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Abstract

Recent research related to occupational therapy education identified the need for a conceptual model to help guide the design and implementation of occupation-centered education. Spurred by this research, the Subject-centered Integrative Learning Model-Occupational Therapy (SCIL-OT) emerged as a model to enable educators and learners to keep the concept of occupation at the center of all occupational therapy education and learning. That work, largely focused on teaching students to connect non-occupation content to occupation (Hooper et al., 2020). However, teaching students about occupation directly can also benefit from using the SCIL-OT model to design learning experiences. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: 1) to demonstrate how the SCIL-OT model guided the development of a semester-long occupational balance assignment, and 2) to introduce the Occupational Experience Profile (OEP) used in the assignment. Content analysis of students' written components of the semester-long occupation-based learning assignment revealed two themes: 1) completion of the occupational balance assignment contributed to an increased awareness of occupation and the dynamics of occupation and 2) students' learning revealed interconnections between self, occupation, health, clients, and OT practice. Use of the SCIL-OT enhances students' abilities to make connections; however, educators need to continually create and communicate explicit connections with and to occupation.

Keywords

Scholarship of teaching and learning, Subject-Centered Learning Model, Occupational Experience Profile, occupational balance

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Use of the Subject-centered Integrated Learning Model and the Occupational Experience Profile to Promote Students' Connections among Occupation, Self, and the Profession

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ABSTRACT

Recent research related to occupational therapy education identified the need for a conceptual model to help guide the design and implementation of occupation-centered education. Spurred by this research, the Subject-centered Integrative Learning Model-Occupational Therapy (SCIL-OT) emerged as a model to enable educators and learners to keep the concept of occupation at the center of all occupational therapy education and learning. That work, largely focused on teaching students to connect non-occupation content to occupation (Hooper et al., 2020). However, teaching students about occupation directly can also benefit from using the SCIL-OT model to design learning experiences. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: 1) to demonstrate how the SCIL-OT model guided the development of a semester-long occupational balance assignment, and 2) to introduce the Occupational Experience Profile (OEP) used in the assignment. Content analysis of students' written components of the semester-long occupation-based learning assignment revealed two themes: 1) completion of the occupational balance assignment contributed to an increased awareness of occupation and the dynamics of occupation and 2) students' learning revealed interconnections between self, occupation, health, clients, and OT practice. Use of the SCIL-OT enhances students' abilities to make connections; however, educators need to continually create and communicate explicit connections with and to occupation.

Introduction

In her 1998 essay titled “Occupation: The Keystone of a Curriculum for a Self-Defined Profession,” Elizabeth Yerxa discussed the need for occupation to become “the central organizing framework of a future-oriented curriculum...” (p. 366). Yerxa (1998) reasoned that an occupation-centered curriculum would differentiate occupational therapy from other professions, create opportunity for new scholarship on occupation, and prepare students for future practice. Whiteford and Wilcock (2001) concurred with Yerxa, adding that the centralization of occupation in curricula would help unite the profession’s knowledge base and unify the language of our profession, thus advancing the distinctive nature of occupational therapy.

The profession has made some progress in advancing occupation-centered education. The *Journal of Occupational Science* launched a new section titled *Teaching Occupation* to encourage education research focused on how occupation can be taught (Hocking, 2016), however limited work has been published (Townsend & Hocking, 2019). Bagatell and Womack (2016) are one exemplar. They provided an illustration of how occupation can be placed in the foreground to enable students to understand the relationship between occupation and body structures and functions.

In 2018, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) revised the Occupational Therapy Education Research Agenda. Research priorities continued to include development and appraisal of specific occupational therapy education models to examine the core concepts embedded in occupational therapy education. Current works focused on this priority include an exploration of how occupation is taught across occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant curricula in the United States (Hooper et al., 2018; Krishangiri et al., 2017; Price et al., 2017), and teaching and learning scholarship in threshold concepts (Fortune & Kennedy, 2014; Rodger et al., 2015). Threshold concepts in occupational therapy portray the essence or nature of the field. Rodger and Turpin (2011) proposed five threshold concepts for occupational therapy, including purposeful and meaningful occupation. Educators’ perspectives on the use and utility of threshold concepts to support a curricular redesign indicated that threshold concepts offered a shared and consistent language and enabled focused and integrated learning for students (Rodger et al., 2015). Fortune and Kennedy (2014) further advocated for the use of occupation and its relationship with health and well-being as an essential discipline bound threshold concept.

