

TOWARDS APPROPRIATE TRAINING FOR DEVELOPING WORLD PSYCHOLOGISTS

Fathali M. Moghaddam and Donald M. Taylor

Department of Psychology
McGill University
Montreal, P.Q. Canada H3A 1B1

What constitutes appropriate training for psychologists from the developing world is a thorny issue. At one extreme, developing world psychologists might receive training that is identical to that of western psychologists, with the intention that they acquire the same skills as their western colleagues. Such training would not involve a serious consideration for the special needs of developing world societies. At another extreme, an "isolationist" policy might be pursued, with developing world psychologists receiving training that involves minimal contacts with the west, designed to develop research skills and professional outlooks that are specific to their own societies. At present, the training received by developing world psychologists tends to be closer to the first extreme: developing world psychologists receive advanced training in the west with little or no consideration for the particular needs of developing world societies. We argue that neither the present system of training, nor the "isolationist" extreme, are to the benefit of either developed or developing world societies. As an alternative, we propose an approach that would aim to maximize the use of both developing world and western expertise in the training of developing world psychologists, while ensuring that such training is relevant to the needs of developing world societies.

At present, the training of developing world psychologists typically involves students from the affluent sector of a developing country travelling to the west for specialized training. Such students are already likely to be to some extent "cut-off" from the traditional, less westernized sector of their own societies. This gulph is further widened by the cultural experiences these students undergo during the years they spend studying in the west, where the research questions studied tend to be derived from, and studied within, the context of western societies. After completing their studies, some developing world psychologists remain to follow careers in the west. Among those who return home, many experience frustration at finding conditions unsuitable for researching and practicing psychology as in the west. The minority who remain active in research after returning home tend to limit their concerns to the modern, relatively affluent sector of their own developing society, and to remain distanced from the urgent problems of the traditional sector.

Despite its fundamental importance, the issue of training for de-

veloping world psychologists has received little direct attention. However, the recent concern expressed by both western and developing world psychologists about the state of psychology in the developing world has involved an implicit concern with the issue of training (see Blackler, 1983; Connolly, 1985, 1986; Moghaddam and Taylor, 1985, 1986a, 1986b; Rosenzweig, 1984; Russell, 1984; Sinha and Holtzman, 1984). That is, the demand for a psychology that is more "appropriate" for the developing world (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1986a) implies a need for a more "appropriate training" for developing world psychologists.

Some Consequences of the Present System of Training Developing World Psychologists

An important consequence of the present system of training developing world psychologists in the west is that dualism and parallelism are strengthened in developing societies (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1985). Dualism refers to the coexistence of a modern and a traditional sector in the same developing world society. Dualism is strengthened by this training in two ways. First, on returning to their own societies, developing world psychologists help to import and propagate a conceptual system that supports the westernized life-styles of the modern sector population. Second, by teaching a western psychology developing world psychologists help create and spread the image of a "westernized" modern sector that is similar to western societies. In the long-term then, psychology promotes different perceptions of social reality in the modern and traditional sectors of developing world societies. In this way, psychology indirectly acts to widen the rift between the modern and traditional sectors.

Parallelism refers to the evolution of different institutions in the same developing world society that have strong dependencies on institutions outside that society, but have few or no links with each other. The present system of training strengthens parallelism by leading developing world psychologists to become part of a network of researchers in a specialized field that has its centre in the west. Consequently, important links among research networks tend to be between researchers in the west, or between researchers in the west and in the developing world, rather than between researchers within the developing world.

Criteria for Assessing "Appropriate Training"

We introduce six criteria for the assessment of "appropriate training" in the developing world context. The first and perhaps the most important criterion we introduce is "self-reliance". The other five criteria are: research skills, career preparation, cultural awareness, infrastructure support, and western institution motivation.

(1) Self-reliance: Training for developing world psychologists should be designed to increase the self-reliance of developing countries in the field of psychology. In this context, there are two aspects of self-reliance that deserve special attention. First, the issue of confidence is central to achieving self-reliance. The training received by developing world psychologists should provide them with the confidence needed to rely mainly upon indigenous developing world resources. Second, self-reliance does not mean following an isolationist policy. For example, the pursuit of self-reliance does

not imply that western psychologists should not play a constructive role in the training of developing world psychologists.

