

# Conference on Intercultural Psychology

## Diversity Management in Academic Teaching of Intercultural Psychology

10<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, held at Roskilde University, Denmark

**10:00-10:15** Welcome and introduction

*Inger Birk, Danish representative in EFPA task force on Cultural and Ethnic Diversity, and Hans H. K. Sønnderstrup-Andersen, Study director, psychology, RUC.*

Hans welcomes everyone to Roskilde University (RUC) and PAES (Department of Psychology and Educational Studies). His department is currently involved in exploring possibilities within cultural diversity teaching. Together with Rashmi, he is working in an International project about multiculturalism and bilingualism involving Finland, Russia and Denmark.

We view ourselves as a critical university, he explains. This vision can't be reached without opening the doors to the outside world.

We have 3 areas of research at PAES:

1. Social Psychology of Everyday Life (the main focus of the department)
2. Lifelong Learning
3. Health Promotion

With this short introduction to RUC and the department, he would like to open the seminar.

Inger thanks Hans and RUC. She welcomes everyone, students, teachers and researchers. A special welcome to Ulrike from Germany. She welcomes on behalf of the organizing group on cooperation with SIP and the EFPA task force. Then she proceeds to introduce the different speakers and the program of the seminar.

A few words about EFPA (European Federation of Psychology Associations). In Europe we are 300,000 psychologists who are members of the organization, she explains. In the past few years, we have been working with some of the same problems that we will discuss today. We find it very important to further work in this field.

**10:30-12:00** Intercultural psychology at Danish universities

*Pernille Hviid, associate professor, International coordinator, Vice Head of Studies, Psychology, KU.*

*Berta Vishnivitz, associate professor, International & Intercultural program, ISA, U.C. Metropol.*

*Rashmi Singla, associate professor, International coordinator, Psychology, RUC.*

*Torkil Clemmensen, professor mso, Head of Studies, EBUSS ITU, CBS.*

Pernille takes the floor.

KU considers itself to be very international, but when it comes to education it becomes a bit more ambivalent. We have 240 students and that means that around 120 students should go on exchange every year, she explains. Currently we have 80 students going out. Why only this number? There seems to be an idea at the department that psychologist should work in their own country. It is some kind of conservative attitude. There are, though, more and more students interesting in doing international exchange. Most students are going to English speaking countries. Pernille is trying to persuade her colleagues to do courses in English, but they usually come up with excuses. But we need to open more up internationally. It is paradoxical that KU will not internationalize. This is the main problem at our department.

This was to present to you what we are doing presently, she continues. Often international students are considered welcome, of course, but also a burden. We are trying to make a project together with our Asian students, for which we have received funding. This project aims to record these students experience with living in Denmark. All in all, a lot of big goals, but also a lot of ambivalences.

20 minutes for questions to Pernille.

“In what way is your research international?”

We are doing progress towards internationalizing. The majority of the research is still Danish.

“I think we are all 'getting there' in terms of internationalizing. The question is, are you also working with tutor systems?”

Yes. Even though very popular teachers are doing English courses, the Danish students still won't go. Therefore most students are international at the English courses. The Danish students seem to be worried about their grades, and this courses the separation.

“It seems like there is a tendency to think that psychology should be local”

There is this mentality. Maybe it is because people believe that one should know ones context very thoroughly .

Berta takes the floor as the next speaker..

Berta starts with drawing the names Paulo Freire, Vygotsky, Holzkamp on the white board. This is my background, she explains and adds “Freire is my guide when I seek to change the world. He was very good at listening to those who are not pr.”

I am born in Argentina and came to Denmark to study, she continues. I still teach to develop the students own competences to change the world. I came in contact with cultural psychology in my PhD.

Bertha proceeds to talk about her background and her work in I&I (International & Intercultural Program).

Then she elaborates on what she believes to be the goals of intercultural psychology:

- Focus on understanding the Historical (power) mechanisms generating social problems, at different levels in each society.
- To promote individual and community well-being through research and action.
- To promote equality, social justice and inclusion
- Reestablishing dignity and recognition of human rights of historically marginalized groups.

