SYMPOSIUM

Journeys to psychology: Different perspectives on pre-tertiary teaching of psychology in Europe

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Chair: Prof. Dr. Stephan Dutke,
Chair of EFPA BEA

Symposium hosted by
EFPA Board of Educational Affairs & EFPTA

European Federation of
Psychologists' Associations

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European Federation of
Psychology Teachers' Associations

Introduction & context

- Psychology is a popular subject in secondary schools / high schools in numerous European countries (e.g. Augustin, 2012; Banyard, 2008)

- Many young people who study psychology at school continue their journey in psychology at university, while others follow a variety of career paths

- Some psychology teachers are psychology graduates who have trained to teach the subject; others are teachers of other subjects who have turned to psychology (e.g. Sokolová, 2014)

- Curricula and pedagogies vary between and within countries (e.g. Williamson et al, 2015)

- Research into pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) is sparse

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Symposium overview

1. **The student journey into psychology starts at school**
   Morag Williamson (Scotland)

2. **Who are the guides on the journey towards psychology? Professional trajectories of psychology teachers in Europe**
   Lenka Sokolová (Slovakia)

3. **The role of character strengths in the A-level psychology classroom**
   Jock McGinty (England)

The student journey into psychology starts at school

Morag Williamson
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EFPTA and EFPA BEA

Two studies were conducted into awareness of, & attitudes to, pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE):

Study 1:
- online survey of European national psychologists' associations who are members of EFPA

Study 2:
- audit of PTPE in one country, Scotland, where psychology is widely offered as a subject in secondary schools & further education colleges (student ages c.15-19)

Study 1: A survey of national psychologists' associations in Europe

- the **aim** was to discover the extent of pre-tertiary psychology education in European countries

- EFPA invited its 36 member associations (MAs) to respond to a **questionnaire** (one response per MA)

- 28 responses were received from **20 EFPA member countries**

Morag Williamson, EFPTA and EFPA BEA; **Dorothy Coombs,** EFPTA and EFPA BEA; **Renate Schrempf,** EFPTA and EFPA BEA; **Jane Hamilton,** EFPA BEA

Study 1: A survey of national psychologists' associations in Europe

- questionnaire items were factual; response options were dichotomous (yes/no) but also allowed free text

- analysis was mainly quantitative (descriptive stats)

- free text responses yielded some additional factual information

The 36 EFPA member associations (MAs)

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece

- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland

- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- San Marino
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- United Kingdom

Study 1: Findings

- **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)

- three MAs have a stated **policy** for pre-tertiary psychology; three are developing such policy

- four MAs are involved in developing the school psychology **curriculum**

Study 1: Findings (continued)

- five MAs are involved in developing **teacher training** programmes and/or **professional development** for psychology teachers; two respondents are currently aiming to do so

- **published research** on PTPE exists in eight countries

- six countries have psychology teachers' **associations or committees**

- MAs have formal or informal **links with teachers' associations** in all the countries where an association does exist

Study 2: audit of pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) in Scotland

The **aims** were to discover:

(a) the extent of psychology provision for students aged c.15-19 years in Scottish schools & colleges

(b) attitudes of school and college heads to psychology as a subject in the pre-tertiary curriculum

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European Federation of Psychologists' Associations

The British Psychological Society
Scottish Branch
Comann Saidhgeolais

EFPTA

Study 2: audit of pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) in Scotland

- an online **questionnaire** was circulated to heads of all 429 secondary schools and all 17 further education (FE) colleges in Scotland

- **responses** were received from 36 schools (representing c.10% of all secondary students), & six colleges

Study 2: Findings

Opportunities for young people to study psychology:

- **81%** of secondary schools which responded deliver psychology courses ; where it is *not* offered, a key reason is lack of teachers qualified in psychology

- **all** colleges which responded offer psychology

- colleges offer a more varied range of courses and delivery modes than schools

Level of student demand for Psychology:

- **76%** of schools and all but one college estimate demand is 'high' to 'medium'
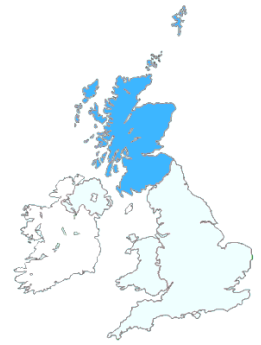
Study 2: Findings (continued)

