Building the Professional Power of Occupational Therapy through Education

Can masters entry pre registration programmes in New Zealand strengthen the profession?
Panel Discussion
NZAOT Conference
Hamilton, New Zealand
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- Tim Dunn
- Lindsey Farrelly
- Shoba Nayar
- Kirk Reed
- Sara Churches
- Cate Hilly
- Matthew Molineux
- Alison Wicks
1. Background

Alison Wicks
University of Canberra

Co-Moderator
Entry level qualification
WFOT position

- endorses multi-level entry
- supports move to higher level entry

(WFOT 2008)
Qualification creep  (Lall et al, 2003)
Graduate entry: What the literature says in relation to professional power

Masters entry pre registration program in NZ

- Australian graduate entry masters (GEM) program
- undertaken after completion of a bachelor degree
- a stand alone degree
  (Reed, 2012)
2. What the research says

Shoba Nayar
Auckland University of Technology
Rationale and Aim

- Research in 2008 revealed only 9.3% of New Zealand graduates felt very well prepared for practice. An equal percentage reported feeling not prepared at all to fulfil their current work requirements (Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards, Australia and New Zealand).

- To determine new graduate occupational therapists’ preparedness for practice, based on the OTBNZ competencies for registration, in New Zealand.
Methods

- Literature Review
- Online Survey
  - 454 responses (16.7%)  
- Focus Groups

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Findings: Education

- 56% of respondents favoured a four year undergraduate qualification
- 91% of respondents did not support an entry level masters qualification

“Different Places – Different Preparation”
- practical vs theoretical knowledge
- acknowledging diversity within the profession
Findings: Professional Power

- Practice and Profession’s Expectations
  - need for clarity re: expectations of new graduates
  - emerging vs traditional practice settings
  - shifting roles of health professionals

- New graduates rated:
  - Excellent in continuing professional development and culturally safe practice
  - Poor in implementation of occupational therapy
Summary

- Identify emerging fields of practice and associated skill sets
- Review current pre-registration education requirements
- Educate profession on what is involved with ‘graduate entry’ programmes
3. The context of occupational therapy education in Aotearoa New Zealand

Kirk Reed
Auckland University of Technology
Co–Moderator
Historical context
Who has the power?
Barriers and challenges – Do we know what we want?
4. Perspectives of a New Zealand bachelor student

Lindsey Farrelly
Auckland University of Technology
Why Occupational Therapy?

Vs

Attitude

The University of Auckland
New Zealand

Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makaurau

AUT
University
Auckland, New Zealand
AUT Degree Enablement

Socio-political Focus

Evidence based practice

Group enablement skills
Prepared for Practice!
5. Perspectives of an Australian graduate entry masters student

Sara Churches
University of Canberra
Features of graduate entry masters program at UC

- students have a clearer understanding of occupational therapy
- most students have relevant base degree (psychology, exercise physiology, sports movement, nursing, rehabilitation counselling, health science)
- different level of maturity of students
Personal benefits

- I am going to be professionally unique
- professional advancement in my current role
- broader knowledge of rehabilitation
Perceived benefits for the profession

- multi skilled occupational therapists
- graduates with prior experiences as professionals
6. Perspectives of an Australian practitioner

Cate Hilly
Therapy ACT, University of Canberra
My professional journey

- BApp Sci (OT) 2001
- MAapp Sci (OT) by research 2011
- 11 years clinical experience – paediatrics, disability, health, University
Experience in student & graduate supervision

+ UK undergraduate student
Undergraduate vs graduate entry

- Depends on the individual’s:
  - life/work skills
  - experience in disability, child development & team work with other clinicians
  - understanding of occupation
Undergraduate vs graduate entry

Undergraduate:

- generally longer placements e.g. 12 weeks in 3rd or 4th year
- have had observational experiences early in curriculum
- more time spent in curriculum on underlying theory
Postgraduate vs graduate entry

Postgraduate:

- generally shorter placements e.g. max 8 weeks
- observational placements are still placed early in curriculum
- less time spent in curriculum on underlying theory
- independent research skills
7. Experiences of a New Zealand practitioner

Tim Dunn
Mid Central & Whanganui District Health Boards
How I found Occupational Therapy

- Good luck!
- It made sense
- It was unseen yet hugely apparent
- The need for a creative solution to a logical problem
- It was complex in its simplicity
Experience of education programme design

- educator/moderator – NZ undergraduate programmes at AUT & Otago Polytechnic
- educator – UK IPL learning programmes
- evaluator of NZ programmes against OTBNZ, NZAOT and WFOT requirements
- supervisor/practice educator – undergraduate students and post grad. entry students (UK/Aust)
The challenges

- extent that occupational knowledge or understanding is influenced by life experience

- academic requirements of the PG entry vs the development of an occupational view of the world

- development of specific health knowledge
The challenges

- merging of the undergraduate qualification (and consequent identity) with the OT identity
- transference of academic qualification (previous degree) to a ‘short cut’ in preparedness for practice (and associated assumptions)
- relevance of the previous degree?
The challenges

- future work places of NZ occupational therapists
- NZ occupational therapy employment market
8. International perspectives

Matthew Molineux
Griffith University
United Kingdom

bachelors – part-time 4 years
bachelors – full-time 3 years
bachelors – accelerated 2 years
postgraduate diploma – two years
masters – accelerated 2 years

Australia

bachelors – full-time 4 years
masters – accelerated 2 years
Issues with masters...

- acceptable prior degrees
- prior knowledge and skills
- distill essential content
- time to synthesise
- higher expectations
- academic versus professional level
- assumptions of employers
programme or curriculum
curriculum

occupation based

professional identity

fundamental knowledge, skills, attitudes

life long learning
References

Discussion: What are your views?

- What are some other challenges?
- What are the benefits – and for whom?
- How could such programmes be implemented?