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Self-Empowerment of OT Students through Political Reasoning at Zuyd University in the Netherlands

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Introduction: The revised vision of the OT program of Zuyd University in the Netherlands identified a need to advance students' social consciousness and engagement i.r.t. enabling social participation. The challenge how to operationalize this view in their curriculum prompted the start of a five year project 'Political reasoning within the OT program of Zuyd University' (2005-2010).

Objectives: ●Rationale behind the need of the project ● Explanation of political reasoning as the core concept/competency ● Contents of and experiences with elective course 'Political Reasoning: A Vehicle for Self-Empowerment' ● Findings of students' thesis on participants' perceptions of how the elective course contributed to their personal empowerment ● Lessons learnt and recommendations how to integrate political reasoning within OT curriculum.

Description: Informed by global developments in the discourses and practices of OT and occupational science, Zuyd University embraced the challenge to explore the political nature of OT and human occupation and to integrate insights within its overall undergrad curriculum. The project describes five phases: 1) literature review; 2) orientation workshop with faculty; 3) development and implementation of an elective course; 4) report w/ recommendations for implementation of political reasoning (what & how) within OT program; 5) publication of process and results.

Discussion: Originally doubts dominated whether sufficient interest existed or could be generated among students and faculty to engage with 'Politics and OT'. However, an orientation workshop with faculty yielded consensus that this topic was indeed relevant but that the main challenge would be to construct 'the right form' to attract and involve students. This became a so called '3P archaeology-approach to self-empowerment', the course's subtext.

Conclusion: Surpassing all expectations, between 2007-2009 the course involved 64 third and fourth year students. Virtually all participants highly valued this elective. It inspired some to conduct their final thesis on the course's impact on participants' development of personal competencies. The students' course journals and evaluations and the thesis findings contributed to informing the project's recommendations of how to implement political reasoning within the overall OT curriculum.

Contribution to practice of OT: A self-empowerment approach to learning about the value and use of political reasoning in OT.