



RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ON PHYSIOTHERAPY EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL: AN
ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

*¹Mandar Malawade and ²Rui Corredeira

¹Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam College of Physiotherapy, PIMS, Loni BK, Maharashtra, India 413736

²Department of Adapted Physical Activity, Universidade do Porto- Faculty of Sport, Porto, Portugal

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 23rd July, 2017

Received in revised form

28th August, 2017

Accepted 20th September, 2017

Published online 31st October, 2017

Key words:

Ethnography,
Physiotherapy,
Education.

ABSTRACT

Background: The study was done to explore the ethnic diversity in physiotherapy education between Portugal and India.

Methods: Qualitative research design based on ethnographic data collected by the ethnographer in terms of diaries and informal interviews. Setting: Adapted Physical activity department and centers attached to one of the reputed university in Portugal. Participants: physiotherapy faculty members, clinical physiotherapists, physiotherapy students, and administrative staff.

Results: The views of physiotherapy students and faculty revealed their perception as they are quiet advanced, patient centered, believe in active physiotherapy interventions and what they are doing is probably the best.

Conclusions: Physiotherapy education in Portugal is different from Indian perspective and their focus is more on student centered approach with more of active learning.

Copyright©2017, Mandar Malawade and Rui Corredeira. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Mandar Malawade and Rui Corredeira, 2017. "An Indian perspective on physiotherapy education in Portugal: An ethnographic study", *International Journal of Current Research*, 9, (10), 59954-59957.

INTRODUCTION

Ola'!!! This is the word used in Portuguese as salutation. Ethnography is an art and science of describing and interpreting culture. Ethnography involves variety of methods to generate data. Having chiefly relied on interviews for the data generation, the author also observes participants during their normal working day and at social gatherings. (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007; Maxwell, 2005) It is believed that ethnographic research is a fascinating tool for studying the people & their culture, it also helps to understand the fact that studying culture and diversity is more important than just having a thought of "company of strangers". Perhaps, there is a growing interest in the use of ethnographic research in Indian Physiotherapy field at this moment of time, as there is little amount of training or experience with this kind of qualitative, phenomenological, or ethnographic research imparted during academic training. This research paper describes field research method used to explore the physiotherapy education process in Portugal and to identify and explain some of its components with its comparison to Indian system of Physiotherapy education. The notion of culture is central to ethnography. Culture can be defined as the "total way of life of a group, the learnt behavior which is socially constructed and transmitted".

(Saville-Troike, 1997) Individuals in a culture or subculture hold common ideas acquired through learning from other members of the group. No matter what the setting but the general questions guiding ethnographic studies are the same: "What is it like to be a member of a particular culture? What are the rules guiding social behaviour?". (Roper and Shapiro, 2000) Author (MM) felt fortunate enough to get selected for participation in Erasmus Mundus teacher exchange program at Portugal in the field of physiotherapy. During this period the co-author who is Portuguese helped to plan, visit and interact with different Physiotherapy centers, institutions related with people with different impairments, students and other support staff so as to carry out this ethnographic study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study method was ethnography. In a broad sense ethnography involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching, listening, asking questions and collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (Shelley *et al.*, 2009)

Aims

The aims of the study were to investigate the culture of the physiotherapy student and teachers in Portugal and to acquire a

*Corresponding author: Mandar Malawade,

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam College of Physiotherapy, PIMS, Loni BK, Maharashtra, India 413736.

comprehensive understanding of how Physiotherapy education was imparted.

Setting

The study was conducted in the one of the well-known university in Portugal (University of Porto- Faculty of Sport & The Research Centre in Physical Activity, Health and Leisure, and associated rehabilitation centers with this university during the period of 30th March 2017 to 30th April 2017.

Participants

As the study used an ethnographic method, all people attending academic activities that included teachers, students, visitors, caring staff, patients whom the ethnographer could approach for the information.

Data collection

Ethnographic data collection involves observations, interviews and the review of relevant documents. (Bernard H. Russell, 2002) Participant observations were performed over a one month period for a total of 100 hours. Observations were performed on different days of the week and during different shifts. The fieldwork observations were recorded in a field note diary during the observation periods. Formal interviews were conducted following the observation period. The focus of the research was the interactions among physiotherapy students, teachers, and patients. The formal interviews were limited to these groups. Interviews were semi-structured, 30-40 minutes in duration and open-ended questions were used to keep the conversation focused.

Ethical considerations

The individual participant consent for the observational fieldwork was extremely problematic and disruptive to the study. Hence no formal consent was taken from the participants and utmost care was taken to avoid any details that will reveal the details of people and institutes.