Hooper and colleagues published several studies reporting how occupation is taught at a curricular level across 25 different United States programs (Hooper et al., 2018; Krishangiri et al., 2017; Price et al., 2017). Krishnagiri and colleagues (2017) pointed out that occupation often still remains implicit or absent from many occupational therapy curricula. The authors proposed that for occupation to become the central organizing framework of curricula, occupation must be taught explicitly (Krishnagiri et al., 2017). In response to the need for a conceptual model that provides a comprehensive theoretical approach to teaching occupation within occupational therapy, Hooper and colleagues (2020a, 2020b) developed the Subject-centered Integrated Learning Model (SCIL-OT)

to guide development of occupation-centered curricula, courses and assignments. Likewise, Adler and Berg (2018) developed the Occupational Experience Profile (OEP), a client-centered and occupation-focused assessment to enable users to better understand the relationship between time use and occupation. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how the use of the SCIL-OT guided the development of an occupational balance assignment, using the OEP, in an effort to place occupation at the forefront of the curriculum. By combining the use of the SCIL-OT with the use of the OEP, the authors hoped to elucidate the importance of explicitly making connections to and with occupation throughout all aspects of the occupational balance assignment.

Overview of the SCIL-OT Model

The SCIL-OT, composed of key elements and guiding principles, provides a structure to help educators centralize occupation. Table 1 summarizes the five key elements of the SCIL-OT and the five corresponding principles, which guide instructors on ways to think about and connect the five elements and keep occupation as the central organizing framework. “Learning on-the-lines” occurs when instructors create learning opportunities that enable students to make connections among the five elements of the model (Hooper et al., 2020b, p. 11). Three educational learning theories underpin the guiding principles and how the elements interrelate with each other: idea-based learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011), integrative learning (Huber & Hutchings, 2004), and transformative learning (Magolda & King, 2012). For additional information see Hooper and colleagues’ writings on the model (Hooper et al., 2020a; Hooper et al., 2020b).

Overview of the Occupational Experience Profile

Designed as a client-centered and occupation-focused assessment, the OEP is a time use diary intended to convey what people do and experience in the context of a 24-hour period of time (Adler & Berg, 2018). The developers created the OEP to enable individuals to become aware of the inter-relationships between occupational performance (doing), occupational experience and the elements of the situational context that influence and are influenced by each other (Fisher & Marterella, 2019). The OEP is intended to promote discovery of the meanings associated with everyday occupations, which according to Hasselkus (2011) “lies in the experiencing of our daily lives” (p. 185). Previous studies with the Pleasure, Productivity, and Restoration (PPR) Profile, the predecessor of the OEP, have demonstrated the utility of using the time-use diary to aid in goal development to promote occupational engagement in various populations (Adler et al., 2017; Adler & Fox, 2020).

Table 1

Overview of the Elements and Guiding Principles in the SCIL-OT Model (Hooper et al., 2020b)

Elements of the SCIL-OT	Guiding Principles of SCIL-OT
1. "Occupation at the core" (p. 3) Specific occupations (taxonomies) and the dynamics of occupation (the ways in which occupation and health influence each other)	Occupation is the core subject of occupational therapy; therefore, occupation is the core subject of occupational therapy education (p.5).
2. "The topics that students learn" (p.3) (knowledge and skills used in practice by occupational therapists)	"The topics we teach, although important and necessary, are not distinctive to occupational therapy and lack a cohesive logic" (p. 6).
3. "Knowledge community" (p. 3) (those people who have insights into occupation and key topics)	"As members of a large knowledge community, educators and students together learn and develop knowledge of occupation and related topics" (p. 9).
4. "Learning context" (p. 3) (internal and external influences on teaching and learning and the curricula)	The learning context shapes all elements of the SCIL-OT model (p. 10).
5. "The interconnecting lines" (p. 3) (the ways that all of the other elements interconnect with each other)	"Teaching, learning, and assessment occur "on the lines" (p. 11).

