

EFPTA Newsletter September 2012

Editor's note

The focus of this issue is the EFPTA conference “Evil and its place in the classroom”, held in Copenhagen in April 2012.

Here you can read reports of the presentations given there and discussions from the workshops “Mad or bad?” and “Whose curriculum is it anyway?” The topics are very varied and I believe that everybody can find something of interest. Finally we have a book review on a very interesting book, “Doctoring the Mind - Why Psychiatric Treatments Fail”. Slides from most of the lectures and other material are available at the [EFPTA website](http://efpta.org), (efpta.org > Presentations)



I find it interesting that in this issue we have articles from people from so many countries, from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Scotland, England, Germany, Russia and Slovakia. I want to thank you all for your contribution.

Kind regards,

*Harpa Hafsteinsdóttir (Iceland),
editor, harpah@mh.is*



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President's report

To my dear colleagues in Europe, thank you for your interest in our newsletter 2012.

As announced on our website this year's **conference** was in **Copenhagen in April**. It was a great success. There were more delegates than ever before... and we got wonderful feedback! In the spirit of EFPTA, delegates could learn from experts in interesting lectures and presentations, they could participate in discussions on various issues and share experience with colleagues from 10 different European countries.



Our conference theme "The Psychology of Evil – its place in the classroom" came up when we were shocked by the shooting in Norway in July 2011. And almost at the same time as our conference the trial against Breivik started in Oslo. This was a coincidence but it gave our discussions an unforeseen relevance. More so as the first issue of the trial was the question of "mad or bad?" and this was also the title of one of our workshops.

You will learn more about the conference in this newsletter and you can download some of the presentations from our website.

Warm thanks to all those who helped in organizing the conference, mainly Astrid Scherrebeck, Morag Williamson, Dorothy Coombs and Udo Kittler - and to all who contributed during the program. Also on behalf of the delegates I want to express our gratitude to the Danish Association for all their wonderful support. The venue was simply congenial, we felt very well taken care of and I am sure all of us will keep wonderful memories of Copenhagen.

Although the preparing of the conference used a lot of our time we managed to continue to make progress with our various ongoing issues.

Through our connection and affiliate membership to EFPA (European Federation Psychologists' Associations) **we are now part of a big network**. EFPA's members are professional psychologists' associations in 35 EU countries, and EFPA provides a forum for European cooperation in a wide range of fields of academic training, psychology practice and research. EFPA is probably the biggest association in the psychological field. (See more about EFPA at www.efpa.eu)

We are also **represented on** EFPA's newly-formed **Board of Educational Affairs** and I have already taken part in the first two meetings. This board is important for us as it "shall monitor and assess developments regarding academic education in psychology, develop standards for academic curricula in psychology at all levels (BA, MA and PhD), and give advice on issues of concern to students and teachers of psychology". Pre-tertiary psychology is not one of the top topics on the first working plan but I am sure we will come round to that later – or earlier if necessary for some reason.

We have also continued with **our research projects to gather data on pre-tertiary psychology in Europe**. Stage 2 examined the situation of teacher-training for psychology on pre-tertiary level (for the results see our website). There is also an online questionnaire for students going on, and we are approaching the next step, focusing teachers' ideas on a psychology curriculum. There were discussion groups at our conference in Copenhagen on this item. The results will be analyzed and put on our website. Both projects provide a basis for further action.

Prospects for the coming years

Encouraged by the feedback of conference delegates we want to focus on joint projects involving students and teachers from different countries. We hope that many colleagues will contribute their ideas, will start projects or join a project. We also aim for closer cooperation with the national associations.

Please visit our website regularly to keep informed, and do not hesitate to contact us with questions or ideas.

Best regards,

Renate Schrempf (Germany),
EFPTA President



The scale of evil

Report of keynote lecture by Dr. Robin May Schott

Robin May Schott is a Danish philosopher and approaches the concept of evil from such a perspective. In particular she asks whether bullying is a legitimate part of that concept. Those who do not agree would say that to include bullying is to trivialize the concept. Schott has formerly researched evil on a larger scale, but recently she has taken part in research group in Denmark, „Exploring Bullying in Schools” (eXbus) and today wants to ask the question whether „bullying“ can be a legitimate aspect of the concept of evil.



Evil has been defined as „foreseeable intolerable harms produced by culpable wrongdoing“. Bullying on the other hand, has be defined as: “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative action on the part of one or more other students”. Most researchers add that bullies are aggressive, impulsive, need to dominate, have a positive attitude towards violence and little empathy. Victims are typically passive, submissive, anxious, insecure, weak and some add, have overprotective mothers.

Schott discusses Arendts’ well known analysis of evil, “the banality of evil”, especially her insistence that Adolf Eichmann – the nazi mass murderer – was not an anti-semitist, not a sadist, but only thoughtless – lacking the “soundless dialogue we typically carry on with ourselves”.

Schott suggests that we need to view evil as a social thing, emphasizing the concepts of perpetrators, bystanders and victims. She also suggests that the processes that lead to evil are dynamic rather than static, captured by the phrase: “a continuum of destruction”. Thus there is a fluidity in the position of perpetrators, victims and bystanders, so that who experiences being seen as perpetrator or victim may have a good deal to do with which moment in time one looks. This Schott calls the “conditioned-ness” of evil. This concept relates closely to anxiety, especially social exclusion anxiety.

In conclusion Schott points out that whereas Holocaust perpetrators are typically portrayed as objectifying, depersonalizing and dehumanizing their victims, Danish research suggests that “the victim’s subjectivity and personhood (is) central for perpetrators’ use of excessive violence in the camps, which enabled a perpetrator to reestablish or enhance his or her personal identity”. Thus the victim is no doubt instrumentalized, but not dehumanized, as the perpetrators’ enjoyment is based on the fact that the victim is indeed human.

The personhood of the victim is in fact very important for the perpetrator. It gives him the power. He has power over other PERSONS, not OBJECTS.

Thus the concept of bullying does not trivialize evil, but can help to understand the concept.

Kristján Guðmundsson (Iceland)

Evil and mental disorders in the classroom - an “insanity” defense

Report of keynote lecture by Dr. Kristján Guðmundsson

I teach a course on mental disorders in relation to forensic psychology and my students do a lot of research on real issues, murders, cults, criminal pairs and so on. In this lecture I present the way I teach forensic psychology in my classroom and how it affects my students to study real foreign (and in some cases Icelandic) cases of murder and mayhem. What do they learn and how does it affect them to study, not about evil, but to read about real life sick people doing really evil things? I do go through mental disorders, and also crime classification manuals and then teach them to classify simple cases of various mental disorders as we find them in textbooks, on the internet, in movies and documentaries. In later stages I give them assignments on individual criminals (worldwide) and they research these and blog their results. I do emphasize the psychological and social analysis part, not the ugly or disturbing part.



In the presentation I show in detail how I do this and give some examples of objects of study and finally show how some of my students blog their results, which are open and for all to see.

After explaining how my Forensic Psychology course is structured and the age range and experience of my students I explain that the course is about Forensic psychology research into crimes, domestic and abroad. I review the classification of mental disorders (DSM-IV: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and ICD-10: International Classification of Disorders) and then apply them to real cases. We study deviant behavior of individuals, pairs and groups. Sanity vs. insanity is studied with actual cases.

Then emphasis shifts to real criminal behavior and students are required to evaluate the social and psychological causes of crime. The major assignments are:

1. Study of individual major criminals (e.g. murderers like Bundy, Chikatilo and Gacy, ...).
2. Crime pairs (e.g. Bonnie & Clyde, Starkweather & Fugate, Fernandez & Beck,).
3. Larger groups “cults” (or terrorists) with or without emphasis on group leaders (e.g. Charles Manson and the Family, Applewhite and Heaven’s gate, the Jonestown massacre)

Major emphasis on the study of real life cases and how they are treated in the printed media, on the internet and especially in the movies.

I have now made the whole lecture available for all on the following:

<http://www.operantconditioning.net>

I encourage all to look at the material, especially as I was unable (due to time) to show the various “YouTube” interviews and movie-clips, that highlight the major topics.

Dr. Kristján Guðmundsson (Iceland)

Mad or Bad?

Workshop discussion

Following the Keynote lectures by Dr Robin May Schott and Dr Kristján Guðmundsson, the delegates were presented with a series of questions such as “how are students affected by studying examples of evil”, and “to what extent does “evil” as a concept relate to other subjects”. We also discussed the issue of bullying and the role of situational conditions, in an effort to answer the question: “Are all evils fundamentally the same?” Finally we considered how far evil can be explained at the level of the individual or the collective condition.



Feedback from the discussion groups was shared in the plenary session and the following themes emerged:

It was generally agreed that there should be a positive outcome to studying examples of evil such as genocide, and that ultimately it should lead to an improvement in human lives. Some teachers, however, warned against the potentially negative effects of teaching young people about violence, though it was pointed out that the belief that children are affected by being exposed to images of violent acts is “outdated”. One delegate said she had been very disheartened by the passive response of some of her students when watching films of real examples of evil acts being carried out in the former Yugoslavia, as though they were watching fiction. Others said that care should be taken when showing even fictional films, especially to sensitive or vulnerable students. In at least one European country the showing of even fictional films of a violent nature is not allowed.

