

Of Hope and
Possibility. OT
Professionals as
Cultural
Workers for
Social Change.

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Abstract

The presentation explores how the initial and ongoing formation of OT professionals can serve as a safe space for re-visioning equitable European cultural spaces that support and enable genuinely inclusive OT practices. Set against a backdrop characterised by the intensification of cultural pluralism in Europe and by concurrent, asymmetrical economic and social relations within the aforementioned geographic area, the presentation will propose a vision for OT immersion into culturally-just practices based on a commitment to social change, collective engagement, cultural inclusion, participatory practices and authentic dialogue as a pedagogy of hope and possibility.

Occupational Justice - Basic Assumption (1)

An OT curriculum that is immersed in culturally-just practices is based on a commitment to **social change**.

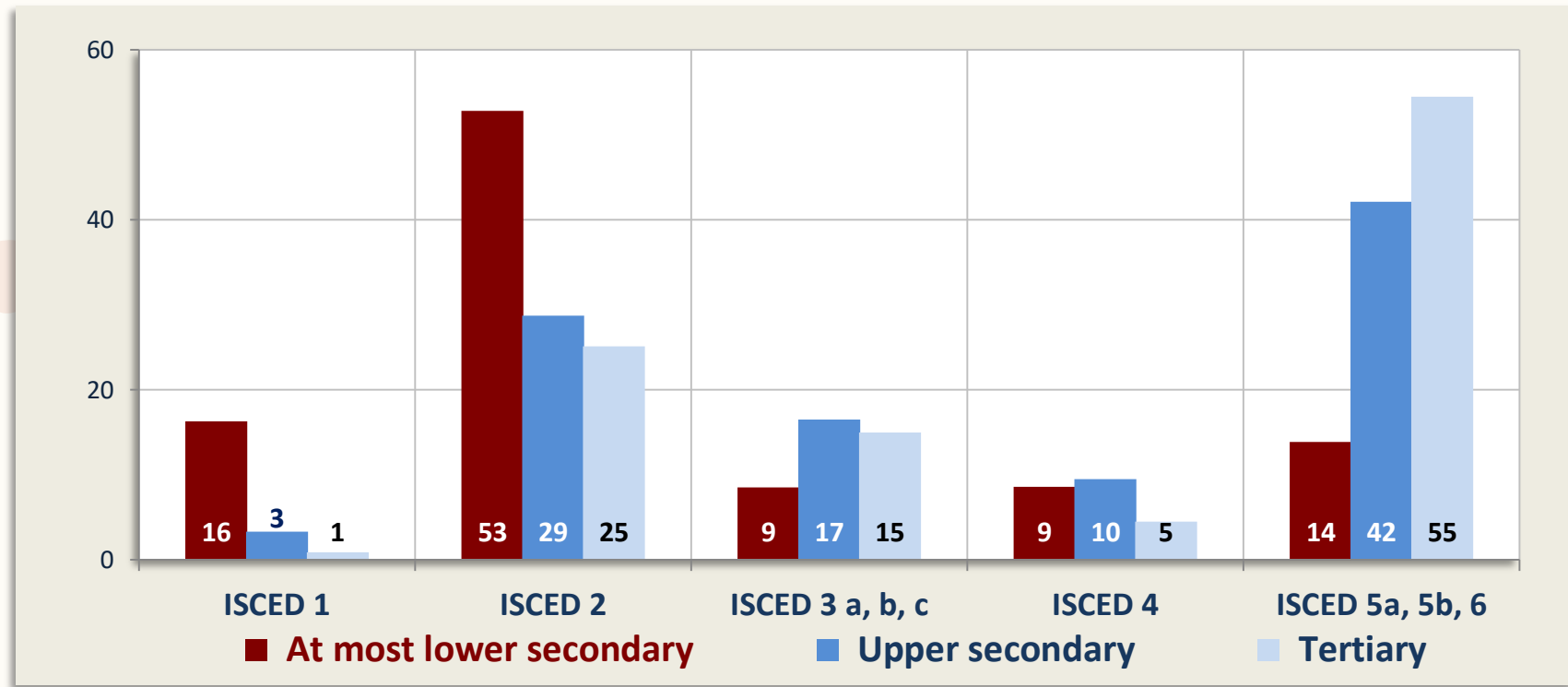
Occupational Justice - Basic Assumption (2)

OT is an **ethical, moral and social act** as much as it is a technical act.

