

Occupational Therapy students with refugees and asylum seekers: Education innovation through a community based partnership

Soemitro Poerbodipoero¹, Lisette Rodenburg², Nadine Blankvoort¹, Irene ten Haaf¹

¹*Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam, The Netherlands,*

²*Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam, The Netherlands*

Introduction: For three years, educators at two University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands have worked to develop opportunities for Occupational Therapy (OT) students to engage in work with refugees. This initiative has resulted in a partnership between the two institutions, and New Dutch Connections (NDC); a community based organization, aiming to empower young asylum-seekers to work towards future goals. Students are engaged across all years of the OT program, in diverse work, from buddy projects to final research projects.

Objectives: This projects aims to explore how this partnership 1) contributes to development of inter-cultural competencies 2) creates an understanding of students professional roles in working within this population and 3) helps with goal attainment and participation of refugees.

Approach: Students participate in multiple areas of course work and depending on the level, deliver products such as; photovoice interviews within buddy projects, modules and soft-skills trainings within group projects, and research reports on instruments measuring goal attainment and impact of participation. The impact of the progress and goal attainment of the refugees is monitored in the context of a social enterprise lab.

Practical Implications: Preliminary results, evaluations and experiences will be presented, with recommendations for education and further development. Implications for practice are that students apply their professional roles through innovative projects with a growing marginalized population.

Conclusion: Based on this connection between young refugees and OT students we contribute to both the equity and accessibility to meaningful occupations and to the development of intercultural competence of future OT's.