

Indonesian Clinical Psychologists in brief history

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Psychology in Indonesia started around 1953 and was introduced by Slamet Iman Santoso, a professor in psychiatry, soon after he returned from Holland. The University of Indonesia started the program of psychology as a division in the medical department of the University of Indonesia. The first graduate of the program was Fuad Hassan (later he became the National Minister of Education), and his diploma was from the Medical Department. Later Fuad Hassan obtained his PhD from Toronto, Canada, and he became the first Dean of Psychology of The University of Indonesia.

Between the years of 1960s to 1990s the educational program in psychology in Indonesia was based on European educational program, primarily Dutch program in preparing the students to be clinician. The influence from the medical program was very strong with great numbers of biology and neurology classes, besides great emphasis on psychoanalytical approach. The undergraduate program was conducted in 4 years, followed by 2 years graduate program including internships. Once they graduated they will be licensed as psychologists. The degree was called “doctorandus” (candidate for doctor), thus they were eligible to pursue the doctorate program. Three main Indonesian universities, The University of Indonesia, The Pajajaran University, and The Gajah Mada University, developed the programs and get connected with Dutch universities such as Nijmegen, etc.

However, only a small numbers of psychologists work in hospitals as clinicians, and few others had private practice. Most of them work in companies and industries, and even private practice psychologists often conducted psychological testing for the sake of recruitment or doing vocational counseling. Providing services for the sake of industrial and organizational matters gives more financial support for the practitioners rather than being employed in hospitals which became more adjunctive therapists to assist medical doctors or psychiatrists.

Starting around early 1990s, the minister of education changed the policy. Graduate students in psychology do not have to have undergraduate psychology degree unless they want to be clinical psychologists. Meanwhile, psychology graduates became some of the mostly looked for being employed in numbers of companies.

Undergraduate psychology programs were booming in numbers of universities, primarily for employment reasons, but also for having eligibility to attend clinical program which make them also eligible to have private practice after obtaining the degree. Those who do not continue to be clinicians remain having great opportunities for employment besides also allowed to take further educational program in different fields.

Limited numbers of universities provide training in clinical psychology. It may still be the priority of the program, but also considered the most challenging program with rather tight selection process, besides requirements of undergraduate in psychology. During the final year of the program, students are required to write a research paper (thesis) based on treatment on mental disorders, and to work in hospital settings. These are considered the most challenging requirements that may cause the students to cancel attending the clinical program and to change their mind to attend other programs that has no such requirements.

The benefits of being clinical psychologist in Indonesia are the eligibility to work on various different settings besides the eligibility of having private practice and conducting psychotherapeutic treatments with various different modalities. However, those who have interests to be industrial psychologists do not need to take education in clinical settings anymore and working as industrial psychologists may give better financial support than being clinicians. Also those who have more interests in educational psychology do not need to take clinical traineeship for secure employment in education settings; and as schools and universities are growing fields, the employment for psychology graduates are growing as well. In the mean time, the requirements for being clinicians remain high and considered challenging as well as difficult for number of students.

The role of clinical psychologists in Indonesia is not as strong as in many other countries. Although they have various forms of eligibility to practice, they are not yet mandated to determine for example whether a person is suppose to be hospitalized, rehabilitated or being charged in court. Those decisions are based on psychiatrist referral. The psychologist may give suggestion based on psychological diagnosis, but referral is supposed to be more based on psychiatric considerations.

Recently, the social department and health department of the Indonesian government have accepted the role of clinical psychologists in a better position in various government institutions such as in numbers of rehabilitation centers besides in

hospital settings. Also, as a part of educational programs, numbers of schools regulate that students entering their programs must also submit clinical evaluation indicating their mental concerns.

We are hoping that the role of clinical psychologists in Indonesia is increasing in the near future, and indeed the training quality and research concerns must also well developed. The Indonesian Psychological Association routinely conducts meetings, annual congresses and conferences for the quality development of the clinicians. They also invite speakers and experts from abroad besides sending delegates to attend international congresses and conferences. The progress may be rather slow associated with limited financial supports, yet Indonesian Clinical Psychologists remain positive on keeping their attitudes to participate in improving better living conditions for the society, domestically and internationally.

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