

TRENDS IN PHYSIOTHERAPY EDUCATION

RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF ECPE PRESENTATIONS

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Aims

Globalization and global labor force, technology, new society models and scientific developments, brought to Higher Education specific demands of change since the last 15 years. In a contextualized and customized framework, educational designs and strategies need to prepare professionals for nowadays non-static demands. Physiotherapy and physiotherapy education, are no exception.

Conferences and congresses are the places where these developments can be presented, giving an overview of the trends and the needs of future development. The purpose of this study is to give an overview of the trends in physiotherapy education, as presented in the last 3 European Congress of Physiotherapy Education (ECPE) organized by World Confederation of Physical Therapy – European Region (WCPT-ER).

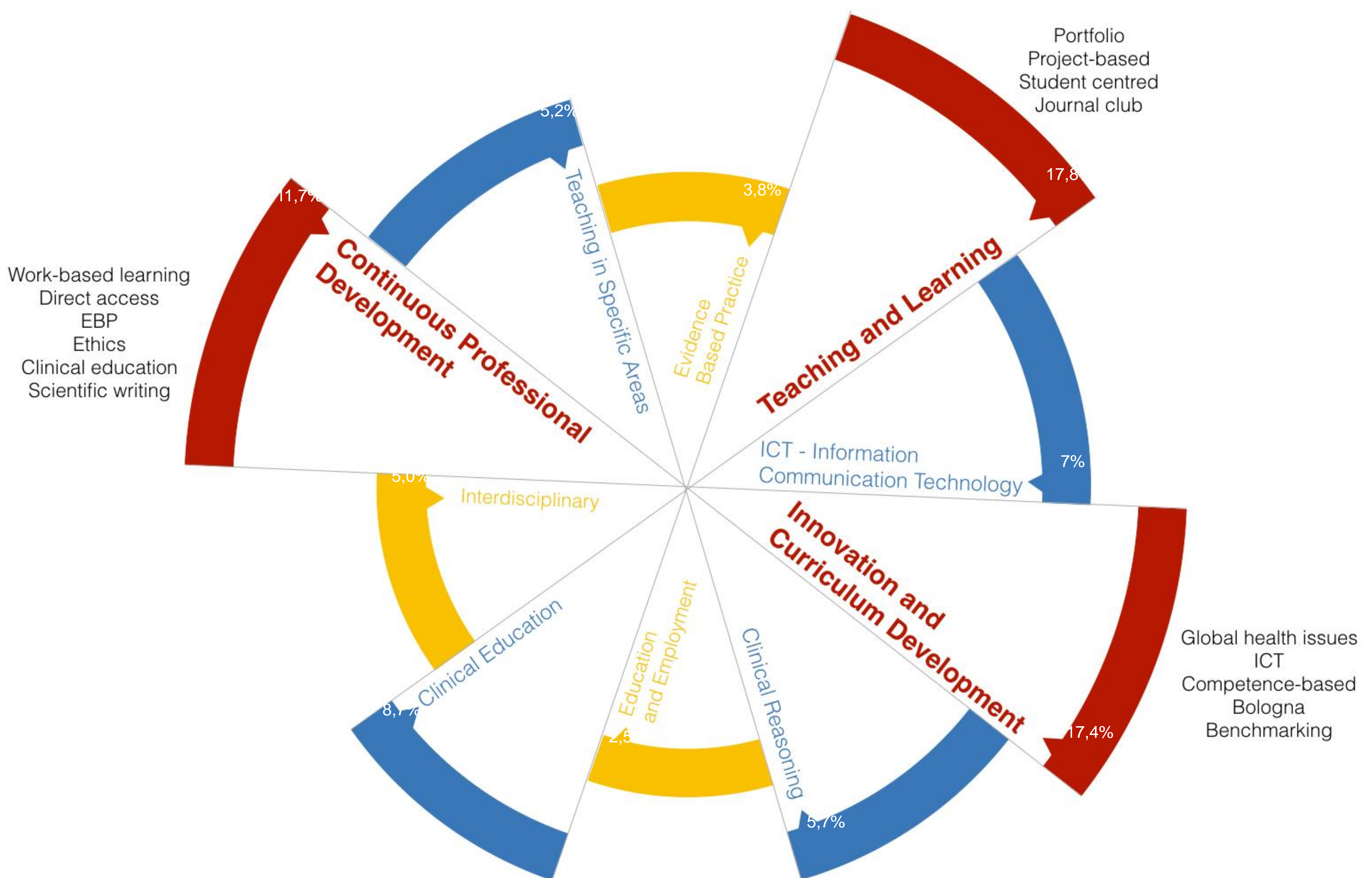
Methods

A descriptive and retrospective study, with the analysis of the abstracts of the conferences in 2004 (Estoril-Portugal), 2008 (Stockholm-Sweden) and 2011 (Viena-Austria). A qualitative and quantitative analysis was made on: level of education, topics, content and study design/ methodology, by 3 independent reviewers.

Results

A total of 419 abstracts were analysed. From these, 45 were eliminated for not being related with educational issues, resulting in 374 (77 ECPE I, 148 ECPE II, 149) abstracts for the purpose of this study (platform presentations n= 189 and poster presentations n = 185):

Focus are in both entry level and or post-qualifying education studies. The topics that represent the trends in education are presented below:



Other findings

Besides de main trends presented above, other 15% of the studies are related with:

- Students or teachers perceptions of education or competences,
- Research and scientific writing in the context of professional continuous development
- Internationalization of students and curriculum.

Study design - 39.5% used a **qualitative methodology** with the use of qualitative or quantitative statistics for analysis or purely a description without statistics (11,4%). **Action research and implementation research** are also used, specially for studies related with innovation and curriculum development. However, 30,6% of the studies / presentations have no specific or clear methodology then pure description or opinions. This might be related with the non application of any method or the application of new research methodologies not well described yet.

Conclusions/Implications

Education in Physiotherapy has been evolving towards the global health issues developments and in direction of uniformization among countries. Presumably these topics are related with the European movement – 'Europe a strong society in 2020!', where education and professionals should meet an European standard. However, some differences in stage of development is still found among countries. North and central european countries are focused in innovation in the curriculum and learning strategies according to new insights of learning, critic reflexion and global health issues, while south and eastern european countries are centered in learning skills for core content in physiotherapy and benchmarking with others.