Counseling in Denmark

Nanja H. Hansen, cand.psych.aut., MC., NCC
Stanford University Faculty Staff Help Center
Stanford, California, USA

Andrea Dixon, Ph.D.
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

History of counseling in Denmark

Counseling/psychology has a long history in Denmark and has its roots in the philosophical movement influenced by Harald Høffding, a Danish philosopher (Funch, 2000; Køppe, 1983; Lundberg, 2001; Pind, 2009). It was due to the disciplined work by Alfred Lehmman, who established the first psychophysical laboratory in Copenhagen in 1886, that counseling/psychology became a distinct discipline (Funch, 2000; Pedersen, 1990; Pind, 2009). The Danish counseling/psychological movement quickly progressed. Between 1905 and 1914 the Association for Psychological Research and the Association for Experimental Pedagogy was established. The establishment of the Association for Experimental Pedagogy also marked the beginning of school counseling/psychology in Denmark (Hjørlund, 2000), which flourished throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s. As a consequence of World Wars I and II there was a increased need for school counselors/psychologists in social services, prison and military systemic and business (Jensen, 2000). In response, a 3-year master of psychology-pedagogy degree appeared at the University of Copenhagen in 1944.

In 1947 the Danish Psychological Association (Dansk Psykologi Forening) was established (Hjørlund, 2000) and by 1957 the need for joint licensure and laws were raised. It would take 37 years before the licensure requirements and laws took effect (Jensen, 2000).

In 1968 a student-led protest took place at the University of Copenhagen. The protest was a reaction to the Vietnam War, capitalism, and nuclear weapons, as well as the drastic increases in the number of students at the university (Hjørlund, 2000; Karpatschof, 2000). The highly publicized protest led to international psychological ideas such as existentialism and Marxism being introduced into Danish counseling/psychology (Dixon & Hansen, 2010).

During the 1980’s the field of counseling/psychology in Denmark saw great changes. First, the increase in international refugees relocating to Denmark created needs for additional applied counseling/psychology interventions (Alberdi, 2010; Hjørlund, 2000). Moreover the Center for Brain Damage was founded by neuro-psychologist Anne_Lise Christensen, which represented the focus on cognitive approaches in Danish counseling/psychology (Hjørlund, 2000). Lastly, the Nordic countries developed their own set of ethical codes (Lunt, 1999) apart from the European federation of Psychologists’ Associations Charter of Professional Ethics for Psychologists (EFPA, 2011).

In 1993, counselors/psychologists gained public licensure from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and a committee, Psykolognævnet (Danish Board of Psychological Practice) was formed to evaluate counselors/psychologists’ qualifications (DBPP, n.d.). Currently, there are 9.139 licensed counselors/psychologists practicing in
Denmark, whereof 1,370 are in training (Dansk Psykologi Forening (Danish Psychological Association), n.d.). Counseling/psychology in Denmark has undergone many changes and there are many forces at work to continue to improve the standards of the field of counseling/psychology within Denmark. It should be noted that in Denmark a degree in psychology is equivalent to a degree in counseling within the United States. Therefore the term counseling/psychology will be used throughout the article to stay true to the Danish counseling/psychology profession (Dixon & Hansen, 2010).

Number of counseling training programs

There are four main counseling/psychology training programs in Denmark: Copenhagen University, Århus University, Ålborg University and Odense (South Danish University. Each university offers a three year bachelor degree in counseling/psychology and a two year masters degree in counseling/psychology. While the content of the degree is similar at all four universities the structure at the masters level program varies across the universities (Hansen & Dixon, 2012).

Furthermore there are two additional degrees which can be earned in counseling/psychology. The first is the specialist degree which may be earned throughout a counselors/psychologists career but only after the counselor/psychologist is licensed. The degree take approximately five years to complete and is divided into three main areas of specialization: (1) child psychology, (2) adult psychology, and (3) work and organizational psychology (Poulsen, 2007; Dansk Psykolog Forening (Danish Psychological Association) n.d.b.).

