



## 20th ENOTHE Annual Meeting 2014 – Nijmegen, The Netherlands

### Hanneke van Bruggen Lecture Gaynor Sadlo

#### **Preparing students for Health 2020 and beyond: distinctive, occupational science-based curricula with a European twist**

*This address honours the exceptional contribution Hanneke van Bruggen made in creating and developing our pan-European thematic network of occupational therapy educators and students. At ENOTHE we meet to share our best educational methods and pedagogical ideas, building collaborations and international friendships to enhance health and equality across nations.*

Since lifestyle is a major cause of poor health in our communities, occupational therapists are well placed to make a special contribution to public health. This Hanneke van Bruggen Lecture proposes that, in order to prepare students for a health promotion role and to build their confidence in occupation as a therapeutic agent, the science of occupation needs to permeate our curricula both theoretically and practically. As occupational science is the study of our how and why human beings do what we do, and how that affects our health and wellbeing, it is THE relevant basic science for upstream occupational therapy.

Two outstanding features of occupational therapy education within our ENOTHE area support the development of the most distinctive, most occupation-focused programmes in the world.

The first feature is the innovative way Tuning uses occupational science and public health terminology to express the knowledge competencies for occupational therapy, as in knowledge of "the nature of occupation.....the complex relationship between health and occupation.....the population's needs and rights for everyday occupations..." (Tuning 2006:58). Our challenge is to identify the content needed to develop such competencies. Occupational science constructs suit this purpose - its multi-disciplinary threshold concepts encompass other subjects to become a more unified epicentre of students' learning. Anatomy, psychology, and sociology can transform into the study of the capacities that enable occupation, namely physical, biological, information processing, socio-cultural, symbolic-evaluative and transcendental (Clarke et al 1998). Occupational form, function and meaning (Clarke & Larson 1993) structure observations of performance, while The European Conceptual Framework examines the internal and external influences on human action (Creek 2010). Occupational deprivation, alienation and imbalance highlight the detrimental effects of disrupted occupation (Whiteford 2000), while an occupational perspective of health reveals how participation in meaningful occupations is essential to population health (Wilcock 2006). Such studies enable students to articulate how occupations promote wellbeing, and how that relates to their therapeutic potential.

The second, more distinctive feature is the importance European programmes still give to manual and creative skills, when in the rest of the world craft workshops have been largely replaced by additional theoretical classes. We all face the dilemma of considering the place of skills (ENOTHE 2003) when the academic level of occupational therapy education climbs ever higher. It is proposed here that we should value very highly **learning through doing** as the essential element in the study of the essence of occupation (Sadlo 2004). Relevant to the Year of the Brain 2014, the personal benefits of creative occupational engagement can be justified through neuroscience, including increased neuronal density and inter-hemispherical links, cortisol reduction and altered states of consciousness, including transcendental experiences (Koelsch 2000, Timmons & MacDonald 2008). The skills/theory hallmark of European programmes represents important, experiential, lived-body and historical aspects of the pedagogy of occupation. Rebranded for the 21<sup>st</sup> century through occupational science, our distinctive skills programmes can contribute to occupational therapy curriculum design worldwide, and to public health. Such are our considerations at the University of Brighton.

The European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy shows how a carefully crafted, student-centred, problem-based and practical curriculum based on occupational science has brought its graduates high employer ratings, promotions to leadership, research and publications. Their implementation of occupational science within bachelors programmes around Europe supports health promoting, sustainable occupation towards 2020.

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