(2) Research skills applicability: The research skills that are required for conducting research in the context of the west are not always those that are required for conducting research in the developing world context. For example, skills in using the most advanced laboratory equipment for research might be highly applicable in the west, but less applicable in a developing world country where such equipment is likely to be non-existent. In some cases, a developing country is "forced" to import expensive laboratory equipment, not because this is necessarily in the best interests of society, but because the students they had sent to the west for training have returned home with skills that can only be put into effect by using such advanced equipment. However, the importation of such equipment is the beginning of a lengthy chain, that involves the importation of service personnel and spare parts.

(3) Career Goals Suitability: This refers to the suitability of the career goals that students acquire during their training, for working in their own developing world societies. Both the career structure and the system of evaluating performance for psychologists is in important ways different in developed and developing countries. For example, while the main criterion for assessing performance in western universities is research productivity, performance in many developing world countries is assessed on the basis of teaching and government consultancy positions. In many instances, developing world students trained in the west tend to adopt western career goals and perspectives, and this can lead to problems when the student returns home and has to reorientate him- or herself to fit into the "home-country" career structure.

(4) Cultural Awareness: Developing world psychologists need to be particularly aware of cultural differences between social groups and the demands this makes on research and practicing psychologists. This is not to deny the need for greater cultural sensitivity on the part of all psychologists. However, the special need for greater cultural sensitivity on the part of developing world psychologists is because the dominant value system underlying modern psychology is derived from the cultural context of the developed rather than the developing world. As a consequence, the training of developing world psychologists needs to heighten sensitivity to possible gaps between value systems and orientations inherent in modern psychology and value systems of the developing world. For example, underlying modern psychology is a concern, sometimes made explicit, to treat the sexes in a similar and equal fashion. Differential treatment between the sexes is frowned upon.

However, a different attitude is found in at least the traditional sector of many developing countries. For example, from a Moslem perspective the sexes are complementary and should not be in competition. Thus, for example, Moslem psychologist has recently attempted to use attitude change techniques to encourage more positive views towards polygyny (see Ugwuegba, 1982).

(5) Infrastructure Support: The institutional support available to psychologists in the west tends not to be available to psychologists in developing societies. On the other hand, other potentially useful types of support are generally available. Training for developing world psychologists should lead to an awareness of the different types of institutional support available

in developed and developing societies. For example, in many developing world countries there exist few organizations with the explicit responsibility of providing support for psychological research. Thus, "grantsmanship" does not exist in the western sense and a psychologist trained to seek research support through the channels available in the west would be confronted with major problems. It is essential that the expectations of developing world psychologists from their own societies be realistic. However, realism does not mean a passive acceptance of lack of research support. What is required is initiative and creativity in order that the potential sources of research support in developing countries be nurtured. The training of developing world psychologists should be designed to foster these abilities.

(6) Western Institution Motivation: A program for providing special training for developing world psychologists in the west must also involve special features to motivate western academic institutions to participate in such training. Western institutions seem to be growing wary of current exchanges. Except for those with much experience in the training of developing world psychologists, many find that it is difficult to predict the academic quality of students from the developing world. Academic standards in different developing world countries are not well known and selection procedures are sometimes erratic. Thus, often western institutions find themselves committed to the training of students who are unable to compete in a western context. The result of varying standards, ineffective selection and culture shock is the awkward situation where the western institution offers degrees with standards that differ from those of regular western trained students. In short, exchange programs are needed that offer western institutions the diversity of thought that students from a different culture can offer, but where the responsibility for granting degrees to every student is not with the western institution.

