

EURACT Educational Agenda: The Way to Implementation

Francesco Carelli¹

¹EURACT Council , Director of Communications – University of Milan, Italy

The EURACT Educational Agenda is an official document, adopted in 2005 by the European teaching community, that translate the new definitions of the GP/FM profession into a list of competencies that should be achieved at the end of vocational training, and should be maintained during lifelong learning. It describes the competencies in 8 chapters, 25 competencies and 80 subcompetencies. It puts GP training and learning in the international trend of harmonizing the roles (like CANMEDS) or balancing against other specialties. But what can be done with this list? Practical implications will be discussed starting from different testimonies: translation exercises in Portugal and Italy, implementation efforts in Poland, framing of future education curriculum in UK, construction of an electronic check list system to guides progression and completeness of the learning process in Denmark and Belgium. The purpose is to give a clear view on the content of the agenda, the value and the usefulness of the competency framework for their personal and national purposes.

Why an educational agenda?

It is designed to provide a framework to teach the core competencies for those involved in delivering general practice education and in developing programmes of teaching general practice. However not only can it be used by individual teachers and course organisers but also should be used to determine priorities in teaching and learning general practice and contribute to national policy development. Calling this an “agenda” is deliberate. By this it is meant that it is both a dynamic review of where we are now in family medicine teaching and learning in Europe and it marks where work has still to be done - the other element in “agenda”. It is hoped that it will lead

discussions, reflections and amendments, and will stimulate groups of experts to discuss some of the themes, and the production of further papers on the issues raised. After some years, this may lead to updated versions.

A background for recommendations to curriculum developers and researchers For the last 30 years family medicine has led the way in developing education methodology, educational processes and assessment. This has been in spite of working in education systems designed for the training of other disciplines and in institutions where family medicine is not practised. With the increasing pressure on the medical curriculum it is important that we address these issues. In a number of countries training programmes are being extended and the locus of training is changing towards general practice placements and away from hospital attachments although the situation is very variable.

The central focus is general practice vocational (specialty) training

If the new definition of the discipline sets out the core competencies that have to be acquired to be called a trained GP/FP, then the educational agenda must support and underpin the content of the GP/FM specialty training in Europe. The six core competencies for the discipline are the starting point and this document uses these as the framework for its six agenda-chapters. They can be seen as the hallmark of a GP/FM educational program, and should be at its centre. In each of the chapters we identify the specific educational objectives, and from these derive appropriate learning and assessment methods, and the specific options for the setting and the timeframe within the curriculum.

From time- and discipline-based to competence-based learning

In this document we have decided to stay at a global conceptual level and have not outlined more detailed statements on such things as time and place. We want to promote a move from time- and discipline-based to competence- and outcome-based learning. We need to move away from the time- and institution-based thinking about the curriculum towards producing a relevant education programme both in and for general practice that is mainly competence driven.

Harmonization in Europe at the level of learning outcomes

With this educational agenda, we want to contribute to the harmonisation of the learning outcomes of the different educational programs all over Europe at this level. Perhaps it is sufficient to achieve an optimal “tuning up” of the national specialty training programs, by growing to more and more convergence and common understanding. EURACT hopes that this educational agenda, derived from the core competencies accepted by all European GP/FM academies during the WONCA Europe meeting in London 2002, completed with the learning options defined in this educational agenda and presented at the WONCA Europe meeting in Amsterdam 2004 can lead to an acceptable harmonization instrument for the content of the vocational training all over Europe.

Case Vignettes

Case Vignettes were created and will be more created to see EEA in the practical life of Family Medicine, to stimulate thinking, reflexion, teaching and learning so to consider that and how all six core competencies are in many real daily situations in our offices and to reflect how they are different and at the same time so similar and how they can help family doctors to afford and resolve the cases in their daily work for patients.

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