Developing a competence-based P&O core curriculum: a Delphi study

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, university curricula has been transitioning from a subject or discipline based approach to competence-based approach. The competence-based approach focuses upon outcomes that are most relevant to employers and should be based upon knowledge of the competence needed for professional activities. (Edgren, 2006). A number of competency standards for the prosthetics and orthotics profession have been proposed by professional organisations worldwide. To date there is no international consensus regarding core competencies. The aim of this study was to determine the necessary competences for entry into the P&O profession in Sweden, and to use these suggested competences to develop a core curriculum.

METHOD

The Delphi technique was used to obtain consensus regarding core competencies for entry level clinicians. Three Delphi rounds were completed over a 6 months period (fig. 1). In the first phase, two focus groups were held with the aim of reviewing existing P&O competency documents and identifying areas relevant to the Swedish workforce. Based upon results of the focus groups the first round of Delphi statements was generated and distributed as a questionnaire to an expert panel consisting of 40 individuals. Experts were requested to grade the importance of various entry level competencies on a 5 point Likert scale and comment when they felt necessary. 75% agreement was chosen as the consensus level. In the second-round experts were provided with feedback related to round one and modifications were made to questions where there was misunderstanding or clarification was required. In the final round, competencies upon which agreement was reached were sent to the expert panel and comments were invited.

RESULTS

35 experts responded to the Delphi questionnaires. Consensus was reached on competence standards falling under four main areas of practice. 1/ multidisciplinary practice, 2/ provision of clinical care, 3/ P&O services and products and 4/ professional values. There were a number of competencies that experts considered important for professional practice but not necessary for entry level clinicians. These largely included issues related to billing and service provision that are under the control of regional government and could differ between municipalities.

Results of the Delphi analysis have been used to develop a new undergraduate curriculum for prosthetics and orthotics in Sweden.

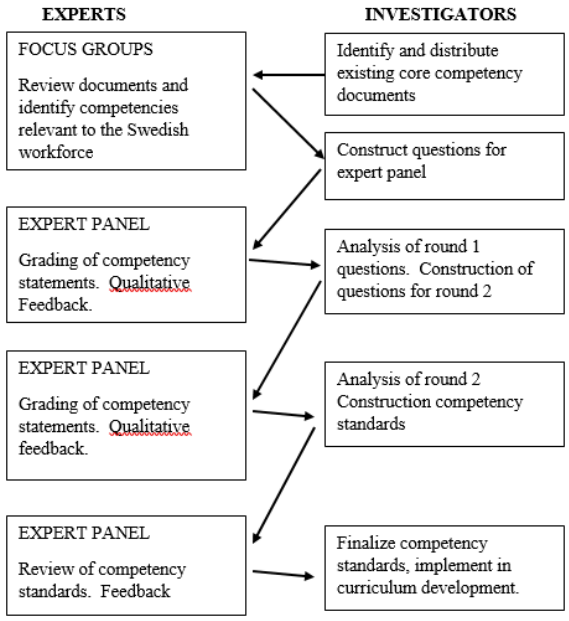

Figure 1 – Overview of Delphi process

DISCUSSION

As the prosthetics and orthotics profession develops it is vital that core curriculum meets the current and changing needs of the workforce. The Delphi technique has been used to facilitate curriculum development in other health professions (Edgren, 2006) and provides a means by which consensus can be reached regarding core competencies required of graduates. Competencies identified in the present study are consistent with those reported in an Australian study (Ash et al., 2015) suggesting that professional activities in Sweden and Australia are relatively similar.

CONCLUSION

This study used a Delphi method to identify core competencies of entry level P&Os in Sweden. Results were used to develop evidence-based core curriculum for undergraduate education at Jönköping University.

CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

The Delphi technique can be used to facilitate evidence-based curriculum development that addresses current and future needs of the prosthetic and orthotic profession.

REFERENCES

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