Perceived value / status of Psychology in the curriculum:

- **helps develop range of skills**: 91% school respondents and all colleges view psychology as a useful subject for developing **skills for life, work and future study**

- **scientific subject**: 68% of school respondents and almost all colleges see psychology as a **research-based scientific subject comparable to natural sciences**

- **psychology as a core curriculum subject:** 24% of schools agreed / strongly agreed that it should be a core subject; college responses were inconclusive

Study 2: Findings (continued)

Teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD) for psychology:

- **Need for subject-specialist teaching**: 63% of schools & almost all colleges responded that, to be taught well, psychology degree-level qualified teachers are needed
- **Strong agreement (c.75% of respondents) on the value of a psychology teacher in the broader curriculum, eg:**
  - cross-curricular promotion of wellbeing
  - interdisciplinary projects
  - in-house CPD on teaching / learning, and young people's social-emotional development

BUT......

Study 2: Findings (continued)

…..when asked about the likelihood of their school offering :

- a **trainee placement** for a psychology student teacher?

  ➡ 34% of schools felt this was 'unlikely' or 'highly unlikely'

- a **job / probationer post** for a newly-qualified psychology teacher?

  ➡ again 34% of schools felt this was 'unlikely' or 'highly unlikely'

Conclusions from the two studies

PTPE is widely available and highly popular amongst young people in Europe, yet:

- it is not compulsory / not a core curriculum subject

- it is barely researched in most countries

- most national psychologists' associations in Europe have no formal policy on PTPE, and only a few are involved in school psychology curriculum development or psychology teacher education

- in at least one country, school heads tend to hold ambivalent attitudes towards the value of psychology in the curriculum

This suggests…

..... a lack of coherence in PTPE in Europe

1. There is a striking **mismatch** in perspectives on PTPE, between pre-tertiary psychology teachers and students, and other sectors of the psychology community

2. There is enormous **variation** within Europe in terms of:

• **provision** of psychology education in schools

• **attitudes** to its value in the curriculum

• EFPA MAs' **involvement** in PTPE (and perceptions of their role in relation to it....?)

• the findings are consistent with evidence (e.g. Sokolová, 2014; Williamson et al, 2015) and with information from national psychology teachers' associations, via EFPTA

Why such incoherence? PTPE in Europe clearly needs further research.

References

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Who are the guides on the journey towards psychology?
Professional trajectories of psychology teachers in Europe

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Who are the guides on the journey towards psychology?

Hogwarts was not hiring,
so I teach muggles
psychology instead.

Study background:

Pre-tertiary psychology education in Europe

- **specific status of psychology as a school subject:**

  - higher secondary education ISCED 3
    (both general and vocational)

  - an optional, non-compulsory subject

  - ambivalent informal status
    (popular among students versus underestimated by school leaders, decision-makers, universities etc.)