The discussion of how film might be used to illustrate acts of evil moved on to the issue of time constraints and most agreed that short extracts are the answer.

As far as how we should teach about evil is concerned it was suggested that the context should be set out and then students should find out for themselves what the contributory factors were. Some teachers organise visits to locations where, historically, evil acts have taken place and it was generally agreed that it is unlikely that students would not be affected by such an experience. The sensitivity of the subject matter makes this a challenging topic to teach.

In relation to the question of whether the topic of evil arises in other subjects there was general agreement that it does appear in many, including History, Philosophy, Sociology and Religious Studies. When students are asked “what is evil?” their responses range from animal abuse to bullying, from genocide to greed. It was suggested that some students may choose to study psychology in order to learn about evil in the form of crime, and that care should be taken to avoid this. In addition the “mad or bad” debate was considered by some to be narrow and it was felt that there is much more to the complexity of evil behaviour than that.

Dorothy Coombs (England)
Vice Chair of ATP UK and Vice President of EFPTA

Whose curriculum is it anyway?

Workshop discussion

One of the great attractions of any teachers' conference is quite simply the opportunity to talk with colleagues about 'what we do'. We psychology teachers do seem to enjoy 'talking shop'! Liberated from the constraints of our everyday workplaces, the conversations and debates amongst teachers from different countries, institutions and educational traditions can be particularly fruitful experiences, revealing common ground as well as contrasts in our professional practices. These exchanges happen all the time at conferences, informally, at lunch and coffee breaks (and even in the bar at the end of the day!), and they often spark enthusiasm, innovation, and a healthy questioning of established orthodoxies. Many agree that such encounters are as valuable as the formal programme of lectures.



The EFPTA Copenhagen conference in April 2012 therefore provided the opportunity for all delegates to share their knowledge, experiences and views, at length and in depth, on a particular aspect of our work – the psychology curriculum at pre-university level. This took the form of a round-table forum entitled 'Whose curriculum is it anyway?'. The session was organised by the EFPTA Research Team – Renate Schrempf (Germany), Dorothy Coombs (England), Lenka Sokolová (Slovakia) and Morag Williamson (Scotland) – who also utilised the discussion as a source of focus group data for Stage 3 of the ongoing EFPTA research project.

Morag gave a brief presentation to introduce the session, referring to EFPTA's key aims, and outlining findings from the first two research stages, which had been presented at EFPTA events and at the British Psychological Society conference in Glasgow in 2011. It had been found that there were substantial variations in the topics taught in schools across European countries, and that members were experiencing major revisions of courses, which often raised concerns. In spite of great popularity amongst students (as shown in the EFPTA student survey – see <http://www.efpta.org/home/index.asp?sid=7>), in some countries psychology was accorded less respect and status than other academic subjects, and was struggling to gain recognition as a science. These issues were often found alongside inadequate provision of teacher education, low levels of teacher confidence in curriculum design processes, and doubts over the expertise of educational authorities charged with providing psychology curricula and qualifications.

Delegates then formed small groups to discuss a set of broad questions about the pre-tertiary psychology curriculum: what should its purpose be? What kind of content and skills should it include? Should we focus on breadth or depth? How much emphasis should there be on research evidence, how much on theory, how much on applications to everyday life? Should practical research skills be included, and assessed? How can psychology help us achieve interdisciplinarity, or integration with other subjects? How can we address diversity?

As well as discussing actual content and structure of courses, delegates were asked to consider the processes of curriculum design: who decides – and who should decide – what is taught and assessed? What criteria are there – or should there be – for designing a ‘good’ psychology curriculum for schools, in European countries?

In a final plenary, representatives from each small group gave summaries of the outcomes of their discussions. This provided delegates with a ‘snapshot’ of the variety of their colleagues’ views. There appeared to be substantial agreement on what the purposes and content of psychology courses in schools should be, but teachers in some countries felt that their curriculum fell short of the ideal. The question of who designs the curriculum, and how, revealed considerable variation, in terms of both actual existing processes and views on how these processes should work.

Participants made written notes during discussions, and audio recordings were also made (with participants’ consent). These will be fully analysed by the Research Team and findings will be disseminated later this year; it is anticipated that they will constitute a valuable addition to EFPTA’s knowledge base of psychology education in Europe.

Many delegates said they found the discussions enjoyable and refreshing, and wanted a similar session next time. This was in spite of the fact that all discussion was in English, which for most participants was not their first language; so, for your enthusiasm and commitment, our sincere thanks!

Morag Williamson (Scotland)

Why study psychology?

Preliminary results from a cross-cultural collaborative teacher-student research project

The aim of the presentation is to describe collaborative project to investigate students' motivation for, and perceived outcomes of, studying psychology. Preliminary results from over 300 respondents from Great Britain and Slovakia have shown that one of the students' expectations towards psychology studies is to develop transferable life skills (interpersonal understanding and communication, self-cognition etc.).



Introduction

Psychology as a non-traditional and voluntary or optional school subject is often perceived as easy to study and teach, and in some countries does not always enjoy support from education authorities (Williamson et al, 2011). On the other hand psychology in many countries is one of the most popular subjects at school and university and there are many different psychology courses available from secondary level in Europe (Schrempf et al, 2010). That is why we find the issue of motivation and perceived outcomes of studying psychology important to study and analyse in the context pre-university level of education. This situation led us to design an international collaboration project which aims to compare students' motivation for studying psychology in the cross-cultural context, to promote the idea of teaching psychology, to support cooperation among psychology teachers and students in Europe and to share good practice in psychology teaching.

Research questions:

- Why do students choose to study psychology?
- Are there any gender differences in motivation for studying psychology and perceived outcomes of psychology studies?
- Are there any differences in motivation for studying psychology across Europe?
- Does the educational system and the status of psychology as a school subject influence motivation for studying psychology?
- How do curricular goals meet students' expectations?
- Do the perceived outcomes of studying psychology meet the European Parliament's and Council's recommendations on key competences (2006)?

Method

To obtain data on students' motivation to and perceived outcomes of studying psychology we used two online questionnaires. The items and categories are based on previous research and experiences of psychology teachers.

43-item online questionnaire on perceived outcomes of studying psychology contained 5 demographic questions, 2 open questions and 36 Likert-scale questions grouped in 6 following categories:

- Self-understanding and psychological thinking,
- Critical thinking skills,
- Skills of scientific thinking and application of scientific method,
- Study skills,
- Job skills,
- Interpersonal communication and relationships.

40-item online questionnaire on motivation towards studying psychology contained 5 demographic questions, 1 open question and 34 Likert-scale questions grouped in 7 following categories:

- Difficulty,
- Psychotherapy,
- Intrinsic motivation – help others, work with people,
- Intrinsic motivation – interest in discipline as such,
- Gender,
- Future job,
- „Life success“.

Participants

For the purpose of EFPTA conference presentation we have analysed data from Slovak and British psychology students.

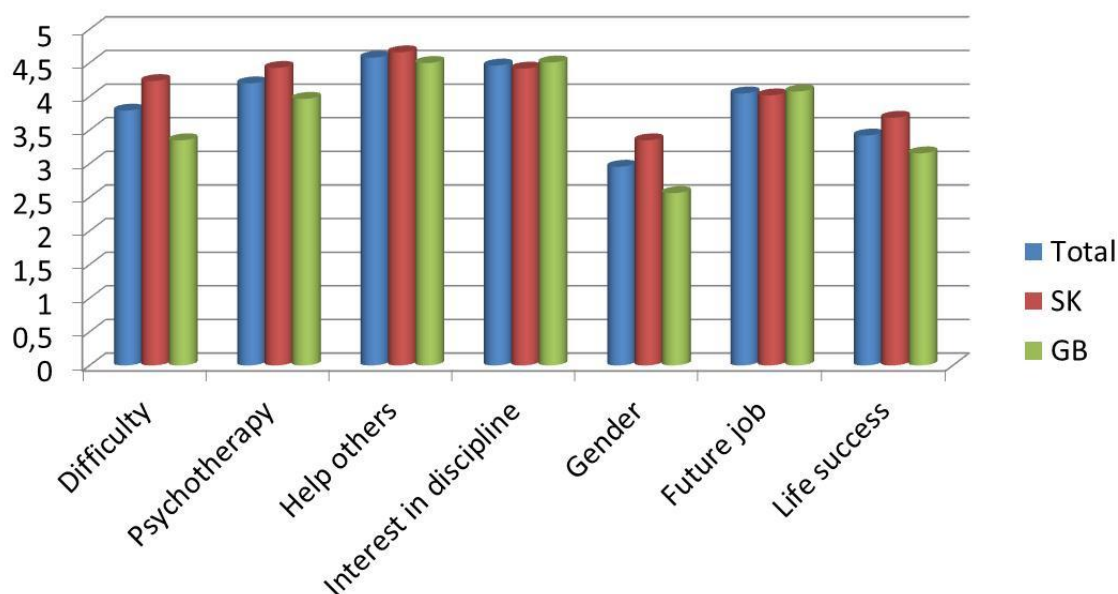
	Great Britain	Slovakia	Total
Male	8	48	56
Female	261	113	374
Total	269	161	430