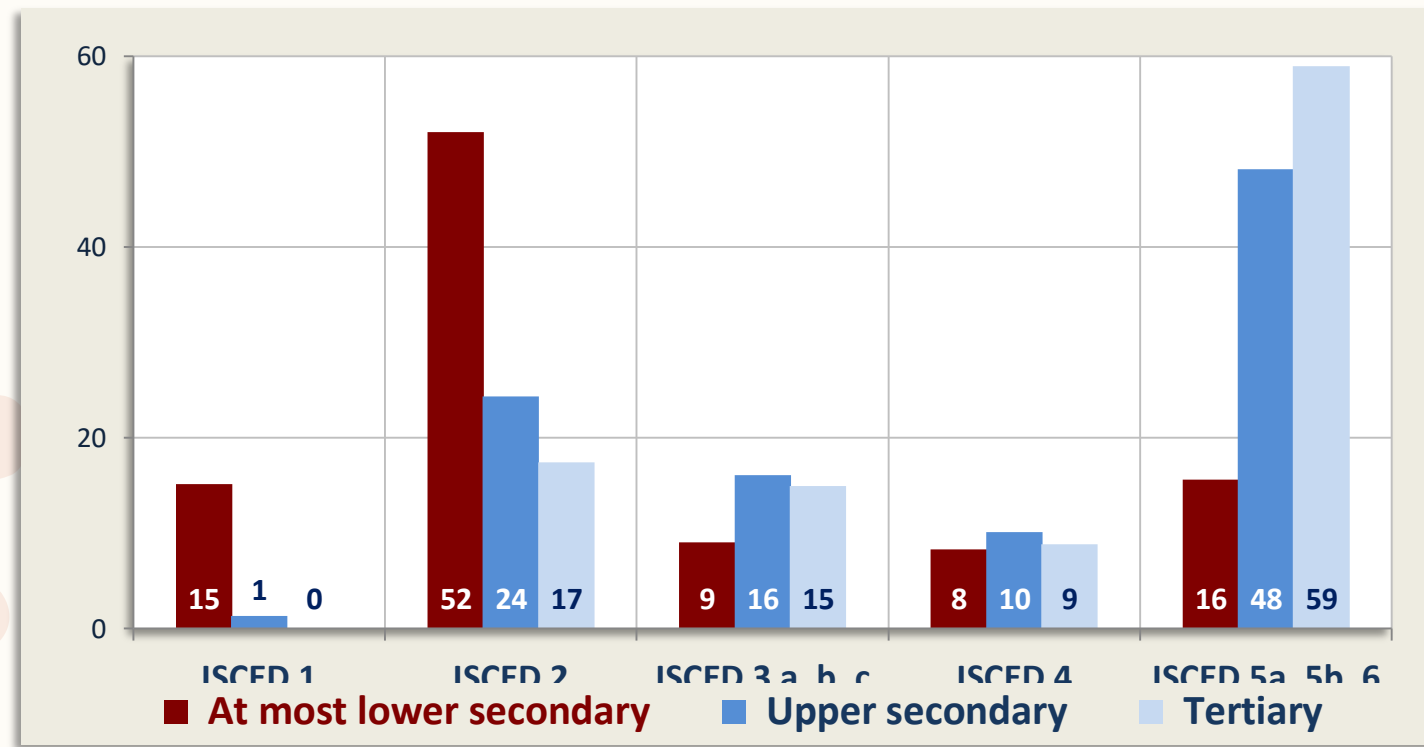
Occupational Justice - Basic Assumption (3)

Access (to provisions) is **not Neutral**.

Child's Educational Success (defined as entry into higher education) Correlated with Educational Background of Father (Borg, Raykov and Mayo, 2016)



Child's Educational Success (defined as entry into higher education) Correlated with Educational Background of Mother (Borg, Raykov and Mayo, 2016)



OT for Social Change - Curricular Outcomes

- OTs will revisualise themselves as **social change agents**.
- OTs will **challenge hierarchical structures** that reproduce oppression, thereby contributing to the wellbeing of societies.

OT Curriculum as Collective Commons

The **OT Curriculum is a site of transformative adult education**; an education which brings diverse publics, peoples and generations together to promote dialogue, mutuality, inclusion, co-investigation, co-discovery, co-production of knowledge and, ultimately, action on the world that is.

Philosophical Underpinnings of the OT Curriculum for Social Change

An OT Curriculum for Social Change is firmly rooted in the world **that is** while projecting itself into a world **that is not**.

Such curriculum is **transformative** by nature.

Philosophical Underpinnings

An OT Curriculum for Social Change is not simply about reading the world but also about **acting on the world**.

Such curriculum is firmly rooted in concrete experiences and, therefore, **cannot be alien to the realities of service users**.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The OT Curriculum for social change welds rational with **emotional intelligence**.

