

Summary of the workshop „Breaking the glass ceiling – Empowering OTs to promote their academic carrier“

21. ENOTHE Annual Meeting Ruse, Bulgaria, 23 October 2015

Participants: 20 students and staff from Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, France, Netherlands, United Kingdom

In the beginning awareness was raised for the difficulties of an academic carrier especially for woman in a small profession like Occupational Therapy.

Young academics are facing **barriers on their way to PhD** and further, such as:

- In family phase
- Financial obligations (lack of funding)
- Limited time resources
- Members of a small profession: limited opportunities

Bologna Cycle

1st cycle: 180–240 ECTS Bachelor's degree (well established)

2nd cycle: 90–120 ECTS Master's degree (some programmes exist)

3rd cycle: doctoral degree (more or less non existing)

Established tools as an option to support academics on their way to a PhD and further were introduced:

Mentoring:

- Professional relation between mentor (advanced practitioner, student or researcher) and mentee
- Target: Supporting personal and professional development
- Sometimes certain target group, for example women
- Over a certain time period or phase
- Formal or informal
- Ideally a win-win situation for mentee and mentor
- Example in Germany: — <http://www.forum-mentoring.de/>

Networking

- Formal or informal networking
- People with similar background or target
- Professional networks, examples in Germany: Interdisciplinary national network Thesis e.V. (— <http://www.thesis.de/>) and network for therapy sciences „Netzwerk Therapiewissenschaften“ Charité, Berlin (http://igpw.charite.de/fileadmin/user_upload/microsites/m_cc01/medpflug-paed-wiss/Poster_Promovierendennetzwerk_Farbe_finalppt.pdf)

Symposium

Example in Germany: <http://www.hochges.de/index.php/termine/empowerment-promotion-2014>

Publication

Example in Germany: Höppner, H. (2015): Promotion in den Therapiewissenschaften. Frankfurt am Main: Mabuse Verlag

In the second part the **participants discussed** in small groups existing support programmes in their home countries.

The **students discussed the following needs** (clustered):

- Easily accessible information (guideline, how to get a PhD, funding, how to find a topic ...)
- Sufficient funding
- Support through mentoring
- Reliable and transparent job prospects for OT's with a PhD
- Higher acceptance for OT's with a PhD in the field and for the academic career in general
- Professional partnerships (universities, research centers, practice)

Students and staff discussed the following barriers:

- No clear advantages for career (salary, function), not even on a Master level (no job description)
- OT's are too modest in promoting/presenting results
- There is no support from national body for OT researchers
- Research and education are in some countries not recognised in the „quality registration OT“
- No existing PhD programmes for OT's (Austria, France, Germany, Denmark)
- No established research centers
- Too few or no funding

Students and staff discussed the following existing supporting strategies:

- In the Bachelor programme: writing an article with guidelines from journal
- One-year research assistant in current PhD, then proceed to own PhD
- Partly existing cooperation between schools in Denmark and Sweden

Students and staff discussed a profile of a sufficient support strategy

- **Clear pathways:** BA-MA-PhD: students should be prepared
- **Career options** (practice, education, research) should be equally developed during study programme
- Established **partnerships** between universities
- **Research centers** should be established at universities (Bachelor students should have the opportunity to help PhD candidates to get interested in their own PhD)
- Better **communication/information**, for example a guide book, how to get a PhD „PhD for dummies“
- Sufficient **funding** and **supporting strategies**
- **Promotion** of PhD, for example through national associations
- Good **job prospects and salary** for OT's with PhD
- Better options for **publications** (Bulgaria)
- **Full support** from national body for researchers
- Research and education should be recognised in the „**quality registration OT**“
- Shaping our identity as OT: the role of a **researcher is an integrated part of the common OT identity**

Thanks to the participants for the lively discussion and the ideas you've come up with!