

SOME FACTS AND THOUGHTS ON THE TRAINING AND PRACTICE OF INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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OPSOMMING

Die bydrae wat die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite oor die dekades heen gelewer het tot die opleiding van personeel-praktisyns, en die stand van die bedryfsielkunde professie en praktyk word bespreek. Enkele dwalinge in bedryfsielkundige praktyk word nader toegelig en besweer aan die hand van internasionaal erkende norme.

Looking at the present state of Industrial Psychology in South Africa, one is struck by the developments that have taken place over a period of about four decades (Wickert, 1960; Sexton and Misiak, 1972; Raubenheimer, 1974; Langenhoven, 1977; Kamfer, 1977; Botha, 1977; Schoeman, 1978; Augustyn, De Villiers, Raubenheimer and Van Biljon, 1978).

While contributions made by research institutes and organisations in the public and private sectors are often cited in annual reports and papers, relatively little is published about the extent to which Industrial Psychology is practiced in South Africa and the role universities play in ascertaining the professional standards of such practice.

In this article a few trends in the training, practice and professionalisation of Industrial Psychology will be discussed.

TRAINING

Probably the first course in Industrial Psychology was offered in 1943 at the University of Stellenbosch (Augustyn, et al., 1978). Today, Industrial Psychology is taught in varying de-

¹ Requests for reprints should be sent to the author.

degrees of extensiveness and thoroughness at 16 universities in South Africa as can be inferred from the data in Table 1.

Table 1 also indicates that 6 out of the 16 universities had separate departments of Industrial Psychology in 1972. This number increased to 12 in 1981 while another three might be added to this list in the near future.

The number of lectures involved in teaching Industrial Psychology did not change markedly between 1972 and 1977 as can be inferred from Table 2 while from 1977 to 1981 the change has been considerable. The level of training reached by the teaching staff has raised appreciably, a fact which necessarily should result in better training.

There has also been a substantial increase in the number of students taking Industrial Psychology over the past few years as can be inferred from Table 3. It is interesting to note that the percentage increase for most of the levels of training is larger than for the total university student population over the same period of time.

The data in Table 3 permit a rough estimate of the total number of students, with a Bachelor's or higher degree in Industrial Psychology that entered the labour market over the past ten years. Assuming a growth rate of approximately 11 % per annum, this figure amounts to 8 000 - quite a substantial potential contribution to manpower development in this country.

TABEL 1

EXTENT TO WHICH INSTRUCTION IN INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY IS PROVIDED FOR AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Year	No. of universities giving instruction in Industrial Psychology	No. of universities with separate departments of Industrial Psychology	No. of universities offering separate undergraduate courses	No. of universities offering graduate courses leading to a doctoral degree
1972	15	6	13	9
1977	16	8 (+ 2)	14	10
1981	16	12 + (3)	15	11

Number of universities offering courses in the sub-fields of Industrial Psychology					
Year	Personnel	Managerial and organisational	Consumer	Ergonomics (Human factors engineering)	Occupational
1972	14	5	8	11	
1977	16	10	9	12	1
1981	16	12	10	13	3

TABLE 2

TEACHING STAFF INVOLVED IN TEACHING INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY 1972-1977-1981

	1972	1977	1981	% change 1972-1981
Number of staff	50	50	76	52
<u>Level of training:</u>				
Honours	14 (28 %)	10	10 (13 %)	29
Masters	21 (42 %)	20	32 (42 %)	52
Doctoral	15 (30 %)	23	34 (45 %)	127

TABEL 3

UNIVERSITY STUDENT POPULATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 1972, 1977 AND 1981 CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO YEAR OF STUDY

	1972	1977	1981	% increase 1972-1981
Total number of students enrolled at South African Universities	63 276	78 771	153 199	142
Total number of Industrial Psychology students	3 147	4 095	5 757	83
Industrial Psychology I	2 071	1 350	2 758	33
II	586	963	1 646	181
III	323	532	821	154
Honours	100	164	324	224
Masters	51	71	170	233
Doctoral	16	15	38	138

Research which has been carried out with respect to applied Industrial Psychology shows an increasing awareness of the value of Industrial Psychology in dealing with human behaviour in the professional and business world.

In 1964 in a survey of the attitude in industrial organisations towards the Industrial Psychologist and his functions, Raubenheimer found that not only was the concept Industrial Psychology unknown, but also that the contribution that Industrial Psychology can make to dealing with human resources was not appreciated or accepted .

In 1972, eight years later, Orpen reported a more favourable attitude especially among younger top managers. Both the surveys of Marx (1974) and Langenhoven (1976) on the training of personnel managers in South Africa reflect a generally positive picture of Industrial Psychology in practice.