	Great Britain	Slovakia	Total
Motivation questionnaire	131	90	221
Perceived outcomes questionnaire	138	71	209
Total	269	161	430

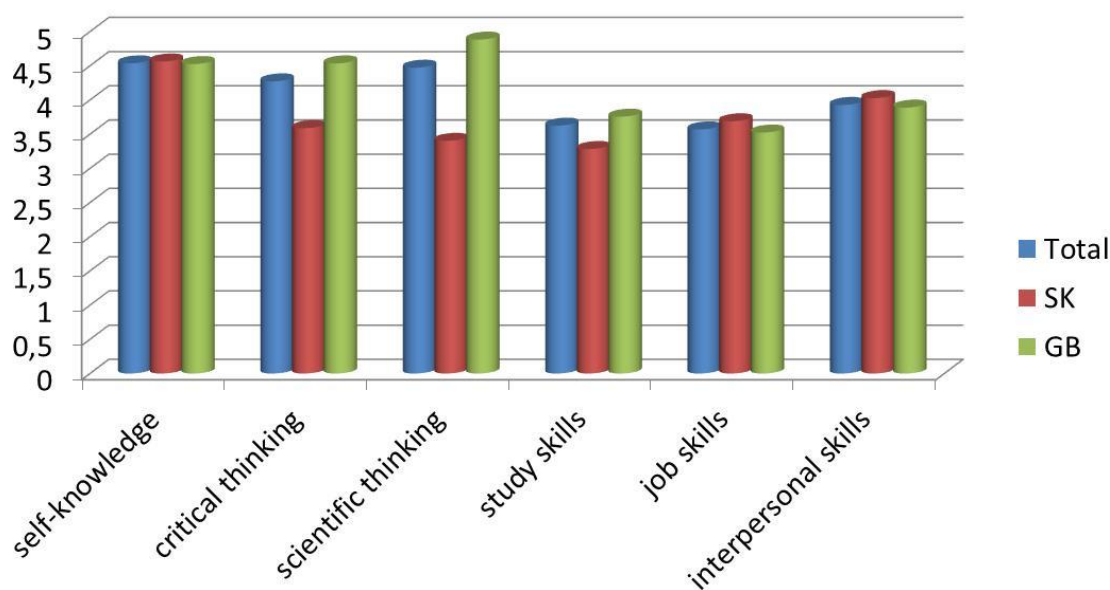
Preliminary results

In both countries the most frequent motifs for studying psychology were the understanding and helping others and the desire to learn more about human mind. Differences in motivation among countries were in three categories: difficulty (more Slovak students chose psychology because they had believed it is easier to study

than other subjects), psychotherapy (more Slovak students chose psychology because they had believed that it might helped them to solve their personal issues) and gender (more Slovak students chose psychology because they believed that psychology was more suitable for women than men).



In perceived outcomes the highest scores in the British sample had the development of scientific and critical thinking. Slovak students found the most important benefit of studying psychology to be self-cognition and self-understanding. Lower score of critical and scientific thinking as a benefit of psychology studies in Slovak sample relates to the content of psychology courses in Slovakia, scientific methods and critical analyses of research designs or psychological theories are not included in the curriculum in the same extend as in Britain.



Based on the open questions further categories of motivation and perceived outcomes were formulated.

Motivation:

- Personal experience with psychologist or psychology teacher (more frequent in Slovak sample),
- Recommendations from friends,
- Perceived „talent“ for psychology (more frequent in Slovak sample).

Perceived outcomes:

- Being prepared for university studies (more frequent in British sample),
- Understanding non-verbal communication,
- Stress management (more frequent in British sample),
- „personal change“,
- more interest in psychology as such.

Conclusion

We suppose the results underline the differences in the formal and informal status of psychology as a school subject and the content of psychology courses in both countries. We believe that in further international discussion the results may open the door to research on:

- curriculum: content, objectives and competences,
- subject-specific competences and skills of psychology teachers,
- the role of psychology in developing key competences in secondary school students.

Detailed analysis of the findings and revised questionnaires will be available for psychology teachers by the end of 2012.

Lenka Sokolová (Slovakia)

What do our students think of studying psychology?

EFPTA online student survey: interim findings.

The following is a brief summary of my presentations at the EFPTA Conference in Copenhagen (April 2012) and at the 30th ATP Conference in Birmingham (July 2012).



History

Originally the idea for this survey stems from Michael Bürger (current president of the German Psychology Teachers' Association). Because in Germany psychology as a school subject has always had its ups and downs he thought it would be very useful how students evaluated our subject. The idea was that the results would be very positive and a strong argument when dealing with decision makers in the field of school administration. The EFPTA board found this approach very convincing and decided to design a European version of this survey and this task was subsequently carried out by Morag Williamson and Wolfgang Augustin. The resulting online survey has been accessible since November 2011 (www.psysurvey.de.vu) and so far more than 1500 students from all over Europe have filled out this questionnaire.

Table 1

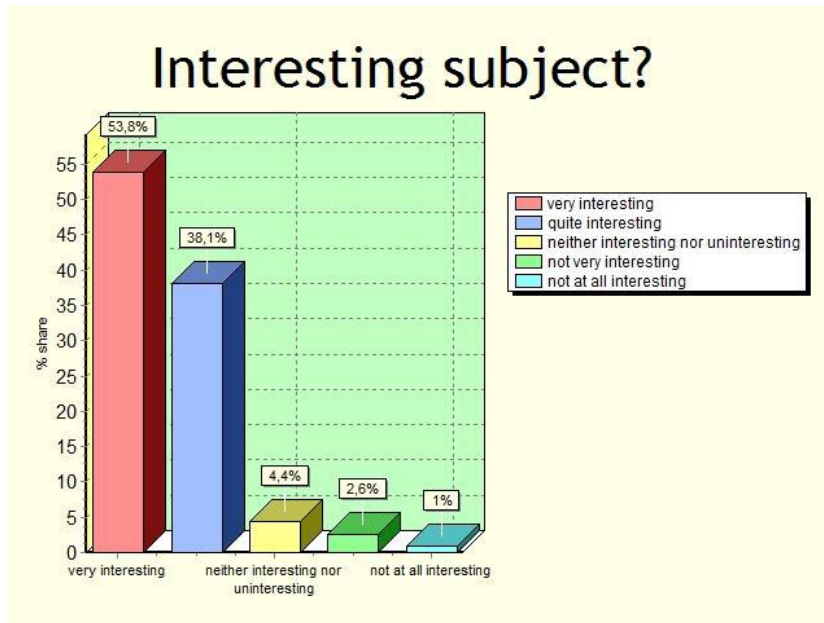
Countries	Participants	Percent
Austria	1	0,07%
Belgium	1	0,07%
Denmark	48	3,13%
England	434	28,31%
Finland	70	4,57%
Germany	550	35,88%
France	0	0,00%
Greece	2	0,13%
Iceland	374	24,40%
Italy	1	0,07%
Netherland	0	0,00%
Norway	0	0,00%
Russia	0	0,00%
Scotland	24	1,57%
Spain	2	0,13%
Sweden	0	0,00%
Other	26	1,70%
Total	1533	100%

The questionnaire consisted of 26 items which means we collected about 39.000 single answers. If you include all the open answers, you end up with more than 90 impressive pages full of data. Some countries do not seem to have responded but

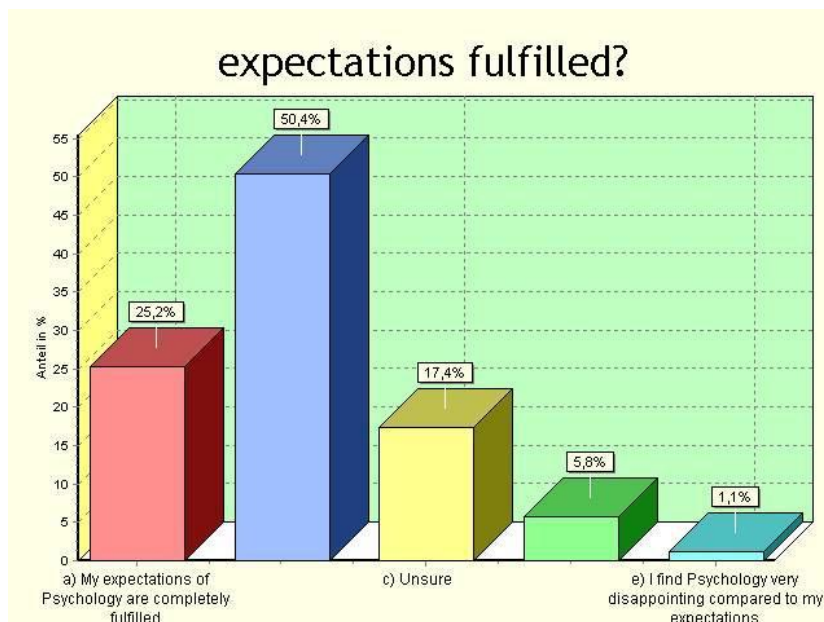
this may be due to two factors a) we do not have any contact person to spread/promote the survey, b) there is no psychology in the pre-university sector.

