

WFOT CONGRESS 2010

Education Day Report

Education Day took place on 3 May 2010 in the city of Santiago, at the Universidad Mayor campus. It was chaired by Daniela Olivares, of the Universidad Austral de Chile, as well as Monica Palacios and Paola Méndez, of the Universidad Mayor, and Jennifer Pascoe, WFOT Congress Project Officer. We were also fortunate to count on the operational support of the entire Work Team of the School of Occupational Therapy at the Universidad Mayor; finally, the task of coordinating the work methodology was the responsibility of Paulo Freire Group, specifically Eugenio Oyarzún and Carlos Acevedo, in coordination with the team in charge of Education Day, who succeeded in finding discussion topics relevant to our discipline, using the methodology of Popular Education, designed and developed by Professor Paulo Freire.

One hundred and sixty delegates attended the meeting, representing the most varied corners of the world, making it the largest gathering of occupational therapists at Education Day during an International Congress.

The proposed objectives were as follows:

1. To reflect on the role occupational therapists, responsible for the promotion and prevention of fundamental rights of citizens violated, excluded and marginalized.
2. To familiarize participants with participative and interactive methodologies that favor working with communities serviced by occupational therapists.
3. To generate a work space that allows the analysis of the theoretical and practical approaches to the role and identity of occupational therapists.

The proposed methodology included sending a discussion matrix to all Occupational Therapy programs registered in the database of the World Federation of Occupational therapists (WFOT); we received approximately 40 documents, which formed the basis of a diagnosis or map of realities, which helped identify the topics to be discussed on Education Day (for details, please read the Education Day systematization document).

During the morning session, based on the selected topics, Monica Palacios presented and provided a context for the selected methodology and organized the work to be carried out during the rest of the day.

Arranged into various small groups and accompanied by student volunteers, the Education Day delegates' mission was to discuss various issues, which had been previously organized by themes; the volunteers played the role of facilitators of the group discussions and recorded the information that ensued.

In the afternoon, the delegates continued the discussion by splitting into two large groups, whose main mission was to take agreements to be presented at the final plenary session.

During the plenary session we saw important agreements being made, all of which had originated in a constructive and auto-reflective view of our own profession, both in our role with people in need of occupational therapy services, as in our role of trainers of future colleagues, thus realizing that beyond cultural differences and language, the occupational therapists share the same difficulties, the same challenges, and indeed, the same dreams.

The discussion process at the various stages was recorded in sheets designed specifically for this purpose. All these documents were delivered to the Paulo Freire Colectivo for data entry, and to draft the Final Document of the Education Day 2010.

As for delegate feedback on Education Day, the strengths consisted in the methodology and the importance of the topics discussed, the role played by student volunteers in organizing and group facilitation, and the high quality of the simultaneous and consecutive interpretation. Among the weaknesses, the overall organization of Education Day was the aspect most commented on by the delegates (see attached document with evaluation survey results).

With regard to self-evaluation from the team in charge, there is a correlation between our own vision and that of the delegates. We knew in advance that the selected methodology would be a success, but that it

would also require a high level of organization, achieved by moments, but that certainly could have been better. However, despite the high number of delegates, which exceeded by far our initial calculations, we are confident that we kept the dual task of using and presenting a methodology to our colleagues from around the world that was born in Latin America, belongs to the tradition of our profession in this corner of the world, and allowed us to collect relevant information and make it available for discussion. Finally, the deadlines for the final document have been extended further than planned, but once again, this has been as a result of the discipline required and complexity involved in the use of a methodology that has not imposed topics of discussion, but quite the contrary, has made of Education Day 2010 a true international collective process.