Occupational Balance Assignment

The *Occupational Balance Assignment* was integrated into the first year, second semester course, *Human Occupation: Concepts and Process*. In this required course, entry level master and doctorate occupational therapy students explored key concepts of human occupation such as meaning and purpose, balance, occupational patterns, and occupational and activity analysis. During the same semester, students were also enrolled in courses focused on therapeutic groups, evaluation, and assessment, teaching and learning, applied research and a Fieldwork Level 1 experience. Previous coursework completed during the first semester included courses in human development, neuroscience, and clinical medicine, along with an overview of occupational therapy and a course in related theories (Department of Occupational Therapy, University of the Sciences, 2018).

Aligned with the program's overall curriculum design and learning philosophy, the primary instructor used the SCIL-OT (Hooper et al., 2020b), along with key concepts from Pierce's book (2003) *Occupation by Design: Building Therapeutic Power* to create the *Occupational Balance Assignment*. The aim of the semester-long assignment, as an experiential learning project, was to foster students' understanding and appreciation of occupation, and the role of occupation in one's health and well-being (dynamics of occupation). The assignment reflected Pierce's (2003) notion of a balanced life as a blend of restoration, pleasure and productivity experiences associated with everyday occupations. In addition, Pierce's (2003) seven phase design process provided a way to organize the assignment to help students recognize the key steps to making change (see Table 2).

Students were asked to study their own occupations, and how they could achieve occupational balance in their lives. At the beginning of the semester, students completed the OEP and reflected on their results; they then picked one to two occupations for self-study - occupations could be something the students always wanted to do, or something they wanted to do better. Students wrote goals and developed strategies to work towards their goals. For the remainder of the semester, students implemented their goal(s). Students had the opportunity to meet in their learning communities (weekly lab sections) to share progress, discuss challenges, and identify revisions or changes as needed. At the end of the semester, students again completed the OEP, and reflected upon knowledge gained. Students presented a short PowerPoint presentation on what they learned about themselves, and about occupation. Refer to Table 2 for the primary instructor's initial planning of the assignment.

Table 2*Overview of the Major Steps of the Occupational Balance Assignment*

Semester Timeline	Weeks 1 & 2	Week 2	Weeks 3-13	Week 13 & 14
Students' Responsibilities	1. Complete the Occupational Experience Profile (OEP) for 2 weekdays and 1 weekend day 2. Complete first guided reflection	1. Develop goal(s) and strategies for implementation of personal goal(s) based upon findings from the OEP	2. Implement self-selected goals 2. Discuss weekly in-lab; re-assess progress; edit goals or strategies as needed	1. Complete a second OEP for 2 weekdays and 1 weekend days 2. Complete second guided reflection 3. Present PowerPoint
Phase of Pierce's (2003) design process	Phase I Motivation Phase II Investigation (assessment)	Phase III Definition (Problem identification) Phase IV Ideation (Strategy development) Phase V Idea Selection (Strategy selection)	Phase VI Implementation (Intervention) Phase VII Evaluation (Re-assessment)	Phase VII Evaluation (final)

Completion of the Occupational Experience Profile and Initial Guided Self-Reflection

In the first step of the *Occupational Balance Assignment*, students completed the OEP (Atler & Berg, 2019) for three days: 2 weekdays and 1 weekend day. This occupation-focused assessment provided a natural learning context for students to begin to examine the dynamics of occupation in their own lives, illustrating Guiding Principles 1 and 4 of the SCIL-OT. The students recorded in their own words, each of their occupational performances (e.g. drinking coffee with friends) that occurred in a 24-hour period of time. Then they selected one of 15 predefined categories of occupational performance, such as having fun, maintaining health, or caring for home to allow them to offer their own perspective on the specific purpose of the occupational performance in the situated context. Next, students recorded when, where and with whom each occupational performance occurred. Lastly, they rated their levels of each of the four

occupational experiences: pleasure (experiencing enjoyment), productivity (experiencing a sense of accomplishment), restoration (feeling renewed or re-gaining energy), and social connection (feeling a sense of relatedness or belongingness). See Figure 1. Each experience was conceptualized across a continuum ranging from positive to negative experiences, such as pleasure to displeasure. The first three experiences associated with the OEP's predecessor, the PPR Profile (Atler, 2014; Atler, 2015a; Atler, 2015b), were based on the work of Pierce (2003). Social connection was incorporated into the OEP based on theory and research that social connection is an important experience associated with occupation (Atler, 2015a; Reed et al., 2010). Importantly, these four experiences were not meant to be comprehensive of all experiences, but instead a place to begin to explore the interrelated nature of occupational experiences, with occupational performances and elements of the situational context.