This positive image can mainly be ascribed to two factors:

- The increasing awareness of the value of behavioural sciences to the utilization of manpower as indicated by the following surveys:
 - The importance of certain types of knowledge and experience for personnel practitioners' is illustrated in Table 4 (Langenhoven, 1976). From this table it is clear that among other things, a knowledge of applied behavioural sciences, enjoys a high priority among managers and personnel practitioners.
 - Marx (1974) found that generally it was felt by firms that training in personnel management should not only be limited to employees within a personnel department but all individuals in a supervisory capacity should have a thorough knowledge of the principles of behavioural science as they are manifested in personnel management.

(If one looks at the curricula at most universities one finds that a B.Comm-degree with Industrial Psychology as a major exposes the student to almost all the topics relevant to manpower utilization).

TABLE 4

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE FOR PERSONNEL PRACTITIONERS (n = 70)

1. Practical training and experience in personnel work.
2. Knowledge of applied behavioural sciences to describe and understand human behaviour.
3. Knowledge and skill in personnel procedures.
4. Knowledge of labour and industrial laws.
5. Knowledge of economic sciences to understand the industrial situation.
6. Knowledge of Ethnology (Anthropology) and African languages to be able to understand Black people.
7. Knowledge of administrative sciences to be able to understand government services.
8. Knowledge of statistical methods.

- The status awarded to Industrial Psychology for the handling of manpower.
 - Both Marx (1974) and Langenhoven (1976) have found that Industrial Psychology is given first preference in training programmes for personnel managers - as shown in Tables 5 and 6.

The necessary supporting subjects are also shown in these tables. It seems as if commercially orientated subjects are preferred. Again, a B.Comm-degree with Industrial Psychology as a major would provide the required training.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that both Marx (1976, p. 16) and Langenhoven (1976, p. 9) independently come to the conclusion that there is a tendency in practice to prefer applied subjects to pure subjects, for example: Industrial Psychology above Psychology, Industrial Sociology above Sociology and Business Economics above Economics.
 - This phenomenon is further elucidated by a survey of 190 firms by Langenhoven and Verster (1969, p. 6) which shows that the number of graduates in personnel departments increased sharply between 1964 and 1969, and also that there was a greater increase in the number of industrial psychologists employed than ordinary psychologists.

TABLE 5

SUBJECTS WHICH SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A COURSE
OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (n = 224)

SUBJECT	% of time nominated	SUBJECT	% of time nominated	SUBJECT	% of time nominated
1 Industrial Psychology III	73,8	16 Sociology I	32,0	31 Technical Subjects (i)	12,8
2 Industrial and Labour Laws	71,4	17 Economics I	30,5	32 Ethnology III	11,8
3 Personnel Management/affairs	69,9	18 Psychology I	29,0	33 Bantu Administration III	11,3
4 Industrial Psychology I	67,4	19 Public Relations	28,5	34 Ethnology III	8,8
5 Industrial Psychology II	62,0	20 Ethnology I	27,5	35 Economics III	6,4
6 Statistics/Stat. Methods	60,5	21 Afrikaans I	27,0	36 Afrikaans III	5,9
7 Business Economics I	54,6	22 English I	25,6	37 English III	5,9
8 Communication	54,6	23 Mercantile Law	23,1	38 Accountancy II	5,4
9 Bantu Administration I	44,3	24 African languages	22,6	39 Afrikaans II	5,4
10 Business Economics II	40,3	25 Sociology II	21,1	40 English II	4,4
11 Industrial Sociology I	38,4	26 Bantu Administration II	20,1	41 Bantu languages	4,4
12 Business Economics III	37,4	27 Psychology II	19,2	42 Mathematics	3,9
13 Accountancy I	35,9	28 Psychology	15,7	43 African languages III	3,4
14 Industrial Sociology II	32,5	29 Sociology III	15,7	44 Accountancy III	1,9
15 Industrial Sociology III	32,5	30 Economics II	15,7	45 Other subjects	10,3

(Marx, 1974)

TABLE 6

THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED (AVERAGE NO. OF YEARS) BY 145 PERSONNEL PRACTITIONERS AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH EDUCATION IS CONSIDERED NECESSARY

SUBJECT	UP TO WHERE COMPLETED	UP TO WHERE CONSIDERED NECESSARY
Industrial Psychology	1,4	3,1
Business Economics	1,0	1,5
Industrial Sociology	0,3	1,3
Psychology	1,5	1,0
Economics	1,1	0,8
An African language	0,3	0,8
Statistics	0,5	0,7
Mercantile Law	0,5	0,6

(Langenhoven, 1976)

Professional Developments

Industrial Psychology seems to be highly regarded as a profession. In a survey that included mainly members of the two professional societies (PIRSA & SAPA) Langenhoven (1978, p. 11) found that Industrial Psychology was considered the most important applied field of all the psychological sciences – as shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7

THE MOST IMPORTANT APPLIED FIELDS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

	PIRSA	SAPA	OTHER	TOTAL	%
Industrial Psychology	31	36	20	87	29
Clinical Psychology	22	26	5	53	18
Counseling Psychology	35	13	2	50	17
Educational/Child Psychology	15	7	5	27	9
Psychometrics	14	5	4	23	8
Research	9	8	3	20	7
Social Psychology	3	7	1	11	4
Other	11	11	2	24	8
TOTAL	140	113	42	295	100

The interests of industrial psychologists are mainly supported by two professional societies namely PIRSA and SAPA with a total membership of about 900.