Below you will find a selection of diagrams showing very typical findings and they all speak for themselves:

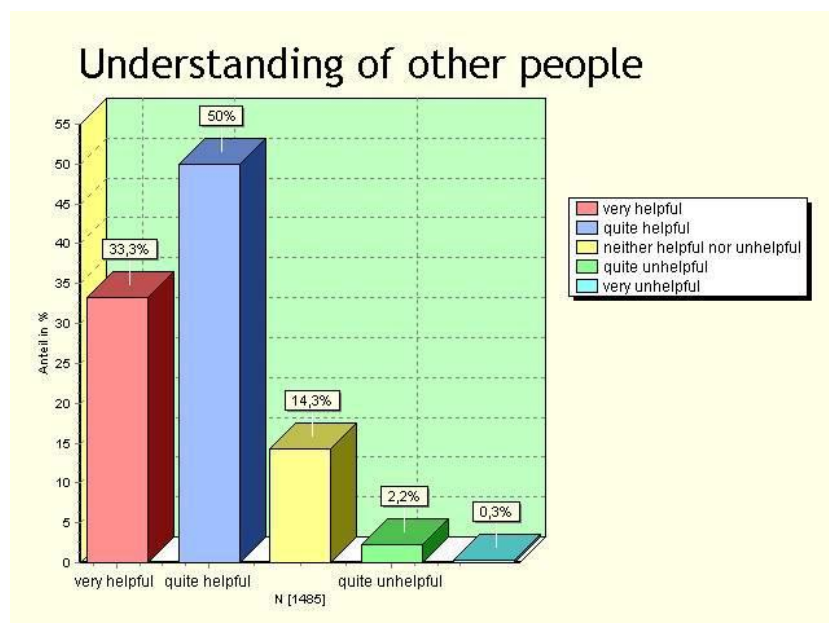
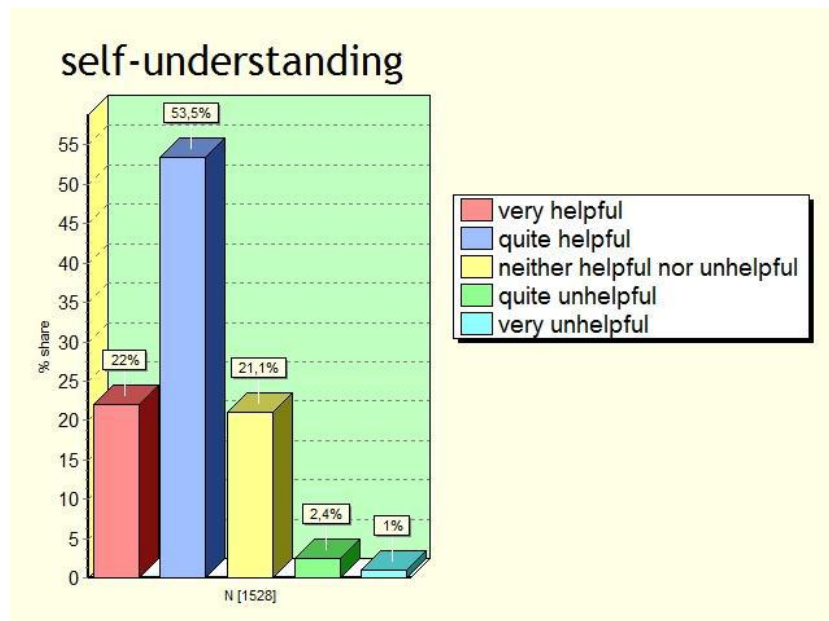
Have you found Psychology an interesting subject so far?



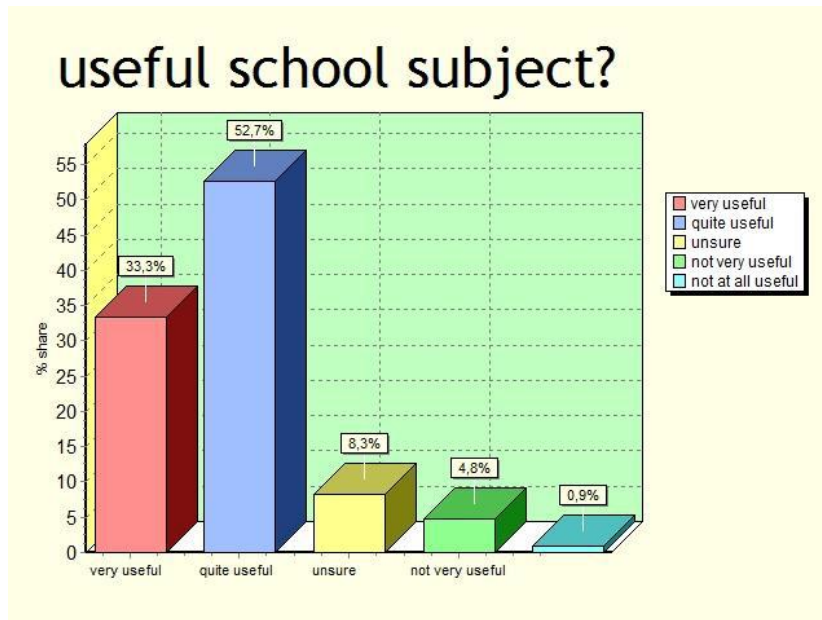
To what extent has studying Psychology fulfilled your expectations, so far?



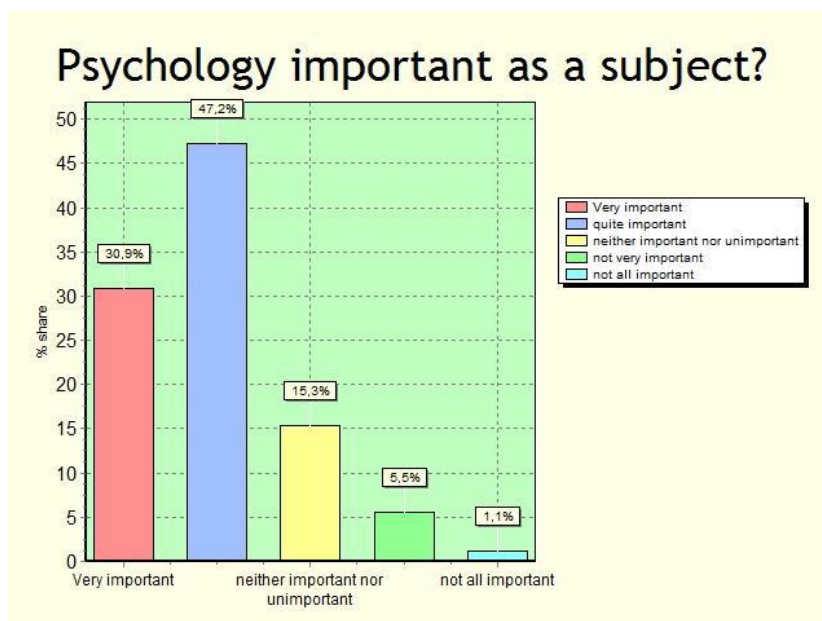
To what extent has your knowledge of Psychology been helpful to you, in the following areas of your learning and life experience?



How useful do you think Psychology is for you personally, as a school subject?



How important do you think Psychology is, as a school subject, compared to other subjects?



As can be seen from all these illustrations the results are strikingly similar and always (!) very strongly in favour of psychology as a school subject. Who would have dared to imagine such an overwhelmingly positive response from our students Europe wide? It can also be clearly said that the results are very homogenous with a view to the different countries involved even though there has been no detailed analysis of this aspect so far. Above all, this is also a very big compliment for the teachers and the work they are doing. I strongly doubt that a lot of other subjects would fare as well as psychology does in this survey.

Apart from the straightforward statistical results we believe that the survey has a couple of more interesting aspects to offer for the students. Some of the potential benefits are listed in the table below:

Other benefits for students

- experience of an authentic survey questionnaire on issues that they care about
- the teacher can use it as a resource within their teaching of research methods
- students can be encouraged to critically evaluate the questionnaire in terms of validity
- the questionnaire may be used as a model for students to set up their own online survey -> promote students' IT skills
- for students also studying English it can provide language practice

Outlook

How do we go on from here?

This question has not been answered yet and will be discussed in future board meetings. Currently there is some scientific research being carried out based on our findings which will eventually lead to a paper being published in a renowned psychology journal.

Wolfgang Augustin (Germany)

Scotland's "Curriculum for Excellence"

Scotland has new national qualifications

The new qualifications have been developed as part of Curriculum for Excellence which covers the 3-18 curriculum in schools and prepares young people for the 21st century. As part of Curriculum for Excellence, all aspects of Scotland's education system, including qualifications, assessment, and learning and teaching approaches have been reviewed.



Work on developing the new qualifications started in 2006. The first year of implementation of the qualifications is August 2013. The first external assessment will be in spring 2014.

We began the development process by scoping out the new qualifications at curriculum area level and worked to a blue print for development called the design principles.

The new Courses use a new type of Unit which is more skills-based, less prescriptive, and more user-friendly. These Units require knowledge and understanding of the subject area as well as skills to be developed. The Unit Specifications are more flexible and open and have fewer, broader learning Outcomes that encourage holistic assessment. The Units also rely on assessors to exercise professional judgement instead of having to satisfy long lists of criteria.

