

Decolonising OT epistemology: Is it needed and is it possible?

Fasloen Adams

University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction / rationale: In South Africa university students are calling for nation-wide decolonised curricula that are responsive to the local context. The call has been made to “rid South Africa’s universities of procedures, values, practices, thinking, belief and choices” (the convercersion.com) that are not indigenously South African or African. What are the implications of this for the occupational therapy curricula being taught in South Africa? Should these be decolonised too?

Objectives: This presentation proposes to explore:

- What a decolonised curriculum in occupational therapy is
- The need for decolonised curricula in occupational therapy and methods that could be employed to do so.

Approach: Work by South African and African academics as well as occupational therapy theorists concerned with occupational constructs from a ‘southern perspective’ will be reflected on to answer the questions above.

The need to review the applicability of occupational therapy specific epistemology will be explored. The presentation will propose that this be done through reflecting on local ontology and axiology and how these align with current dominant epistemology in occupational therapy.

Practice implication: Furthermore, a proposal for a collective approach in this reviewing process will be made along with the development of locally contextual theory that can be included in the global occupational therapy epistemology.

Conclusion: Developing locally relevant information through research and using this information to ensure that occupational therapy epistemology is applicable to all communities is essential if an effective contribution to the decolonisation of curricula is to be made.