Other bodies which are concerned with manpower management also contribute indirectly to the professional application of Industrial Psychology, for example the National Development and Management Foundation and the South African Institute for Personnel Management.

Industrial psychologists publish to a greater or lesser extent in a number of journals for example *Psychologia Africana*, *Humanitas*, *Perspectives in Industrial Psychology*, the *South African Journal of Psychology* and the *South African Journal of Business Management*.

The journal, *People and Profits*, cannot strictly speaking be considered a scientific journal, but it contributes to the advancement of the practicing of personnel management to a large extent through its publications.

In 1974 the Professional Board for psychology came into being which provides for, among other things legal registration of industrial psychologists, the regulation of professional conduct of industrial psychologists and the accrediting of organisations for the training of industrial psychology interns. (In total 15 organisations are at present accredited for intern training. Eleven in the Transvaal, two in the Cape and one in Natal.)

A survey which has already been referred to, carried out on PIRSA and SAPA members (Langenhoven, 1978, p. 13) seems to indicate that Industrial Psychology will become one of the most popular registration categories of the Professional Board - as indicated in Table 8.

In 1977 a movement was initiated by the Institute for Personnel Management to acquire statutory recognition for personnel practitioners. What will happen with regard to such registration is not yet completely clear. It is, however, clear that training in Industrial Psychology will probably be one of the main requirements for registration as a personnel practitioner.

TABLE 8

CATEGORIES IN WHICH ASPIRING PSYCHOLOGISTS WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER

CATEGORY	PIRSA		SAPA		TOTAL	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
Clinical	7	13	7	17	15	12
Counselling	21	38	9	21	37	28
Industrial	14	25	10	24	36	28
Research	6	11	10	24	20	15
Educational	2	4	3	7	5	4
Psychotechnical	-	-	2	5	4	3
Unsure	5	9	1	2	13	10
TOTAL	55	100	42	100	130	100

Some Unfortunate Tendencies

Apart from all the positive trends in the development of Industrial Psychology in South Africa, however, there are also negative signs which should not go unheeded.

Firstly, academics and practitioners of Industrial Psychology should guard against attempts, unintentional as they may be, to separate the work of the scientist and academic on the one hand from that of the practitioner on the other. There is a ring of truth about the old adage: "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." Academics should, however, remember the final test of whatever they create or construct is not to be found in the laboratory or in the lecture room.

Secondly, big money to be made in the field of consulting should not entice practitioners from always verifying their recommendations against accepted theory and research data.

Thirdly, practitioners and consultants should never shy away from backing whatever services they render. Too many consultants have become super salesmen of ideas and so called package deals frequently borrowed from foreign consultants or based on scanty research data that simply cannot stand the test of time.

Unprofessional and potentially unethical behaviour can be thwarted if consultants, practitioners and academics always keep the internationally accepted criteria of professional behaviour in mind. According to Boshoff (1981) the professional and amateur differ in several respects:

- The professional has a life-long commitment to his occupation.

- The professional chooses his career on the basis of a strong interest and motivation for doing that specific kind of work.
- The professional functions in terms of specialized knowledge and skills.
- Decisions made by professionals are based on general principles, theories and propositions.
- The professional has a service orientation.
- The professional functions in an emotionally detached way.
- Autonomy of judgement, subject only to review by professional colleagues is essential in decision-making processes of professionals.
- The knowledge of the professional is assumed to be specific. He should not claim to be a "wise man".
- Professionals do not advertise their services.

Although these criteria appear rather stringent, they are society's safeguard against unprofessional and unscrupulous conduct.

Conclusion

In the light of what has been said it can be seen that the development of Industrial Psychology in South Africa has gained great momentum. One can confidently conclude, despite the few negative influences referred to, that Industrial Psychology in South Africa has a bright future, as an academic discipline and as a field of practice.

It is, however, important that academics and practitioners join forces, regardless of their present affiliation or orientation, to build this future.

ABSTRACT

Contributions made by South African universities over decades to the training of personnel practitioners are reviewed and the status of Industrial Psychology as a profession is discussed. A few misconceptions about ethical conduct are criticised in the light of the internationally accepted criteria of professional behaviour.

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