

School Psychology in Estonia

1. Context of school psychology

Geographic characteristics;

- Located in northern Europe, on the eastern coast of Baltic Sea.
- Area
 - 350kms from east to west
 - 240kms from north to south
 - Total area is 45226 sq kms
 - Borders
 - East – Russia
 - West – Sweden across Baltic Sea
 - North – Finland
 - South – Latvia
- The capital of Estonia is Tallinn
- The official language, Estonian
- The country secured its independence in 1991
- Became a member of European union in 2004

Demographic characteristics

- Population: 1.3 million
- 29.80 people per square meter
- Age structure:
 - 0-14 years: 15%
 - 15-64 years: 67.8%
 - 65 years and over: 17%
- Largest ethnic groups: Estonians (69%), Russians (26%), Ukrainians (2%), Belarussians (1%) and Finns (1%).

Economic characteristics

- GDP: \$19.23 billion (2004 est.)

- Per Capita - \$14,300
- Trading Partners – Finland, Sweden and Germany
- Strongest Industrial Areas – Telecommunication and Electronics

Educational system

- Number of Students – (2005 est)
 - 288,600 Students
 - 18,800 in basic schools
 - 42,100 in secondary schools
 - 29,900 in vocational institutions
 - 67,800 in universities
 - 52,900 in pre schools (2006 est)
 - 5065 children in special schools
 - 1859 studying in special classes at main stream schools
 - 20,252 children through inclusive education
- Pre – School until age of Seven (Voluntary)
 - Until three - Crèches
 - From age three to seven – Nursery Schools
 - Special Pre Schools for children in need
- Primary School starts at age seven and lasts for nine years
 - First six years are called as primary
 - Next three years
 - Upper Secondary School
 - Vocational School
- Schooling is compulsory from seven to seventeen years and free through municipal schools
- Class size –
 - Basic School – 24
 - Upper School – 36
- Each school develop its curriculum based up on the national curriculum

2. History and current status of school psychology

- First instance of School Psychology - Department of School Psychology was emerged in the University of Tartu, 1968
- Soviet Period (1970 – 1991)
 - School Psychology introduced by Kalju Toim, Univeristy of Tartu, Heino Liimets and Juhan Soerd, Pedagogical Institute of Tallinn.
 - First School Psychologist – Lia Hanso (1975)
 - Vocational Training and Career Planning were given more importance.
 - Vocational Centers started in 1970s.
 - In 1988 most of the centers got closed except two in Tallinn and Tartu
 - Before 1991, there were 66 school psychologists
- Independent Republican Period (after 1991)
 - More than 150 persons are currently employed
 - Most of them are appointed in just one school serving to the needs of 600 children at an average
 - Distance between schools and lack of financial resources restricts the professionals from practicing in many schools
 - Average monthly salary – 467 euros (2004 est)
 - Job prospects and stability are good at major cities but lacks in other places



3. Infrastructure of school psychology

- The Union of Estonian Psychologists (1988) and The Union of Estonian School Psychologists (1992) are the two professional psychologists serving the interests of school psychology.
- The Union of Estonian Psychologists is the licensure body for school and clinical psychologists.
- The Union of Estonian School Psychologists started with 30 members now have 133 members.

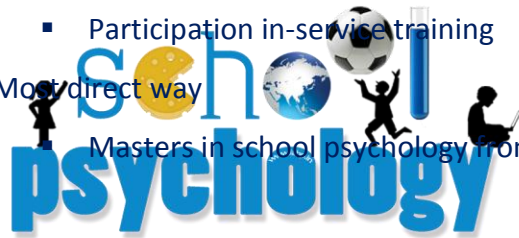
- The Union of Estonian Psychologists has a newsletter, Education – a monthly journal, weekly Teachers Newspaper.
- National School Board issued a school psychologist job description in 1995
- According to qualification standards issued in 2005, a school psychologist must have a Bachelors level in psychology but these standards were not met.
- School Psychologists follow the code of International School Psychology Association

4. Preparation of school psychologists

- New Curricula introduced in 2002
 - a) Bachelor's (three years)
 - b) Masters (two years)
 - c) Doctoral (four years)
- New Curriculum focuses on making the a school psychologist as scientist and practitioner
- Bachelor's (three years)
 - 120 credits
 - Optional papers have the choice of learning school psychology
 - Offered at University of Tartu, University of Tallinn, and Nord
- Masters (two years)
 - 80 credits
 - Specialization available in fields like psychology, clinical psychology, school psychology, counseling, health psychology and social psychology
 - This level is needed to work in schools
- Qualification Required
 - Qualification Level III Requirement
 - Bachelors in Psychology with 4 credits in school psychology
 - Qualification Level IV Requirement



- Masters or Bachelors in psychology
- 40 credits in service training
- Three years work experience
- Qualification Level V Requirement
 - Masters in psychology
 - 20 credits in- service training
 - Ten years of work experience
 - Publication in education psychology journals
- Straight route one
 - Master of Psychology at University of Tartu
 - Nine person have completed till 2012
- Straight route two
 - Completing bachelors or masters in psychology
 - Participation in-service training
- Most direct way
 - Masters in school psychology from University of Tartu



5. Roles, functions, and responsibilities of school psychologists

- Roles differ from school to school and area to area.
- Roles include
 - Counseling
 - Consultation Services
 - Testing and Assessments
 - Organizational and program development services

6. Current practice impacting school psychologists

- Psychologists trained in the old curriculum do not meet the new standards
- Low salaries and poor working conditions.
- Lack of supervision for young professionals
- Estonian School Psychology Association is trying to bridge the gap by planning some new courses for the old psychologists
- Though the professionals are small in number, the lack of unity among them has stood as a barrier towards development of the profession

