Teaching psychology in the Czech Republic

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Context

Psychology education is offered by many universities in the Czech Republic. All education degrees (bachelor, master, and PhD) are offered by five public universities (free of charge; charges may be introduced in the future): Charles University, Prague (Faculty of Arts; Faculty of Education); Masaryk University, Brno (Faculty of Arts; Faculty of Social Studies), Palacký University, Olomouc (Faculty of Arts). There are two more universities offering bachelor degree according to EuroPsy – Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava, Ostrava and Pedagogical Faculty, University of South Bohemia (PhD in pedagogical psychology as well). Apart from these departments there are many other universities offering some education in psychology as well (e.g. faculties of education, sport, law, medicine, social service). All programmes must be accredited by the Accreditation Commission appointed by the government. The profile of the graduate is often general, B.A. graduates expected to use their knowledge as an advantage in finding a job, M.A. graduates may aspire to the traditional psychological profession (psychotherapist, counsellor, school psychologist) with further education depending on (sub) profession legal framework.

Studying psychology is very popular in the Czech Republic; entry exams are very competitive and only a small percentage of students are accepted for study. There are a various content and forms of entry exams. Most departments use a mix of in-house custom testing including e.g. general knowledge, psychology, biology and oral examination. Some use widely offered knowledge and academic aptitude tests produced by Scio Company.

The majority of students graduate with a master degree and work as personnel psychologists, school psychologists, counsellors, clinical psychologists, in non-profit organizations, and at universities. Many students find their jobs outside psychology or in related fields (education, social work). Job opportunities for bachelors are scant and there are not many special job opportunities.

If graduates want to teach at pre-university level, they have to receive the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (student has to pass several exams and teach under supervision at high school). This certificate was (and sometimes is) a facultative part of the programmes and nowadays is a part of private courses as well. To teach at university level no teaching training is usually required, however an expertise in a given field is required; mentoring is not common.

Studying in English is not yet very common. Most programmes are accredited in Czech only, with one or two courses in English. All students have to study one or two languages (English is often compulsory). There are many scholarships and other possibilities to study or work abroad in academic environment for at least one semester and most of the students take full advantage of this opportunity. There are more and more foreign students studying doctoral degree in psychology in English at Czech universities.

There are two major unions of psychologists. Both are active in a European context:

The Union of Psychologists Associations CR (http://www.upacr.cz/) is a professional union of legal entities, psychologists associations and the Czech-Moravian Psychologists Society.

Czech-Moravian Psychological Society (http://cmps.ecn.cz) associates the psychologists of the Czech Republic. It has several sections (e.g. clinical, pedagogical) and working groups (e.g. neuropsychology).

Major psychological research institutes are: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (Brno and Prague) (http://www.cas.cz/); Institute for Research on Children, Youth and Family, Masaryk University (http://isi.muni.cz); Centre for Addictology, Charles University, Prague (http://www.addiktologie.cz).

Current problems of psychology education in the Czech Republic: lack of teachers especially in more specialised areas; lack of applied bachelor programmes in psychology (the employability of bachelor students is not high), and the low diversification of bachelor study programmes (often vague or missing profiles of graduates); current reforms in the public financing of science heavily influence the budgets of public universities because research funds are often used to help finance teaching; curriculum of psychology is often quite traditional and not influenced too much by practice and professional organizations what may decrease the employability of the graduates in specialised fields; current state of psychodiagnostics in the Czech Republic shows there should be more pressure on the quality of education of psychodiagnostics; there is often lack of the support and training provided to new university teachers.

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Department of psychology at the Faculty of Social Studies was established in January 1998. In addition to psychology, the faculty focuses on education in the branches of sociology, political science, psychology, social policy and social work, media studies and journalism, environmental studies, international relations, European studies and, as new ones, gender studies, social anthropology and security, and strategic studies. The whole faculty strives for connection between education activities and research done by the departments as well as by the institutes belonging to the faculty. Thus, the courses held by the faculty are permanently enriched with the latest gossips of both basic and applied social science research. The department of psychology offers a Bachelor’s programme (EuroPsy), Master’s program (EuroPsy) and PhD programme. Bachelor students can either study one “major” or a combination with other subjects (e.g. sociology, media studies). As a part of the BA programme students complete a minimum of two research projects (one group project as a part of research methods course in the second year and one individual as a bachelor’s degree thesis). In the MA programme (applicants must pass entry exams) students have to complete one individual study as their master’s thesis. There are three PhD specialisations – general psychology (cognitive), social psychology, and developmental psychology.

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