



EuroPLAT

European Psychology Learning and Teaching

April 2011 Newsletter

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Welcome to the Europlat Newsletter

Annie Trapp

This month, the progress report for Europlat was submitted to the European Commission. This is an important milestone for Europlat, not least because its approval releases the second tranche of funding due to the project. The report confirms that the project has achieved all of its milestones and deliverables to date. Congratulations!

Professor Nigel Foreman has provided an external evaluator's view of Europlat's progress to the Europlat quality assurance board. He has made a number of constructive comments and suggestions for the continuing growth of Europlat including supporting new and innovative teaching strategies in the partner countries with the involvement of the Europlat Network.

During the project partner meeting in Istanbul we will develop plans for the next eighteen months of Europlat. These include the programme for the conference in Lithuania, and the two research projects related to the employability of psychology graduates and quality assurance of psychology programmes. There will also be time to discuss the future role of Europlat and how best to further develop national networks and provide professional development for psychology education across Europe. This discussion will form the foundation for our bid to the European Commission for continuation funding.

The second Europlat research project "Employability of psychology graduates" is underway. Watch out for the next questionnaire.

The International Conference Employability of Graduates & Higher Education Management Systems will take place in Austria in September 2011, and in Slovenia in September 2012. To learn more visit: <http://www.dehems-project.eu/en/dehems-conferences>.

See you all at the European Congress of Psychology which is taking place in Istanbul, in July 2011!



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

www.europlat.org

Announcements

Facilitating Teaching of Neuroscience in Psychology Programs

Dr. Daniel A. Levy, The School of Psychology, The Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, Israel

An important trend in the contemporary teaching of psychology is the increasing level of sophistication of neuroscience components in the curriculum. Beyond the classic topics in biological foundations of behavior, today's psychology programs are called upon to include courses on cognitive, social, developmental, and affective neuroscience. These topics require sophisticated teaching resources, including materials that require frequent and rapid revision in light of new developments in the field, and laboratory equipment for student participation and research experience. In many smaller institutions, the neuroscience expertise to cover the new range of topics may not always be available. Sharing of curricular planning, teaching resources, and study materials can provide a solution to this academic challenge.

We propose to create a network of instructors in psychology and neuroscience who will exchange ideas, materials, and other resources. We plan to conduct virtual and physical forums on psychology-neuroscience curricula, identification and sharing of existing text-based and audio-visual materials, and joint development of new materials, including interactive learning modules, recorded lectures by leading researchers who are master teachers, test materials, and laboratory modules.

We hope to apply for organizational co-funding to support this initiative, through TEMPUS, COST, and other frameworks. If you are interested in participating, please send a brief description of your department and current neuroscience providing components in your curriculum (this can be done by link to a department webpage and noting the current numbers of students in the programs in your department) to: daniel.levy@idc.ac.il.

PsychMap

PsychMap is an interactive web-based resource for psychologists working in health services across the world. It was set up to provide a forum for psychologists to make contact with each other, exchange ideas and share resources.

The focus of PsychMap is the education, training and practice of psychologists working in clinical or health settings.

The PsychMap site hosts:

- e-mail discussion lists organised by topic and geographical region that you can join.
- Individual country profiles (organised by WHO region) which over time will contain information on each country and the development of psychology and mental health services.
- Resources arranged by topic which are free to download.
- Results from the PsychMap survey – an evolving, systematic compilation of psychology training worldwide.

The hope is that this site will be used to find out about the work of psychologists in different parts of the world, and also provide a platform to develop collaborative research projects and staff/student exchanges. Please visit: <http://www.psychmap.org/>.

Learning Styles

There has been much debate about different learning styles. There are whole industries dedicated to publishing textbooks and guides for teachers based on the assumption that the learning styles do exist and people learn more effectively when teaching corresponds with the learning style they represent. Is the belief of the existence of different learning styles supported by scientific evidence?

Read "Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence" by Harold Pashler, Mark McDaniel, Doug Rohrer, and Robert Bjork: http://www.psychologicalscience.org/journals/pspi/PSPI_9_3.pdf.