Figure 1

Excerpt from a Completed Occupational Experience Profile

Time began	Time ended	Main activity	Occupational categories		With: Alone Other	Where:		Pl. ^a	PR ^a	Rest ^a	Con ^a
			I considered this activity to be: Select the BEST ONE			Home Away	Indoor Outdoor				
7:00	9:30	Studied for my exam	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for self	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for others	Alone	H	I	2	3	2	1
			<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for home	<input type="checkbox"/> Getting goods/services							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Having fun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enriching/learning							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Exper. spirituality	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining health							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting obligations							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Socializing	<input type="checkbox"/> Traveling							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/> Working							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Doing nothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____							
9:30	10:35	Went shopping with my friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for self	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for others	Other	A	I	5	4	3	6
			<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for home	<input type="checkbox"/> Getting goods/services							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Having fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Enriching/learning							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Exper. spirituality	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining health							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting obligations							
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Socializing	<input type="checkbox"/> Traveling							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/> Working							
			<input type="checkbox"/> Doing nothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____							

*Pl. = Pleasure, PR = Productivity, Rest = Restoration, Con = Social Connection

Comments: *It was really fun to get to see my friends after studying for a very difficult exam.*

Following completion of the OEP, students initiated self-reflection on the OEP process and data, using questions provided by the instructor. Questions were designed to help students make connections between occupation, the dynamics of occupation, related topics, and students' own life experiences, illustrating Guiding Principle 5 of the SCIL-OT. Example questions included: *What patterns did you see in how contextual elements supported or challenged your occupations, and What have you learned about what you value in relation to your daily life and what you find meaningful?* Additionally, students

began to think about what aspects of daily life they would like to change to achieve a sense of occupational balance and well-being. The importance of self-reflection was based on the premise that as people gain an understanding of the complexity of their daily occupations, the knowledge gained can lead to enabling change in their own everyday occupations to support their health and well-being (Clark et al., 2012; Wastberg et al., 2013). The lead instructor believed that once students learned this process for their own lives, they would also gain an embodied experience for supporting similar awareness with others (Price et al., 2017). Personally understanding the occupation-health connection would then make it more likely they would address health through occupation with others.

Development, Implementation and Reflection on an Occupation-based Goal

Following their initial self-reflection, students met in small groups within their assigned lab to share, collaborate, and refine one or two specific aspects of occupation they wanted to modify to support greater occupational balance. Students created measurable goals and identified strategies to use to move towards their goals. Common goal areas included: increasing health (i.e. cooking for health, activities to decrease stress); increasing pleasure and restoration (i.e. painting, reading) and improving formal and informal learning (i.e. getting organized, learning Spanish, keeping up with the news). Strategies varied based on the specific goals but included strategies such as scheduling, using reminders, and involving others. Throughout the semester, students met weekly in their small groups to discuss progress, challenges, and potential changes as they attempted to reach their self-identified goals. Using SCIL-OT Guiding Principle 3, students learned and developed knowledge in their knowledge community of peers (small groups in their lab sections) and instructors, resulting in the co-construction of knowledge. The aim was for students to appreciate the importance of working with others and transfer these small group learning opportunities to working with clients in the community. Toward the end of the semester, students again completed the OEP, and completed a final reflection using guided questions posed by the instructor. The assignment purpose and objectives directed the development of the reflection questions. Sample questions included: *What have you learned about yourself, occupations, performance patterns, contexts, and environments?* and *What from this assignment do you want to take with you as you continue in the program and become an occupational therapist?*

Occupational Balance Written Assignments: Data Collection and Analysis

Students' two written reflection papers and PowerPoint slides were analyzed to examine students' perspectives on their learning related to occupation and the dynamics of occupation. The first paper included a synthesis of their OEP self-reflections, and their identified goals and strategies. For the second paper, completed at the end of the semester, students identified their goals and reported their progress towards the goals, compared the results of the first and second set of OEPs completed, and discussed how they viewed the intersection of inter-relationships between who they are, what they

do and experience, and their surroundings (resources and communities). The PowerPoint slides summarized key components of their assignments, what they learned about themselves personally, and as a future practitioner, and recommendations for changes to the assignment.

