

Who and what is shaping our assessment practice? A scoping review of assessment practice in Occupational Therapy education

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Abstract

Background

Health professions education (HPE), including occupational therapy (OT), faces ongoing challenges in developing *valid* assessment practices, which goes beyond test characteristics, but result in evidentiary-based decisions(1). HPE assessment often prioritises dominant epistemological practices, which may not align with OT. This could result in decisions that are not valid for the profession, or the South African (SA) context. This study aimed to examine the current landscape of assessment in OT education.

Methods

A scoping review was conducted using best practice(2,3). Medline, ERIC, Ebscohost, and ProQuest were searched for articles, with additional handsearching and pearl growing, to include all relevant literature on assessment practices in entry-level OT education. Data extraction and a descriptive summary were conducted, followed by thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

Results

Forty studies were included, with the majority (92.5%) coming from the global north. The most discussed assessment methods were objective structured practical exams (OSPE) and competency-based assessments. The justifications for these methods primarily stemmed from their use in medical education. While many papers emphasised a need for alignment with the philosophy of OT, only 26% of the papers demonstrated actual application of these principles in their assessment practice.

Discussion & Conclusions

The findings highlight the influence of both contextual (global north) and professional (medical education) factors on OT assessment practices, with a 'lift and shift' phenomenon evident. Common critiques of current assessments included a lack of fluency to OT, insufficient

alignment with real-world practice, and poor correlation of assessment scores to clinical practice.

Implications for further research

Future research should investigate the impact of this transfer and the influence it has on the validity of decision making. Identifying assessment practices best suited to OT in the SA context, will better equip graduates to embrace the unique value of OT, and provide services that meet the population's needs.

References (maximum three)

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