Cultural change in academia

Peter Reddy and Jane Tyrrell, Aston University, UK

Is change from a research focused university culture to one that balances research, teaching, and community engagement desirable and if so how can it be achieved?

In the UK there is the pre-'92 or 'old' University sector, where research is often seen as the most important of university activities, perhaps to the exclusion of other functions. However, it is in the cause of teaching, not research, that most income is generated and spent in most universities. A university without students would be diminished by their absence and would be merely a research institute. Yet there is a disparity in status between research and teaching. Prestige and promotion usually go to those who succeed in research; teaching and its associated academic administration is little recognized or rewarded and sometimes positioned as academic drudgery, a necessary evil.

Europlat seeks to enhance the quality of psychology learning and teaching and to do this may mean that we need to re-examine the importance and status of teaching. We may need to 're-balance the mission' in the words of Aston University's Vice-Chancellor, Julia King. It may even be that our modern HE Institutions could learn valuable lessons from the past. The traditional role of universities was to prepare the young for the knowledge work of the day. In the medieval world this meant preparing for the administration of secular and religious affairs, for law, letters and rhetoric.

Two hundred years ago Humboldt (cited in Elton, 2008) saw unity in research and teaching. In schools, knowledge is presented as accepted and established wisdom whereas in universities, knowledge is presented as partial and less certain. The university focus is on enquiry into incompletely solved problems. This is reflected in research activity and in the way teaching and learning is conducted. University teaching is concerned with the transmission of established knowledge, but more importantly, teaches that assumptions can be questioned, problems solved and boundaries extended.

Newman (1852/1982) saw the importance of undergraduate education not in providing technical skills for the workforce, or in accumulating knowledge for its own sake, but in educating the mind and cultivating understanding. For Newman the aim is to develop students' critical faculties so that they can see things as they truly are, get to the point, discard irrelevance and detect sophistry. This process of exercising and enriching the life of the mind is an end in itself, but it also develops intellectual capacity of economic value. Consensus theory (Kerr, Dunlop, Harbinson and Myers, 1973) sees technical innovation as driving social change and knowledge as a key factor in wealth creation, as a "...driver of national economic and social development through the formation of human capital" (Coaldrake and Stedman 1999, p. 3). The idea of the knowledge economy suggests that raising participation rates is an investment promising continued economic and cultural vitality for Europe.

Until the 1960's higher education was an elite undertaking with small numbers of students, high levels of academic autonomy and relatively little financial support or interest from government or industry (Coaldrake and Stedman 1999, writing here about Australia). As expenditure rose the pressure from governments also rose for the implementation of reporting processes and for influence over the quality and nature of educational output in terms of students and subjects taught. Coaldrake and Stedman suggest that "Government has gradually re-positioned itself from being a patron of universities to a purchaser of higher education, and expects demonstrated accountability and returns for its investment" (1999, p. 4-5).

The effect of the shift in purchaser from the Government (with its eye on the bigger picture) to the student (with a much more self-interested outlook) is leading to a change in the demands put on HEIs, and this change inevitably crystallizes the debate around the quality of learning and teaching and the employability of graduates.



If the promise of the knowledge economy is to be fulfilled, raised participation in higher education must not merely lead to credential inflation: Purchasers need to see that the quality of learning and teaching is at least fit for purpose and, preferably, outstanding.

Other factors also draw attention to the educational output of universities. Globalisation, terrorism, sustainability and the desire to propagate democratic values have led universities to take ethical positions and a more active role in promoting global citizenship. As the contract between students and institutions becomes more clearly defined, institutions may have to weigh the value of a reflective, critically aware and ethically informed young graduate against that of a handful of journal articles which float briefly in the academic pond before sinking without trace. All academic staff in universities contribute to the educational mission, but how many achieve significant citation rates for their research? The modal value may well be close to zero.