The Institutional Review Board of the University granted approval for this project, where it received exempt status. Students were informed about this project through an email in which the assignment was briefly described. On the first day of lab, students indicated their decision to consent or not. All consents were placed in a sealed envelope and were not examined prior to grades being posted for the semester. All student identifiers were removed from student reflections by a third-party before being reviewed. Lab instructors who worked with and graded students' assignments were not a part of the research team; however, the primary instructor and co-instructor were involved in both roles.

The authors conducted content analysis to examine student written reflections (Bengtsson, 2016). All students' work was independently reviewed and coded by at least two analysts prior to coming together to discuss until consensus was reached. Using inductive coding, we allowed the codes to emerge from the data, guided by the questions posed in the written reflection, which focused on the concepts of the dynamics of occupation connected to the OEP. We employed an iterative process, always coming back to the students' written work to check our findings.

Outcomes from Analysis of Students' Written Assignments

All 61 students in the Human Occupation course consented to allow their de-identified reflections and PowerPoints slides to be analyzed. The main focus of the analysis was to uncover what students understood and appreciated about occupation and role of occupation in one's health and well-being (dynamics of occupation). Two overall themes emerged: 1) completion of the occupational balance assignment contributed to an increased awareness of occupation and the dynamics of occupation and 2) students' learning revealed interconnections between self, occupation, health, clients, and occupational therapy practice. Students' recommendations for changes to the assignment follows a description of the two themes.

Completion of the Occupational Balance Assignment Contributed to an Increased Awareness of Occupation and the Dynamics of Occupation

Many students reported they were unaware of what they did (their specific occupations) and what they experienced as evidenced by the following quotes: "I found myself analyzing areas of my daily life that I would normally not think twice about," and, "I realized I spend too much time watching television and not enough time on productive activities, such as schoolwork." Another student stated "it (the assignment) really made me think about my daily routines, things that I enjoyed doing, and things that I would like to do." Others recognized preferences for certain activities, or what was important to them. For example, a student stated "[I] took notice of all the things I chose to engage in," and then went on to share "in my opinion, to have a balanced life it is important to

be productive and restorative, but mostly to find pleasure and connect with others.” Still another student shared insight into several specific occupations, as she compared current and past occupations:

I thought watching TV was really pleasurable but I learned that it really is not meaningful for me, it’s more or less an activity I partake in to pass the time. Looking back, I felt my best when I was productive, outdoors, and had active leisure pursuits that held a lot of meaning for me, such as sports. While I understand I do not have to be as active as I once was, perhaps it’s time to find a good balance between active and being sedentary.

Additionally, some students reported a new awareness of learning about specific occupations and the dynamics of occupations concurrently. One student reflected on the specific occupation of socializing: “[m]y friend is overseas so not talking to them for long periods of time makes our rare conversations on the phone very pleasurable, more pleasurable than they would be when they are home.” The student not only became aware of a socializing activity but how the location of the friend, and frequency of connecting influenced how the occupation was experienced (the dynamics of occupation). Another student shared:

I realized that the activities I spend my time on are influenced by the people I am with and where I am at. When I was at places like the train station and not with people I am familiar with, I just sat on my phone waiting alone instead of socializing or doing anything productive. But I realized that when I am at home with my roommates, I am more motivated to be productive and interact socially.

Another student recognized the dynamics of occupation as they reflected on the fact that relationships, while important, may not always be enjoyable.

When I first learned about occupational balance, I assumed that all important relationships are probably very pleasurable and restorative. By examining my own occupations I’ve begun to see that this is not necessarily the case. My relationship with my children, for example, is often not restorative; spending time with my kids can be exhausting, and takes every ounce of patience, creativity and perseverance I have. Being a parent though is an occupation that is very meaningful to me.

Students’ Learning Revealed Interconnections Between Occupation and Self, Health, Clients and Occupational Therapy Practice

When students were asked what they would like to remember as they continued their journey toward becoming occupational therapy practitioners, students’ comments revealed on-the-line learning between occupation and other elements of the SCIL-OT. Although students’ discoveries were varied, the cohort made connections between occupation and identity, meaning, health, future clients, and occupational therapy practice. The following examples illustrate on-the-line learning.

