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Abstract

Fieldwork education is a critical piece to professional development and competency in occupational therapy. As part of their core curriculum, all students enrolled in accredited occupational therapy programs must complete full-time fieldwork experiences under the direct supervision of a licensed occupational therapy practitioner. This component of the student's education relies on the skills and training of the fieldwork educator. Academic programs are expected to support occupational therapy practitioners in their role as fieldwork educators in the form of resource provisions to enhance supervisory skills. However, there are no clear standards that describe how to vet, effectively disseminate, or implement the use of fieldwork educator resources. This study sought to identify and explore how occupational therapy practitioners prepare for the role of fieldwork educator, and how they maintain professional competence in that role through the use and effectiveness of available support tools for fieldwork educators. Results of the study highlight underutilization of readily available materials, effective programs that may not be readily accessed due to cost, and the need to establish more structured educational experiences that would serve to support the role of the fieldwork educator. These findings point to potential areas of fieldwork educator development that may be designed and addressed by Academic Fieldwork Coordinators through both continued research and program development. Future research examining pre and post tool use assessment would provide further insight on effectiveness and progression of growth in the fieldwork educator role.

Keywords

Fieldwork education, fieldwork tools, supervision, fieldwork educator, clinical instructor

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Exploring Fieldwork Educator Development: Preparation Methods and Support Tools

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ABSTRACT

Fieldwork education is a critical piece to professional development and competency in occupational therapy. As part of their core curriculum, all students enrolled in accredited occupational therapy programs must complete full-time fieldwork experiences under the direct supervision of a licensed occupational therapy practitioner. This component of the student's education relies on the skills and training of the fieldwork educator. Academic programs are expected to support occupational therapy practitioners in their role as fieldwork educators in the form of resource provisions to enhance supervisory skills. However, there are no clear standards that describe how to vet, effectively disseminate, or implement the use of fieldwork educator resources. This study sought to identify and explore how occupational therapy practitioners prepare for the role of fieldwork educator, and how they maintain professional competence in that role through the use and effectiveness of available support tools for fieldwork educators. Results of the study highlight underutilization of readily available materials, effective programs that may not be readily accessed due to cost, and the need to establish more structured educational experiences that would serve to support the role of the fieldwork educator. These findings point to potential areas of fieldwork educator development that may be designed and addressed by Academic Fieldwork Coordinators through both continued research and program development. Future research examining pre and post tool use assessment would provide further insight on effectiveness and progression of growth in the fieldwork educator role.

Introduction

Fieldwork education is a critical piece of professional development and competency in the discipline of occupational therapy (Francis et al., 2016; Hunt & Kennedy-Jones, 2010; Kirke et al., 2007). As part of core curriculums, all students enrolled in accredited occupational therapy programs must complete full-time fieldwork experiences under the direct supervision of a licensed occupational therapy practitioner. This component of the students' education relies on the skills and training of the fieldwork educator. Students are dependent on practitioners to provide them with the experiences necessary to integrate and apply theory to practice. Continued competency in the area of fieldwork supervision strengthens the profession's overarching goal to "positively influence health, welfare, education, and vocation at an international level" (WFOT, 2016).

Academic programs are expected to support occupational therapy practitioners in their role as fieldwork educators in the form of resource provisions to enhance supervisory skills (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2018). However, there are no clear standards that describe how to vet, effectively disseminate, or implement the use of fieldwork educator resources. As such, there is a paucity of research in the current literature that examines fieldwork educator resources. In addition, how occupational therapy practitioners prepare to undertake the role of fieldwork educator is not well understood. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify and explore how occupational therapy practitioners prepare for the role of fieldwork educator, and how they maintain professional competence in that role through the use and effectiveness of available support tools for fieldwork educators.

Literature Review

In occupational therapy education, Level II fieldwork serves as the bridge between didactic learning and the clinical environment. The profession relies on clinicians in the field to serve as educators so that students may complete their fieldwork experiences under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapy practitioner. However, support of the student learning experience requires more than just clinical knowledge. The practitioner transitioning to an educator role must acquire a new skillset so that they can provide a positive, supportive, and effective learning experience for students (Chapman, 2016; Kirke et al., 2007; Koski et al., 2013).