Sample

Participants were physiotherapy faculty members, clinical physiotherapists, physiotherapy students, and administrative staff at one of the reputed university physiotherapy division and the rehabilitation hospitals attached to this university. In total 28 participants took part in this study.

Study design

A qualitative research design in form of ethnographic research was adopted, as we felt that this was one of the most suitable approaches to explore the objective of the study.

Ethnographers

The personal background of ethnographer (MM) is an Indian citizen from Maharashtra State and for education, service, conferences and collaborations moved different places of India and at Sweden. Second ethnographer (RC) is Portuguese in origin and moved to different countries and works as professor in Adapted Physical Activity department at well-known university in Portugal.

RESULTS

Data analysis started during the collection of the first observation data. After every day of observation in the university, the field note diary was reviewed and memos made for the following day. The memos were used to clarify situations by questioning or observing similar encounters more closely. Further analysis used components from analytical processes proposed by Spradley. (Spradley, 1980; Spradley, 1979) The ethnography provided a wealth of information regarding the physiotherapy students, teacher's academic activities clinical activities, actors, activities, rituals, rules, communication patterns and relationships within their system. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide the details of all the findings. We wish to report the major findings with three themes as people, academics and clinical with relevant extracts from interviews and the field note diary since we believe that these themes could of interest to Indian Physiotherapy fraternity at large with

People

Coordinator (RC) came to receive me (MM) at Francisco Sa Carnerio Airport. After formal introduction as we met first time in person, he took me to the accommodation. The first thing I observed was the big playgrounds filled with people of all age, playing football. So my first impression for Portuguese people was about their affection towards games especially football. In India I hardly found people playing football as cricket is the game most played by Indians. During the visit I have attended one football match between Porto and other club. The game was full of all kind of emotions. The people were very such involved in the game as if they were playing. I also observed that most of the people specifically young age population is more into fitness. I saw the gyms were occupied at the late night time too. I found people jogging at the late hour on the road. So I felt that probably Portuguese people are more into physical fitness and outdoor games. In developing and mid income country like ours, people are less conscious about their physical fitness. Once money comes we tend to buy motorcycle or cars and the amount of physical exertion comes down and probably this may lead NCD (non-communicable diseases) and reduces the life expectancy. Alike India though Portugal is mid income country but I found people are more conscious about their physical fitness. During interactions, I realized Portuguese people are free minded, helpful and social. They got lot of patience to listen to others. They have tendency to help others even if there is a language barrier. I could see access for people with disability almost everywhere. People with disability had special scooters, special walkers, the local bus and train transport was easy for this population.

Academics

Class rooms were modern. Every department had its own classroom which had a door with small transparent glass through which you can see if class is going on. There were central halls at every floor for organizing guest lectures, seminars etc. All the class rooms, halls and laboratories had almost perfect access for people with disabilities and everywhere escape way was written as "escaper" or the picture and green color used for this. It was a bit difficult for the foreign country person to understand the meaning. There were Wi Fi hot spots, places to sit, eat, study, to perform fitness activities were available. There were special rooms available according to specific games to train for. The second author and

my coordinator informed me that there are many students and participants can be seen in the campus, who is training for various international games including Olympics. Apart from the specific training rooms there was a big hall with modern training equipments available for everyone. It was fitness room for all. Those who want to come should select the time available and do the workout. I was very much impressed with the gym with various modern equipments. The athletics training room was full of people. The participants and their parents were there. The room was full of magnesium powder smell. In fact most of the training rooms were full of Magnesium powder smell. The department of physical activity trains the students for specific games to be trainer. Also there is Adaptive training department which deals with the rehabilitation of the special people. Unlike India, students can open up and play with their mobiles, laptops, scribble notes, move out. An interesting lecture to me was during their field training. They call their teachers by their name or 'Professor' in general. In India we feel it's arrogant to call our teacher by their names. So we call them with 'Sir' or 'Madam'. After the class of training special group of people the teacher used to gather all the students and there would be discussion about the session. I think it is one of the best way to teach students with experience first. The students from other countries like Spain, Belgium were there. Even though there was a language barrier they were being explained by their respective professor. The professors were very particular about explaining and observing their students. This showed their dedication to their work and affection towards their students. While communicating with professors of different faculty I found their interest in Indian food, culture and our priorities in life.