Occupation and Self

Many students gained a realization of what it meant to be in graduate school, and how school has impacted their lives (intersection of occupation and self; identity). One student wrote, "I am upset because it (the assignment) was proof of how much time I spend consumed in school, inhibiting me from enjoying other occupations such as being a friend....volunteer." Other students reflected on the importance of learning about oneself, one's values, and what is meaningful to them. For example, a student stated "[I]took notice of all the things I chose to engage in." The student went on to share "in my opinion, to have a balanced life it is important to be productive and restorative, but mostly to find pleasure and connect with others," revealing his values. Several students commented on seeing oneself as an agentic person, or one who can impact or influence change in daily occupations, as reflected in this quote: "It was particularly gratifying to see that I could set a goal that would increase my occupational balance and reach it." The act of doing or working on changing their own occupations was a large influence on knowing how and realizing that change is possible.

One student wrote:

I will use what I learned from this assignment to achieve occupational balance in my life. Being able to focus on myself in terms of self-care and exercise is important to me. Because I found ways to do this, even when life is extremely busy at this moment in time with school, I know I will be able to implement the changes I made in the future to achieve occupational balance.

Occupation and Health and Well-being

Students' reflections about the interconnections between occupation and self were at times expanded beyond how they saw themselves, revealing direct connections between occupation and health. Some students reflected on the role of specific occupations to health and well-being as indicated by this comment "I want to make sure that I am balancing school and work with leisure because it is very important to have fun and not always worry about the serious things in life. I tend to stress out a lot and struggle with anxiety..." Others reflected and noted the interconnections between health and the experiences associated with occupation: [I want to remember] "the ability to reflect on what activities I find more pleasurable. I would like to do such activities more often because it genuinely does make me a happier person overall."

Occupation and Clients

Fewer students described their ability to make connections between what they learned about occupation and others' occupations. At times the reflections were quite broad: "I want to take away the understanding of the effect of even the small mundane items of life on an individual's pleasure, productivity, restoration and connectedness." Other reflections more explicitly reflected that students began to transfer their "on-the-line" learning to connecting clients to occupation: several students discussed how they would be more inclined to ask their clients about their occupations as well as their occupational experiences. Others began to make connections to others' well-being, and

to actual therapy. “I hope to be able to stay conscientious of how I spend my time and how that makes me feel, and I hope to encourage others to do the same,” or “ I will try to be aware of all the activities an individual chooses to engage in and how that may affect their overall well-being.”

Occupation and Occupational Therapy Practice

Although less common, several students made a connection between occupation and occupational therapy for the future. The following quote illustrates the connection between occupation and the therapeutic process of using occupation to promote change: “This assignment showed me how it can be difficult to accomplish a goal ... when implementing goals for clients, just like I had difficulty completing my goals, they will have difficulties too. It is important that I as a therapist keep motivating the client and make sure that they reach their goal.”

This last quote addresses more the connection of occupation as the defining attribute of the profession: “This assignment has taught me about what makes occupational therapy so unique. It is that we cherish the everyday activities that most people take for granted.” In summary, students’ comments revealed that on-the-line-learning did occur through the occupational balance assignment. More connections were explicitly made between occupation and self, than occupation and future clients and the occupational therapy profession.

Students’ Recommendations for Change to Improve the Assignment

The majority of the students enjoyed the occupational balance assignment. Many did not have any recommendations for change. A few others recommended some logistical changes, such as when to start and stop the assignment. Suggestions offered by more than one student were to incorporate a mid-semester reflection, use an app for the OEP data collection, partner with someone to provide more formal weekly check-ins, and consider ways to help students write more specific, and attainable goals.

Discussion

This paper sought to illustrate the use of SCIL-OT to guide the development of a learning assignment using the OEP to promote students’ learning about occupation and the nature of occupation. Learning outcomes from the Occupational Balance Assignment reflected how use of the SCIL-OT and OEP supported students making connections from occupation to self, from specific occupations to the dynamics of occupation, and from one’s own experience of occupation to the use of occupation in practice. Each of these outcomes illustrate the importance of integrative learning, which is encouraged through the use of the SCIL-OT. From the results, students perceived learning outcomes related to an awareness of who they were as occupational-beings and explicit learning about the dynamic nature of occupation. Fewer students made connections from one’s own occupations to the importance of occupation and use of occupation in practice. In the following paragraphs the authors discuss the use of the SCIL-OT model to guide the development of an occupation-based assignment, including benefits realized, as well as ways to strengthen the use of the SCIL-OT model in the future.

