

The Community as an Educator!- Developing community based learning opportunities for occupational therapy students: A European perspective

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The manner in which occupational therapy services are provided has changed as a result of a global shift towards community based healthcare (Gitlow & Flecky 2005). In response to this change occupational educators must provide opportunities for students to be aware of and responsive to the needs of diverse community settings and to become skilled in interdisciplinary collaboration and communication (Gupta 2006).

A number of models of community based education have emerged within occupational therapy to address these concerns. (Whiteford et al., 2005)

Service learning or community based learning is pedagogical approach which links meaningful service to the community with academic learning. Although in use in the United States since the early 1970's service learning is a relatively new approach to OT education within a European context and limited research has been identified which focuses on the cultural adaptations needed to successfully embed service learning into European Occupational Therapy curricula.

Participants in this workshop will be provided with the opportunity to explore the process of developing and implementing service learning in occupational therapy from two different contexts; Ireland and the Netherlands.

The workshop will facilitate participants to understand the cultural adaptations needed in order to develop, implement and evaluate service learning at the National University of Ireland Galway and Hogeschool van Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Students and teachers perspectives on the experiences of integrating service learning in both schools will be the focus of the workshop during which the similarities and differences between Ireland and the Netherlands will be considered including the impact of variation in cultural context, health, and social care and education systems.

Learning Objectives:

Workshop participants will

- Understand the rationale for introducing service learning opportunities into undergraduate curricula
- Recognise the cultural adaptations necessary in order to adopt service learning within European curricula
- Demonstrate understanding of the experiences of integrating service learning into occupational therapy in Ireland and the Netherlands
- Develop a proposal to implement community based learning into their own curriculum

Length of Time Required:

1.5 Hours

Teaching Methods:

Round table discussion

Short group/ individual assignments

Maximum Participants

25-30