To be awarded a Course, learners have to provide evidence which meets the requirements of all of the Units and pass an external assessment. The external assessment will be marked and quality assured by SQA. External assessment samples breadth, depth and application from across the Course and uses one or more of seven approved assessment methods.

Key points for Psychology Course

- contains three Units: Individual Behaviour; Social Behaviour; and a Research Unit
- focuses on the scientific study of the mind and behaviour, and enhances learners' ability to use evidence to explain behaviour
- provides opportunities to study and research classic and contemporary psychological topics
- develops critical thinking, reasoning skills and report writing throughout the Course
- provides progression for learners into higher level qualifications by developing deeper understanding of more complex concepts and the ability to apply this to more complex issues

- provides personalisation and choice in external assignments
- external assessment has two components — a question paper and an assignment

Lecturers and teachers have been involved at every stage of the development process, offering advice and guidance on the structure, skills, knowledge and understanding being developed in the Courses. Over 800,000 hits have been received on SQA's website throughout the development and over 3,500 comments have been received from lecturers and teachers as feedback on the draft documentation. Not bad for a country with a population of 5,222,100.

Marie Morrison (Scotland)

Socio-psychological characteristics of the teenagers, subject to abuse by their equals in age in study groups

The issue of the abused coevals in the networks of children and teenagers is not a novelty. For a long time it has been a context of the children and teenagers' aggression problems research (L. Berkowitz, 2001) and has been considered topical mostly for spontaneous groups of youngsters.



The problem of the coevals' abusive treatment in organized communities as well as in learning circles has been gaining a particular relevance over the last years. There has been introduced the notion of a bullying or a school harassment as a variety of abuse within the child internal group relationship system (D. Lane, 2001). This phenomenon does not possess a local character but has a cross-cultural nature. The growing number of the suicides committed by the schoolchildren who have been abused causes alarm among the scientists in different countries.



The range of the abuse manifestations of some children and youngsters towards the others varies greatly: from the direct negative attitude accompanied by the use of the physical force to neglect or a mockery for the most trifling occasions. More often the coevals' abuse in study groups is a psychological violence and represents a complicated series of the repeated effects upon a child, whether it be a hostile or indifferent attitude to him, which leads to his self-depreciation, self-belief loss, deep psycho-traumatic feelings, adjustment disorder.

The experience shows that the corresponding manifestations can occur in objectively trouble-free groups; therefore it is not possible to solve this problem by strengthening discipline or punishing aggressive pupils, whereas the interference of parents, teachers and school administrations does not always appear to be efficient.

A theoretical analysis of this issue testifies that the abusive treatment on the part of the coevals in child and teenagers communities is a complicated phenomenon to understand which allows for various factors to be taken into account.

First, numerous authors (G.Abramova, 2001) consider the baiting to be an age specific phenomenon, a specific form of aggression, particularly specific of the middle childhood and junior teenagers. At the age of 11-12 a child experiences the need to perceive himself through opposing himself to the others. Along with this the youngsters' behavior is marked by the need of self-assertion, group affiliation, group cohesion, accord with social norms. Denial of one another can originate, for example, from the ethnic and social controversies, behavior peculiarities, appearance and et cetera. It is a topical issue within the inclusive community as the children with health disabilities are perceived as "the others".

Second, the classic research in the social psychology has revealed the phenomenon of the normative social influence in groups, when the influence of the majority in a group determines a person's homonymy drives. Immaturity of a personality, overdependence upon the opinions of the others and insufficient individualization of the teenagers' behavior and values bring about the situations when even not really aggressive youngsters in a group get involved in a baiting, display inhumanity towards the minority group. In the event of the immature self-appraisal the children tend to re-direct the concentration, including the aggression, at someone else.

Third, a very significant factor to determine the appeal to the coevals is an adults position, that of parents, teachers, school administrations. The interaction within the children's families is determined by the coevals' group interaction. Those children who are abused in their families more often demonstrate inhumanity towards their coevals.

As for today, a big number of researches deal with the study of the aggressive teenagers' personality, while the personality of the abused children and youngsters is not inspected well enough. In most cases the abusive treatment in study groups is demonstrated against the same children who are socially isolated and cut off the group interaction.

The survey of the socio-psychological peculiarities of the teenagers who are distinguished by a degree of their attractiveness in a study group (E. Drozdova, 2009) showed that the ratio of the teenagers' appeal in their interpersonal communication in a study group is due to their socio-psychological characteristics.

The socio-psychological characteristics surveyed listed communication skills, a general level of the communication competence, a communication type, the prevailing attitude in the interpersonal communication within a group and the visage evaluation.

The results of the survey participated by the teenagers, schoolchildren at the age of 12-14 proved that in each investigated group of the youngsters with an average degree of attractiveness there are fewer unattractive teenagers (1-2 persons in each group). Along with this the attractive youngsters have their communication skills well formed. The attractive teenagers can produce a better reaction towards a criticism, refuse somebody's request. On the contrary, various communication skills are not formed well enough with the teenagers with the low degree of attractiveness as compared to their coevals.

The prevailing communication type characteristic of the attractive teenagers is confident and non-confident, whereas with the unattractive youngsters the prevailing communication types are aggressive and non-confident.

The attractive youngsters are less dependent, more communicative; they are capable of accepting a fight as well avoiding it if necessary. The unattractive teenagers are dependent, reserved, they often avoid fighting rather than accept it.

As for the appearance of the teenagers marked by a greater degree of attractiveness, there can be observed the following tendency: the attractive teenagers highly rate their physique, expressive behaviour as well as their reflected semblance (their photo image).

Sufficient differences in evaluation of the appearance by the attractive teenagers are demonstrated in their rating of the outward form dressing. The unattractive youngsters much less value their outward form dressing.

The experience shows that in order to prevent an abusive treatment it is important not only to reveal and punish those who treat the others inhumanly, but to level up the competency to stand against the negative treatment of those who are outcast as well as to develop their communication skills.

One of the activities to prevent the potential trouble in the psychological and personal development of the children there can become socio-psychological training procedure (for example, tolerance training) at Psychology lessons. Such training courses may be aimed at the development of the teenagers' personalities, self-cognition, empathy, as well as at the construction of their reflexive attitude towards themselves and the others, maturation of their communication skills, interpersonal communication tolerance.

The experience of such activities proves to be efficient (I. Drozdova, I. Volodina S., 2002). The teenagers abused by their coevals in study groups and those who abuse them can modify their behaviour in the course of the role play in class. Training situations are notable for their safety, controllability, intensive teamwork, which allows the youngsters to behave themselves in a different way, to expand their communication repertoire, to disclose their experiences in a safe situation.

One should take into consideration the fact that the development of a personality is a long and complicated process and the immediate result oughtn't to be counted on, but a systematic approach sooner or later will turn out to be efficient.

The development of a personality as well as his communication potential in the course of the socio-psychological training can be looked at as a method to prevent the abusive treatment on the part of the coevals in study groups.

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Elena Drozdova and Irina Drozdova (Russia)

An evil in the student's environment: Pilot research of the ideas and emotional experience of the students

The problem of the evil is one of the topical and everlasting problems of the humanitarian science and religion. The questions of the ontological basis of the evil in the world and in man, of the resistance to the evil, etc. still remain open. The main topic of this article without going into philosophical-psychological research of the evil is to present the results of the analysis of the pilot research of the emotional experience and ideas of the students about the evil in the students' environment.



In our research we came from the following understanding of the evil in the Russian language: the evil is a conscious and purposive damage against the other person. The evil in such understanding is an integrative psychic formation which has a certain structure containing outer and inner components. Proceeding from such an understanding and being guided by the model of the structural organization of psychic worked out by V.N.Panferov (2) we offered the preliminary psychological-pedagogical composition of the evil (see drawing 1). Of interest is the fact that there exist the words in the Russian language which reflect this or that component of the composition suggested by us:



1. The inner component includes 4 psychic formations:

- Moral psychic formation – the nucleus of the evil as the psychological-pedagogical phenomenon because it includes the relations of “man-man”.
- Motivational component is the motivation of the evil. The examples of the words, reflecting the content of this component are the words «ill-intentioned», «malefactor».
- Reflexive component is the knowledge about the good and the evil, awareness of the fact that a person commits an evil.
- Affective component is the feelings experienced by a person who is looking forward for the evil, committing the evil or after committing the evil. The following words illustrate this component «malevolence», malevolent».

2. The outer component is the deeds and actions committed by a man. This component can be illustrated by the following words: «malefactor», «villainy», «malignant gossip».

We also specified the features of the social environment of the faculty in which the expression of the evil of the students towards each other is possible:

1. The interaction and communication of the students at the lectures and seminar classes, the communication of the students with each other and with the lecturers at classes and in connection with classes. The basis of the possible expression of the evil can be misunderstanding the context of the communication, non-acceptance the positions of each other, etc.
2. The interaction and communication at leisure time – concerts, show performances etc. organized by the initiative of the students. The possible reasons of the expression of the evil may be the clash of the interests, divergence of the positions of the group and individual, etc.
3. The personal life of students, their interpersonal relations (friendship, love, enmity). Here it is also possible to see the origination and expression of the evil in the continuum “sympathy-antipathy”.