The second degree is the supervisor degree. Once the counselor/psychologist has obtained a specialist degree and has worked full time as a counselor/psychologist he/she may add on a 2-year supervisory degree (Lindhart, 2010). Additional requirements include providing a minimum of 120 hours of supervision to at least two different counselors/psychologists, and participating in 30 hours of theory on the theory and method of supervision (Dansk Psykolog Forening (Danish Psychological Association) n.d.b.).

Level of training to be employed as a counselor

In order to work as a counselor/psychologist in Denmark the individual has to have obtained a masters degree in counseling/psychology. The individual does not have to be licensed to work and use the title counselor/psychologist. The title is protected.

Number of counselors currently working in various settings

There are currently 917 counselors/psychologists employed within the Danish hospitals, 1,501 counselors/psychologists are publically employed, 342 are employed as leaders/managers, 398 counselors/psychologists are employed as school counselors/psychologists, 1,557 work in private practice, 1,231 are in training within the universities and 202 counselors/psychologists work within the universities (Dansk Psykolog Forening (Danish Psychological Association) n.d.a).
Existence of standard training curricula

The four main universities have a standard training curricula. At the bachelor level the student will have to write a bachelor thesis at the end of the third year as a requirement for graduation. At the masters level the student will complete all coursework within the first year. In the second year the student will complete a 16 week internship and write a master’s thesis as a requirement for graduation (Hansen & Dixon, 2012). All four universities conduct research as well. Their areas of research vary anywhere from randomized controlled trials of cognitive behavioral therapy for bulimia nervosa to research aiming to strengthen and enhancing the supervision of counselors/psychologist (Hansen & Dixon, 2012).

Certification/licensure/credentialling options for counselors

In order to become a licensed counselor/psychologist in Denmark the individual must have received 160 hours of supervision. Forty of those hours must come from an external supervisor and forty of the hours must be within group supervision. In addition the individual is required to have 500 hours of assessment, 500 hours of intervention and 200 hours of group contact. Most counselors/psychologists will receive their supervision at their place of employment at no cost to the individual (Psykolognævnet, (Danish Board of Psychological Practice) n.d).

It should be noted that most Danish counselors/psychologist do obtain their licensure (Poulsen, 2007). Once the licensure has been obtained the counselor/psychologist will not have to take continuing education classes to maintain his/her license. The licensure is for life once acquired unless the counselor/psychologists is sanctioned by the Danish Board of Psychological Practice.

Certification, as it is known in America does not exist in Denmark currently. In Denmark, a counselor/psychologist may be certified as a specialist and certified as a supervisor (Hansen & Dixon, 2012). Beginning in January 2012, the Danish Psychological Association (Dansk Psykolog Forening) were able to begin certifying licensed counselors/psychologist with a EuroPsy certificate for individuals applying for this specific certification (Dansk Psykolog Forening (Danish Psychological Association), n.d.c).

Professional associations for counselors to which counselors belong

The main professional association in Denmark is the Danish Psychological Association (Dansk Psykolog Forening). School counselors may also belong to the Pedagogical Psychologists Association (Pædagoisk Psykologers Forening)

Conferences within country and region that counselors typically attend

Within the Danish Counseling Association there are approximately 25 different divisions focused on a specific area of counseling/psychology. Conferences within a specific area of counseling/psychology are usually held by one of these divisions (Dansk Psykolog Forening (Danish Psychological Association), n.d.a). Conferences
such as; the annual ACA or APA conference within the United States does not exist in Denmark.

Goals relative to accreditation and credentialling of professional counselors

Odense/South Danish University’s counseling/psychology program was the first to become accredited in 2007. The other three universities, Copenhagen, Århus and Ålborg, are scheduled to be accredited by 2014 (Hansen & Dixon, 2012). It was not until 2007 that the council of accreditation ACE Denmark was founded. Overall ACE Denmark helps to make visible the quality and relevance of higher education in Denmark as well as ensuring quality. The council must contribute to the visible quality of Danish university degrees, and ensure that they meet the requirements of the highest international standards (ACE Denmark, n.d.).

References


Hansen, N. H. & Dixon, A.L. (2012). Counseling the "happiest people on earth". In Moodley, Gielen, and Wu (Eds.), Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy in an International Context (pp.).


