

**UiT**

**THE ARCTIC  
UNIVERSITY  
OF NORWAY**

**Developing a Curriculum for an Occupational  
Therapy program in Zambia:**

# **Guiding principles and professional considerations**

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# Background

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- **2009:** Lusaka Apex Medical University established to contribute to the severe shortage of health professionals in Zambia.
- **2011:** OTARG Congress in Livingstone
- **Invitation from LAMU to the OT community to participate in a workgroup for starting the first Zambian OT program**

# Current status of OT in Zambia

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- OT represented in Zambia since independence (1960's)
- No OT programme established so far
- 6 practicing OTs
- Few OTs to develop OT practice and the profession
- No formal OT representation at a policy level
- Limited knowledge and understanding about OT practice in the health care services and in the population

# Recent developments

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- 2013: Zambia Occupational Therapy Association established
- 2015: Needs Assessment completed
- 2016: A BSc OT curriculum for Zambia was approved by WFOT
- 2018: Appointment of an HOD?
- 2019: First uptake of OT students?

# Developing a curriculum relevant for the Zambian context



# Underpinning questions

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What occupational challenges are the Zambian population facing?

What is the context that OT services are going to be delivered in?

Which teaching/learning method would be appropriate?

# Formal requirements

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To conform with WFOT minimum standards

To be in accordance with Health Professions Council of Zambia (HPCZ) requirements

To meet University policies, procedures and processes

To employ a Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach

# Zambian context

- Population is approximately 13 million
  - Approx 60 % lives in rural areas

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- The disease burden is high – with an increase of non-communicable diseases
- Poverty levels high
  - 54.4 % lives below the poverty line
  - Extreme poverty 40.8
  - Poverty is a predominantly rural phenomenon (76.6/23.4)
- Unemployment rate is high
  - More prevalent among youth, women and people with disabilities
- Disability: 2 % of the population living with disability
  - Stigma and negative attitudes affects individuals and families
- Inequity in access to health services
- Dominant medical approach
- Few practicing OTs



# Guiding principles and professional considerations for the curriculum

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Occupation based and a lifespan perspective

Family and community focused

Rights focused

Partnership and Collaborative approach

Public health perspective


# Teaching /learning approaches:

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- Experiential and explorative
- Innovative and entrepreneurial approach
- Group based learning, peer learning and peer review
- Encourage critical reflection
- Create political awareness and encourage political practice
- Strengthen academic skills; documentation, communication and promotion

# Challenges to the programme

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- Practicing Zambian OTs do not meet the University /HPCZ's requirements for being lecturers/tutors
  - Need for experienced tutors familiar with the local context to teach and supervise students
  - Few practicing OTs to offer supervised placement to students
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# The OT curriculum has the potential to provide Zambia with...

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## Competent and confident practitioners

### Pioneers

- OT practitioners to work within the Zambian health care system and civil society
- Confident and competent OT professionals
- Pioneers in OT to take the profession forward
- OT scholars contributing to an African evidence base

# In summary

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The occupational needs in the Zambian population (ZOTA 2015) informs the curriculum

Integration of emerging African scholarship and development of knowledge relevant to the local context

Acknowledgement of the limitations of western knowledge and experience to the African context

# Acknowledgements

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- ZOTA members Judith Beeson, Iris Nicolaisen, David Likezo and Boyd Sakuwaha

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- NORAD, OT Frontiers UK, Action Zambia
- And other formal and informal contacts too numerous to mention

**We wish Zambia good luck with the further development of the occupational therapy programme and the further development of the occupational therapy profession in Zambia**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION ☺**

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