Historically, occupational therapy practitioners have experienced barriers and challenges that adversely affect their willingness and ability to assume the role of fieldwork educator. Lack of fieldwork educator training, mentorship and feedback, perceived decrease in productivity, and added role strain have all been reported in the literature (Barton et al., 2013; Hills et al., 2012; Varland, 2017). Fieldwork educator preparation has been dichotomously perceived as critical to developing an educator skillset yet lacking by practitioners. Supervision of fieldwork students has been found to be professionally motivating (Hanson, 2011). However, the experience of assessing student learning needs and providing appropriate and effective feedback is also challenging for occupational therapy practitioners (Hunt & Kennedy-Jones, 2010).

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Commission on Education (COE, 2013) guidelines provide general information about the Level II fieldwork experience, including expectations for fieldwork educator preparation. In general, practitioners need to have a minimum of one year of clinical practice experience following initial certification and be “adequately prepared to serve as a fieldwork educator” (AOTA, 2013, p. 3). The guidelines list methods available to fieldwork educators to facilitate preparedness, including conference attendance, mentorship relationships, online coursework, and use of self-assessment tools such as the Self-Assessment Tool for Fieldwork Educator Competency (SAFECOM). The SAFECOM, developed by AOTA (2009), is a free self-assessment tool that supports the development of skills deemed necessary to be an effective fieldwork educator. It was designed to foster self-reflection so that fieldwork educators can assess their perceived level of competence and identify areas to work on for future professional growth. It provides a means for fieldwork educators to develop specific strategies and measurable outcomes to advance their skills in fieldwork supervision. The SAFECOM addresses professional practice, education, supervision, evaluation, and administration. Educators utilize a Likert rating scale to assess their skills from low proficiency to high proficiency. The SAFECOM also provides a format for recording their professional development plan.

Other resources available are the AOTA Fieldwork Educator Certificate Program (FWECP). The FWECP is a two-day in person training workshop designed for fieldwork educators and academic fieldwork coordinators (AFWCs). The goals of the workshop are to facilitate understanding of the fieldwork educator role, develop effective strategies to integrate learning theories and supervision models, increase skills to provide quality educational opportunities, and to analyze strategies to support best practice in fieldwork education. The workshop is organized into four curricular modules: administration, education, supervision, and evaluation. The cost of the workshop is currently \$225 for AOTA members and \$359 for non-members. Participants receive 15 continuing education credits that can be utilized towards licensure renewal. Pre-covid the workshops were typically delivered in person at different locations throughout the United States; however, virtual workshops are now being offered (AOTA, 2021).

The Fieldwork Experience Assessment Tool (FEAT) was developed (1998) and revised (2001) by the American Occupational Therapy Foundation following a qualitative study completed by six occupational therapy programs across the United States and Puerto Rico. The study highlighted the importance of balancing the interaction between three key components: the fieldwork environment, the fieldwork educator, and the fieldwork student. The FEAT is a self-assessment checklist that assesses this balance and provides a framework to utilize in discussions between the student and the fieldwork educator with emphasis placed on reflection and problem solving. The FEAT can be used as needed anytime during the fieldwork experience. It can also be used at the end of the fieldwork experience as a means to provide information regarding the characteristics of the placement to future students of the site (AOTA, 2001).

In addition to resources available through AOTA, two other resources which were developed outside of the United States are available to fieldwork educators. The Australian-based Clinical Educator's Resource Kit was developed by the Occupational Therapy Practice Education Collaborative-Queensland (OTPEC-Q) in 2006, as part of a clinical placement capacity building initiative to facilitate a commitment to fieldwork education and to help address a shortfall of clinical placements. The kit is a web-based resource that provides education, training, and resources to fieldwork educators. It is organized into five main sections: pre-placement considerations, setting up and sustaining clinical placements, approaches to clinical education, the feedback process and evaluation, and working with students. The website also provides additional templates, worksheets, publications, and presentations to support fieldwork education (OTPEC-Q, 2017).

The Preceptor Education Program (PEP) for Health Professionals and Students, developed by Kinsella et al. (2016), is a Canadian-based, free online interprofessional program that consists of nine interactive self-paced learning modules that include downloadable resources, learning exercises, video case scenarios and references. The learning objectives of the modules include the development of role identity; development of personal learning objectives; preparation for giving and receiving feedback; fostering, and engaging in clinical reasoning and reflective practice; fostering assertive communication and how to manage conflicts; preparation for the formal evaluation process; and learning about peer coaching as a model of professional development. The program was developed for use by both clinical educators and students, with many of the modules designed so that educators and students can work collaboratively through them. At the end of each module, participants are provided with a certificate of completion.