Questions touch on problems concerning emotions in clinical cultural psychology.

Rashmi takes the floor.

Usually people from Copenhagen are hesitant to come to RUC, so she warmly welcomes people from KU, and all other as well.

When we talk about intercultural psychology it is a lot about movement, she starts. I share many of the issues that Pernille from KU also talked about. Rashmi outlines the main themes of her talk: about

- Context, global and local
- Direct & indirect focus
- Thematic illustrations
- Collaboration

What is intercultural psychology? It is about movement, meeting and contact. It's becoming so complex that it is becoming hard, maybe too hard, to grasp. There are an abundance of different

concepts, so it is important to be aware what these different concepts imply. It is about exchange of all sorts of phenomena, but what we forget sometimes is ideological aspects.

Then she proceeds to talk about what her department at RUC works with. She emphasizes that RUC promotes interdisciplinary research, and then talks about what the research at RUC has accomplished, the 'success stories'. Her department is teaching Global Health, that focus on the encounter between 'the west and the rest'. She then proceeds to present problems at her department that includes competition and conflicts between different subject areas and approaches. She concludes that researchers of this field actually should come together and collaborate across various borders.

The following discussions touch on how the field of cultural psychology and anthropology meet, as well as how the university can meet other groups as ethnic groups, marginalized groups and cultural groups.

Thorkild takes the floor as the last speaker before the lunch break.

He will be talking about psychology in connection with technology as he has been working with technological usability.

Firstly he begins with focus on working with psychology at a business school. He can't recognize the problems with internationalization which was discussed earlier in his institution. He emphasizes that psychology and psychologist are not the same.

He addresses the issue that the research may be international, but the researchers are mainly local.

What is this computer-psychology? It started when computers came into the hands of normal people, and not only computer professionals. The first (American) research would explain psychology through IT concepts – social psychologist protested.

Even though the research was western, nowadays, because of globalization, this research has spread all over the world. He then emphasizes the importance of studying computer from a psychological approach, since technology is everywhere in everyday life.

He furthermore presented cultural issues in technology. There is a need to research technology across all cultures, since the technology is directed at so many different cultures. He then talked about what people from different cultures focus on in terms of usability and presented illustration from different contexts.

Conclusively, we need to know more about local cultural HCI and cultural usability from local perspectives, from 'within'.

**12:00-13:00** *Lunch*

**13:00-14:00** *Camilla Sløk, associate professor, Head of studies HA(psyk.) and CM(psyk.), CBS  
Klaus Nielsen, Professor at the department of psychology, Århus Universitet.*

Camilla could unfortunately not make it, so Torkil presented her main points..

He presented psychological schools taught at Copenhagen Business School as well as the structure of studies at CBS in connection to psychology. He elaborated on what is called Economical Psychology.

Rashmi asks into whether there is any kind of intercultural psychology courses. Torkil answers no. He estimates that out of 140 students on the bachelor, only 10 students go on exchange.

Klaus takes the floor.

He has mainly worked with cultural psychology in connection with situated learning and more. There is little reflection on cultural psychology at Aarhus University.

– The relationship between culture and psychology: which role does this play in Aarhus?

There is not really a coherent environment in cultural psychology at Aarhus.

He then proceeds to present some projects that try to connect culture and psychology. (1) A cognitive approach: researching cultural life scripts and life stories. (2) Studies of how living conditions of late modernity (autonomy) influence our psychological well-being and developmental processes. (3) Projects about re-integrating potential terrorists into everyday life. Furthermore there is a project that attempts to approach the notion of culture and psychology by looking at historical changes, and another project, which Klaus himself is involved in, that focuses on barriers/exclusion/inclusion.

– Educational considerations about culture and psychology.

They are mainly educating their students in this via lectures. Klaus believes that this is not satisfying, they should get knowledge through participation. He attempts to persuade his students to understand culture and psychology from the 'inside'.

