

Occupational therapy educators' experiences of occupation in curricula: Lessons from the Australian context

Amelia Di Tommaso^{1,2}, Alison Wicks², Stephen Isbel², Jennie Scarvell²

¹Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, ²University of Canberra Health Research Institute, Bruce, Australian Capital Territory, Australia

Introduction: All accredited university programs must follow the World Federation of Occupational Therapists' Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists, ensuring continuity across occupational therapy curricula internationally. A core focus of the educational standards is occupation and its transformative relationship to health. Previous research has highlighted that occupation and occupation-based practice are difficult to consistently implement across all years of an educational program. Little is known about the experiences and opinions of educators about focusing on occupation within curricula.

Objectives: This paper aims to explore university educators' experiences of occupation in occupational therapy curricula.

Method: A qualitative phenomenological framework was used to guide the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to uncover educators' perspectives and experiences of contemporary occupational therapy education in Australia. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was used to inductively develop themes.

Results: Eight occupational therapy academics were interviewed to gain understanding of their experiences of the use of occupation in Australian university curricula. Themes emerged including the challenge of balancing an understanding of impairments with an occupation-base, managing partnerships with practice educators and the need for educators to lead practice change.

Conclusion: Due to the requirement of teaching occupation as a central concept in all accredited education programs across the world, learning from international colleagues is valuable for enhancing occupation-based education. Highlighting Australian experiences of the benefits and challenges of implementing occupation into everyday curricula can assist other educators to ensure that occupation has a prominent place in occupational therapy education.