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Introducing Occupational Therapy as profession and education in Transition Countries (Eastern European Region)

Hanneke van Bruggen

ENOTHE, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Introduction

The European Network of Occupational therapy in Higher Education (ENOTHE) has undertaken since 1996 several projects(funded by the European Commission) with the aim to facilitate the participation of disadvantaged groups in East and Central European countries by developing occupational therapy educational programmes that were directly linked with practice and all the stakeholders.

Objective

This presentation is aimed at providing a deeper insight into the complex issues related to capacity building, development and cooperation between occupational therapy educational institutes in Western Europe and (health and social) educational institutes in Eastern and Central Europe, local governments and stakeholders.

Description

The experiences of ENOTHE of more than 12 years engagement in projects in Eastern and Central European countries together with the development of European competences through the TUNING project has resulted in a defined strategy of implementation and in a diversity of curricula adapted to the local context and compatible with European standards of education.

Developmental theories (UNDP, 2007; Engel, Keijzer and Land, 2007) have contributed to a methodology in capacity building of all stakeholders. Building partnerships, defining together the occupational needs as essential elements for health, as well as the need for education in order to develop an occupational therapy curriculum and services in transition countries are important strategies to undertake before introducing or implementing the new profession.

The process, challenges and ethical dilemma's of introducing occupational therapy contributing to the social reform in these countries will be discussed.

Furthermore the outcomes of recent reflections of local teachers, students, clients and other stakeholders will demonstrate the results and impact of the process.

Conclusion

As a conclusion here follows a quote of one student: "In this education were lots of challenges, because it was a new learning style for me, but those challenges taught me how to use challenges for change and this became the slogan of my life".

Results

As a result of these projects 4 new educational programmes have started and at least 3 are under development and innovative practice in community development have started in the whole of Europe.