The following discussions touch upon how many students go abroad, in order to examine culture from the 'inside', as well as some of the projects on culture and psychology that Klaus presented. Then the discussion turn to touch upon the problem of getting the students quickly through the studies, because of the progression reform (fremdriftsreformen), all the while having studies with good quality.

Rashmi takes the floor, and introduces a 'new cultural practice'- thanks the participants who have presented in the seminar without receiving honorar and requested Inger Birk to handover symbolic gifts sponsored by Frontpage Firm.

**14:00-14:15** *Break*

**14:15-15:15** *Teaching Intercultural Competence*

*Ulrike de Ponte, Dipl.-Psych., coordinator for Center of 'Internationale Handlungskompetenz', Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule, Regensburg.*

Inger introduces Ulrike, who is given the floor.

She starts with presenting an exercise, that one can use in the teaching.

Everyone gets a note, one can read it, but not read it out loud. Then one has to find ones group/culture with a specific greeting. e.g. You belong to Loango, they welcome by hand clapping.

Ulrike afterwards proceeds to talk about the work of her department, which is open for students of all departments. The structure of the program of Intercultural Competence consists firstly of a semester with lectures on interdisciplinary framework, and then with seminars on experience-oriented training. After this follows a semester on culture specific training and then self-reflection & self-management. Then she explains through a diagram how the different parts of the program cover the 4 dimensions: culture general, culture specific, information oriented and experience oriented.

The students can also choose a country specific summer course, where one studies two culturally different countries, like USA and Poland, or Peru and Norway.

Ulrike is asked how the cultures of these countries conceptualized. Ulrike explains that it is not about stereotyping, but about examining one culture from the point of view from another, more relatively.

**15:15-16:15** *Workshops – teaching/practicing intercultural psychology*

*Workshop1 - Nike Brandt Poulsen, cand.psych., certified specialist in psycho-therapy.*

*Workshop2 – Helle Preisler, cand. pæd. psych.*

Workshop 1- organized by Nike Brandt Poulsen,

How can the practices cooperate with the universities? It is too bad when practitioners have valuable experiences which are barely incorporated into academic knowledge.

Nike starts out by talking about her experiences with working at an asylum seeker camp and some examples of intercultural research.

She works what she calls play-back theater, which is an original form of improvisational theatre in which audience members tell stories by enacting them. She elaborates on play-back theater with pictures. She uses play-back Theater with asylum seekers to work-out their positive and negative experiences, for instance their hazardous travel to Europe.

Nike emphasizes that it has a positive effect to witness one's own story enacted, and it is exactly this effect that should be 'picked up' and made into academic knowledge.

Nike is asked how she 'sells' this play-back theater. She answers, that she starts out with presenting it as something amusing, and then it is about setting a pace that catches ones audience/participants.

The workshop ends with a discussion on how to make this type of practice interesting to academic psychology. One point is that to make it interesting one would have to be able to present evidence based data that shows how play-back theater is therapeutically efficient.

Workshop 2- organized by Helle Preisler

Helle begun by a description of her work during a period of 1½ years with Palestinian refugee children in the West Bank. She discussed how treatment of children with trauma in groups and concurrent psychosocial group sessions with their mothers may have children and families to function optimally

In addition, she motivated other workshop participants to articulate and share experiences of working in a multicultural context, especially across the national border. There were a number of suggestions regarding content of future training and exchange programs, among others. beginning the planning in good time and involving the local knowledge as well as local experts.

### **16:15-17:00** *Discussion*

Discussion of how partners in practice could develop collaboration with research institutions, one of the points from Nike's workshop.

Issues based on the discussion:

- Students have to plan a long time in advance to do studies abroad.
- It would be good to have fundraising consultants.
- Abilities to analyze contexts and oneself in new contexts.
- Enlarge numbers of international students.
- How to continue collaboration across institutional borders such as the present seminar.
- Uniting key persons in the field and enhancing contact between them.

Appendix

**pp- Berta Vishnivit**

**pp- Rashmi Singla**

**pp- Klaus Nielsen**

**&**

Article by Helle Preisler