References: Williamson, Coombs, Schrempf, & Sokolová, 2011; Sokolová, 2014

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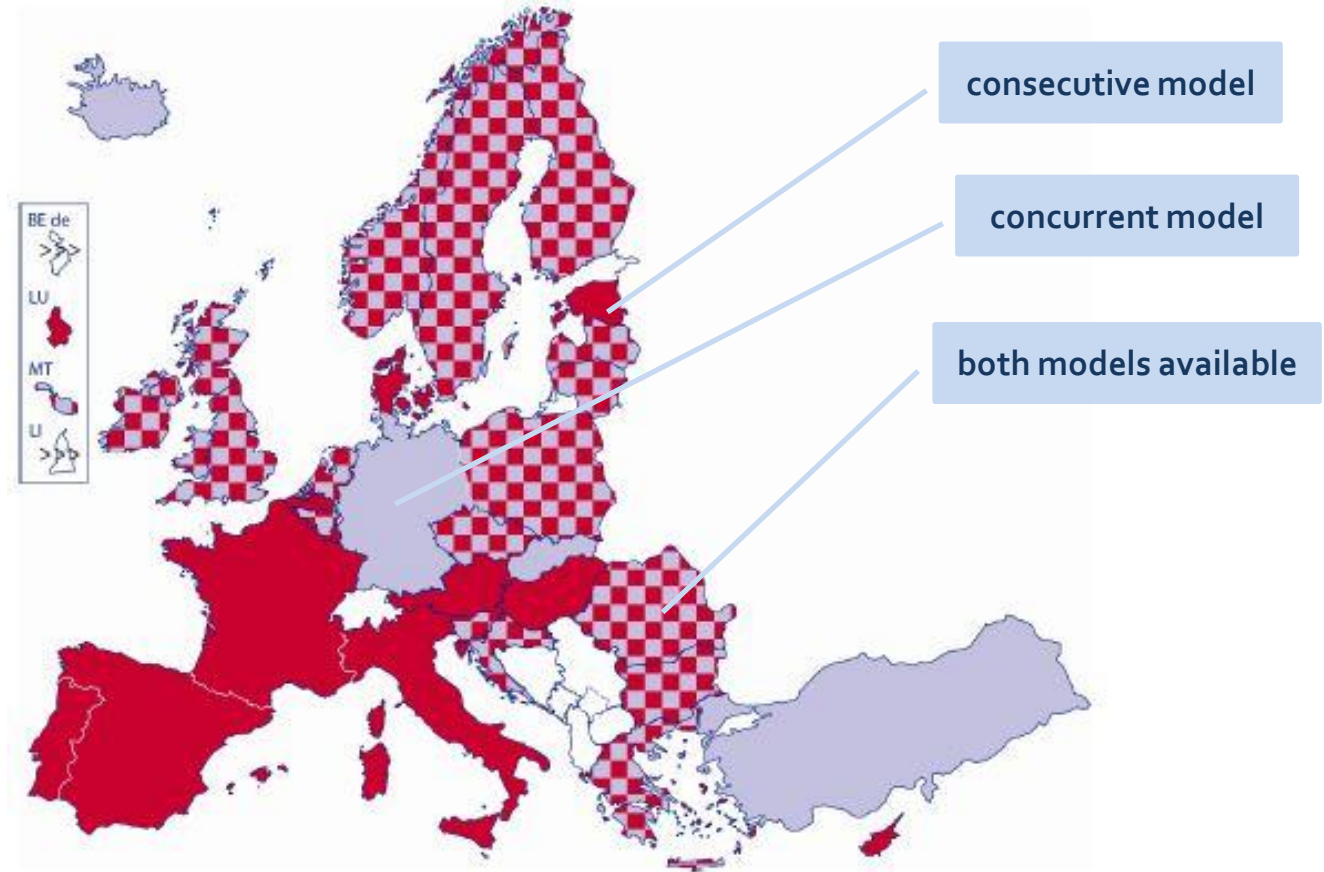
Study background:
Teachers' professional trajectories

- **Professional trajectories:**
  - models of teacher trajectories (Huberman, Fessler, Sites, Day).
  - a career path from graduation to retirement, strongly determined by teacher education.

- **Initial teacher education:**
  - **concurrent model**, the professional education component is provided along with the study of the subjects the prospective teacher is intended to teach.
  - **consecutive model**, students study their subject first and take a professional course in education after completing their academic degree.