How should academics balance their own activities and how should the university mission be balanced? Academics with strong research profiles are valued and have internationally transferable skills and value. The same cannot be said for academics who concentrate their efforts on learning and teaching. They face not so much an invisible glass ceiling as a highly visible thundering great reinforced steel one. An interest in learning and teaching, it has been said, is a fatal handicap to an academic career. Yet in addition to research output, the cases for university educational output and for ethically based community involvement are compelling. Bringing them together to make a business case to ensure the success of the university overall suggests that balance needs to be restored.

Effective change requires changing the rules. Traditionally teaching competence has been desirable but research has trumped all. New academic promotion criteria at Aston University specify three areas of performance:

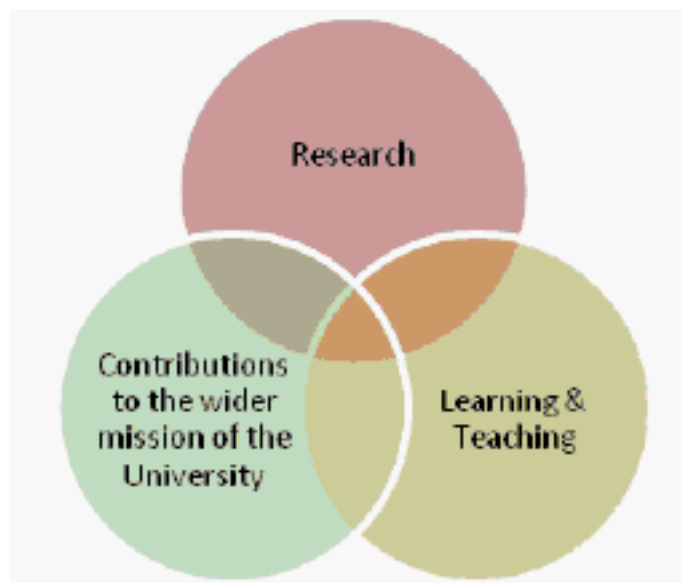


Figure one: Areas of academic performance

There are criteria for each area at three levels of promotion; to Senior Lecturer, to Reader and to Professor. Against specific criteria, staff should be able to demonstrate excellence in one of the three criteria and at least ability and effectiveness in the other two. The example below for promotion to professorial level illustrates how much of a change this is. In Profile 1, the candidate for promotion is traditional in offering excellence at research at professorial level. However to achieve promotion to Professor, ability and effectiveness in both other areas must also be established. Ability and effectiveness therefore becomes the minimum level of achievement expected of someone who has a primary focus elsewhere. The criteria for ability and effectiveness in learning and teaching at this level include:

- Independently assessed ability to communicate the discipline effectively in a learning & teaching context
- Evidence of the ongoing use of student feedback to improve personal performance
- Evidence of quality and innovation in learning and teaching
- Evidence of critical reflective practice
- Advice and mentoring of junior staff.



The other two profiles represent more of a change. Again ability and effectiveness at an appropriate level for the grade of promotion is expected in two of the three areas and excellence in the other. In Profile 2 excellence in learning and teaching at professorial level qualifies the candidate for

It would be interesting to hear the views of other Europlat members on Aston's development. Do others regard it as unusual? Pioneering? Misguided? A debate in future issues of the Europlat Newsletter would be most welcome. ●

