

Creating education that fits students: Present-Day Challenges for the EFPA Standing Committee on Psychology in Education

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Abstract: This article gives information about the Standing Committee on Psychology in Education (SC PiE), the history of the SC PiE and its organisation. It also describes the aims and the work of the SC PiE. The SC PiE focuses on the psychologist's role in the educational system, the psychologist's training in the educational system related to the Specialist EuroPsy Certificate on Educational Psychology, the importance of inclusion in education and evidence-based knowledge and processes. The SC PiE gives information and promotes these topics through publications, symposia and presentations. The committee undertakes some limited research. The activities are described in this article. The EFPA Standing Committee Psychology in Education has been invited by the Slovenian Psychologist's Association to contribute to a volume of their Scientific and Professional Journal "Horizons of Psychology" (2022) with the theme "Psychology in Education: Challenges, choices and changes". The topic comprises articles about psychology in education from European countries. The special topic is issued on the occasion of the European Congress of Psychology, ECP, 2022 in Ljubljana. The theme of the ECP is "Psychology as the Hub Science: Opportunities and Responsibility".

Keywords: EFPA Standing Committee on Psychology in Education, school psychologist, educational psychology, inclusion, evidence-based knowledge

Ustvarjanje učencem prilagojenega izobraževanja: Izzivi za Stalni komite za psihologijo v izobraževanju pri EFPA

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Povzetek: Članek predstavlja Stalni komite za psihologijo v izobraževanju (SC PiE), njegovo zgodovino in organiziranost ter opisuje njegove cilje in delo. SC PiE se ukvarja z vlogo psihologov v izobraževalnem sistemu, njihovim usposabljanjem znotraj Sistema, kot se povezuje s specialitičnim certifikatom EuroPsy iz pedagoške psihologije, pomembnostjo vključevanja psihologov v izobraževanje ter z znanjem in prosci, ki temeljijo na empiričnih dokazih. SC PiE informira in promovira našete tematike skozi publikacije, simpozije in predstavitve, poleg tega pa izvaja tudi nekatere omejene raziskave. Dejavnosti komiteja so predstavljene v članku. Stalni komite za psihologijo v izobraževanju pri EFPA je Društvo psihologov Slovenije povabilo, da prispeva k znanstveni reviji Psihološka obzorja v okviru posebne teme Psihologija v izobraževanju: izzivi, izbire in spremembe. Posebna tema vključuje članke o psihologiji v izobraževanju iz različnih evropskih držav in je bila izdana ob robu Evropskega kongresa za psihologijo (ECP 2022) ki je potekal v Ljubljani pod naslovom Psihologija kot vozliščna znanost: priložnosti in odgovornosti.

Ključne besede: Stalni komite za psihologijo v izobraževanju pri EFPA, šolski psihologi, pedagoška psihologija, inklucija, na dokazih temelječe znanje

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This article discusses the work of the European Federation of Psychology Associations (EFPA) Standing Committee on Psychology in Education (SC PiE). The EFPA SC PiE is one of the working groups of the EFPA. The field of the SC PiE is education in the broadest sense of the word. The field covers day-care, preschool, primary education, secondary education, vocational education, higher education, and organisations that support these kinds of education. The field of education is interesting but complex. The field of education is interesting because it is concerned with all the peoples of Europe, as well as connections with people across the whole world. Life-long learning covers the youngest child to the most elderly. The complexity is seen in education at a European level but also at the national level in European countries. Different people and organisations are involved and contribute to the complexity of education, for example students, parents, teachers, but also the management of schools, municipalities and counties. Various kinds of educational systems, legislation, research about teaching, and the many visions on education also contribute to this complexity. The EFPA SC PiE carries out projects, writes position papers, and gives presentations and lectures at national and international conferences. The SC PiE has organised meetings with school psychologists of national departments of psychologist's associations about this interesting, large and complex field.

What is the EFPA SC PiE?

