher Education at Linnæus University, Sweden.

**Stavroula Philippou** is an Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Cyprus, Cyprus.

**Tiina Soini** is a Research Director at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Finland.



Example of European collaboration  
furthering our understanding and  
development of curriculum

# Support for the psychology curriculum in Europe – at all levels of education



*“a worthwhile aim is to promote EU citizens’ psychological literacy through teaching psychology in secondary schools. We find it hard to understand and justify that people learn the basics of physics and biology at school but have to learn the basics of human behaviour by themselves, often at high personal and social costs”*



*Prof. Dr. Robert Roe, President of EFPA, 2011, in a speech to the European Parliament*

# PRE-TERTIARY PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATION ON-LINE SURVEY OF EFPA MEMBERS



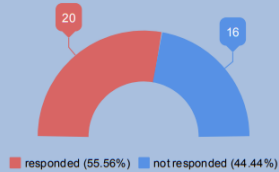
European Federation of Psychologists' Associations  
Board of Educational Affairs  
www.efpa.eu

European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations  
www.efpta.org



## PARTICIPANTS

36 EFPA national member associations (MAs) were invited to respond to a questionnaire on pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) in their countries.



## PSYCHOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

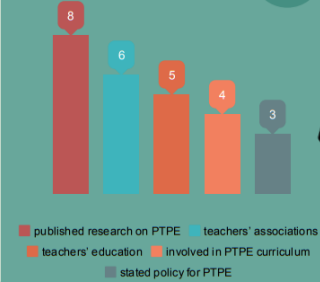
**Availability** of psychology as a school subject is very variable: it is taught in 18 of the 20 European countries which responded, but is **compulsory** in none.

**Exams** at the level normally required for entry to university (Abitur, Matura, A-level etc) are available for psychology in half of the responding countries where psychology is taught (n = 9).

National associations have formal and informal links with psychology teachers in schools.

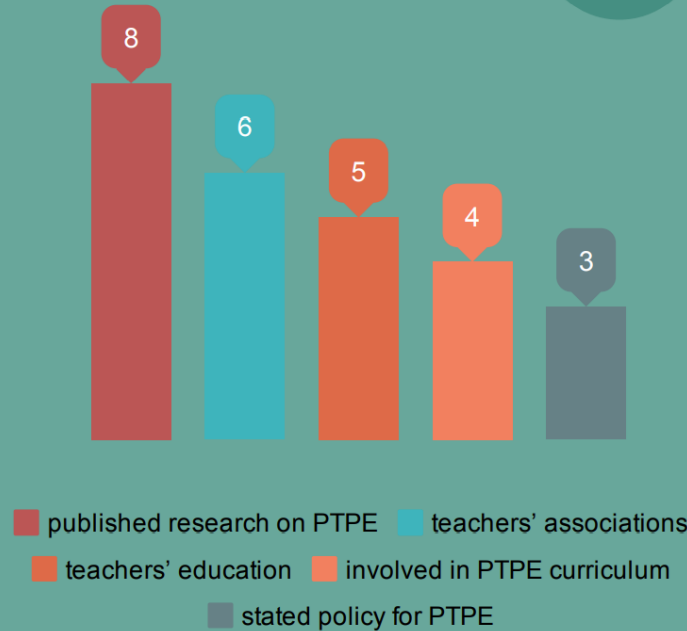
- 18** AVAILABILITY OF PTPE  
pre-tertiary psychology courses are available in eighteen countries
- 0** COMPULSORY SUBJECT  
none of the responding countries offer psychology as a compulsory subject
- 6** PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS  
psychology teachers' associations or committees are established in six countries
- 56%** RESPONSE RATE  
just over a half of EFPA member associations responded, 28 responses were received from 20 EFPA member countries