An Alternative Approach

We propose an alternative "home-based" training program designed to develop research skills and psychological knowledge among developing world psychologists, while ensuring that such skills and knowledge evolve in relation to the needs of developing world societies. The "home-based" program is guided by two principles. First, western psychology centres serve in consultative and advisory capacities to the training program. Second, training priorities, needs, and standards are defined by the student's own developing country institution. Given the aim of the "home-based" program and the two guiding principles specified above, such a program might, for example, have the following key features. First, during the period of their training students would be affiliated with a psychology centre in their own countries and in a western country. Second, all research carried out by students would be in their own developing world societies. Third, at no stage during their training would students remain outside their own countries for a period longer than twelve months. Fourth, during their training period students would take part in courses and seminars at a western university, and also work as a research assistant on research projects directed by a western psychologist. However, although feedback would be provided to their home countries about their performance by the western university, the home country institutions would set the standards that students must achieve. Fifth, the final degree, if there is to be one, would be awarded by the

home-country academic institutions.

An Example of Possible Alternative Training Programme for Developing World Psychologists

The following four-year graduate program serves to illustrate how responsibilities might be divided up between institutions in the home-country and in the west, in order that the developing world psychology student acquires more "appropriate" skills.

First Year

Place of Training: Western academic institution. Supervision provided by: Western supervisor. Prerequisites: First degree in psychology or a related area, command of English or a relevant second-language, and interest in at least two "priority research areas" as defined by the student's home country institution. Role of student: Research Student, Research Assistant.

Training Objectives: (1) Develop familiarity with theoretical issues in psychology, and particularly in the two selected "priority research areas". This would be achieved by writing two papers, reviewing and critically assessing theoretical approaches to the two selected topics. (2) Develop the basic knowledge and skills needed to carry out laboratory and field research. Such skills would include: writing a research proposal, designing studies, employing data collection procedures, data processing, and preparing research reports. These objectives would be achieved by, first, working as a Research Assistant in an ongoing research project; second, by attending year-long courses on (a) research methods (b) statistics.

Second Year

Place of Training: Home country academic institution. Supervision provided by: Home country supervisor. Role of student: Research Student, Teaching Assistant.

Training Objectives: (1) Develop an in-depth understanding of the practical issues related to the two "priority areas" chosen for study. To achieve this objective, the student will write two papers, each focussing on a selected "priority problem". In the first section of each paper, the "priority problem" is discussed in its larger context. In the second part, the potential role of psychology in tackling the problem is explored. (2) Develop an appreciation for the skills required to carry out applied research in the home country, and especially in the traditional sector. This is achieved by carrying out two "pilot studies" on selected "priority areas" under the direction of the home country supervisor. (3) Develop the skills needed to teach psychology in the home country, depending as far as possible on indigenous resources. This is achieved by acting as Teaching Assistant on a course taught by the home country supervisor. At the completion of the second year, the western supervisor visits the home country academic institution and the student's progress is reviewed.

Third Year

Place of Training: Western academic institution. Supervision provided

by: Western supervisor. Role of Student: Research Student, Senior Research Assistant.

Training Objectives: (1) Develop fairly advanced skills in experimental design and statistical procedures. This is achieved by acting as Senior Research Assistant in an ongoing research project, and by taking advanced courses in (a) research methods and (b) statistics. (2) Develop the ability to put together research proposals on issues that are of practical importance in the context of the home country. This is achieved by the student writing two fairly detailed research proposals the two selected "priority areas".

Fourth Year:

Place of Training: Home country academic institution. Supervision provided by: Home country supervisor. Role of Student: Research Student, Senior Teaching Assistant.

Training Objectives: (1) Develop the ability to carry out applied research in the home country, particularly in its traditional sector. This is achieved by the student carrying out two pieces of applied research, on the basis of the two proposals that he-she prepared in Year Three. (2) Develop the ability to involve undergraduate students in research projects and supervise their work as part of a research team. This is achieved by teaching a small "research methods" course, and involving at least some of the students from this course in the implementation of research projects on the selected "priority areas". At the completion of the training program, the student's progress is assessed by a committee that includes both western and home country academic supervisors. The relevant degree, if one is to be awarded, is conferred by the home country academic institution.

Concluding Comment

The training program outlined above is only one example of possible alternatives available; we believe that such an alternative has several advantages over the present procedure that is commonly used for training developing world psychologists. Most importantly, it is designed to develop the student's talents in closer relation to the practical realities and needs of the home country.

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