References: Eurydice, 2012; Eurydice, 2013; Bayer, Brinkkjaer, Plauborg, Rolls (eds.), 2009
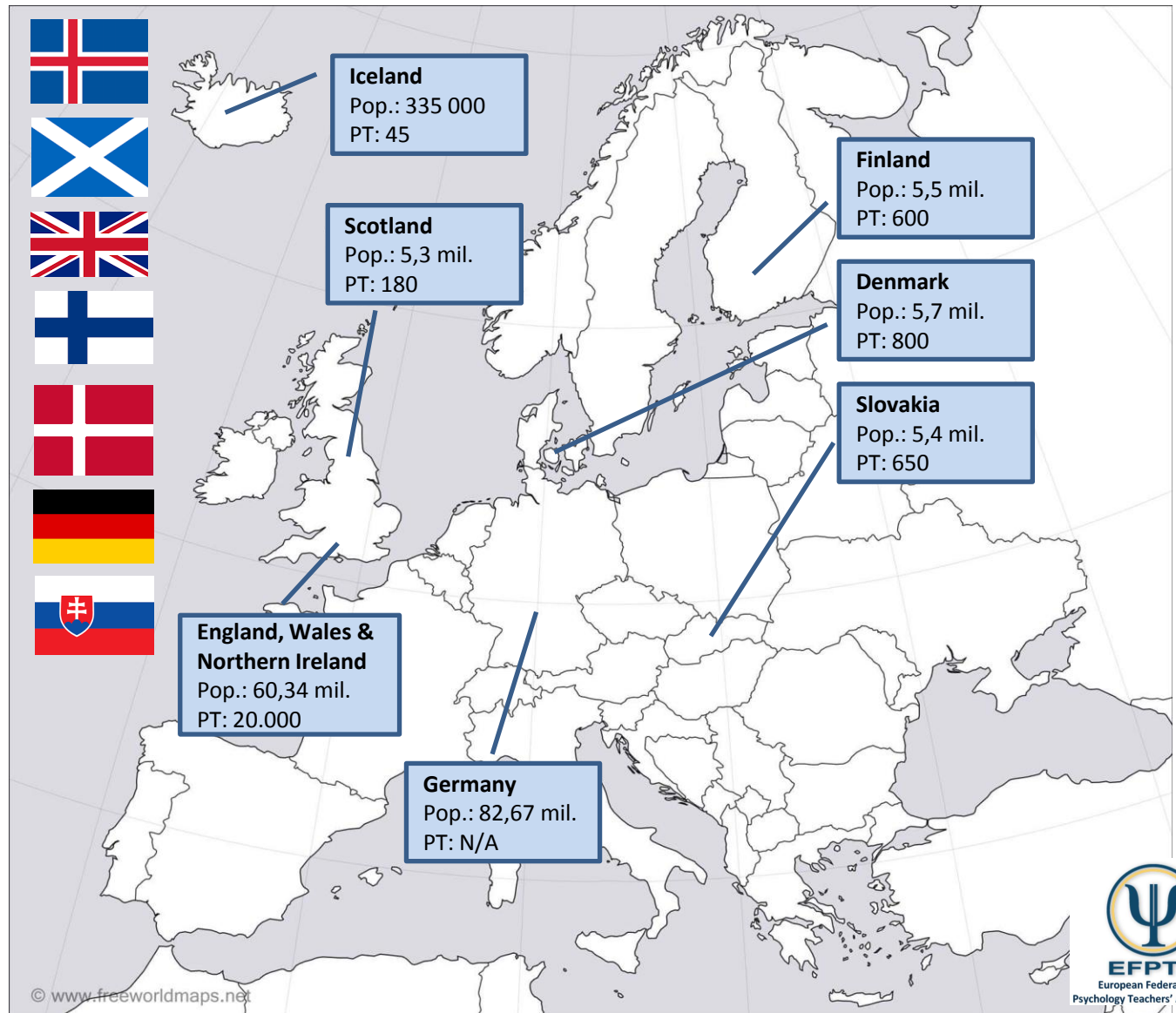
Study background:

Initial teacher education in Europe

consecutive model

concurrent model

both models available

Study background: EFPTA and national PTAs

Sources: EFPTA and national psychology teachers´associations

Iceland
Pop.: 335 000
PT: 45

Scotland
Pop.: 5,3 mil.
PT: 180

Finland
Pop.: 5,5 mil.
PT: 600

Denmark
Pop.: 5,7 mil.
PT: 800

Slovakia
Pop.: 5,4 mil.
PT: 650

England, Wales &
Northern Ireland
Pop.: 60,34 mil.
PT: 20.000

Germany
Pop.: 82,67 mil.
PT: N/A

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Survey objectives

The aim of this study is to:

- analyse the routes towards becoming
  a psychology teacher among expert psychology teachers from
  different European countries,

- compare their motivation, initial teacher education, professional
  experiences, attitudes and beliefs about teaching psychology at pre-
  tertiary level,

- discuss concurrent and consecutive models of psychology teachers'
  education.

Method

Semi-structured written narratives:

- narratives were written in English and submitted online,

- participants were contacted via EFPTA member associations from seven European countries:

  - **Iceland**

  - **England & Wales**

  - Scotland

  - Denmark

  - Finland

  - Germany

  - **Slovakia**

Participants

no.	gender	years in service	years teaching psychology	country
1	F	17	17	Iceland
2	F	21	21	Iceland
3	F	9	7	Iceland
4	F	9	9	Iceland
5	F	24	22	Iceland
6	F	6	6	England
7	M	12	10	England
8	F	10	7	England
9	F	14	5	Slovakia
10	M	5	3	Slovakia
11	F	7	2	Slovakia
12	M	20	15	Slovakia
13	F	10	5	Slovakia