The pilot research of the emotional experience and ideas of the students was made on the basis of the personal questionnaire including the following blocks of questions:

An idea of the evil in general;

- Description of the concrete cases of the expression of the evil in the students' environment;
- Description of the situations in which the student was the subject and object of the evil;
- Emotional experience of the situations by the students in which they were the subject or object of the evil;
- Preventive measures, suggested by the students for the avoidance of the situations of the evil in the students' environment;
- Idioms illustrating the situations of the evil.

The research was made with the participation of the students of the 3-d and 4th courses of the psychological-pedagogical specialities. In total there were 48 students at the age of 18-22.

We'd like to give more details on the results of the pilot research in accordance with the above-mentioned blocks of questions.

The student's idea of the evil. The students define the evil as a moral category, as certainly a negative phenomenon of the interpersonal relations. But at the same time in students' answers the evil as the psychological category refers to different psychic formations:

- the evil is the moral formation reflecting the negative attitude of the man towards the other one, the moral and physical damage against the people (60.7% answers);
- the evil is an abstract category of the moral, «something bad», antonym of the good (25%);
- the evil is a specific human feature (14.3%).

On the whole the students understand the evil as the negative category of moral, the damage against the other people.

Description of the concrete situations. The typical situations, in which the evil in the students' environment, in their mutual relations finds its expression, are:

- hostility of the group to the student – mockery, sneer, humiliation, insult (50% answers), including a negative attitude to the students having a good progress in studies (3%);
- hostility to the students of other groups (21.4%);
- never encountered these situations (14.3%);
- find difficulty in giving an answer (14.3%).

At the same time the students note that they were either the witnesses of such situations (71.4%), or the evil was directed against them (28.6%). Except one case one (the fight between the girls), the evil was expressed verbally – mockery, insult and others.

One should note the fact that describing such situations the students never used the notion «manipulation».

It is necessary to draw your attention to the fact that while describing the situations at the faculty the students explained that these situations were only negative, which in their opinion were not an evil, understanding under the evil something global (4%).

The situations in which the student himself hurt the other person.

Describing such situations the students note:

- negative deeds towards the other student – rudeness, aggressiveness, vengeance (32% answers);
- a student acknowledges that he committed an evil but doesn't concretize the situations (4%);

- a student committed an evil accidentally (4%), in this case it is possible not to take these situations into account as in the very definition of the evil there is purposiveness and deliberateness;
- a student does not remember whether he did an evil but he admits such a situation – «may be, I don't remember» (16%);
- he did not do an evil (40%);
- he finds difficulty in giving an answer (4%).

So, the number of students who write that they did an evil and those who did not do an evil is approximately equal (40-56% и 40% respectively).

The students' emotional experience. Being the witnesses or the participants of the situations in which the evil was done the students assess their emotional experience in such situations in the following way:

- negative emotional experience – aggressiveness, fear (24%);
- emotions of surprise– surprise, incomprehension(8%);
- not emotional but rational assessment of the situation – «incorrect» (8%);
- when doing an evil he does not feel pangs of conscience (4%);
- there are no descriptions of emotions and feeling (56%).

In connection with answers it seems reasonable to continue the research of the emotional experience of the students as it remains unclear why the students did not give the descriptions of their emotions and feelings in the situations of the evil.

Preventive measures on preventing the evil at the faculty suggested by the students include both the inner work of the person on self-cultivation and the outer forms:

- the change of self-attitude and the attitude to others, the life on the principle «treat the people as you wish to be treated by them » (22.8%);
- self-regulation, prayer (10.5%);
- not to focus the attention on the negative, on offence (14%);
- communicate only with pleasant people (7%);
- forgive, repay evil with good (5.2%);
- repay evil with evil (8.8%);
- make complaints to different organizations, impose administrative sanctions and punishments (8.8%);
- arrange relevant trainings, meetings, talks (14%);
- no measures will help, it is impossible to protect oneself from the evil (8.8%).

So, the majority of the students consider that the best way of fighting against the evil is the inner work, self-development oriented on the positive potential of the personality (52.5%). Going away from the solution of this problem are the answers of the students who prefer to socialize only with pleasant people (7%). To a certain

regret one should state the fact that not all the students (14%) consider trainings and other forms of psychological practice as preventive measure – their future professional activity.

Idioms, which in the students' opinion describe and reflect different situations of the expression of the evil. In total the students gave 48 idioms more often referring to:

- He that mischief hatches, mischief catches; cast no dirt in the well that gives you the water; as the call so the echo (29 answers);
- An eye for an eye (9);
- Don't do good you won't get evil (5);
- Do as you would be done (4).

All the idioms mentioned by the students are frequently used in Russian speech and they give recommendations and pieces of advice for regulating the interpersonal relationship and interaction. All idioms may be called cause-and-effect ones as they give a strict succession of these or those moral or immoral actions and response of the other person. These idioms also serve as warnings because the majority of them mean the possible consequences of the negative actions.

In conclusion we would like to note the following:

- An evil is the category of morals and morality.
- An evil is a complex psychological-pedagogical phenomenon the structure of which includes inner (moral, motivational, reflexive, and affective) and outer components (actions). It is perspective to make the further research of the structure of this phenomenon and build the psychological-pedagogical model of an evil. The research of the students' emotional experience and ideas of an evil gives an opportunity for increasing the moral effectiveness of the interaction of the students. It also seems reasonable to carry out appropriate methods and comparative cross-cultural researches of the students' emotional experience and ideas about evil.

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Oksana Barsukova, Raisa Chumicheva, Victoria Korolkova (Russia)
Pedagogical Institute, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don

Socio–developmental factors involved in violence towards children within the family

Causes of violence against children are social and developmental in nature.

The social factors include alcoholism, financial problems, poor social standards and insecurity. They lead people into a state of stress and, in some cases, to family cruelty. Children whose parents have used threats, punishments, condemnation and ridicule are likely to develop a sense of guilt and shame. The effects of punishment on the child's emotional state can result in a sense of remorse and frustration. Physical punishment is not a valid method of discipline, as it can cause undesirable effects such as reactions of rage or fear. A child who is under threat of punishment often behaves badly.



The family acts as a role model for the child, demonstrating certain patterns of social behavior. In assessing what is happening in society, the child relies primarily on the type of communication he has with close relatives, and he will base his interaction with other people on this. No other type of informal group has the same influence on the primary socialization of children as that of the family.

I research extensively into the problem of socialization in the family and family/kindergarten interaction. We help the parents by different ways in the kindergartens. There are workshop, different consultations, conversations etc.

Olga Zvereva (Russia)

School psychology in Denmark

- An overview and update

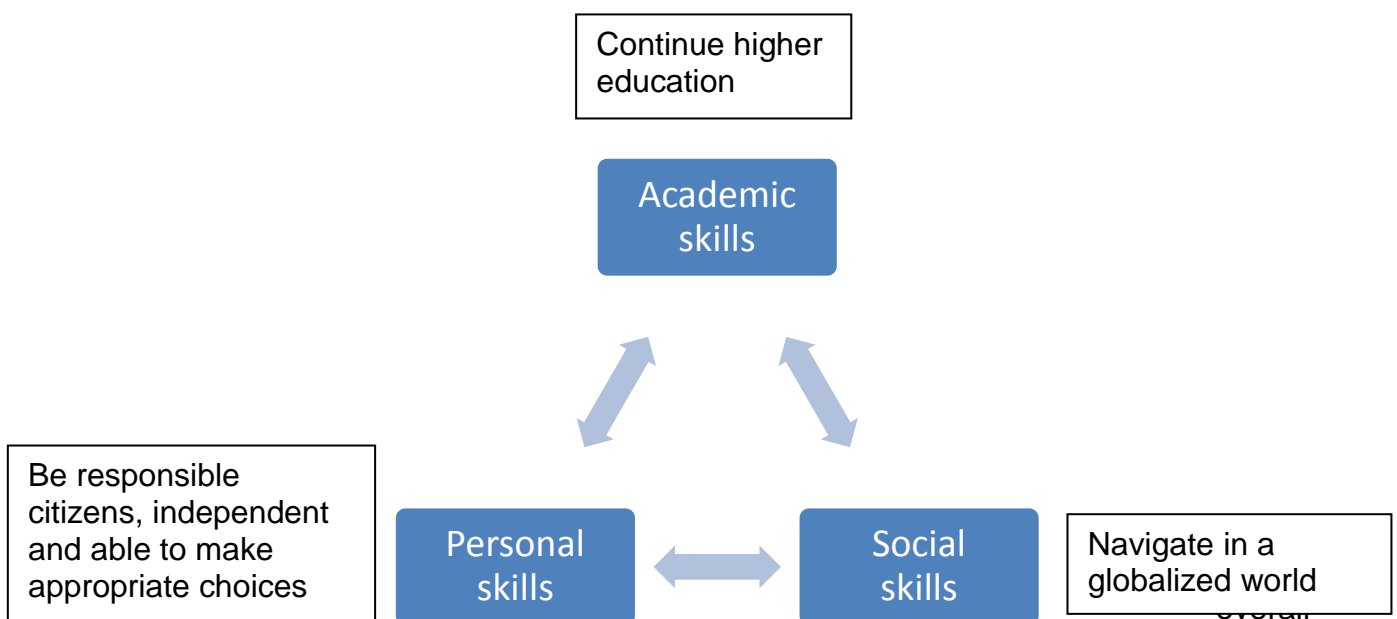
In 2005 the Danish government set out to reform the school curriculum. It was designed to ensure that students learn in an interdisciplinary way, promoting cross curricular teaching and aiming to develop both academic and social skills.



