

Participant Idea Exchange (PIE) at NITOP 2015

Psychological Literacy: A Practical Approach

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Psychological literacy (Cranney & Dunn, 2012) is a new and important concept in psychology education which encapsulates the knowledge, skills and attributes acquired through the study of psychology and the ability to transfer learning from the academic setting into the real world. Despite an increasing number of academic and professional publications highlighting theoretical concepts and benefits of psychological literacy, there are few practical resources for psychology educators. This PIE will address this need by discussing two recent publications commissioned by the UK Higher Education Academy.

‘An Introductory Guide to Psychological Literacy’ (Mair, Taylor & Hulme, 2013) outlines the theoretical context for psychological literacy and its rationale, and offers ideas about aspects of the curriculum that lend themselves to developing students’ psychological literacy. It also signposts a comprehensive list of resources to facilitate further study on the topic.

‘A Psychological Literacy Compendium’ (Taylor & Hulme, in prep) presents a wide range of contributions focused on highlighting how psychological literacy is developed across individual activities or across whole cohorts and degrees. The case studies highlight the staff perspective (e.g. what worked well or could be improved), evaluations of student experience, and evaluations of performance and employability prospects. In identifying examples of good practice, the Compendium offers psychology academics evidence that will enable change to take place within staff development and at curricula level. Participants will reflect on the development of Psychological literacy in their own teaching practice and will be asked to discuss case studies of good practice.

Questions for PIE participants:

Have you experience of developing psychological literacy in your own teaching practice? Or have colleagues in your department or university developed psychological literacy? What have been the positive and negative experiences?

Would you like to discuss any of the case studies in more detail or ask advice from the facilitators regarding how to introduce psychological literacy into your own teaching practice?

An Introductory Guide to Psychological Literacy and Psychologically Literate Citizenship

Mair, C., Taylor, J. & Hulme, J. A. (2013). York, Higher Education Academy.

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/subjects/psychology/psychological-literacy>

Large numbers of Psychology graduates do not go on to further professional training in Psychology, and there is an increasingly recognised need for professionals and citizens with high levels of psychological literacy and global citizenship. In their comprehensive exploration of psychological literacy, Cranney, Botwood and Morris (2012) define psychological literacy as “the general capacity to adaptively and intentionally apply psychology to meet personal, professional and societal needs”. Global citizenship as “the understanding of global interrelatedness, and the capacity to live, work and contribute positively as a member of global communities” (p. iv).

This Guide aims to demonstrate how psychological literacy and global citizenship can be embedded within the curriculum and promoted explicitly with the aim of helping academics and students of Psychology to become psychologically literate citizens. The Guide first highlights the ways in which psychological literacy is important for employability and global citizenship. It then goes on to provide examples across the whole Psychology curriculum where the development of psychological literacy can be demonstrated. Finally, we present the way forward: an argument for promoting psychological literacy across undergraduate Psychology courses.

Compendium of Psychological Literacy Case Studies

Edited by Taylor, J. & Hulme, J.A. (in preparation)

Psychological Literacy lends itself more naturally to some areas in psychology than others and the units where Psychological Literacy is covered in the Compendium reflect this. Five of the 13 case studies took place in occupational psychology or employability units and two in social psychology; and one each in developmental and educational psychology and mental health. Generic units on experiential learning, psychological enquiry and psychology in everyday life also naturally covered the topic. Interestingly, there were no submissions from biological or cognitive areas.

Although one case study reports a whole-course approach and another case study involves two cohorts of students, generally case studies highlighted Psychological Literacy in a specific unit at one level. These were often facilitated by one proactive academic rather than a team of academics and the editors suggests ways to encourage departmental buy-in.

Psychological Literacy coverage was mainly in the final year of undergraduate degrees (eleven case studies); with only three at 1st year and one at 2nd year. Also, the majority of case studies were based on optional units or voluntary extra-curricular activities. This suggests that students could proceed through a degree without exposure to PL-based units. Also, not all units covering Psychological Literacy activities were assessed. The level of assessment varied and although some were novel, such as using Pecha Kucha and assessing PAL, reflective pieces were the most usual form of assessment method. Suggestions are included to encourage assessed psychological activities to be included within core units.

The contributors of case studies to the Compendium so far come from a self-selected set of UK Universities. We are now inviting international contributions.

Teaching and learning activities also varied and included many interactive techniques, such as: critique of psychology in the media; volunteering or work based learning; seminar discussion or groupwork; peer mentoring and enquiry-based or project-based learning.

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