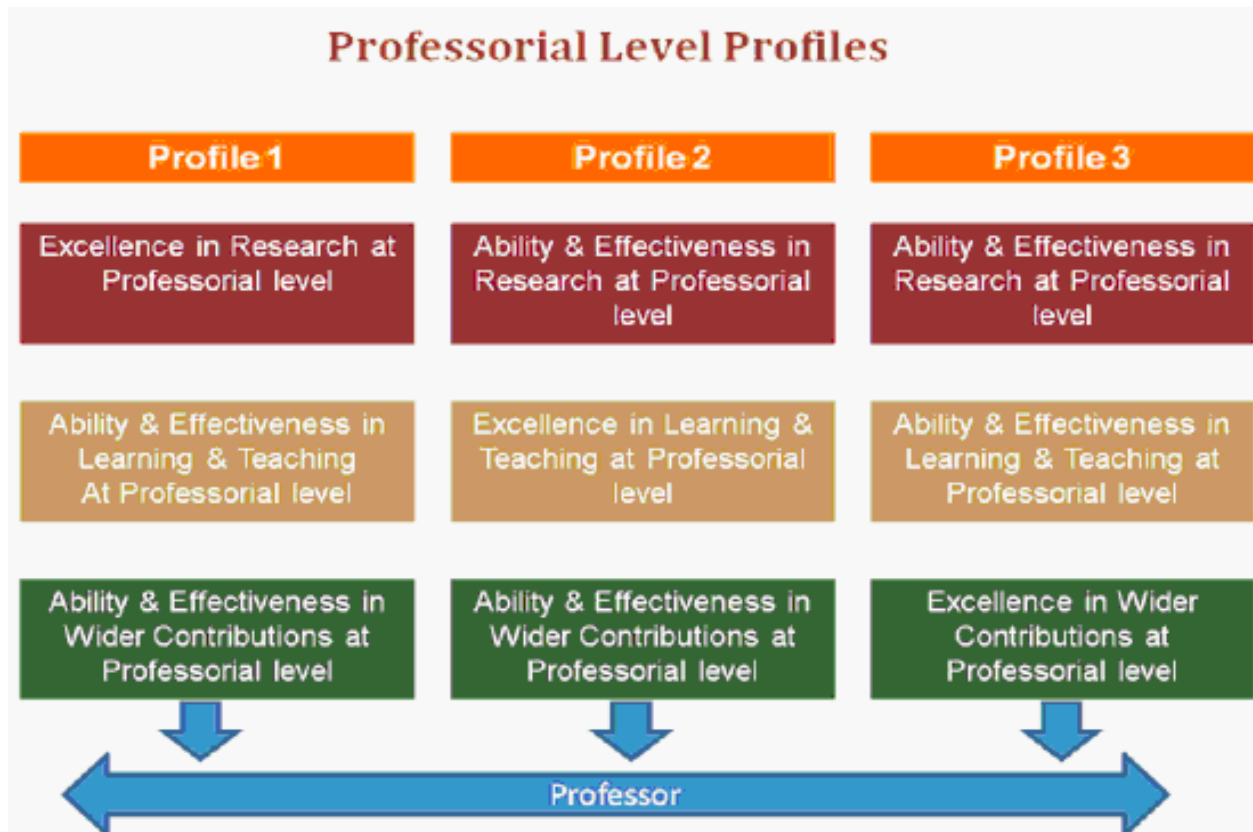


Figure two: Promotion profiles

promotion to Professor as long as ability and effectiveness in the other two areas is also demonstrated.

These changes do not mean that the importance of research has lessened. Research activity remains extremely important in terms of research income, published output and the supervision of research students. However the importance of other essential contributions to the overall mission of the university is receiving recognition. In future it is thought that up to 40% of promotions may be on the basis of excellence in learning and teaching or in the wider mission of the university.

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The impact of student-centred teaching on self-efficacy of psychology students

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Rationale

Student-centered teaching methods are increasingly recognized within academic teaching due to their indubitable contributions to create an optimal learning environment. Student-centered learning focuses on students' abilities and presumes their active and responsible participation in learning. This study addressed whether student-centered teaching methods lead the enhancement of self-efficacy in psychology students. The term self-efficacy has been proposed by Bandura¹ and refers to an individual's belief that they are confident of their own competence and can therefore produce behavior that leads to successful outcomes. Student activity is considered fundamental for the development of self-efficacy.

Methods

Self-efficacy and teaching and learning activities were examined across bachelor and master level in two different subjects, Cognitive Psychology and Child Clinical Psychology. In total 82 students participated in the study. The applied teaching methods emphasized the students' active involvement in class and consisted of brief lectures by the teacher, student presentations, teacher-led discussions, group work and discussions in plenum. These were complemented by home preparation, reading instructions and group-based homework. To assess self-efficacy, a questionnaire developed by Uzuntiryaki & Aydm² and modified to cognitive psychology and clinical child psychology was applied. The students' subjective experience regarding the effects of different teaching and learning activities was examined by a separate questionnaire.