The reform focused on three levels:

1. Student level: Competence development (e.g. study skills, social competence, personal competence, meta cognition)
2. Subject level: Units of subjects (e.g. organisation of units based on e.g. Biology, Math and Psychology; 'Theory of knowledge'→cooperation of subjects in specific themes (e.g. 'What is true?' or 'Thinking') and project based cooperative learning and cross-curricular teaching)
3. Teaching level: Didactic and pedagogical considerations

The picture below demonstrates at a student level the idea that skills and competence must be related because learning skills in isolation do not necessarily make the student competent. Knowledge is not mentioned here but implied and it seems that 'knowledge' may be considered as a vehicle for development of competence. Academic skills such as reading, comprehension (including organisation of knowledge), thinking, writing are the same for all subjects and they are 'meta skills', meaning that they apply to all academic subjects. It is then up to teachers to organise teaching to achieve this.



philosophy of the reform, and in psychology, is that students should not only learn the basic information in core subject areas, they must also learn to apply their knowledge effectively in other contexts (e.g. thinking and reasoning). Cross-curricular teaching should prevent fragmentation and isolated skill instruction and promote transfer of learning. It is considered very important to enhance student motivation and learning (competence development).

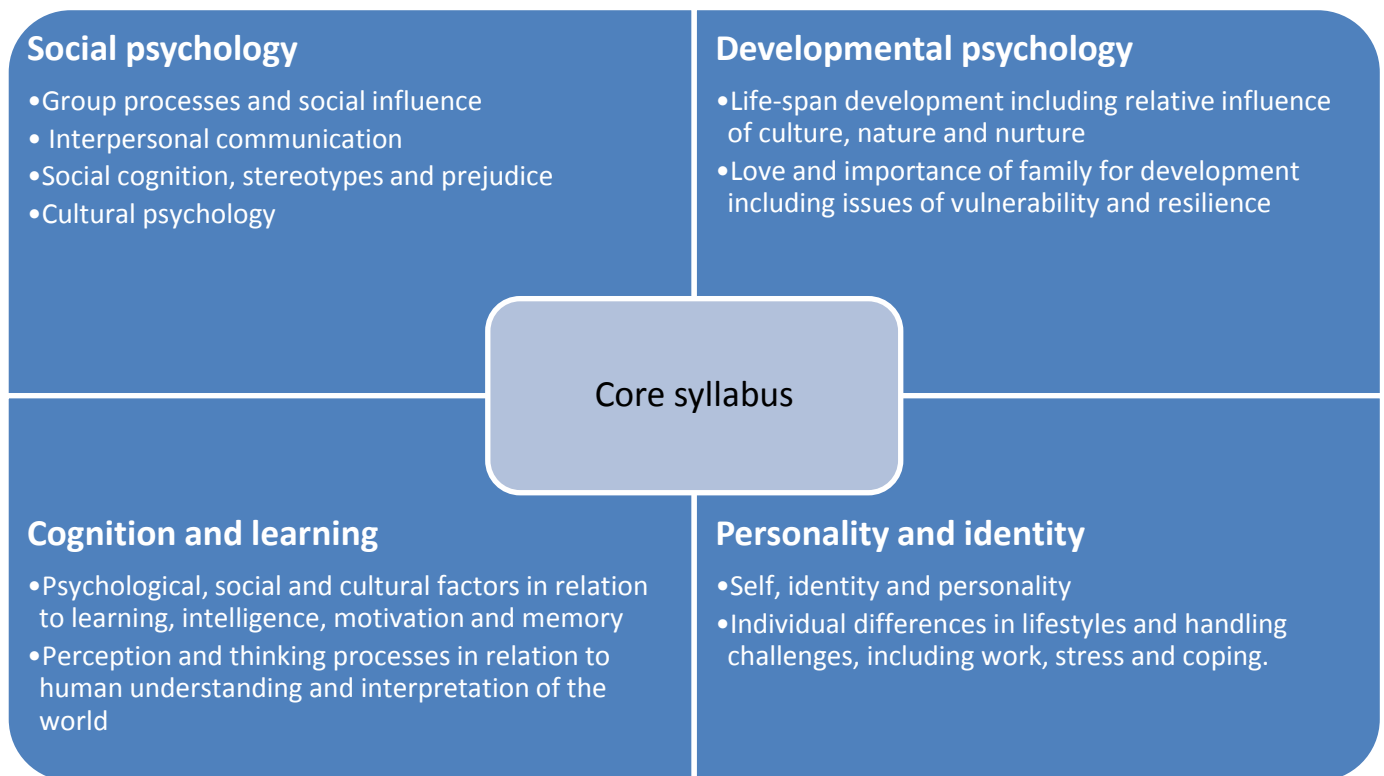
Denmark Psychology Teachers' Association (PLF) was invited to participate in curriculum development with a university professor and the national adviser. Extraordinary. The reform invites teachers to an unprecedented level of team-work. It can be seen as a reaction against what was called 'the private practicing teacher', i.e. the idea that the teacher was king in his or her own isolated kingdom and that there was no transfer of skills from one subject to another.

In Denmark psychology can both be electives and Field of study on B-level (200 hours) or C-level (75 hours). As a study subject it is often seen together with English and social studies. Another common combination is psychology, biology and mathematic.

The aims presented here are reflecting some of the changes in the new syllabus.

Aims Psychology B (2005 syllabus)

- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of core content and focus of normally functioning individuals
- Describe and critically evaluate psychological theories + relate to historical and cultural context
- Apply psychological knowledge to concrete issues
- Demonstrate knowledge of different perspectives in psychological explanations
- Demonstrate knowledge of methodologies, ethical issues in research and how psychological knowledge is generated→design simple field work
- Evaluate influence of historical and cultural factors on human behaviour
- Communicate clearly (oral and in writing) on psychological knowledge using appropriate terminology



Introduction of social psychology in the syllabus is a major event. It used to be taught in social sciences and psychology was not allowed to teach it. Placing social psychology as the first part of the core content is also an indication of the importance of social psychology thereby sending a signal to teachers.

Optional content has been added so that teachers and classes can decide on additional material in relation to the school system they are in (e.g. technical, commerce or high school) or for possibilities of co-operation with other subjects. Some of these naturally invite for cooperation with biology, others with economics and business, one with technical classes etc. The aim of adding extra possibilities and not really outline what should be the content was 'freedom of choice' which is something highly valued among high school teachers in Denmark. And the curriculum states that teachers and students together should decide on content of a course (i.e. the thematic approaches) and teaching methods.

Optional content of the course at B-level include health psychology, dysfunctional psychology, neuropsychology, sport psychology, organizational psychology, educational psychology and media psychology.

Cross-curricular teaching

The most spectacular change in the reform – and therefore also for psychology is the demand to engage in cross-curricular teaching.

Interdisciplinary/cross-curricular teaching is based on the assumption that it provides a meaningful way for students to use knowledge learned in one context as a knowledge base in other contexts in and out of school.

Many of the important concepts, strategies, and skills taught in the languages (e.g. writing, communication, language use etc.) are easily transferred to other content areas and situations. Introduction to study skills and training in e.g. note taking are meta-skills that can be used in all subjects. For example, the concept of perseverance that is being addressed in introduction to study skills, relates very much to what is called 'personal competence' and should be included in teaching approaches (e.g. training in writing and problem solving) and it could be linked to 'procrastination' as well.

Strategies for monitoring understanding are another example, and these can be directed to reading material in any content area. Cause-and-effect relationships exist in literature, science, and social studies. Interdisciplinary/cross-curricular teaching supports and promotes this transfer. Critical thinking can be applied in any discipline. Interdisciplinary/cross-curricular teaching involves a conscious effort to apply knowledge, principles, and/or values to more than one academic discipline simultaneously. The disciplines may be related through a central theme, issue, problem, process, topic, or experience.

Psychology has become a new subject in high school - it is based on recent theory and research. The subject involved in very interdisciplinary collaboration, as our research field is so wide that we have studies on many areas.

Sonja Schoubye (Denmark)

Join the Class

Report of a live psychology session by Mette Morell

During the wonderful conference in Copenhagen we had the pleasure of joining the class with Mette Morell and her students. Mette Morell who teaches IB psychology told the audience that IB curriculum has been changed recently and now the focus is on competence development and metacognition. The curriculum aims at teaching the students how to apply knowledge and encourages teachers to do cross-curriculum teaching. This is to prevent fragmentation of knowledge and isolated skills and also to enhance student's motivation and learning. As a result teachers do more teamwork.