Data analysis:

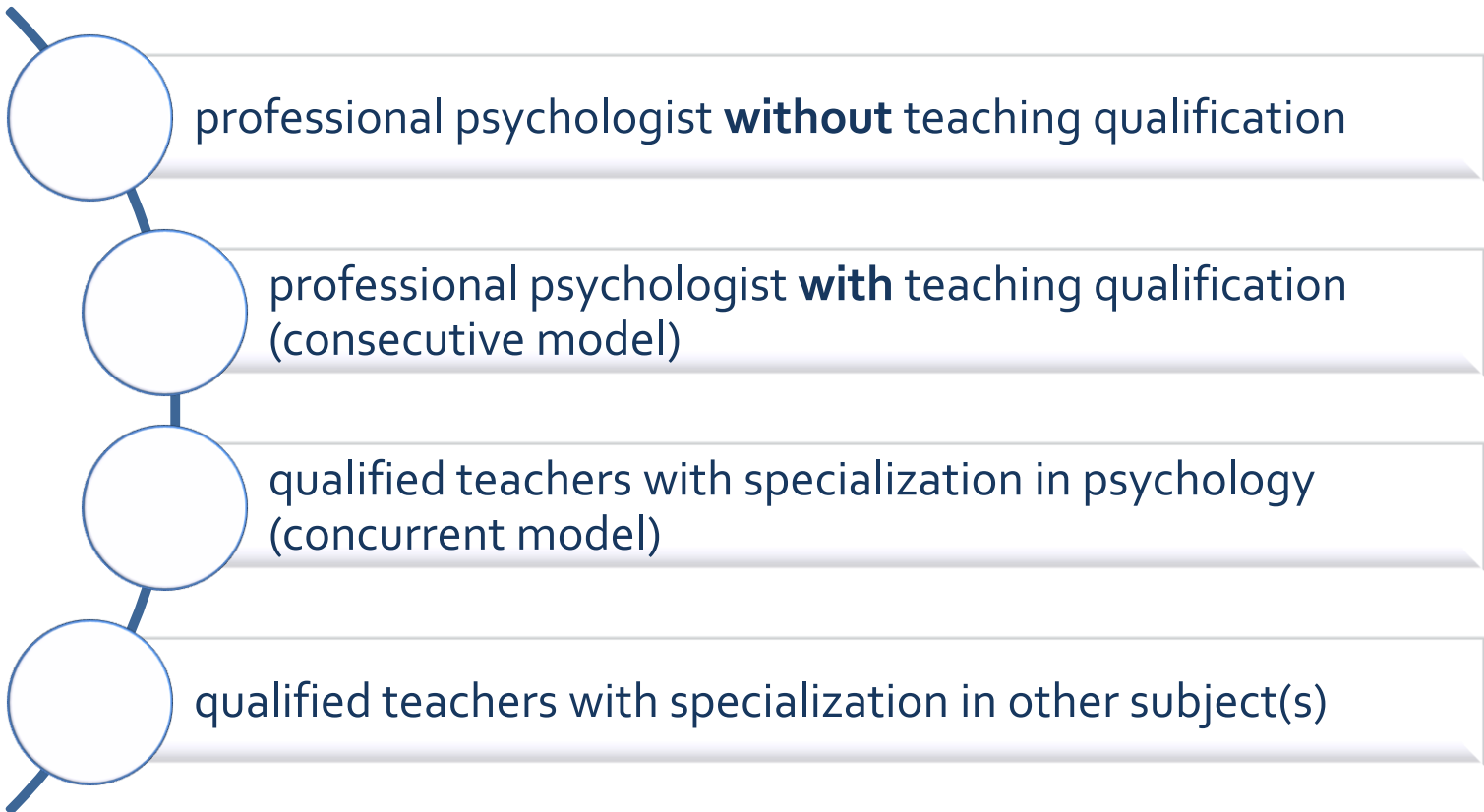## primary categories & cross-cultural comparison

- a general inductive approach was used to analyse the narratives,
- five primary categories were derived:
  - experiences with pre-tertiary psychology,
  - initial teacher education,
  - transition into service,
  - teaching psychology as a challenge,
  - perspectives of pre-tertiary psychology.
- based on primary categories cross-cultural comparison was made.