EFPA is the European Federation of Psychology Associations. Thirty-eight national associations of psychologists work together and are united in EFPA. These member associations participate in the various EFPA working groups with more than 300 volunteers nominated by the member associations. The EFPA Standing Committee on Psychology in Education is one of the sixteen permanent working groups of EFPA. Active members in the SC PiE represent twenty-eight member associations. The SC PiE has 11 observer representatives from member associations who are informed about the work of the SC PiE. The representatives in the SC PiE are all psychologists who can offer expertise and have experience working in school and educational system as psychologists, researchers or counsellors.

History

In 2007 psychologists from 8 countries started a working group called the Network of European Psychologists in the Educational System (NEPES). Since the start of NEPES, it had connections with EFPA and ISPA, International School Psychologists Association. In the NEPES regulations of 2008 the working group formulated eleven aims (NEPES, 2008). Three of them are: to promote psychology as a science and profession in the educational system in cooperation with EFPA and ISPA, to promote communication and cooperation between psychologists and their organisations working in the educational system, and to promote children's rights. In the beginning NEPES was also a discussion-forum where the differences in the work of the psychologists in the educational system between countries were highlighted and discussed.

The focus of the network was concerned with the practical psychological work in the school system. In 2009 NEPES got the status of a task force of EFPA. The working group NEPES adapted to the new EFPA structures at that time. In 2011 the network evolved into a standing committee of EFPA. This change meant, for example, that the committee had to write an activity plan and a report every two years. Both are presented at the General Assembly of EFPA (EFPA, 2022). The convenor of the network NEPES was responsible for writing these documents based on the results of the discussions, for organizing the meetings, and keep in touch with the Head Office of EFPA and organisations outside EFPA. The organisation of the SC PiE has evolved during the time towards sharing responsibilities for one or more of the activities for all members. Every active representative has a task of writing documents, organising meetings and being active in a subgroup. The meetings of the SC PiE evolved from once a year a physical meeting to two physical meetings a year, to in the Corona period 2020 and 2021, fourteen online meetings: major, in-between and subgroup meetings.

Aims of the SC PiE

The role of the SC Psychology in Education (EFPA, SC PiE, 2022, para. 2) is to analyse and appraise the developments in research and professional practice of psychologists in educational contexts across Europe.

To these ends, the SC PiE will :

- Disseminate scientific knowledge about psychology in education
- Exchange experiences of good practices of psychologists in education
- Promote inclusiveness in education
- Promote and support the best interests of vulnerable young people in educational systems
- Adopt both preventative and reactive approaches in educational contexts
- Provide a platform for sharing best practices of psychologists in education across Europe and the wider world.

Challenges for the SC PiE

From the beginning of the network the SC PiE had three crucial challenges. In short, these challenges are the psychologist's role in the educational system, inclusion in education, and evidence-based knowledge and processes in education.

Challenge 1. The role of the psychologist in the educational system

The first challenge relates to the training and role of the psychologist in the educational system, the systems to get work and the regulated working conditions in education.

Every country in Europe has its own educational system. Therefore, the psychologist's role in this educational system is different in all European countries. For example, the role can be focused on mental health service, student counselling,

career guidance and counselling, training of teachers and staff, crisis management, teaching social emotional learning, etc. (Arnold & Horan, 2017).

In the Bologna Statement (1999, as cited in EuroPsy, 2016), twenty-nine countries agreed to reform the structures of their higher education systems towards convergence. Nevertheless, higher education courses at universities continue to fit in with the education system of the individual European country. The fit to the national educational system is one of the reasons why the training of the psychologist working in the educational system is different in all European countries. A psychologist, who works in education, needs a university master's degree of psychology in most European countries. However, in some states of Germany, the psychologist can only work in education when s/he has qualified teacher training and experience as a teacher. In many countries, school- or educational psychology courses are organised at master's, post-master's or doctoral levels, for example, in Cyprus, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the UK and Russia. However, in some other countries, there are no courses at all.

Not only is the training and role of the psychologist in the educational system different in every country, but also the legislative structures for psychologists working in the educational system are not the same in European countries. For example, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, and the United Kingdom have legislation defining the psychologist's role in education. However, in the Netherlands, in general, no such legislation underpins the work of the psychologist in education, with one exception the advice for admission to special education (Arnold & Horan, 2017).