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITIES IN PTPE



# Research into school psychology education in Europe

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITIES IN PTPE

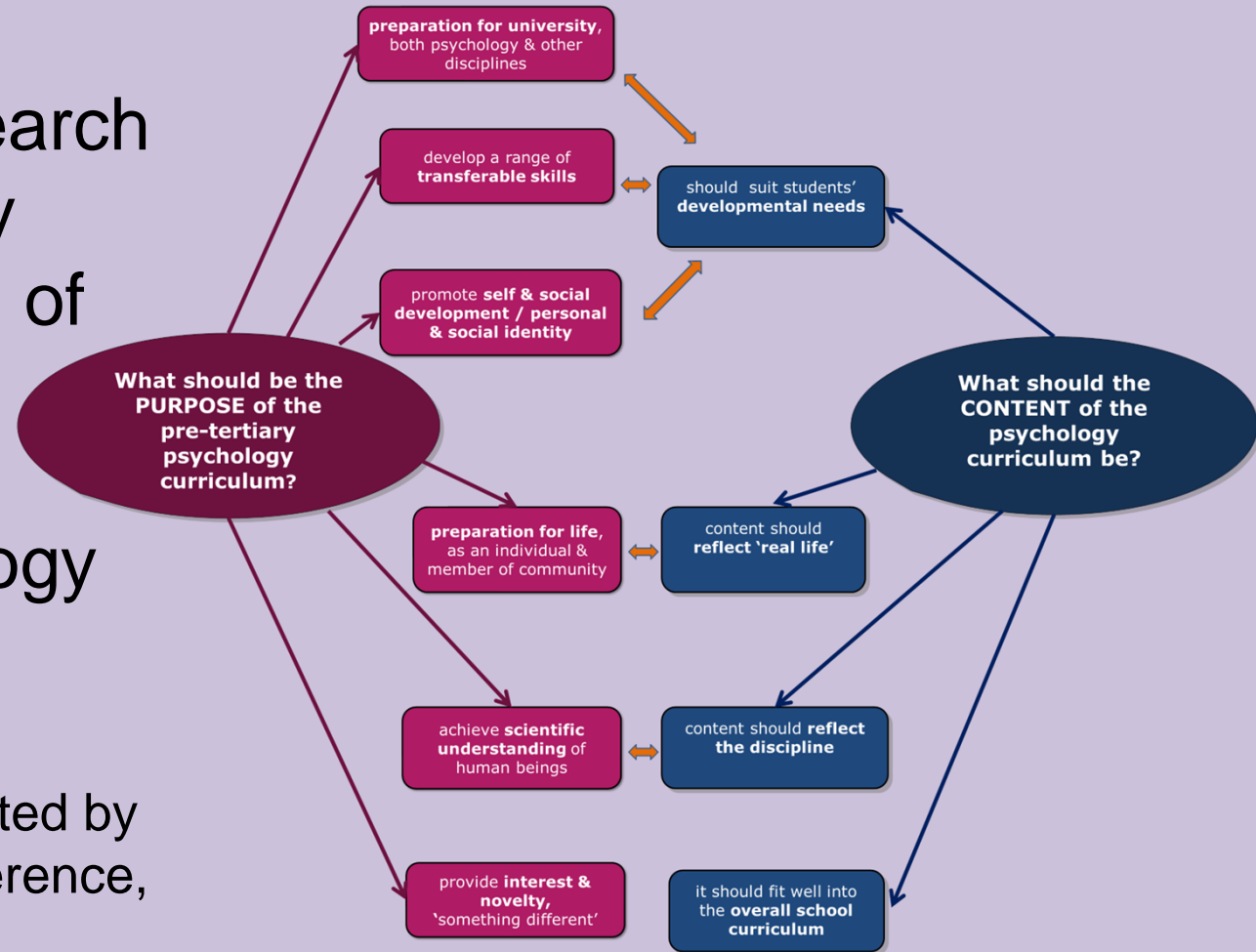


For more information contact Morag Williamson or Lenka Sokolová:

m.williamson@napier.ac.uk or sokolova@fedu.uniba.sk

# Qualitative research with psychology teachers: views of **purpose** and **content** of the school psychology curriculum

(from a poster presented by EFPTA at ICPS conference, Amsterdam, 2015).