References: Thomas, 2006

Motivation towards becoming a psychology teacher:
previous experiences

- only 5 participants had psychology as their school subject at secondary school,

- in each country there were participants, who were transiting to the teaching of psychology from a different field of study or practice,

- despite their limited experiences with psychology as a subject, teachers found psychology as an interesting and important subject.

Initial teacher education:
ways to become a psychology teacher

professional psychologist **without** teaching qualification

professional psychologist **with** teaching qualification (consecutive model)

qualified teachers with specialization in psychology (concurrent model)

qualified teachers with specialization in other subject(s)

Transition into service:
first days of teaching

- working overload in the induction period,

- limited teaching sources (textbooks, teaching guides and other teaching materials),

- loneliness & DIY,

- transition from other subject or psychological profession is quite common.

Teaching – the challenge:
difficult moments in the teaching of psychology

- high expectations,

- students´ motivation and finding appropriate ways to teach the subject,

- students´questions,

- ambiguous status of psychology as a subject,

- professional identity dilemma.

Why shall we teach psychology?
attitudes & beliefs about pre-tertiary psychology

- personal development

- ability to use psychology knowledge/skills in everyday life – many really useful topics

- „To find ways to get students to connect what they learn to the life outside the classroom".

Differences and similarities:
cross-cultural comparison

- low support in the induction period (work overload)
- good experiences with pre-tertiary psychology
- professional loneliness and DIY

- deployment, transition from teaching of other subject or psychological profession
- pressure of exams and curriculum
- good sources for psychology teachers

- low support in the induction period (work overload)
- limited or no experiences with pre-tertiary psychology
- deployment, transition from teaching of other subject or psychological profession

Consecutive versus concurrent model of psychology teacher education

Consecutive model

+ deeper insight into psychology as a science,

+ more practical research skills (depends on the training),

+ might have more experiences and contacts with professional psychologists,

- usually qualified only for one subject,

- dilemma of professional identity.

Concurrent model

+ identification with a teaching profession from the beginning of tertiary education,

+ more practical teaching skills (depends on the training),

+ usually qualified for at least two subjects,

- tendency to deployment (teaching of related subject),

- too theoretical approach to teaching.

Conclusion

- teachers' professional trajectories are influenced by initial teacher education and subject taught,

- despite the differences in the initial education and pre-tertiary psychology status, similar attitudes towards psychology as a subject were expressed across frontiers:

  - *„Psychology is about ourselves and as such is always interesting.''*
    (a participant from Iceland)

The role of character strengths in the A-level psychology classroom

Jock McGinty

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Research background

- MSc Teaching of Psychology.

- Character strengths are trait-like, morally valued and measurable individual differences that are expressed not only through behaviour but also in thoughts and feelings.

- For example, perseverance and love of learning.

Research background

- Positive Education.

- Highlights the role schools have in fostering wellbeing, together with academic skill development.

- Seligman (2011).

Research background

- Character strengths contribute to individual well-being and happiness.

- Character can be developed and nurtured in schools.

- Peterson & Seligman (2004).

Research background

- Existing empirical evidence for the associations between character strengths, global life satisfaction, domain-specific (school) satisfaction and school success has so far proven to be favourable.

- Wagner and Ruch (2015), Weber and Ruch (2012), Lounsbury *et al.* (2009).

Research aims

- The purpose of the present research is to show the associations of character strengths with satisfaction with school, academic self-efficacy and academic performance.

- Secondly, to investigate which character strengths A-level students use to improve academic performance in schools.

- Thirdly, to build on and extend previous research, so that the developmental aspect of character strengths is highlighted.

Participants

- A sample of 36 A-level psychology students.

- Age 16-17 years old.

- All male from Watford Grammar School for Boys, England.

Method

- A correlational design with a cross-sectional survey methodology.

- VIA inventory of strengths for youth (VIA-Youth).

- Brief multidimensional students' life satisfaction scale (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois 2003).

- Academic self-efficacy scale (Jerusalem & Satow, 1999).

- Academic performance was operationalised using grade point averages (GPA).

Your Top Character Strength

Forgiveness
You forgive those who have done you wrong. You always give people a second chance. Your guiding principle is mercy and not revenge.

Your Second Character Strength

Curiosity
You are curious about everything. You are always asking questions, and you find all subjects and topics fascinating. You like exploration and discovery.