Although the current body of literature points to the overall importance of professional development and ongoing education to support the fieldwork educator (Drynan et al., 2018; Ellington, 2018; Evenson et al., 2015), current research is lacking data on the utilization of these tools and resources. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to identify and explore how occupational therapy practitioners, practicing in the United States of America, prepare for the role of fieldwork educator and how they continue to maintain professional competence in that role through the use and effectiveness of available support tools for fieldwork educators.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to solicit perspectives on fieldwork educator tools and preparation methods that are available to support the occupational therapy practitioner in the concurrent role of fieldwork educator. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to illustrate participant perspectives on each of the tools and to determine if participants employed other methods to support their role as fieldwork educator.

Participant Recruitment

Prospective participants were recruited via a purchased mailing list from AOTA. Post cards containing a brief description of the survey, a URL link, and a QR code to access the online survey platform were sent to each individual on the list. Participants were also recruited at the AOTA 2018 Conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Permission to distribute business cards, containing the short survey description and URL link and QR code, was obtained prior to the conference. In addition, a request to disseminate the survey to fieldwork educators was posted on the AOTA AFWC listserv.

A detailed introduction letter and inclusion criteria was displayed to all who followed the hyperlink or QR code. Participants were eligible to complete the survey if they had a minimum of one year of experience in practice (and therefore were eligible to supervise fieldwork students). Participants who felt they met the outlined inclusion criteria and who chose to participate in the study were required to provide informed consent to participate in the study before the survey was displayed to them. Participants were permitted to skip questions or stop taking the survey at any time.

Instrumentation

Following extensive discussion among the authors regarding their experiences as clinicians, fieldwork educators, AFWCs, and faculty members, a survey was developed to collect information that might elucidate the barriers and facilitators to fieldwork educator preparedness, from the perspective of the educators themselves. The authors were also interested to learn what available educator support tools were being utilized. While the survey was not formally piloted, the authors prepared multiple drafts following each subsequent discussion and review. The final iteration of the survey contained 15 multiple choice/response questions. Six questions collected demographic information and nine collected information about fieldwork supervision. In addition, participants were given the opportunity to provide open-ended text responses.

Data Collection Procedures

Recruitment and data collection occurred after approval by two Institutional Review Boards. Qualtrics™ was used to create the survey and to generate the anonymous link that was provided to potential study participants. All responses were confidential, and identifying information was not collected.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the surveys was entered into IBM SPSS statistics package (Version 26). Descriptive statistics were used to assess and compare demographic information, perceived effectiveness of identified tools and methods used to facilitate the fieldwork educator role, and barriers to tool usage. Multiple response tables were used to calculate the frequencies related to preparation methods used, supports provided by facilities, and supports perceived as important by the fieldwork educators. The Kruskal-Wallis test using pairwise comparison was utilized to compare years of practice to perceived effectiveness of preparation methods and tool usage. The significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Significance values were adjusted using Bonferroni correction for multiple tests (Field, 2013).

Responses to four open-ended questions, which sought to gather more in-depth information from respondents, were summarized. Each of the researchers individually reviewed open-ended responses, extracting relevant and repeating concepts and perspectives. Following individual summarization, the researchers reviewed their findings together to check for “interpretive convergence” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 36) as a means of checking for researcher agreement.

Results

A total of 267 practitioners responded to the survey call. Participants that did not fully complete the survey, did not practice in the United States, or had less than one year of practice were excluded from the study. One hundred and forty-two met the eligibility requirements and were included in this study. Respondents were asked to report their years in practice, highest education level, the region in which they currently practiced, and their current practice setting. Respondents were also queried on how many students they supervise, on average, per year at their facilities. Refer to table 1 for detailed demographic information collected from study participants.

