Mapping the Future of Occupational Therapy in the 21st Century

Review & Analysis of existing Australian Competency Standards for Entry Level Occupational Therapists and their Impact on Occupational Therapy Curricula Across Australia

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Drivers of OT Curricula

- National OT Competency Standards (OT Australia, 1994)
- WFOT Min. Standards for Education (WFOT, 2002)
- University Specific Generic Graduate Attributes (GGAs)

Educators (ANZCOTE) have become increasingly concerned by the appropriateness & currency of these curriculum drivers:

What are the tensions between drivers?
Are there inconsistencies?
Do they compete or align?

Method

GGAs from each of the 13 universities with OT programs were downloaded from the university websites. Each set was unique. The number of GGAs contained in each ranged from 3 to 12. The statements reflected both meta-cognitive (e.g. personal autonomy) and technical (e.g. literacy & numeracy) requirements. However, there was a stronger emphasis on cognitive rather than psychomotor skills.

Following a thematic analysis of the statements, the sets of university GGAs were compared according to themes within a matrix.

17 common themes were identified but only 4 were universal:

Universal GGA themes

- Effective communication skills
- Attitude of enquiry and research
- Critical thought & analysis
- Values-driven practice

Researchers then conducted a preliminary mapping of the curriculum drivers:

OT Competency Standards (philosophies) vs WFOT vs Universal GGA themes

Found sound alignment with contemporary principles of OT practice. However, ‘critical thought’ component absent from the OT Competency Standards.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Unis</th>
<th>GGAs (2007)</th>
<th>OT Competency Standards (1994)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td>Documentation &amp; Dissemination of Professional Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Attitude of Enquiry &amp; Research</td>
<td>Evaluation of OT Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Critical Thought &amp; Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Values-driven Practice</td>
<td>Professional Attitudes &amp; Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Discipline Specific/ Professional Knowledge</td>
<td>-Management of OT Practice</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-Assessment &amp; Interpretation of Occupations, Roles, Performance &amp; Functional Level of Individuals &amp; Groups</td>
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<td>-Implementation of Individual &amp; Group Interventions</td>
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<td>-Professional Education</td>
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Key Outcomes

- GGAs aligned generally with OT competencies (excepting critical analysis).
- GGAs are necessary but not sufficient alone to drive curriculum of professional programs. OT curriculum leaders require up-skilling to apply GGAs, competencies, and WFOT guidelines in curriculum.
- Demonstrated need for revision of OT Competency Standards to align with contemporary practice requirements and expectations.

Key Challenges to Overcome

- Fostering partnership between OT and Higher Education disciplines within university setting.
- Need to strengthen curriculum leadership within OT.
- Creating opportunities to share curriculum development/renewal processes within OT.