Student Experience in Optometry Education in Mozambique: Initial Challenges in an International Collaborative Program

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Student Experience in Optometry Education in Mozambique: Initial challenges in an international collaborative program

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Introduction
The Mozambique Eyecare Project, a collaboration between the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), International Centre of Eyecare Education (ICEE), the University of Ulster (UU) and the University of Lurio (UL), is developing and implementing a sustainable model for optometric education and eyecare service delivery in University of Lurio in Mozambique. The project aims to train Mozambique’s first professional optometrists, who will be part of a sustainable and comprehensive eye-care system as an integral part of the national health system.1

Aim
The aim of this research is to analyse the model of optometric education by evaluating the student experience and relating it to student performance, with a view to:

a) creating best practice in the education of health professionals in a developing world environment. 2,3,4
b) informing the course coordinators and partners on how to better structure and develop the educational programme and course.

Methods
Results from the questionnaire and interviews were analysed in relation to exam results to determine if student performance was affected by student experience.

Questionnaire: A questionnaire was completed by the first cohort (A) of 16 optometry students in relation to five course modules, and by a second cohort (B) of 24 students in relation to a single module. The questions asked the students to rate their experience of the module, the lecturer and the assessments.

Interviews: Semi-structured focus group interviews were carried out with the 40 students from the two cohorts and the first two members of faculty. The interviews aimed to get qualitative information about the strengths and weaknesses of the modules.

Results

a) Questionnaire

i) Rating of the module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>I.O a Cohort A</th>
<th>I.O b Cohort B</th>
<th>COP Cohort A</th>
<th>OOT Cohort A</th>
<th>OOP Cohort A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage who agree</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1 I.O a Cohort A</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2 I.O b Cohort B</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3 COP Cohort A</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4 OOT Cohort A</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 OOP Cohort A</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Rating of the lecturer

| Percentage who agree | 80            | 78            | 68           | 70           | 75           |
|0.1 I.O a Cohort A | 54            | 52            | 100          | 93           | 88           |
|0.2 I.O b Cohort B | 58            | 53            | 83           | 71           | 94           |
|0.3 COP Cohort A   | 56            | 51            | 93           | 86           | 92           |
|0.4 OOT Cohort A   | 58            | 53            | 93           | 86           | 92           |
|0.5 OOP Cohort A   | 58            | 53            | 93           | 86           | 92           |

Analysis
Student interviews and feedback suggested a concern about language of instruction and the lack of prior knowledge and experience of Optometry. However, analysis suggests that this did not make significant difference to performance (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Table showing exam results

More specific indication of student performance seems to have been the level of quality of support and feedback given to students by lecturer. Where the lecturer was less available (due to class size or other teaching commitments) students fared worse.

Conclusions
• Overall lecturer support and feedback seems to have the greatest effect on student performance.
• The evaluation has helped the partners to recruit and retain multilingual lecturers and to ensure they understand the importance of supporting students.
• It has assisted the module writers to develop international curriculum for developing countries where few students if any have any knowledge of Optometry.
• Evaluations on how these challenges will affect the overall clinical competencies of the students when they graduate is still on going. The first students will graduate in December 2012 and have their clinical competencies assessed in relation to World Council Of Optometry competencies. This research will inform the course coordinators and partners on how to better structure and develop their educational programme.

References
3. Oppenheim A N (1992), Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement. London: Pentech

For further information
Please contact the programme coordinator. More information on this and other projects can be obtained at www.mozambiqueeyecareproject.org

Figures
Figure 1: Optometry student in clinic
Figure 2: Bar graph showing student rating of modules. Introduction to Optometry (I.O a) for Cohort A, and (I.O b) for Cohort B; Clinical Optometric Procedures (COP); Ophthalmic Optics Theory (OOT); and Ophthalmic Optics Practical (OOP).
Figure 3: Table showing student rating of lecturer
Figure 4: Table showing student rating of assessments
Figure 5a and b: Students being assessed