Occupational Therapy Education in Africa

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Background

• Africa is challenged to educate a critical mass of occupational therapists to meet the populations growing demand and need for health and rehabilitation services.

• WFOT has urged graduate-level training for OTs for decades.

• Very few studies document the number of OT training programs in African countries. (Hum Resour Health 2017 June 12; Bokotro, 2010; Aylers, 2010).

• Healthcare personnel studies focus primarily on nurses and physicians.
Workforce Challenges: Ugandan Example

- 1 in 5 Ugandan over 5 years old has a disability *(Demographic and Health Survey)*
- In 2014 there were >5.6 million PWD in Uganda *(Poverty & Disability in Uganda)*.
- 87 OTs are actively practicing *(Uganda Allied Health Council, 2017)*.
- **UGANDA:** 5,625,000 PWD/87 OTs = **1 OT for every 64,655 PWD**
- **USA:** 56,700,000 PWD/111,791 OTs = **1 OT for every 507 PWD**
Aim & Methods of the Study

Purpose: Describe the number and characteristics of OT education programs in African countries.

Sample: Generated database N=26 of existing programs from:
- WFOT
- Academic Institutions/OT Program websites
- Health Professions Associations
- Licensing Authorities in African countries
Data Collection and Analysis Processes

**Data Collection Tool:** Researcher developed questionnaire asked:
- Year Program was Established
- Type of Degree offered (Dip, BSc, MSc, PhD)
- Academic Faculty Staffing Patterns
- Enrollment Trends and Number of Graduates

**Data Collection Process:** Questionnaire completed by heads of OT programs in African countries and current students in these programs.
- Questionnaire sent to all programs every 2 weeks for a period of 3 months
- Data triangulated: Institutional Heads, Students, WFOT, Licensing Authorities

**Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics calculated for all data
Response Rate

• Total number of OT Programs identified in Africa = 26

• 17 out of the 26 educational programs responded to the survey. Response rate = 65.4%

• Total number of African countries with OT Programs = 15

• 11 out of the 15 African Countries with OT Programs responded: Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe
Findings

• 15 of 54 countries in Africa have OT education programs

• ALL African OT programs are offered at or below the bachelor’s level
  • **Exception**: Most programs in South Africa are at or above bachelor’s level

• Levels of OT Educational Programs in Africa
  • 4 Doctoral level (Ph.D.) programs (South Africa)
  • 5 Master’s level programs
  • 16 Bachelor degree (BSc) programs
  • 7 Diploma (3-year) Programs
African Countries with OT Programs

15 African countries have occupational therapy education programs.
Distribution of OT Programs

- **Countries with OT education programs that responded**
- **Countries with OT education programs that did not respond**
- **OT education programs that responded**
- **OT education programs that did not respond**
Development of OT Educational Programs (N = 20/26)

New OT Programs Opening by Year

- 2010's: 5
- 2000's: 3
- 1990's: 2
- 1980's: 5
- 1970's: 2
- 1960's: 2
- 1950's: 1
- 1940's: 0
Type of Degree Offered

- Diploma (8)
- Bachelor's (17)
- Master's (5)
- PhD (4)
RANKS OF OT EDUCATORS IN AFRICA

There are as many educators in South Africa as in all OT programs in Africa combined.
Discussion: Overall Findings

• There are too few OT educational programs in Africa (N = 32)

• Most educational programs (72%) are at the diploma or bachelors degree level

• There are too few OTs to meet the population needs (approximately 7,453 OTs in Africa for a 1.216 billion people = One (1) OT for 163,156 people )

• The vast majority of OT educators hold the lower ranks in academia
Discussion: Contextualized Findings

• South Africa
  • Has greatest number of advanced OT programs
  • May be positioned to act as a catalyst to build capacity for OT workforce in southern Africa region

• Nigeria
  • Is quickly building capacity to train more OT healthcare workforce
  • Is facilitating international collaboration and exchanges
  • May be positioned to play important role in West African region since it has more schools offering OT programs and the program has taken quite some good time there.

• Need a concerted effort to...
  • Increase the number of OT clinicians and educators with advanced degrees
  • Sustain and develop advanced entry-level OT educational programs at or above the bachelor entry-level
Conclusions and Questions

• The pace of development of OT training programs in Africa seems slow and we are not producing enough OT’s to meet the need.
  • Why and what can be done to increase the pace of development?

• There are areas, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya for example, that may act as catalysts for OT professional development in their regions
  • How can we capitalize on strengths?
  • What strategies can be used to develop strong inter-regional collaboration to increase capacity of rehabilitation services?

• Many OT educational programs collaborate with regional and foreign universities.
  • How can we focus these collaborations to elevate the educational training in the region?
  • What kinds of professional development opportunities are needed to provide supports that allow individuals to gain the skills to move up in academic rank?
Limitations and Challenges

• As a researcher I am a novice and I have learned much about systematic data collection and analysis but also have much to learn.

• The data is incomplete and is only representative of the schools that responded; several did not.

• A variety of challenges including consistent communication, access and lack of one common language hinder survey research and necessitated creative follow-up strategies to elicit data.
Acknowledgements: I am grateful to ...

• To all the heads of OT schools who responded and all students who responded to the development of this research

• The Elizabeth Casson Trust who provided grant support that allows me to present at this Congress.

• Duquesne University Occupational Therapy department who supported me with the financial gap

• Dr. Anne Marie Hansen for her tireless support and sharing her pearls of wisdom with me during the course of the development of this research project.

• Dr. Jaime Muñoz for his consultation and editing that improved the research development and presentation
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