# So how, exactly, can - should? - a school psychology curriculum be designed?

Examples from:

Finland

and

Scotland



# Take home message:

Teachers made the latest national curriculum in Finland!

How?

How could you do the same?



<https://psop.fi/lops2021/>  
(in Finnish)

Psychology LOPS2021 working group members were

**Counselor of Educational Pekka Iivonen**  
Finnish National Agency for Education  
(until 28.2.2019)

**Counselor of Educational Kati Mikkola**  
Finnish National Agency for Education  
(as of 1.3.2019)

**Lecturer Raija Anttila**  
Helsinki High School of Fine Arts, Helsinki

**Lecturer Tina Kinnunen**  
Kyrksläatts Gymnasium

**Lecturer Minna Nummenmaa**  
Raisio High School

**Lecturer Susanna Nyblin**  
Etu-Töölö High School, Helsinki

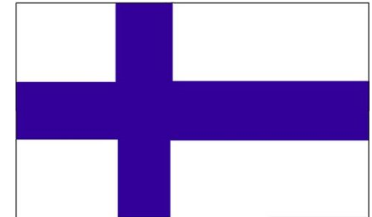
**Lecturer Jukka Oksanen**  
Metropolia University of Applied Sciences,  
Helsinki

**Writer Harri Peltomaa**  
Opintoverkko

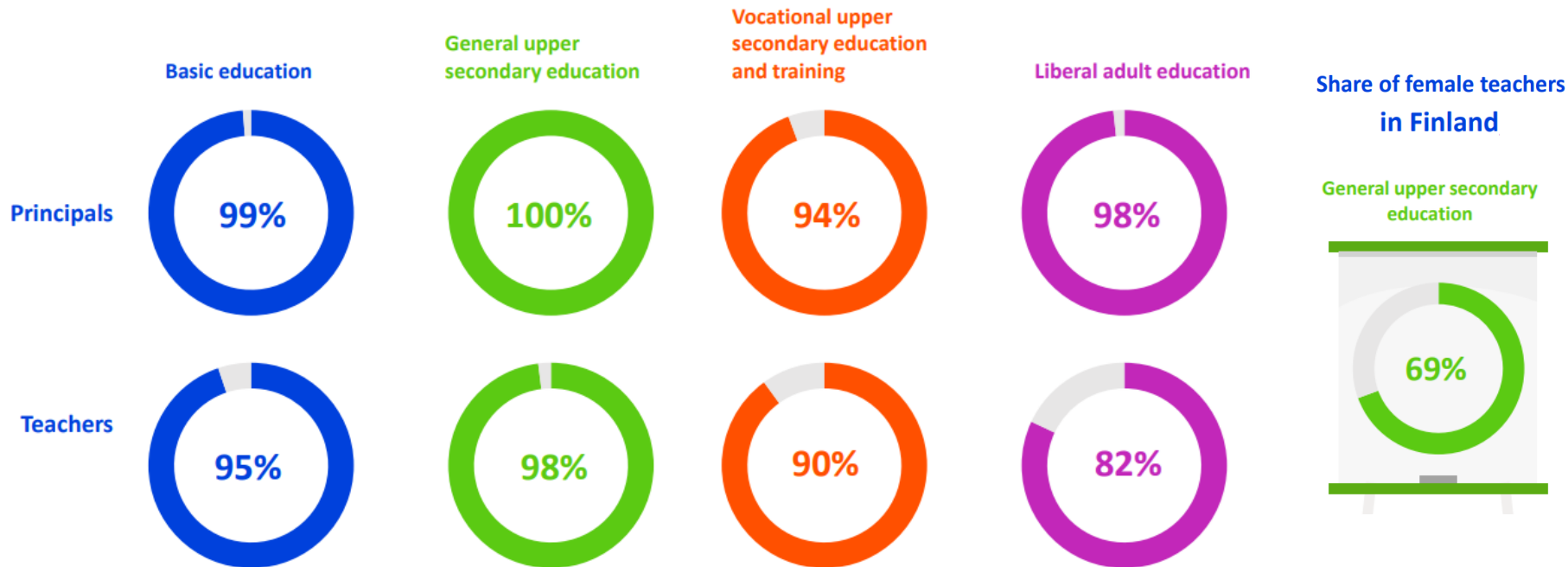
**Principal Pia Räsänen,**  
Kiimingin high school, Oulu