Table 1

Demographics of Eligible Study Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Years in Practice		
1 - 3 years	23	16.2
4 - 6 years	21	14.8
7 - 10 years	22	15.5
> 10 years	76	53.5
Highest Level of Education		
Entry Level Degree	95	66.9
Post Professional Degree	47	33.1
US Region		
Northeast	54	38.8
Southeast	22	15.8
Midwest	34	24.5
Northwest	11	7.9
Southwest	18	12.9
Missing	3	

Table 1 Continued		Frequency	Percent
Practice Setting			
	Pvt. Practice	9	6.4
	Outpatient	30	21.4
	Homecare	5	3.6
	School based	35	25.0
	Hospital	26	18.6
	Subacute	21	15.0
	Community based	14	10.0
	Missing	2	
# Of Students Supervised per Year			
	No students	11	7.7
	1-3 students	104	73.2
	4-6 students	19	13.4
	7-10 students	4	2.8
	>10 students	4	2.8

Quantitative Data

Table 2 presents multiple response data for fieldwork educator preparation methods, and perceived effectiveness of those methods. Survey participants were asked to rate their perceived effectiveness of the preparation method(s) they had utilized and/or received using a Likert scale ranging from “not effective” to “extremely effective.”

Participants had the ability to choose and rate multiple methods from the list provided. The majority of participants who responded to this question reported the use of continuing education as a means of preparing for their role as fieldwork educator, with the majority of those respondents rating continuing education as “very effective.” Very few participants (31) reported that fieldwork educator preparation had been a component of their entry level degree program. The majority found this preparation to be at least moderately effective. Forty-seven participants reported having a post professional degree, of which only 12 reported that fieldwork educator preparation had been a component of their degree program. Responses regarding the effectiveness of this preparation was variable, with no clear indicator that these post professional programs provided effective preparation.

Table 2*Perceived Effectiveness of Fieldwork Educator Preparation Methods*

Method to Prepare	Participant Responses (n)	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective
Continuing Education	(85)	1.2% (1)	8.2% (7)	30.6% (26)	37.6% (32)	22.4% (19)
Entry Level Degree	(31)	6.5% (2)	25.8% (8)	35.5% (11)	22.6% (7)	9.7% (3)
Post Professional Degree	(12)	25% (3)	16.7% (2)	25% (3)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)
Mentorship	(44)	-	4.5% (2)	31.8% (14)	45% (20)	18.2% (8)
On the Job Training	(67)	-	10.4% (7)	31.3% (21)	47.8% (32)	10.4% (7)
Emulation of Fieldwork Educator	(64)	1.6% (1)	10.9% (7)	20.3% (13)	45.3% (29)	21.9% (14)

Table 3 presents multiple response data for five fieldwork educator support tools, including their use by fieldwork educators and their perceived effectiveness. Three of the tools presented were chosen by the authors to be included in the survey based on their availability to educators through the AOTA: the SAFECOM, the FEAT, and the FWECP. Notably, 61 out of 103 participants who responded about the FWECP (59.2%) reported they did not use the FWECP. A similar percentage of non-use was apparent for both the SAFECOM and FEAT (41.7% and 59.6% of participants who responded to these items respectively).

Table 3*Use and Perceived Effectiveness of Fieldwork Support Tools*

Fieldwork Educator Assessment Tools	Participant Responses (n)	Do Not Use	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective
SAFECOM	(120)	(50)	1.4% (1)	15.7% (11)	47.2% (33)	31.4% (22)	4.3% (3)
FWECP	(103)	(61)	-	7.1% (3)	21.4% (9)	26.3% (11)	45.2% (19)
FEAT	(104)	(62)	2.4% (1)	14.3% (6)	50% (21)	26.2% (11)	7.1% (3)
Queensland	(86)	(84)	-	-	50% (1)	50% (1)	-
PEP	(85)	(77)	-	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	50% (4)	-

Study participants were also asked to identify what supports they deemed as necessary to assume or improve their role as a fieldwork educator. In addition, participants were asked to report what, if any supports were provided by their employer. One hundred and twenty-six participants responded to this question. Twenty two percent of respondents (n=28) indicated that they did not receive any type of supports from their employer. Release time and funding for continuing education were the most frequently reported supports provided by employers (68.3%, n=86 and 44.4%, n=56, respectively). The majority of respondents (88.1%, n=118) stated that an established and structured facility-based fieldwork program would be necessary for them to assume and/or improve their role as a fieldwork educator. However only 23.8% (n=30), reported receiving this type of support.

Table 4 presents ratings of perceived barriers to use of the fieldwork educator tools reported by participants. Fifty-four out of 104 respondents (51.9%) reported they were not familiar with the SAFECOM tool, although it is readily available on the AOTA website and can be accessed by both members and non-members. Barrier perceptions regarding the FEAT were similar, with 59 out of 90 (65.6%) respondents noting unfamiliarity with this tool. As predicted, the overwhelming majority of respondents were unfamiliar with the Queensland and the PEP. The FWECF, which was rated highly effective by 19 out of 42 respondents (45.2%), was also rated as too costly by many of the respondents who reported barriers to use of this tool (39 out of 99).

