Focusing on ABILITY beyond DISABILITY: Experiential learning from persons with disability

Sok Mui (May) Lim
Associate Professor – Health and Social Sciences Cluster
Director – Centre for Learning Environment and Assessment Development (CoLEAD)
Singapore Institute of Technology

WFOT Congress Cape Town 2018

Funded by Singapore Ministry of Education : Tertiary Education Research Fund grant
Co-investigator and Collaborators

- Dr Tan Bhing Leet – SIT
- Mr Lim Hua Beng – NYP/SIT
- Miss Anne O’Riordan – Queens University
- Mr Abhimanyau Pal, SPD
- Mr Alvin Lim, Bizlink
- Mr Galvyn Goh - SIT
Background

- Queen’s University: Patients as mentor
- Fostering empathy in Occupational Therapy students in essential for client-centred care

Developing empathy as a foundation of client-centred practice:
Evaluation of a university curriculum initiative

doi:10.2182/cjot.05.0008. This paper was published in the CJOT Early Electronic Edition, August, 2005.

Margaret Jamieson • Terry Krupa • Anne O’Riordan • Donna O’Connor • Margo Paterson • Caroline Ball
Susan Wilcox

Key words
- Education, occupational therapy • Empathy • Disabled
Translate and tailored for the Singaporean education and social context

A more equalised and reciprocal power relationship between healthcare professionals and persons with disabilities

“It’s more than the ramp”
Recruitment

- Partnering with NGOs
- Interview of potential participants

Criteria to be a Community Teacher

- Ability to communicate
- Willingness to share
- Ability to see beyond disability
- Pilot with group with physical disability
Experiential Meet-ups

• Three students pair up with a community teacher
• Preparation class (with lecturer with disability)
• Students arrange **three meet-ups** over course of eight weeks
• Can meet at home, workplace, recreational facility or public transport
• Token of honorarium
Range of activities that took places

Productivity
- Working in office
- Travelling on public transport

Leisure
- Bowling
- Wheelchair basketball
- Fishing

Self care
- Housework
- Cooking
- Nail cutting
## Year 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trimester 1 Sep – Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupational Therapy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory And Study Of Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health System - Singapore’s Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomy And Physiology 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological And Sociological Perspective For Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Horizontal alignment and Project based

The course is structured around a horizontal alignment and project-based learning approach, divided into three trimesters:

- **Trimester 1 Sep – Dec**
  - Occupational Therapy Theory and Study of Occupation
  - Health System - Singapore’s Perspective
  - Anatomy and Physiology 1
  - Psychological and Sociological Perspective for Health Sciences

The trimester format allows for a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of occupational therapy and health systems, integrating practical applications and research critical appraisal.
Research Questions

1. To investigate what the experiential learning experience will be when PWDs are engaged to work with students in the community.

2. To understand how students’ attitudes towards disability change as a result of the experience.

3. To uncover if students demonstrate increased empathy and a more holistic understanding of disability.
Research Design

• Mixed methods
• Quantitative: pre-test and post-test to measure attitude change
• Qualitative focus groups
• Thematic analysis to identify themes that explain the attitudinal shifts
Multi-dimensional Attitudes Scale towards Persons with Disabilities (MAS)

MAS measures feelings, behavior, and thinking towards Persons with Disabilities

Gender and Attitudes Toward People Using Wheelchairs: A Multidimensional Perspective

Noa Vilchinsky, Shirli Werner, and Liora Findler

Abstract
This study aims to investigate the effect of observer's gender and target's gender on attitudes toward people who use wheelchairs due to a physical disability. Four hundred four Jewish Israeli students without disabilities completed the Multi-dimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons With Disabilities (MAS). Initially, confirmatory factor analysis was used to revalidate the MAS. Subsequently, a mediational model was conducted to examine the relationships between gender and attitudes.
Quantitative Findings for two cohorts

1. Significant increases in all three sub-components of attitudes (Affect, Cognition, Behaviour)
2. Findings replicate over both batches of Year One students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants included in analyses</th>
<th>Total students enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AY2017 Year 1 cohort</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AY2016 Year 1 cohort</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Findings MAS AY2016 (N=51)

- Students have relatively low negative attitudes during Pre Test.
- Significant reduction in negative attitudes towards Persons with Disabilities in Post test in all 3 subscales.
Quantitative Findings MAS AY2017 (N=72)

- Significant findings replicate in 2017 for second cohort of Year 1 students
Quantitative Findings MAS combined (2016 and 2017) (N=123)

- Affect: Pre 48, Post 38
- Cognition: Pre 45, Post 40
- Behaviour: Pre 44, Post 38
Effect sizes range from low to high (.20 for Cognition sub-component in 2017 to .54 for Affect sub-component in 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>AY2016</th>
<th>AY2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>.54 (High)</td>
<td>.48 (Medium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>.42 (Medium)</td>
<td>.23 (Low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>.44 (Medium)</td>
<td>.39 (Medium)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Findings

• Thematic Analysis identified 4 themes that explained the attitudinal shifts

Changes in emotions

Learning specific to Occupational Therapy

Challenging and changing prior stereotypes

Personal growth
Learning specific to Occupational Therapy

Discover principles covered in classroom:

- Client-centred
- Collaboration

“keep in mind that, like, both of us should be involved in the recovery process rather than, like, me dumping all my knowledge in trying to help them, and giving them as much help as possible”
Changes in Emotions

Anxiety turned into pleasant surprises

“initially, I was actually very scared. There are some topics that are too sensitive to touch on. Like, for example, his accident.

But, actually, during the meet-up it went very smoothly, and he was the one who initiated the entire conversation. Decided to talk about his own accident.”
Challenged Stereotypes

• Challenged previous experience e.g., nursing home visit, PWD selling tissues
• Assumption that Paralympics was easier
• Assumption on leadership positions

“But then after meeting my CT, I realised that actually, it’s achievable without someone at home, or without someone beside you when you are travelling. So, they’re actually pretty independent.”
Personal Growth

Insight and knowledge that the students can internalize to their own personal life beyond the context of disability

“So, there are things that even though we...sometimes complain: oh, I have so much work to do, I want...I want to sleep some more ...... I learnt to appreciate more things around me.”

“I’ve learned that, previously, I used to take a lot of things for granted. I used to wallow in self-pity about almost everything. But then, from my CT, I learned that sometimes there are greater adversities that people face, and they can take it in their stride.”
What our community teachers said...

• “it's good for the... for us and the future patient or clients”

• “Yeah, because we have a slogan saying that, uh, don't be apart from the community. Be a part of the community, you see?”

• “Not because you got disability means not healthy...You can be very healthy.”

• “make me happy lah... make me happy. Proud, you know. Oh, at least they learn something”
Phase Two

Phase two: trained them as standardized patients – create more employment opportunities

Medical schools are turning to this method of training for doctors and nurses. As noted in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, standardized patients have been used in the medical education of doctors and nurses for decades. They create more employment opportunities by creating a standard way to train doctors and nurses.

"We are training them to be more empathetic and caring and to help patients,“ said the journal’s editor, a professor of clinical medicine.

In the United States, there are more than 250,000 standardized patients who are trained to play the role of a patient to help medical students learn how to communicate with patients.

“Actors play patients to train medical students for real-life work.”

They also serve as live models for anatomy lessons; some even teach students how to do physical examinations.
Learning points....

• Important to interview and prepare community teachers
• Preparation class for students
• Shown to also work in Asian context
• Embed project within a module – authentic assessment
• Use of CT as case study for horizontal integration of modules
THANK YOU!

May.lim@singaporetech.edu.sg