**Lecturer Atte Tahvanainen,**  
Tikkurila High School, Vantaa

**And 400 members of our teacher's union!**

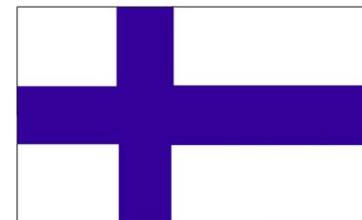


# Qualified teachers by level of education in Finland (2015)



Source: Teachers and Principals in Finland survey (2016)

09/04/2019 | Finnish National Agency for Education



# More of “how”

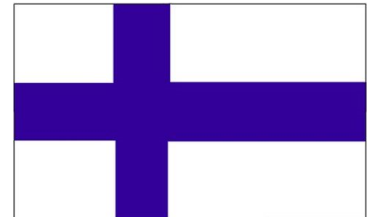
1973 Professional Association /Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ)

1971 <https://psop.fi/>

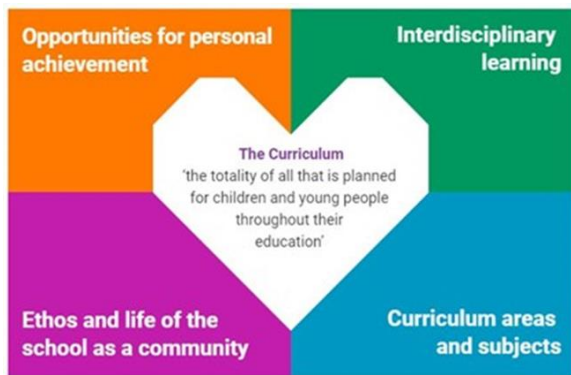
- own apartment!
- matriculum exam, statements, ... → essential part of the system
- founding member of the EFPTA (2004)

2018-2019

- national curriculum 2021



# The school curriculum in Scotland



# How is school curriculum developed in Scotland?



- Subject courses in Senior Phase (14-18 yrs) at three levels (14-18 yrs) – National 4, 5, 6 set by national awarding body (Scottish Qualifications Authority, SQA)
- ‘Higher’ (Nat 6) exams required for university entry; most students take 3 – 5 subjects
- Major curriculum revisions every 5-10 years
- Scottish Government and SQA drive curriculum development: school curriculum is intended to align with Scottish Government’s national policy priorities
- Current national curriculum is “Curriculum for Excellence” (2010) for 3-18yrs; step change – ‘transformative’ rather than ‘incremental’ (Macdonald,2003)
- External and internal influences affect process of course design
- Common tensions in curriculum design:
  - Top-down / directive / prescriptive, vs. bottom-up / participative / teacher autonomy?
  - Transparent vs. secretive? Consultation vs. involvement in decision-making?

# How are school psychology courses developed in Scotland?



- Academic and vocational courses in psychology
- Academic courses: all optional, usually one year each level, 3-4 hours per week
- How are courses designed? Much info on SQA website on assessment, quality assurance, monitoring standards - but little info on HOW courses are designed
- Stakeholder involvement:
  - wider community of psychology teachers?
  - experts – British Psychological Society, psychologists in professional practice, psychology academics in universities?
  - students and parents?
  - employers? local/regional education authorities? trades unions?
- Expectations met? transparency; regular review; comparison/ consistency of psychology course design with other subjects.....

