Future international developments in occupational therapy / science

Seeing the bigger picture; how big should the picture be?

Hanneke van Bruggen

Crossing borders may not be relevant to the daily practice of many occupational therapists, however thinking across disciplinary and national borders is more and more a must in a globalising and complex world.

Mieke le Granse has seen in an early stage the challenges, risks and opportunities of one European labour- and higher education market. To be in the frontline of these developments requires strategic and development thinking and reasoning. This experience she used as well as a Dutch representative in the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT).

Starting from Mieke’s experience and the many challenges and transformations we are facing in contemporary Europe and the World, I will look at strategies and competences, the future occupational therapist should master. The hardening political climate; the economy and the limitations to health and social care; expanded understandings of health that incorporate the impact of inequality on social determinants of health; societal and cultural changes including demographics and the ageing population; the increasing mobility of populations including that of refugees; the strengthening of social accountability by citizen participation in practice, education and research are asking for different approaches than only individual treatment.

It is important to recognise the beginnings of a shift within occupational therapy education, practice and research towards not only understanding the significance of these challenges for the people we work with, but also the important role of occupation, the doing of everyday lives, in addressing these challenges.