Mette Morell and her talented students showed the conference audience how to teach and study The Effect of Deprivation and Stimulation on Neuroplasticity. First the teacher motivated the students by showing a video on right hemisphere lesion from YouTube. After the video students talked about it and answered to questions presented by the teacher. Discussions were lively, enthusiastic and in perfect English. The discussion was followed by a power point presentation on key themes and concepts. Mette Morell activated the students in various ways. For example, she showed them a study (1972 Rosenberg & Bennett) related to the theme, and the students' task was to concentrate on important themes given by the teacher. After that it was discussion-time.

The class was very well organised, students were bright and motivated and inspired by their skilful teacher. Thank you, Mette, for sharing your expertise with us!

Marja Honkaheimo (Finland)



Book review

“SUCK IT AND SEE!”

Doctoring the Mind - Why Psychiatric Treatments Fail

Author: Richard Bentall

Publisher: Allen Lane/Penguin,
2009, 364pp

Doctoring the Mind by Richard Bentall argues that research has been looking for solutions to mental illness in the wrong places. Our anxieties about our social standing and what others are thinking of us are the mainstay of the incessant chatter in our heads. This thinking can become increasingly negative until it is out of control and out of touch with reality. Instead of looking for symptoms and administering drugs on a “suck it and see” basis, Bentall believes that clinicians should be listening to what patients are telling them about their experiences. Psychiatrists do not do enough of this, because they are deciding what diagnosis to give and which drugs to administer. Whilst there has been an anti-psychiatry movement by pioneers such as Szasz and Laing, there has never been the need for an anti-cardiology or anti-obstetrics movement. Why has the treatment of mental illness so eluded us?



Neither conventional treatment nor anti-psychiatry has been very successful at helping some of the most distressed and vulnerable people in our society. Whilst revolutionary cures for physical illnesses are frequently discovered, there have been no such breakthrough in mental illness. In fact Bentall claims that over the last 100 years advances in mental health have been minimal. Biological treatments have not reduced levels of psychosis in the developed world, and cultural studies have shown better rates of improvement for schizophrenia in developing countries, where the use of drugs is less widespread.

Bentall covers the weird and wonderful world of the history of psychiatric treatments. From Kraepelin's theory in the 1880s which proposed that schizophrenia originates with poisons in the gonads intoxicating the brain, to the removal of all manner of body parts including teeth, ovaries and testicles, we still find ourselves today as puzzled as ever. Why is it that mental illness is so difficult to diagnose and treat?

Despite the arrival of anti-psychotic drugs which appeared to make a huge difference to the lives of people suffering with psychosis, Bentall claims that pharmaceutical companies have grossly exaggerated their effects. Psychiatrists are paid enormous sums to promote a drug, and trials by companies show consistently better results than independent trials. The therapeutic benefit only exists for a proportion of

patients and many would be better off under no medication whatsoever. But these non-responders are usually given an even higher dosage which increases nasty side effects, or asked to try other drugs until one works. Suck it and see.

The talking cures have not had great success either. In the 1930's and 40's Skinner and Rogers famously argued in favour of their respective treatments, with Behaviourists pointing out that unconditional positive regard was merely a form of positive reinforcement because the therapist remains silent when clients make negative statements. Conversely token economies were found to be much more effective if the nurses congratulated and encouraged patients (a form of positive regard) when the tokens were awarded. When Rogers attempted the first rigorous trial on 32 psychotic patients in 1957, results were disappointing – there were few differences between patients who had received his client-centred therapy and those who had not.

DIAGNOSIS

Rosenhan's study 'On being sane in insane places' demonstrated the difficulties of spotting a mental illness, let alone diagnosing what exactly is wrong. A repeat investigation by Slater in 2004, found that whilst psychiatric interviews were much more sympathetic, her background and life experiences were not investigated. Mental health professionals are still reluctant to discuss a psychotic patient's beliefs with them whereas patients often want to understand the meaning of their experiences. This frequently leads to discordant conversations because psychiatrists and patients have different agendas.

DSM was established as a diagnostic tool in 1980, but has not been found to be as reliable as hoped. A large scale study of 18,000 Americans found that despite DSM, psychiatric symptoms are very hard to categorise, and co-morbidity was so high that it is doubtful that the categories can identify discrete illnesses because there is so much overlap. Despite these well researched manuals, the problem of diagnosing is far from clear.

BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Bentall questions the validity of the serotonin hypothesis and the dopamine hypothesis because evidence for these is mainly based on animal studies. Direct evidence that varying neurotransmitter levels cause mental illness is still elusive. Brain differences are also questionable, because enlarged brain ventricles, thought to be specific to schizophrenia, are also found in bipolar sufferers and healthy relatives of schizophrenics. Because there is evidence that environmental stress can cause dopamine over-sensitivity and alter brain structure, Bentall suggests that research should be focusing much more on the effect of traumatic life experiences. Genetic research into concordance rates in MZ and DZ twins was pioneered by the Nazis who had a ready supply of subjects in concentration camps. Kallman, a German Jew who fled to the USA found fantastically high concordance rates of 86%

for schizophrenia in MZ twins. But this was probably because any odd behaviour in the well twin was counted as psychotic.

Concordance rates are also higher in families with a sufferer, yet most psychiatric patients do not have a first degree relative with a disorder. As with twin studies, family members who show any sign of strange behaviour are counted as a sufferer and this boosts concordance rates.

Consistently high rates of sudden trauma, violent incidents and sexual assault are common in psychotic case histories. To quote Bentall: "More often than not I found myself listening to tales in which normal development was interrupted by adversity." A survey in Britain found that rates of psychosis in adults who had been sexually abused as children is 15 times greater than expected. This is far larger than any gene finding.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

We all sense disapproval from others, but this can develop into paranoia in people with low self-esteem who are subjected to extensive victimisation and are powerless to respond. Afro-Caribbeans in Britain are especially likely to suffer from paranoid delusions, and surveys confirm that this is not because they are misunderstood by white middle class psychiatrists. Yet these disorders are not elevated in the Caribbean. Similarly other immigrant groups in Britain and Holland show high levels of paranoid psychosis, so the notion of not belonging could increase this vulnerability. Inner city living has also been implicated when a Danish study found that the more time a child spent in an inner city before the age of 15, the more likely they are to become psychotic in later life.

Families too, have long been associated with the course of psychotic disorder. Brown found that patients who returned to their families were, surprisingly, more likely to relapse than those who went to a hostel. It was suspected that levels of expressed emotion (hostility) were responsible for this, and families who have received behavioural family therapy to reduce expressed emotion report how valuable this is in helping them cope with their suffering relative.

PROBLEMS WITH BIOLOGICAL TREATMENTS

Bentall questions the reliability and validity of drug trials. When the drug Clozapine arrived in the 1960's it was more effective for non-responders to earlier drugs but when this and other second generation anti-psychotics were compared to first generation drugs in randomised control trials, abnormally high doses were given to the first generation control group. Later trials where doses were comparable showed no significant improvement in quality of life.

PROBLEMS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENTS

Wikipedia lists 144 varieties of psychotherapy, all of which have been tested far less extensively than biological treatments. Whereas the quality of the relationship between the therapist and patient seems to be the defining factor for improvement, this has been overlooked in biological treatments. But if trials are discovering that the therapeutic alliance is the key factor which leads to improved quality of life, then this needs to be assessed in trials for biological treatments too.

Whilst the outcome of psychological therapies is positive, no one therapy seems significantly more effective than another, and the best predictor of outcome is the patient's assessment of the therapist. Follow up tends to be 4-6 months compared to 4-6 weeks for biological treatments, and drop-out rates are lower, so longer term effects are easier to assess.

THE WAY FORWARD

"Doctoring the Mind" emphasises the quality of the patient-staff relationships as the most significant factor in positive outcome. Whilst it is perfectly clear to most people that good relationships make us happy and bad ones can make us extremely unhappy, this fact seems yet to be absorbed by medical psychiatry.

In the light of the medical model's failure to improve mental health, the emphasis may need to switch to examining the distress caused by unsatisfactory relationships. The observation that warmth and kindness promote psychological healing somehow needs to be addressed by DSM and ICD. Recovery requires development of meaning and purpose in a patient's life, so Bentall suggests that the fostering of strong collaborative relationships in which patients set their own goals is the most likely road to improving quality of life. But this approach would require many changes because the medical system is paternalistic rather than autonomy promoting. Patients who disagree with the psychiatrist are viewed as lacking insight and are not encouraged to make their own decisions. Equally the psychiatric profession is under pressure to ensure that no risks (death, injury) occur, either to the patient or to others. Suicides and violence make sensational headline news, and careers are laid on the line. To encourage decision-making and autonomy in psychiatric patients has its dangers which could lead professionals to regret their actions.

Bentall illustrates his claims with enlightening case studies, and suggests that more research into the consumer's experiences of psychiatric services needs to be undertaken. He warns against the "in-group/out-group" war that can exist between psychiatrists and psychologists, so that power is more evenly distributed. The stories of triumph over adversity in mental health, as his case studies show, are the glimmers of hope that guide both suffering individuals and psychiatric professionals.

*Jacky Childs (England)
Head of Psychology, Burnham Grammar School, Bucks*