In 2009 the network NEPES participated in the Life Long Learning Programme of the EU. In this project, the network worked on ensuring the quality of psychologists' training and work in education. The project report "European School Psychologists Improve Life Long Learning, ESPIL" (NEPES, 2010) gave the educational system recommendations about the psychologist's role, European quality standards for the education training of psychologists and recommendations about European quality standards for the psychological service. These recommendations are a step toward the development of the Specialist EuroPsy Certificate for Educational Psychology. Further work from NEPES includes overviews of the agreements and differences in role, training and legislation in European countries. In 2009 NEPES published the "Preliminary Report School Psychology in Secondary Schools across Europe" (NEPES, 2009b). In this report, the network gave an overview of the psychologist's role in guidance and career counselling in schools in Europe. Also, in 2009 NEPES published an overview of mental health projects carried out by psychologists in the educational system of the countries represented in the SC "Psychologists supporting Mental Health in Youth and Education" (NEPES, 2009a). This included descriptions of these mental health projects. The network also produced overviews and surveys that were not published. In 2012 NEPES produced an overview of training and courses of Universities with a special focus on a study of psychology in education -, school psychology, "EU reference guide of universities with offers in the area of psychology in education". In 2013 a survey was made

about the field and the role of the psychologist in education, a survey about the competencies needed in the work of the psychologist in education and in 2014, a survey about tasks in the work of the psychologist in education.

In 2017 the SC PiE published the book "Inclusive Educational Practice in Europe: psychological perspectives" (Arnold & Horan, 2017). On the first two pages of every chapter is an overview of the key facts underpinning the work of the psychologists in schools of each of 13 European countries. The differences in training, legislation, role and tasks of psychologists between the national educational systems have the consequence that there is no commonality in terminology, concern and structure as a basis for the work of the Sc PiE. The big challenge for the SC PiE is to come to more unified and quality assure the work. In general, the European Certificate in Psychology Basic, EuroPsy Basic (Lunt et al., 2015), can be used to get more consistency in the quality of the work. For example, the association of psychologists in Portugal and Spain use the EuroPsy basic. But the SC PiE has the ambition to develop and promote a standard of post-academic education and professional training at a higher level for the specialist psychologist working in education, the Specialist EuroPsy Certificate on Educational Psychology.

Challenge 2. Promotion of inclusion in education

Another important challenge of the Sc PiE is to promote inclusion in education. The psychologists have an important role in implementing inclusive education. From the beginning, the work of the SC PiE has been based on the needs of society, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (United Nations, 2008) and The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] & Ministry of Education and Science Spain, 1994). All European countries ratified both conventions, but in many nations, the inclusion of all children in the educational system is not a reality.

NEPES and the SC PiE attribute an important role to psychologists working in education on implementing inclusion. During the NEPES period, the network participated in many conferences. They contributed presentations about mental health for youth, the ESPIL project, the improvement of special needs education in European schools, mainstreaming of childrens' rights and child health and rights education for health professionals, including psychologists. These subjects are affiliated with inclusion in education. As a result, the core business of the SC PiE evolved into two main subjects, the rights of the child and inclusion in education (Kant, 2013).

The SC PiE gives a vision on inclusion in the report "Psychologists Supporting Inclusive Education" (SC PiE, 2012). Inclusive education is education in which all children can participate regardless of features that can lead to discrimination. Inclusive education aims to ensure equal development focussed opportunities for every child in education. Furthermore, inclusive education values the

richness and the benefits of diversity. In many organisations and states, the limited definition of inclusion in education is used: inclusion of students with disabilities, special needs.