# Comparisons: examples of other approaches to the psychology curriculum

International Baccalaureate  
Diploma Programme  
A guide to curriculum development



American Psychological Association  
- US High School psychology

*National Standards*  
FOR HIGH SCHOOL **PSYCHOLOGY** CURRICULA





# Questions for discussion – what do you think?

*You can either (1) raise your hand to speak (1 minute max please!)*

*And/or you can (2) type your views into the chat or*

*(3) the Google doc (give your name please) – link is in the chat*



1. Are you **satisfied** with the psychology courses that are offered in your country's schools?
2. What should be the **purpose(s)** of the psychology curriculum in schools?
3. What should be the **key features** of school psychology courses?
4. Should courses be designed **collaboratively**? **Who** should be involved?

# **Feedback and Conclusions**

# Thank you!

This presentation will be posted on the EFPTA website after the conference –  
[www.efpta.org](http://www.efpta.org)

You can also contact us via the EFPTA website.

# References and further reading

- European Qualifications Framework: <https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>
- The Future of A-level Psychology (2012), British Psychological Society <http://efpta.org/docs/FutureOfAlevelMarch2013INF209-A-Le-528312-01-04-2013.pdf>
- International Baccalaureate <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/recognition/rec4122recognitioncurriculumbrief-5web.pdf>
- National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula (2011), APA <https://www.apa.org/education/k12/national-standards#>
- Priestley, M., Alvunger, D., Philippou, S. & Soini, T. (Eds) (2021) *Curriculum Making in Europe: Policy and Practice Within and Across Diverse Contexts*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing
- Scottish Qualifications Authority – Psychology courses: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/5659.8271.html>
- Sokolová, L. and Williamson, M. (2020) The journey into psychology starts at school: pre-tertiary psychology education in Europe. In Rich, G.J., López, A.P., Ebersöhn, L., Taylor, j. & Morrissey, S.(Eds), *Teaching Psychology Around the World (Vol.5)*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Sokolová, L., Williamson, M., & McGinty, A. (2017, September 28). *Journeys to psychology: Different perspectives on pre-tertiary teaching of psychology in Europe*. Symposium at Europlat Conference, Salzburg. Retrieved from [osf.io/4n3rh](https://osf.io/4n3rh)
- Survey of EFPA members on pre-tertiary psychology education. EFPA Board of Educational Affairs and EFPTA (2019) [efpa\\_efpta\\_survey-infographic-LS-M-722166-14-11-2020.pdf](https://efpa-efpta-survey-infographic-LS-M-722166-14-11-2020.pdf)
- Williamson, M., Coombs, D., Schrempf, R., & Sokolová, L. (2015, March). *The psychology curriculum in European secondary schools: what should we teach?* Poster presented at the International Convention of Psychological Science, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://osf.io/p457g>

# WORKSHOP SUBMISSION [from published booklet]

Psychology is taught as a discrete subject in secondary schools in many European countries. There are similarities and differences within and between countries, in terms of: course content, pedagogical approaches, status of the subject in the curriculum, whether mandatory or optional, starting age for studying psychology, teacher qualifications, and so on. One area of striking differences lies in the processes of curriculum development. In many countries there is top-down centralised control of curriculum by government education departments and qualifications awarding bodies. Other countries show regional variations and considerable teacher autonomy, with curriculum development characterised by bottom-up processes, e.g., extensive consultation with stakeholders, practitioners, and experts. How collaborative are these processes? Who are, or should be, the stakeholders and decision-makers, when determining what psychology should be taught and how it should be assessed? Are the voices of experienced teachers, students and parents being heard? Should the curriculum be influenced by government policy priorities? We shall consider these questions in this workshop, referring to examples of practice from two or more countries, as well as research evidence. Participants will be invited to contribute their experiences and views in discussion, with a focus on ways of enhancing collaborative working in developing the psychology curriculum in schools.