Results

Regardless of their study progression, students enhanced their self-efficacy during the taught period on all competence measures. The average overall score increased from 4.99 to 5.98 ($p < 0.0005$) on a scale 1 to 9, as did the average score for bachelor students (from 5.04 to 5.91, $p < 0.0005$) and master students (from 4.91 to 6.14, $p < 0.0005$). This quantitative change of 1 point corresponded to change in the qualitative label from "average" to "good". Subscale scores improved to a similar degree. The assessment of students' experiences regarding teaching and learning activities revealed that they considered active participation in class as

a prerequisite for good learning. However, individual reading at home in combination with teacher-led activities in class were reported as more beneficial. The results were similar in bachelor and master students.

Discussion and conclusion

The results support the assumption that student-centred teaching leads to enhancement of self-efficacy in university students. They show that students conceptualize their self-efficacy in relation to specific course requirements. Although student-centred activities in class were considered important, individual reading at home was the most helpful means of knowledge acquisition, followed by teacher-led activities in class. This suggests that the observed improvements may be mediated by other mechanisms than specified in standard social learning theory, such as the teacher-student alliance. ●

References

1. Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
2. Uzuntiryaki, E. & Aydm, Y.C. (2008). Development and validation of chemistry self-efficacy scale for college students. *Research in Science Education*, DOI 10.1007/s11165-008-9093-x

More articles about enhancing self-efficacy in students:

1. Ceynar Rosell, M. (2004). Role-play discussion: a technique for engaging students in discussion. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 4 (1), 55-58.
2. Falchikove, N. (2003). Involving Students in Assessment. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 3 (2), 102-108.
3. Hugh-Jones, S. & Madill, A. (2008). Collaborative learning alongside independent project work: a pilot study. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 7 (2), 26-33.
4. Palmer, S. (2002). Enquiry-based learning can maximise a student's potential. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 2 (2), 82-86.



Hybrid pedagogies: Can it make students work harder, learn more and have more fun at the same time?

Krister Håkansson, Linnaeus University, Sweden

Introduction

The essence of a teaching activity is, as most teachers would agree, a set of activities by a teacher that contribute to learning, understanding and new insights in students. This should mean that the concept of teaching is a lot wider than lecturing, even if this distinction is not always reflected in everyday use of language. When a teacher e.g. says “I can’t come to the meeting because I am teaching this afternoon”, it probably means that the teacher will be lecturing. If we agree, and if language reflects attitudes, it may also say something about how many of us perceive our role as a teacher.

However, if we accept the general definition of teaching we started with, it is important to regard teaching as the activity of designing a learning environment, including strategies to facilitate activities and processes that the student will be involved in between lectures. In other words, teaching should be about a lot of other things than lecturing. We know from classical experiments in psychology that elaboration, reflection and application are essential in order for understanding and remembering to occur. Evidently this is something that cannot happen easily while the student is concentrating to understand what a teacher is talking about.

Two good questions for a teacher who has adopted such a wider teaching role might then be: How can I encourage those kinds of student activities that I want to take place between lectures in order to facilitate learning? Am I, inadvertently, doing anything that might be counterproductive to such an end? (E.g. what about the way I perform my exams?)

The development of information technology may offer new possibilities in this regard, a development that in so far in Sweden has been tapped mainly in distance education. For many, traditional classroom courses and online distance education courses

represent a dichotomy between two distinct phenomena. What would happen if we make this dichotomy collapse and regard it as a continuum instead? Can we use similar pedagogical methods as in modern distance education to complement classroom lecturing in “ordinary” courses, i.e. a kind of hybrid between the two somewhere referred to as ‘blended learning’? To exemplify: What would happen if after a lecture we make the students look at a demonstration through a web based platform, discuss what happened in the demonstration through a web-based discussion forum, relate that to a certain theoretical model in focus in the course and finally present a group based conclusion - that is also presented through the platform? Then at the next physical lecture the teacher might start by commenting the result of the net-based activities since the previous lecture. (In addition we might include these contributions in discussions and other assignments through the Internet platform as part of the examination.)

