

Developing a Curriculum for an Occupational Therapy program in Zambia: Guiding Principles and Professional Considerations

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Rationale: During the 7th OTARG conference in Livingstone, Zambia, Lusaka Apex Medical University announced plans for establishing an Occupational Therapy program for Zambia. With only five practicing occupational therapists, none with experience of education, OT's from the international community were invited to participate in a workgroup that comprised people with different cultural and professional backgrounds as well as different knowledge and teaching traditions. The authors are northern European OT's with experience of working within Africa and within OT education and have led the process of developing the curriculum. A needs assessment was conducted prior to the curriculum development and this provided information on context and relevance for OT in Zambia.

Objectives:

To develop a BSc Occupational Therapy curriculum relevant to the Zambian context.

To develop a curriculum to meet WFOT and HPCZ requirements.

Approach: The approach was diverse but focused with dialogue and discussions in workshop settings, skype and email. Consultation with the University and practicing occupational therapists in Zambia. Examination of relevant OT and healthcare curricula was also undertaken.

Results: The curriculum is occupational based and has a lifespan perspective and meets the WFOT minimum standards. Since occupational therapy is not an established profession in Zambia, it is important to provide a training of future professionals with entrepreneurial and innovative skills.

Conclusion: The curriculum will ensure provision of occupational therapists competent to develop evidence based practice, collaborate with users and promote the profession's contributions to Zambian health and social services.