Teaching Psychology in Turkey

Nebi Sumer & Mine Misirli soy
Middle East Technical University

Currently, there are 38 Psychology Departments; half in private universities. Psychology is on the rise, 16 departments were found in the last 10 years. Students are admitted to psychology departments only on the basis of a national university entrance exam. State universities are free and usually accept students with higher percentile scores than the private ones, with a few exceptions. 2200 students were admitted to psychology departments in 2009. About 8000 students study in these departments. There were 372 masters and 125 PhD students in psychology departments in 2005. The numbers might have doubled since then. Undergraduate education takes four years and graduates are entitled to use the title “Psychologist”, but for private practice in many fields usually a master’s degree is required. In 1976, Turkish Psychological Association was founded as the umbrella association for both professional practitioners and academicians. First independent national scientific journal in Psychology was founded in 1978, (Turkish Journal of Psychology, in SSCI since 1995). There exist a number of scientific journals in psychology, but not any in teaching of psychology. Psychology is on the rise since the 90s and employment in areas other than teaching sharply increased. There are still no legal regulations for private practice in psychology, but TPD has guidelines and an ethical committee to oversee the practice of psychology. There is no national accreditation system for departments, programs and/or courses. Turkish Psychologist Association has prepared a detailed accreditation system for both undergraduate and graduate programs in psychology, but does not have legal base for it yet.

METU Psychology Department

Our department has 17 full-time and 5 part-time faculty members and 22 teaching/research assistants. There are 256 undergraduate and 130 graduate students in three masters (in clinical, I/O and Social Psychology) two PhD programs (in Social and Clinical Psychology). In four years, undergraduates take 20 compulsory and 7 elective courses in psychology, and 16 elective courses from other departments, mostly from other social science departments. Freshmen and sophomores take mostly compulsory intro courses in different areas of psychology such general intro, social and developmental, and experimental courses and four statistics and research method course, while juniors and seniors mostly take more advanced and elective courses. Students have to take a summer practice course at the end of their second or third academic year (mostly 3rd). METU Psych. Department is a typical one in terms of undergraduate curriculums in other universities. About 60% of our graduates go to post graduate education in Turkey or abroad and about 20% go for a PhD degree. In terms of teaching, we have application hours for statistics and research methods courses. We use conventional teaching techniques in other courses. Student can gain experience in workshop and filed practice courses in which they can run a field or experimental study with faculty members and research assistants. We have lab facilities and computer rooms that can be used in supporting teaching activities. Although some faculty use online teaching facilities to communicate and give feedback to students and place course documents, conventional teaching techniques are still common.

Employment for Psychology Students

About 60% of graduates work in areas related to psychology. Main professional area is clinical setting (hospitals, counseling services, and private practice). Second is teaching in different educational setting, basically high schools and universities. Third is the emerging areas such as industrial/work psychology, traffic psychology, and forensics. For instance, about 250 psychology graduates work in psychological assessment of drivers as traffic/transportation psychologists. There are about 7000 professional psychologists in Turkey.

Problems and Demands in Psychology Education

Undergraduate education should be revised considering the public demand and areas that should be urgently developed. Internship and summer practice are very good experience for students to increase employment. Many departments, including our university has a compulsory summer internship. There are also problems with regulations and having 4 years of undergraduate training only. There is a high demand for post graduate education in many applied areas. At the moment, there is no differentiation for science and practice based post graduate training. There is also an urgent need for accreditation and a chamber of professional psychologists.

www.europlat.org

nsumer@metu.edu.tr

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