Method

I recently tried this concept for the first time on a five-week course (7,5 ECTS) in Cognition and Neuropsychology with 26 students at the Linnaeus University, Sweden. Through automated registration in the platform it was found that these students had logged in 1991 times for a total of 881 hours (around 34 hours per student) and that they had posted a total of 675 contributions (around 25 per student), mainly in discussions on different themes.

All of them (100% participation) did the anonymous course evaluation at the end of the course where three questions had been added specifically to evaluate the online activities between lectures. Students were asked to use previous courses as reference and estimate to what degree the addition of the Internet-based activities had affected the outcome in this specific course in three regards: work load, making the course less or more fun and in terms of learning outcome.



Results

Compared to the reference value 3 on a five-point Likert scale (the value for an average previous course), the mean score for workload was 4,07 (SD 0,63). The “fun factor” got an average of 3,96 (SD 0,84) and the students estimated that they had learned more, expressed by an impressive mean of 4,23 (SD 0,72). (All these values have p-values of less than <0.0001 in relation to the reference value, as measure through ordinary t-tests.)

Discussion

In response to these comparisons with other courses, students said that the Internet platform activities made them work more with this course, that it was more fun and also that they learned more. That should sound like music to any teacher? However, we must remember these are self-perceptions and at this stage we do not have the evidence that students did in reality learn more.

There are also various confounding variables that could have affected the results, perhaps most obviously different teachers on different courses and also the different contents on the courses that students were asked to compare with. It could on the other hand be questioned if courses in Cognition and Neuropsychology would have an inherently higher attraction value than many other courses, such as in Personality or Social Psychology. As for the teacher component, the physical lectures were given a score around 4, which is high, but not exceptionally high. It should also be noted that the students through the three questions were asked to specifically estimate how the addition of the online activities affected the course.

The experience with this course seems encouraging and might indicate that teachers have a largely untapped resource to exploit in order to enhance the quality of their teaching and the learning outcomes in their students. One of the crucial factors in this is probably the need for many teachers to redefine their role away from the traditional one: as designers of a constructive learning environment, rather than as lecturers and examiners. Another challenge for some of us might be the leap into the changing world of information technology that most of students already thrive in.

For those of us who teach Psychology the use of hybrid pedagogics seems especially appropriate. To invent constructive exercises and discussions that can help students understand the deeper meaning of what books and teachers talk about is something most of us probably already do to some extent. To design and develop these exercises in a way that makes them appropriate for discussions through an Internet platform and to take advantage of different web resources that can easily be integrated - and to do all of this in a bit more systematic way, should not be a large step for many teachers compared to what we are doing already. ●

A teaching tip from Estonia

Getting to know your students

Knowing the names of your students is an important way of building relationships but it can be hard to do with larger class sizes. For seminar groups Triin Hannust from the University of Tartu, Estonia suggests that a quick way of getting to know the names of students is to ask them to write their names on name tags and then, at the beginning of the next class, distribute them back to the students.

If you have a suggestion, can think of better ways of doing things or would like to comment on anything, please feel free to contact us.

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Innovative Partners' stories within the field of teaching and curriculum



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
FACULTY OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Professional skills in the curriculum

Sanna Selinheimo,
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In Finland it is possible to practise psychology as a licensed health care professional after completing the Master of Arts (psychology) degree. The competition is strong to be qualified for the studies leading to Bachelor of Art and MA (psychology) degrees. For example between the years of 2008-2010, only 7-8% of the candidates passed the entrance exam for psychology in the University of Helsinki. In practice, this means that having achieved the MA degree in psychology, one has the license to work in any field of psychology. This makes the university studies and professional training very demanding. Among wide theoretical and methodological studies, all students majoring in psychology have to complete a clinically orientated continuum of professional skills, a course on ethical issues and laws concerning the profession, and a supervised internship (together 67 ECTS minimum). The curriculum consists of a minimum of six courses on different areas in the psychological practice. The teaching methods are largely problem-based, building on clinical cases, and organized in collaboration with the University Hospital, the hospital district of Helsinki and Uusimaa and the Mental Health Care Centre of the City of Helsinki. The curriculum ends with courses on more specialized topics such as personal assessment, interventions and debriefing in traumatic stress situations.