Clinical

During the stay I visited few rehabilitation and training centers. It made my first observation very much clear that Portuguese people are very much keen on sports, even the people with disabilities. Handball practice for the wheelchair bound people was one of the most interesting sessions I got an opportunity to attend. The energy and cheerfulness in them got me emotional. In India I hardly have found people practicing any game. I was being informed that they come by their own and they I are training to be a part of special games at national and international level. The session used to start by evening and end by late night. The energy they had was amazing. Even the students and coach faculties were full with energy. Boccia training was another game which was interesting to know. I was unaware about the game. The communication between player and his assistant was really very interesting part. One of the players was giving instructions to his assistant just by nodding the head. And the assistant was following exactly what he wanted. That gave me a clear idea that for communication you don't need words always. I was also a part of training session for Multiple Sclerosis. Though they had pain but still they were cheerful. They showed interest in Indian music and insisted me to participate with them in session. Other sessions were with schizophrenia and autism group. I found it very interesting that they have a medical person with them throughout the session to avoid any medical emergency. It something I believe we should follow in India too.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provided a rich description of the academic culture pertaining to physiotherapy in one of the

world ranked European University. The teachers focus their attention on active teaching and self-directed learning by the students, clinical physiotherapist focus on more of active interventions and less of everyday physiotherapy treatment, students were more independent an actively involved in self-study, peer assistance and were happy with student friendly university culture. Higher education in Portuguese college and university education is self-financed. The average at the beginning of 2017 was roughly 45,000 Euros. The education in Portugal is characterized by students taking more responsibility for their own studies and the relaxed and informal relationship with teachers. With its emphasis on independent studies, the teaching model applied at Portuguese universities and university colleges is based on the motto 'Get inspired'. (https://sigarra.up.pt/up/pt/web_base.gera_pagina?p_pagina=home) This means that students have somewhat less teacher-led time than is usual, mainly pursuing their studies on their own or in groups with inspiration from the surrounding. In essence, the physiotherapist is an expert facilitator for physical activity and patients are more aware about the role of physical activity in their life. We believe that one of the more widely cited benefits of conducting ethnographic research is that due to the first-hand observation that is involved, usually conducted over an extended period of time, the research can provide extensive and in-depth findings about human behavior. In addition, because ethnographic research relies on observation rather than examinations or predetermined tests, the research can evolve and explore new lines of inquiry. The limitation to the study is the nature of the study methodology. The study was undertaken in one major university and training centers associated with this university. This ethnography is meaningful for the physiotherapists within this setup but may be assessed and approached differently in another university setup. Due to the fact that ethnographic research relies on observation, it often takes a longer period of time to produce thorough and reliable results. Also, because the research is reliant upon the observations of just one or a few people, the conclusions about what the human subjects were doing, saying or feeling could be altered by the observers' cultural bias or ignorance.

Conclusion

The study findings confirmed that the physiotherapy education and culture is different from Indian perspective and traditional system of imparting physiotherapy education and treatment may be scrutinized in future for its academic, clinical and cost effectiveness. Following this study, the physiotherapists engaged in classrooms and clinical teaching may shift their focus on student and patient centered approach. This research report focuses on the academic experiences of physiotherapy teacher from India who visited an academic department of one of the reputed university in Portugal where Physiotherapy education is offered. Data were collected using qualitative approaches like diaries, and informal interviews. However, a polite attitude and willingness to hear the foreign faculty and expressing interest in knowing how the educational training is offered in India was remarkable.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson P, Hammersley M. 2007. Ethnography: Principles in Practice. In: Atkinson P, Hammersley M, eds. A Book. 3rd ed. Oxon: Routledge.

- Bernard H. Russell. 2002. Ethnographic data collection. In: Bernard H. Russell, eds. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 3rd ed. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Pr.
- Maxwell JA. 2005. Ethnography. In: Maxwell JA, eds. *Qualitative Research Design: an Interactive Approach*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Roper M, Shapiro J. 2000. The Culture. In: Roper M, Shapiro J, eds. *Ethnography in Nursing Research*. 5th ed. London: SAGE Publications.
- Saville-Troike M. 1997. The ethnographic analysis of communicative events. In: Coupland N, Jaworski A, eds. *Sociolinguistics. A Reader and Coursebook*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Macmillan; 126-144.
- Shelley A, Tranterab, Judith Donoghueb, Jacqueline Bakerb. 2009. Nursing The Machine: an ethnography of a hospital haemodialysis unit. *J Nephrol Renal Transplant (JNRT)*, 2(3):28-41.
- Spradley JP. 1979. Ethnographic data analysis. In: Spradley JP, eds. *The Ethnographic Interview*. 1st ed. New York: Holt. Rinehart and Winston.
- Spradley JP. 1980. Ethnographic data analysis. In: Spradley JP, eds. *Participant Observation*. 1st ed. New York: Holt. Rinehart and Winston.
- Universidade do Porto [PT] https://sigarra.up.pt/up/pt/web_base.gera_pagina?p_pagina=home
