

CLINICAL AND COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

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Obstacles in development of teaching, practicing and researching psychology in Sri Lanka

Darshan Perera

Colombo Institute of Research & Psychology, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is somewhat an anomaly when it comes to health statistics and certain other measure of quality of life. This island nation is a developing country where physical health parameters and education standards resemble more western and developed world patterns as opposed to their neighbors, even compared to some of them who have way more stronger economies. This is usually attributed to the fact that Sri Lanka is one of the few countries in the world with free health services as well as free education up to postgraduate level. As a result the country has maintained a commendable status when it comes to physical health parameters; let it be life expectancy, maternal deaths, controlling infectious diseases such as malaria and polio and even in controlling the spread of AIDS. With such a strong government commitment for funding for health and education and with an educated population, one would assume that the mental health sector is also developed to the same level in this country but it is not. The difference between the allocation and availability of the infrastructure and human resources and funds for mental health is so vast and even the minute portion that is allocated is entirely for psychiatry and literally nothing for psychology. The ratio between populations to registered clinical psychologists is almost to 1:1000000. Country does not have more than one or two child and business psychologists and not a single forensic psychologist. Sri Lankan state university system has 8 well reputed medical schools graduating over 1000 doctors a year to look after the physical health of its population but only one program in clinical psychology that graduates around 10 clinical psychologist once every two years. This paper will try to bring to light some of the cultural, professional, policy and system based obstacles for the development of teaching, practicing and researching psychology in Sri Lanka and the recent positive developments in the field.

Biography

Darshan Perera is the Director of Academic Affairs at Colombo Institute of Research and Psychology and the Convener of International Conference of Applied Psychology (ICAP), Sri Lanka. He has contributed to the growth and development of psychology education and research in the South Asian region and has initiated many pioneering projects in different fields of psychology in Sri Lanka.

darshan@researchandpsychology.com

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