The SC PiE handles the comprehensive definition of inclusion in education in the report “Psychologists Supporting Inclusive Education” (SC PiE, 2012) and the position paper of 2012. In the report, representatives describe the degree of inclusiveness in education in their country. They give examples of good practices of their country. Some countries have inclusive education based on the legislation of the country, for example, Italy and Denmark. Important in all publications, lectures, and presentations about inclusive education is the information about the psychologist’s role in implementing inclusion in education. The SC PiE promoted inclusion in education and the psychologist’s role by lectures on this theme at conferences in Porto, Bratislava, Cyprus and Graz. The SC PiE promoted inclusion in education also with organising symposia during the European Congress for Psychologists, ECP, in Amsterdam 2017, “Inclusive Education in Europe: prevention and early intervention”, in Moscow 2019 “, Psychology in Education: creating a future together” and in Ljubljana 2022, “The impact of COVID-19 on children, families, and schools: Implications for psychology in education professional’s roles during the recovery phase”.

The SC PiE published three issues about inclusion in education in European countries 1. The book “Inclusive Educational Practice in Europe: psychological perspectives” (Arnold & Horan, 2017), 2. The Journal “Psychology in Russia: State of Art”, volume 2019 – 4 (Arnold & Schad, 2019), 3. The Journal “Horizons of Psychology”, volume 2022 (Jurišević et al., 2022). The book “Inclusive Educational Practice in Europe: psychological perspectives” (Arnold & Horan, 2017) describes the development of inclusion in education in 13 countries of Europe. Psychologists, representatives in the SC PiE, working in schools and other educational settings from these 13 different European states, provide a picture of the progress in the inclusion process in their country. The SC PiE uses a comprehensive definition of inclusion in education in this publication. The Journal “Psychology in Russia: State of the Art” (Arnold & Schad, 2019) and The Journal “Horizons of Psychology” (Jurišević et al., 2022) contain papers that are reports of research. The results of the research contribute to the implementation of inclusion in education.

Challenge 3. The use of scientific knowledge and good practices in education

Challenge 3. includes the research described and the promotion of evidence-based knowledge in education in challenge 1. The psychologist’s role in the educational system and challenge 2. The promotion of inclusion in education. The kind of research and promotion of evidence-based knowledge depends not only on the subject, but also on the development and composition of the SC PiE. The composition of the SC PiE was in the first decade, a mixture of practitioners and teachers/researchers in higher education. The first challenge described the investigation of the psychologist’s task, training, role in the educational system, the requirements to get work, and the regulated working conditions in education by

representatives of NEPES and the SC PiE. They did research with surveys and questionnaires. The results of this research were presented in seminars during national and European meetings. In these lectures and the reports of NEPES highlighted the good practices of countries in the field of mental health in education, guidance and career counselling in schools, special needs projects, early childhood education and social-emotional learning.

After the first decade, the composition of representatives in the SC PiE changed to a committee with much more teachers/researchers of higher education than practitioners. This change gave an opportunity to do more research. At the ECP Moscow 2019, the SC PiE organised two symposia, “Evidence in School Psychology: What Counts?” and “Psychology in Education: Creating the future together.” Representatives of different countries presented their research on the ECP in Moscow. They promoted in these symposia the use of evidence-based knowledge in education in the lectures. The research reports presented are described in articles in the Journal “Psychology in Russia: State of Art” (Arnold & Schad, 2019).

The presentations of research were an impetus for joint research. For the next decade, the SC PiE developed several research plans. The SC PiE started in 2020 collaboration with the American Psychological Association [APA], Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education. The APA Coalition has researched what principles are used during a teaching in primary education. The research results are the TOP 20 Principles from Psychology in Schools and Education (APA, Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2015).

As a result of this collaboration, the SC PiE started to research the use of evidence-based knowledge and processes in education by teachers. Representatives of several European countries participate in this research. The results of this research are presented during the ECP Ljubljana 2022 in the symposium “ Use of Psychological Science in Schools from a Euro-North American Perspective.” The journal “Horizons of Psychology” (2022) includes the research reports and presentations from the SC PiE during the ECP. Through the activities, research and presentations by the SC PiE, the committee disseminates scientific knowledge about psychology in education.

All the activities mentioned in the description of the challenges contribute to fulfilling the aims of the SC PiE (EFPA, SC PiE, 2022, para. 2): “The role of the SC on Psychology in Education is to analyse and appraise the developments in research and professional practice of psychologists in educational contexts across Europe”.

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