Table 4*Perceived Barriers of Tool Usage*

Fieldwork Educator Assessment Tools	Responses (n)	Time	Cost	Familiarity	Access	Evidence	Translation
SAFECOM	(104)	20.2% (21)	1% (1)	51.9% (54)	5.8% (6)	6.7% (7)	14.4% (15)
FWECP	(99)	9.1% (9)	39.4% (39)	28.3% (28)	19.2% (19)	-	4.0% (4)
FEAT	(90)	20.0% (18)	-	65.6% (59)	2.2% (2)	6.7% (6)	5.6% (5)
Queensland	(88)	2.3% (2)	1.1% (1)	92.0% (81)	3.4% (3)	-	1.1% (1)
PEP	(89)	5.6% (5)	3.4% (3)	79.8% (71)	6.7% (6)	2.2% (2)	2.2% (2)

Note: Time= too time consuming, Cost= too costly, Familiarity = not familiar with the tool, Access= not easily accessible, Evidence= lack of evidence to support validity of the tool, Translation= difficulty translating the tool into practice

Qualitative Data

Respondents were asked to describe additional barriers to fieldwork educator tools that were not identified on the survey. Multiple open-ended responses indicated a lack of awareness that fieldwork educator tools existed. Responses such as “Did not know about these trainings,” “Was not aware these tools were available,” and “Lack of awareness of tools” signify barriers that exemplify a potential gap in communication between the profession, academic programs, and fieldwork educators.

A second question permitted respondents to share additional information about the supports currently provided by their facilities. Responses were divided between what might be considered tangible supports such as “paid time off” or “career-ladder” incentives and intangible supports such as “recognition” and “positive feedback.” Respondents felt that support was also evident when the facility was “welcoming for students.”

Respondents were asked to describe other supports they felt were necessary to assume or improve their role as a fieldwork educator that were not included as survey options. Multiple respondents noted that increased education provided by academic programs would be a valuable support. Others noted that fieldwork education, specifically “free fieldwork education training,” would help support their role. One participant stated: “Dedication for educating future occupational therapy students” on the part of the facility was an important support that needs to be in place for success.

A final open-ended question asked respondents to share activities and resources they themselves had used and found to positively support and enhance their professional competency within the role of fieldwork educator. It appeared that fieldwork educators relied on formal educational processes including the AOTA Fieldwork Educator Certificate Program, AOTA conference attendance, association conferences, continuing education courses, and programs and training offered locally through school programs. Informal processes that respondents viewed as successful included independent study (i.e., reading articles and textbooks), networking with peers, prior experiences, and feedback from multiple stakeholders (i.e., students, AFWCs, and site supervisors).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore how occupational therapy practitioners in the United States prepare for the role of fieldwork educator. Specifically, the study examined fieldwork educator perspectives on available preparation methods and support tools designed to enhance their ability to effectively supervise students and grow professionally in the fieldwork educator role. While a number of studies have examined desired qualities and characteristics of fieldwork educators (Andonian, 2017; Dunn et al., 2020; Karp, 2020) to our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to examine fieldwork educator perspectives on their preparation methods and tools used in preparation for this role.

The COE Guidelines (AOTA, 2013), established to describe the Level II fieldwork environment and the roles and responsibilities of both the educator and student, outlines the minimum requirements for fieldwork educator preparation. The document also includes a list of resources that can be used by practitioners to help develop and support their educator role. Resources named in the COE guidelines document were included and presented to participants in the context of this study to determine which of these resources were being utilized and their perceived effectiveness in supporting the role of the fieldwork educator. Responses revealed that while practitioners recognized the need for, and value of, effective supervision of students (Ryan et al., 2018), accessible fieldwork educator tools, education, and organizational support for the role of fieldwork educator often remain elusive and incongruent across fieldwork settings and facilities.

