

Outcome focused education: the European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

Eric Trigchelaar¹, Irene Ilott², Astrid Kinebanian¹

¹*Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands*, ²*Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield, United Kingdom*

Introduction: In a cost-constrained world, consumers are increasingly interested in outcomes when investing in education, health care or research. Yet outputs and outcomes are often contested because they are hard to define and measure. The presentation will summarise an evaluation of the European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy. This transnational postgraduate programme (Roberts et al 2003) has been running for a decade. The educational outcomes are defined by the University quality enhancement system and standard tools are used to elicit the views of multiple stakeholders. Such a systematic approach to the measurement of educational outcomes permits comparison across cohorts, programmes and countries.

Objective: To examine the impact of the European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy on students graduating between September 2001-February 2009.

Methods: A longitudinal design with mixed methods that included completion rates, publications and two follow-up surveys of alumni and their employers done in 2005 and 2009. The sample comprised the population of 119 students from eight cohorts (starting in 1999-2001 through to 2006-2008).

Results: The success rate is 84% (100/119), 10% drop-out (12/119) and 6% (7/119) are continuing their studies. Most gain promotion and report increased job satisfaction: changes attributed to the MSc. Fifteen started doctoral studies and three have completed their PhDs. Employers held the programme in high repute, saying they would encourage other staff to apply. Graduates disseminate their research at conferences and 28 articles have been published in peer reviewed journals and 13 more are in progress.

Conclusion and contribution: Postgraduate degrees are crucial for continuing professional development, building research capacity and enhancing the quality of practice. There are few discipline-specific programmes in Europe. This heightens the importance of outcomes from this Master of Science for individuals and the profession. The evaluation showed that graduates embarked upon research careers; advanced education through more scientific and occupation-focused teaching; and worked as evidence-based practitioners. These outcomes are targets for future staff/students and also quality indicators for public accountability.

Roberts A E K, MacRae A, Kinébanian A, Strong J, Stadnyk R (2003) Innovative advanced master's degree programmes around the world. *WFOT Bulletin*, 48, November, 41-48.