The **emotional dimension** of learning is central to a curriculum for social change.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The OT Curriculum for social change is **agentic and empowering in nature.**

Such curriculum emphasises the dispersal of power. **It cannot be vertical, hierarchical and prescriptive in nature.**

Key Words

- Collective and **Social**
- **Agentic** and Empowering
- Change-informed and **Transformative (Praxial)**
- **Ethical** and Moral
- Dialogic and **Horizontal**
- **Rational** and Emotional
- Mutual and **Reciprocal**

Communities of Praxis

- Communities begin in the **everyday lives** of the members of the community.
- There is no community without **curiosity** about the other.
- It is through the exercise of **curiosity, genuine interest in the other** and **active listening** that communities of praxis form.

Communities of Praxis

Communities of Praxis are founded on a process of **empowerment** and **participation**.

Communities of Praxis

Empowerment involves a form of **critical education** that encourages people to **question their reality**: this is the basis of **collective action** and is built on principles of **participatory democracy** and **cognitive justice**.

Communities of Praxis

A critical approach calls for **reflection** and **practice** (praxis).

Communities of Praxis

Authentic communities of praxis are fashioned by participatory democracy and the democratic values of **respect, dignity, reciprocity and mutuality which together form a practical framework for checking the validity of what communities do in the name of community development**, from personal encounters to collective action.

Communities of Praxis

Equal worth of all participants

Equal right to participate and to be heard

Equal Opportunities to participate

Elimination of barriers to participation

Dialogue as Pedagogy

Authentic dialogues are acts of freedom, **rejecting the image of the superior and inferior** and replacing it with autonomy and responsibility.

Authentic Dialogues

- Those engaged in authentic dialogues are **spect-actors** rather than spectators or actors.

Authentic Dialogues

- One cannot intervene in the world when the pedagogy generates **passivity**.

Curriculum Development and Design

In terms of curriculum development, OT for Social Change can be understood in terms of an analysis which conceives alienation as a major generative theme of the epoch (xvi)

.....alienation created by the democratic deficit of the political state.

Three distinct phases

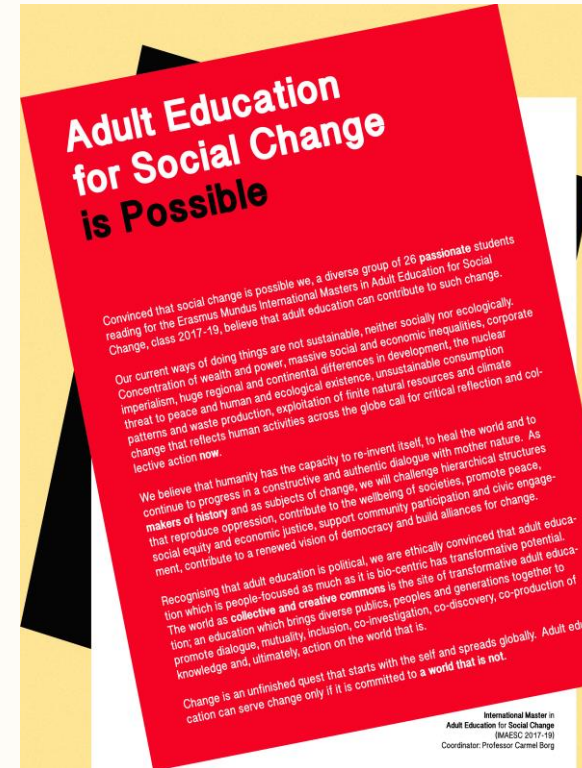
Phase One

Actors: Academic staff and students

Main objective: Building a theoretical base as well as collecting secondary and primary data on multiple experiences, ranging from the experience of home and community life, schooling, health, accommodation, transport, employment, environment, leisure facilities, services, etc.

Aspects of daily life which could be decoded, problematized and interrogated.

First Draft of Manifesto for Social Change



Phase 2 – Political Action

Actors: Academic Staff and Students

In the second phase the academic staff-student relationship is transformed into a public forum aimed at creating democratic spaces with popular participation.

Phase 3 - Co-Codification and Co-Production

Actors: Service users, students and academics

Marginalised voices are not only heard but are directly involved in curriculum design through co-investigation, where students and service users observe moments of life.

- Neighbourhood maps
- Life maps
- Issue maps
- Resource maps
- Power maps
- Storytelling
- Tree of life

Multi-Modal Pedagogy

Photographs

Drawings

Diagrams

Montage

Story telling

Theatre of the Oppressed



Reflections on Curriculum Design

All stakeholders go back to the original curriculum and **rewrite** it for the next year's cohort.

Imagining the Future

Together, stakeholders **revisit** the manifesto with the purpose of re-writing the final draft.

Action Outcomes

Stakeholders work on one **intersectional action** within the community to address some of the themes generated within class.

Short-term effects

The course had a positive impact on **students' social engagement**. For example, a considerable number of students became involved or **intensified their involvement** in the community or voluntary work.

In one cohort, approximately one-third became more involved in their communities after participating in the course.