Valued Qualities Exhibited by Occupational Therapy Students: An Exploration of Preceptor Perspectives

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Presentation outline

- Background and introduction to the project
- Overview of the study method
- Highlights of the main findings
- Discussion and implications
- Questions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links to ENOTHE 2014 Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Educators will learn which student qualities are most valued during fieldwork placements in a rehabilitation setting.</td>
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<td>➢ Understanding the qualities students are expected to demonstrate during fieldwork placements will assist educators to establish appropriate mechanisms for evaluation.</td>
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<td>➢ Fieldwork is integral to the development of student competency. Awareness of valued student qualities will improve educational partnerships and enable professional growth.</td>
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Why explore student qualities?
Professional profile

Occupational therapy performance is measured by competencies

ACOTRO, 2011; CAOT, 2007
Student competencies

Currently students are evaluated based on their performance in the 7 professional competencies of the Competency Based Fieldwork Evaluation (CBFE)

(Bosser et al., 2008)
Student competencies

☑ Practice knowledge
☑ Clinical reasoning
☑ Facilitating change
☑ Professional interactions
☑ Communication
☑ Professional development
☑ Performance management

(Bosser et al., 2008)
Student competencies

Bosser, et al., 2002
Research questions

What qualities do preceptors value?

- Do these qualities change with practice area?
- Do these qualities change with level of student placement?
Methodology

- **Design**
  - 2 focus groups

- **Recruitment**
  - Occupational therapists from a rehabilitation hospital

- **Inclusion criteria**
  - Experience supervising at least 3 students from the University of Alberta within the last 5 years
Participants

- N=11  (1 male and 10 females)
- First focus group consisted of younger participants with less work experience and who had supervised fewer students compared to the second focus group
- Most preceptors had supervised in the 1:1 model or shared students
- One preceptor had experience with supervising 2 students at one time during a placement
Qualities identified

- Total of 55 qualities identified between the 2 focus groups
<table>
<thead>
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- **Flexible**: Adaptable
- **Emotion**: Core value of OT
- **Resilience**: Sound judgement
- **Communication**: Body language
- **Professionalism**: Build rapport
- **Empathy**: Presents self
- **Self-awareness**: Takes and integrates feedback
- **Time Management**: Common sense
- **Self-esteem**: Team player
- **Body Language**: Planning
- **Problem Solving**: Safe practice
- **Modifies Treatment**: EBP
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Placing the qualities in the CBFE

- This led to extensive discussions between the preceptors
- Most qualities were placed under multiple competencies of the CBFE
- Most qualities fit the descriptors of the CBFE
- Not all CBFE descriptors were mentioned by the preceptors

- Practice knowledge
- Clinical reasoning
- Facilitating change
- Professional interactions
- Communication
- Professional development
- Performance management
Placing the qualities in the CBFE

5 qualities preceptors indicated were not adequately represented in CBFE:

- Soft skills/social skills
- Confidence
- Self esteem
- Understanding boundaries
- Attitude
Do qualities change?

- Valued qualities remain the same for the different rehabilitation programs
  
  i.e. pediatric, stroke, brain injury, geriatric

- Valued qualities may be different for different practice areas
  
  i.e. acute care, rehabilitation, community, private practice

- Preceptors indicated that valued qualities do not change for level of student
  
  i.e. junior vs senior student
Interpersonal skills (soft skills/social skills)

- Therapeutic use of self, build rapport, initiate conversation, effective communication, body language, presenting self, eye contact, confidence, modifying behavior
- Preceptors identified interpersonal skills as the most important quality during placements
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy identifies interpersonal skills as fundamental to the profession
  - Part of life long professional competence

CAOT, 2007
Interpersonal skills

- Although preceptors acknowledge that interpersonal skills need to be evaluated during fieldwork placements they feel these were not well represented in CBFE.
- Preceptors found interpersonal skills difficult to objectively measure and therefore difficult to evaluate. (Duke, 2004)
- Often the reason why a student fails. (Koenig, Johnson, Morano & Ducette, 2003)
Discussion

- Preceptors value a high number of student qualities (Steward, 2001)
- Preceptors found rating the qualities regarding level of importance to be a difficult task. (Steward, 2001)
  - Are all qualities equally important or do individual preceptors value different qualities?
  - If there are individual differences does our current evaluation tool account for this? Is the evaluation fair?
Our University of Alberta MScOT Program recognizes the importance of developing interpersonal skills in our students.

- Student-led seminars focused on the development of therapeutic use of self in Year 1 curriculum
- Deliberate self reflection & peer evaluation throughout the curriculum
- Augmented the CBFE (Bossers et al, 2008) by adding a Professional Behaviour Rubric (© Dalhousie University) to the fieldwork placement evaluation process at every level
Preceptors value interpersonal skills during occupational therapy fieldwork placements

Valued student qualities do not change for placement area or for the level of student
Acknowledgement

- Supervisor Dr. Paula Rushton, post doctoral fellow, The University of Montreal
- Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Alberta Health Services
- University of Alberta
- Focus group participants
References