Occupational therapy practitioners who choose to assume the role of fieldwork educator are required to achieve balance where they maintain professional clinical competency, but also continue to enhance and utilize their skills as educators. In addition, student perceptions of their clinical experiences are largely derived from their developed professional relationships with fieldwork educators (Brown et al., 2013), pointing to the need for continued support of growth and development of fieldwork educator skills. Fieldwork educator perceptions also hold relevance as evidenced in the current study. Open-ended responses revealed that fieldwork educators, who perceived their facilities and their administrators as welcoming to students and understanding of the importance of their role as educators, considered this a conducive environment for fieldwork

education. These findings are in line with previous studies in both the occupational therapy and nursing fields where administrator support through understanding and value of clinical education was linked to a more positive clinical learning environment (Drynan et al., 2018; Skaalvik et al., 2011).

In their national survey of fieldwork educators, Evenson et al. (2015) reported that the top perceived benefits of assuming the role of fieldwork educator included “professional development” and “altruistic ideals” (p. 3). The benefit of ongoing professional development, in the form of continuing education and training for fieldwork educator preparation, has been previously documented (Drynan et al., 2018; Kirke et al., 2007). Participants in the current study also illustrated this in their answers to the multiple response question regarding supports provided by their facilities. Both the FWECP and other continuing education opportunities were regarded as “very effective.” Free text responses illustrated the reported benefits of national and state conferences for fieldwork educator preparation. Yet, close to 20% of respondents in this study reported they had not received any education to prepare them to be fieldwork educators, indicating that further exploration of barriers may be prudent to understand why some fieldwork educators still do not utilize available tools and supports.

The role of the AFWC in supporting the growth and development of fieldwork educators cannot be underestimated. Stutz-Tannenbaum et al. (2015) identified and clustered the multiple tasks associated with the role of the AFWC. Tasks related to designing collaborative learning experiences with fieldwork educators and developing fieldwork educator manuals were noted as important to the AFWC role. The current ACOTE educational standards require that fieldwork programs include a mechanism for “providing resources for enhancing supervision” (ACOTE, 2018, p. 66). However, the current study illuminated significant barriers. First, there was a distinct lack of knowledge about fieldwork educator support tools that are readily available and free of charge. High percentages of non-familiarity were reported for the PEP and the Queensland, which are also freely available and accessible. Second, while the FWECP tool was rated by the majority of users as highly effective, the cost of this program was a significant barrier to its use. The AFWC may play a critical role in educating clinicians about the availability of these tools and providing organized and ongoing support for their use by fieldwork educators to support professional growth.

Limitations

This study utilized a researcher-prepared survey which was not used in any previous studies. The survey was not piloted prior to use in the study. Therefore, reliability and validity cannot be established or measured. Although respondents were given the option to expand on their methods preparation and support tools used via open-ended responses, the examples provided were limited to methods and tools familiar to the researchers. In addition, this study employed survey questions designed for multiple responses. However, because the researchers did not include ranking of the presented support tools, it is not possible to determine which were perceived as most useful by respondents among the choices presented (Treadwell & Davis, 2020).

Future Research

Future research examining how fieldwork educators choose methods of preparation would provide more in-depth data about fieldwork educator preferences and valuable information that could guide the development and dissemination of viable and accessible programs that are meaningful and valuable to current and potential fieldwork educators. Research using pre and post assessment methods and rank order choice to analyze currently available support tools would provide further insight about their effectiveness in supporting professional growth.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

As the profession continues to transform, occupational therapy education programs must continue to improve the methods by which they facilitate student preparation for transition to practice. By our own professional education standards, this must include preparation to take on the role of fieldwork educator. Learning how to organize and nurture one's own professional development should start in classrooms and should include an introduction to fieldwork educator preparation methods and support tools, such as the ones included in this current study. In addition, AFWCs may play a critical role in organizing, designing, and implementing professional development experiences to support fieldwork educators. Suman and Provident (2018) found that online professional development modules, designed to support school-based practitioners, increased their self-perceived efficacy in the role of fieldwork educator. Ellington and Janes (2020) found that AFWC-led online journal clubs, provided effective professional development experiences for fieldwork educators. These two studies are examples of the opportunities that AFWCs have in playing an integral role in designing experiences that may support fieldwork educator development and growth.

Conclusion

This cross-sectional survey was designed to explore the use of available tools and preparation methods that may support fieldwork educator development. In addition, the survey sought to understand educators' perceived barriers to utilizing these resources. Results of the study highlight underutilization of readily available materials, cost barriers affecting access to programs, the need to establish more structured educational experiences, and the importance of facility support for practitioners in the fieldwork educator role. These findings point to potential areas of fieldwork educator development that may be designed and addressed by AFWCs through both continued research and program development.

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