

# Medical education without borders

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**Impact**

This short chapter serves to reflect on the impact of the research described in this thesis on science and society. It starts with a summary of the main research objectives and results. Next, I will discuss the research' main contributions to science as well as the potential relevance to societal developments. The third part is a description of the main target groups that may have an interest in the themes of this thesis. The chapter closes with a brief overview of ways in which these target groups may be informed about the research results, so that the knowledge gained can be used in the future.

## **Research**

In this research, I delved into International Medical Programmes (IMPs): medical schools that teach international groups of students, in English, and prepare them for a medical career anywhere in the world. I was interested to learn how globalization affects medical education. More specifically, the research aimed to better understand the choices that IMPs make around the aims, vision and content of such programmes, or, as the title of this thesis reads, to understand the what, why and how of International Medical Programmes. I interviewed staff, students and graduates and studied curriculum documents at eight different medical schools. Altogether, these data helped to learn how educational choices, including the lack of making choices, play out in practice.

The research showed that students have different ambitions and expectations when they decide to study medicine at an IMP. Some want and like the extra international content and challenges, while others 'just' want a medical degree that gives them a license to practice. Medical schools have different, and often very implicit, rationales and ambitions for their IMPs. Financial, altruistic and academic reasons to offer medical education to international students co-exist. These ambitions do not always match and align well in practice. As a result, it remains challenging to build a strong and matching curriculum for the students in these programmes.

## **Relevance**

This thesis adds real world data and examples from a global variety of contexts and individuals to a, thus far largely theoretical and academic, debate. It connects the two academic domains medical education research and higher education internationalization research. One particular contribution was the coining of the term "International Medical Programme", which was defined and established in

the early publications of this thesis and has since been picked up and used by others as well (Chan et al., 2022; Gradiski et al., 2022).

Methodologically, the research stands out for a very international approach with many participating institutions and individuals from different countries and backgrounds. The work includes a longitudinal project, which adds an extra perspective and allows for understanding the development of views and perspectives over time. The introduction of Anthony and Isabel as two representatives of student profiles, and the presentation of their perspectives as two prose stories in a scientific paper, was considered quite innovative by editors and reviewers.

While there is no direct social impact of this research, it does offer insights about and suggestions for dealing with globalization in higher education. It thereby may contribute to social and public debates around higher education internationalization, student and health professionals' cross-border mobility, language and diversity in education and health care, and the social responsibility of universities.

### **Target group**

The research results are relevant to prospective medical students who are considering their preferred location of study and who may identify as an Anthony or an Isabel. It speaks to current medical students in IMPs as well as in regular medical programmes who seek guidance in career orientation 'off the beaten track'. Graduates of IMPs may find recognition of their specific hurdles and challenges in finding their early career paths.

Teaching staff in IMPs and in medical education generally, who are interested in making their teaching globally relevant or who (have to) deal with curriculum internationalization may find inspiration in the study results and encounter issues to consider in curriculum design in the thesis' Discussion chapter.

And finally, institutional policy makers and administrators in medical education who decide on internationalization vision, strategy and ambitions may be interested to read and discuss the findings of this thesis to make well informed decisions.

## Activities

Research findings find their way to these target groups through different routes. Four of the five chapters in this thesis have been published in peer-reviewed journals and the fifth one has been submitted for publication. The articles are available to everybody through the journals' open access policies. I presented the findings at national and international medical education conferences including the NVMO (Dutch Organization for Medical Education), AMEE (Association of Medical Education in Europe), and The Network / TUFH (Towards Unity for Health) meetings between 2017 and 2022.

My growing expertise in the area of international health professions education and collaboration is being recognized nationally and internationally as shown by my membership of the mid-term review panel for the international physiotherapy programme at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and the AMEE panel for the ASPIRE Award for International Collaboration.

The findings have also already found their way to current education for medical students at Maastricht University, where I presented about the challenges and opportunities of international practice in a clinical student symposium and spoke about internationalization and diversity education at a career orientation event.

Ongoing informal communication with co-authors and research assistants across the participating research contexts, as well as with some of the participants in Chapters 2 and 4, forms an informal way to stay informed on perspectives beyond the studies and to share further research findings.

## References

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