The studies of BA degree are more theoretically and methodologically orientated than studies of the MA. A recent enquiry on students' views on their curriculum (1/2011) indicated that they wished more teaching on specific clinical issues during the studies of psychology, such as psychotherapeutic skills and students thought that it would be more motivating to start the curriculum of clinical skills earlier, already in the BA studies. This would also

support their career planning better. Based on the conclusions of the enquiry, this is a challenge for those who plan and schedule the curriculum. A more complex question is how to strengthen students' professional identity and skills, so that they would feel more secure when they start their clinical career. From our point of view, this question is tied to the bridging of theoretical and clinical knowledge throughout the studies. This would help also the students to recognize and appreciate their theoretical knowledge in their clinical work. ●

Student's personal project

Maria Pereira Da Costa,

University Paris Descartes, France



In France, psychology is not part of selective training before the entry into the Master programme. Most of our undergraduate students start their studies without knowing much about the area of Psychology or about the work of psychologist. For most of them, this fact contributes to their failure. So, during their second year of training, a new course has been created in order to help them to build a professional project. Almost 400 students applied for "Student's Personal Project" (3 ECTS).

In this module, under the supervision of an experienced professor, students write a literature review about psychological topics or about the area of psychology they plan to develop. In addition, each student has to interview a psychology professional. Finally, students present their project using Power Point. This course enables students to better understand what is expected during training in psychology linked with applied psychology. Initially, colleagues were not very convinced of the usefulness of such courses. They all changed their minds. ●



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TEACHING PRACTICE

Teaching developmental psychology: useful websites

Adult Development and Learning - APA website seeking to advance a study of human development through a life span focusing on adult development and aging. It provides teaching tips and resources for educators.
<http://apadiv20.phhp.ufl.edu>

Attachment Theory Website - website provides a broad list of authors, books, journals, and presentations with links to literature in the area of the attachment theory.
<http://www.richardatkins.co.uk/atws>

Developmental Psychology by APA - the division 7 of APA which takes up the variety of topics related to developmental psychology. It promotes research in the area and contains useful links and resources for developmental psychologists.
<http://ecp.fiu.edu/APA/div7>

Developmental Psychology - the website provides teaching resources in the field of developmental psychology. The topics include: language development, moral reasoning development, parenting styles, and developmental psychology theories.
<http://www.devpsy.org>

Discovering Psychology - website featuring programmes on introductory psychology topics including developmental psychology, e.g. 'The developing a child' and 'Language Development'. Useful to students thinking about studying psychology and teachers wishing to stay up to date with the discipline.
<http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>

International Society on Infant Studies - a society, which promotes and disseminates research on development of infants and the latest theories in the field. The website contains links to research tools.
<http://www.isisweb.org/view/0/index.html>

Introductory Psychology Resources - a website with resources to introductory psychology courses including developmental psychology. It contains class activities, movies, podcasts, power point presentations, as well as animations and cartoons which may be used in class or at home for independent learning. Resources in Spanish also available from this site.
<http://www.intropsychresources.com>

Jean Piaget Society - a society to study the nature of human knowledge and development, it provides an open forum for discussion, a number of publications devoted to human development and a list of reading resources for students.
<http://www.piaget.org>

Psych Me Up - a web site containing collaborative resources for online teaching of psychology with links to adolescent psychology, human development and more. The website also accepts submission of teaching materials in variety of formats.
<http://www.psychmeup.org/pmu/index.html>

Psychology Practicals - this site, funded by the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network, provides access to materials and resources to support student practical work and the teaching of research methods within psychology at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (source: project website). It includes practicals, tutorials and demos related to developmental psychology.
<http://www.psychologypracticals.com>

STEP E-Prime scripts - scripts replicating studies in experimental psychology. Free to download. For each script a summary of the experiment is provided, related studies, works cited by the study and an abstract of the study.
<http://step.psy.cmu.edu/scripts/categories.html>



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