Your Third Character Strength

Humor
You like to laugh and tease. Bringing smiles to other people is important to you. You try to see the light side of all situations.

Your Fourth Character Strength

Teamwork
You excel as a member of a group. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, you always do your share, and you work hard for the success of your group.

Your Fifth Character Strength

Judgment
Thinking things through and examining them from all sides are important aspects of who you are. You do not jump to conclusions, and you rely only on solid evidence to make your decisions. You are able to change your mind.

Findings – 1st aim

- School satisfaction.

- Partial correlations.
- Prudence $r = .58$ ($p < 0.001$), Hope $r = .51$ ($p < 0.001$), Self-regulation $r = .47$ ($p < 0.001$), Curiosity $r = .32$ ($p < 0.05$), Perseverance $r = .28$ ($p < 0.01$).

- Regression analysis.
- Hope $\beta = .38$, ($p < 0.01$); Self-Regulation $\beta = .42$ ($p < 0.01$).

Findings – 1st aim

- Academic self-efficacy.

- Partial correlations.

- Hope r = .48 (p<0.01), Judgement r = .42 (p<0.01),

   Prudence r = .42 (p<0.01), Love of Learning r = .42 (p<0.01), Perseverance r = .35 (p < 0.05), Self-regulation r = .29 (p < 0.05).

- Regression analysis.

- Hope β = .65, (p<0.001); Love of Learning β = -.40, (p<0.01).

Findings – 1st aim

- Academic Performance (GPA).

- Partial correlations.

- Fairness $r = .42$ ($p < 0.01$), Teamwork $r = .37$ ($p < 0.05$), Kindness $r = .31$ ($p < 0.05$), Judgement $r = .31$ ($p < 0.05$), Honesty $r = .30$ ($p < 0.05$), Perspective $r = .33$ ($p < 0.05$).

- Regression analysis.
- Fairness $\beta = .46$, ($p < 0.01$).

Findings – 2ⁿᵈ aim

- Discriminant Function Analysis

- Fairness, Perspective, Creativity, Social Intelligence, Judgement, Humour, Forgiveness, Beauty, Love of Learning, Bravery, Hope, Teamwork, Humility, Gratitude, Kindness and Academic Self-Efficacy

- Fairness, Perspective, Social Intelligence, Gratitude, Bravery.

Findings – 3rd aim

- A-level students did not markedly differ in their top five signature strengths from samples in similar research.

- Where they did differ was in the strength of Social Intelligence due to maturation.

Implications

- The skills of well-being and the skills of achievement can be taught simultaneously using strengths frameworks.

- Strategies for teaching psychology.

Implications

- Jigsaw technique allows students to develop the strength of prudence.

- Psychology Applied Learning Scenarios (PALS) allow students to develop their strength of perseverance.

- Flipped learning allows students to develop the strength of self-regulation.

Implications

- Social Intelligence as the pathway to developing the higher order character virtues.

- Social Intelligence allows students to cope with new demands and respond positively to the challenges they face and become a more evaluative independent learner.

Conclusions

- Schools are uniquely placed to reach out to teach good character and support the wellbeing of children and adolescents.

- Good character in the context of schools has important implications for the teaching of Psychology.

- An awareness of character strengths and how to use them when learning psychology has positive implications for the mental health of our students and develops their mental health literacy.

Overall conclusions

- Taken together, our findings show that in Europe, PTPE teachers and students make very diverse journeys into psychology

- There is substantial cross-border consensus amongst teachers about the value of the subject in the high school curriculum, and high demand from students

- **But**: there is great variation in the psychology community – psychologists, psychology academics and researchers - in attitudes to, and level of involvement in PTPE, especially in relation to curriculum and teacher education

- So, quite often, pre-tertiary psychology teachers and students are not as well nurtured along the way as one might reasonably expect from the professional psychology community.

Therefore we make the following recommendations….

Recommendations

- all members of the psychology community should recognise and celebrate the value of pre-tertiary psychology and its place in mainstream psychology education

- greater involvement of psychologists in developing high school curricula

- improve availability of teacher education and professional development for psychology graduates and teachers

- improve communication and collaboration amongst schools, universities, teachers' associations, psychologists' associations - EFPTA and EFPA BEA can help to facilitate

- in sum, PTPE and its teachers and students need more support - from those who have already made their successful journey into our discipline.

Thank you for your attention.

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