

Increasing Professional Psychology's Accountability and Access Internationally

A review of



Global Promise: Quality Assurance and Accountability in Professional Psychology

by Judy E. Hall and Elizabeth M. Altmaier (Eds.)

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The profession of psychology is young: It emerged relatively recently in some countries (e.g., after World War II), is emerging in others, and has not emerged in most. For example, among the more than 220 countries, only 72 professional psychological associations—a sign that a profession has emerged—are members of the International Union of Psychological Sciences. When one exists, the professional association has a responsibility to ensure that the profession's training programs are suitable, students who emerge from them are educated and in other ways professionally prepared to serve the public, professional services are guided by ethics codes, and the public is informed of a professional's competencies through

licensure or certification. This responsibility is couched in the term *quality assurance*, a term somewhat synonymous with accountability.

Global Promise: Quality Assurance and Accountability in Professional Psychology focuses on quality assurance, namely the profession's "guarantee to the public, to the consumer, that psychologists have considered and refined the means by which the quality of their services is assured" (pp. 3–4).

The emergence of professional psychology generally is viewed and evaluated from a national perspective. For example, an infrastructure of a profession (e.g., its training programs, ethics code, program approval and accreditation, licensure for practice) emerges in a way that is consistent with each country's history, culture, traditions, resources, and needs. Thus, professional infrastructures typically differ between countries.

Should this narrow national approach to professionalism be challenged? Does the growing international nature of our economies and knowledge, together with a growing desire for more professional mobility, warrant the development of regional or international perspectives in reference to professional psychology and quality assurance? To what extent is the profession of psychology able and willing to abandon some of its national perspectives in favor of developing regional and international quality assurance mechanisms? *Global Promise* helps us understand these and related issues.

Global Promise discusses quality assurance from national, regional, and international perspectives. For example, the well-developed infrastructure that helps support quality assurance in Canada and the United States is discussed in some detail. Quality assurance in Australia, the Netherlands, the People's Republic of China, South Africa, and the United Kingdom also is highlighted.

Regional development of psychology is becoming more common, especially in Europe. The European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) is providing important leadership among psychological associations in 34 European countries in an attempt to address various issues associated with quality assurance, including ethics, academic and professional preparation, program accreditation, and professional mobility. EFPA's efforts and degrees of success will have important implications for how psychology may address these issues in other regions and internationally.

Professional psychology in Central and South America is relatively new and generally not well understood, in part because information often is sketchy and difficult to access. Two regional forces, the Central American Council on Accreditation and a four-country Common Market of the South, have had limited impact on unifying professional psychology in this region. Those interested in professional psychology in Europe and Central and South America will find the discussion of practices and quality assurance in professional psychology in these regions to be informative.

In an ideal world, quality professional preparation programs would be found worldwide; psychologists would have comparable and high levels of preparation; preparation would reflect a country's values, history, languages, and other cultural

components; a universally approved ethics code would guide practices; the use of similar licensure methods would inform the public as to a professional's competencies; and practitioners could work in various countries.

Psychology is a long way from achieving this ideal. Structural (e.g., legal and regulatory), pragmatic (e.g., lack of core information on how to best provide professional services in various countries), and cultural (differences in language, customs) barriers prevent mobility. However, *Global Promise* subtly encourages the profession of psychology to move toward international standards for quality assurance. This movement must be gradual and could start by implementing one or more models for mobility (e.g., reciprocity, mutual recognition, endorsement of credentials, waiver of requirements in emergency situations). EFPA's Metacode (European Federation of Psychologists' Associations, 1995) and the recently approved *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles* (International Union of Psychological Science, 2008) may inform efforts needed to promote accountability. Additionally, models that promote mobility are identified.

Efforts to promote quality assurance internationally require a common knowledge of the status of psychology. Recent books on international psychology, including professional psychology, help promote this understanding (Jimerson, Oakland, & Farrell, 2007; Pawlik & Rosenzweig, 2000; Stevens & Wedding, 2004). A base of common knowledge may lead to the development of shared policies that in turn may lead to shared practices. *Global Promise* makes an important contribution to these efforts.

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