Use of the SCIL-OT to Guide the Use of the OEP as a Learning Assignment

Benefits of the SCIL-OT

The use of the SCIL-OT model helped the instructor visualize how connections between occupation and the other elements of the SCIL-OT could be made. For example, by including small group discussions in lab, students had an opportunity to experience the value of learning in a community (SCIL-OT Principle 3). Students used knowledge they learned concurrently in the therapeutic groups course to enhance the value of the group discussion focused on making changes to their own occupations (SCIL-OT Principle 2). Use of the OEP connected what they were learning in the assessment course that they were also taking during the semester. During the final reflections of the assignment some students recognized the importance of directly assessing occupation, and how their findings would not only reflect the core of the profession, but guide intervention planning. Other students made on-the-line connections between the development of occupational goals and interventions with the design (occupational therapy evaluation and implementation) process as described by Pierce (2003), something they would learn in greater depth in upcoming intervention courses. Each of these examples illustrates the value of using the SCIL-OT to promote integrative learning, helping students make connections between occupation and other concepts and elements.

Another benefit of the use of the SCIL-OT was that it enabled the lead instructor to focus on 'specific occupations' and 'the dynamic nature of occupation', thus explicating the vast complex nature of occupation. While the model was initially designed to help make connections between occupation and non-occupation content, use of the SCIL-OT to guide the use of the OEP enabled the assignment to be created so that students needed to think about the many concepts related to the dynamic nature of occupation. For example, students needed to think about the connections between their natural environment, their school environment, and their impact on one's daily occupations, which highlight key concepts that reflect the complexity of occupation. The students were also required to connect the important concept of subjectivity when looking at occupation. When students drafted their goals and discussed their progress with other students, they had to reflect upon the meaning and importance of their own past and current occupations to discover what changes they wanted to make in their future occupations. Many students expressed outcomes often associated with integrative learning (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). For example, some students changed their perspectives about themselves. Others gained insights into the goal setting process through having to adjust their goals, and strategies throughout the assignment. Most importantly, by situating occupation as central to the assignment, a few students' comments reflected their recognition of the central role of occupation in their identity as an occupational therapist.

Ideas for Improving the Continued Use of the SCIL-OT

At the same time that benefits of the use of the SCIL-OT were realized, critical reflection following data analysis of the reflection papers led the primary instructor to recognize how difficult it is to make connections explicit. Her increased awareness of connections did not necessarily mean that students recognized the connections or would make them

on their own. One way to make the use of the SCIL-OT more explicit would be to use the model directly to develop the assignment reflection questions. In hindsight, the questions used to guide reflection were not explicitly related to the SCIL-OT, but instead related to the OEP. The questions may not have clearly reflected the instructor's desire for students to make the connection between personal experiences and occupation as the core subject of occupational therapy. As a result, there were many student reflections that rambled and did not clearly elucidate the connections. One possibility would be to develop specific reflection questions that focus on learning "on-the-line" to ensure students are making connections. Hooper et al. (2020) stressed that educators should ask themselves specific questions when developing a learning activity so that students can explicitly make connections between their experiences and the core subject of the profession. For example, one important question to ask oneself is "[h]ave I asked students to summarize why occupation is occupational therapy's central concern based on their personal occupational experiences" (p.14). This particular question from Hooper et al.'s article that was not included, would be an excellent question to add to the students' final reflection paper.

Additionally, the instructor learned that opportunities for weekly discussion needed a more formalized mechanism, which could have also benefited from direct use of the SCIL-OT model to design small group discussions to emphasize making connections to and with occupation. Use of weekly guided questions discussed in small working groups or with a "learning buddy" may be more helpful for students. Use of such learning-centered techniques enable a student to master content with rigor, with the student responsible for creating their "own meaning and knowledge" (Blumberg, 2019, p. 4). Finally, sharing the SCIL-OT model with students, as a conceptual model to organize their thinking, may help them not only make the connections, but also help them learn how to learn, and how to create their own knowledge. Using the SCIL-OT model as a visual reference point or concept map could have added an additional way to view the material (Blumberg, 2019).

Benefits of the OEP as an Educational Learning Tool

Without careful consideration of the SCIL-OT, the use of the OEP may have not been as effective in helping students make connections. Overall, the use of the OEP as an educational learning tool helped to bring meaning to the concept - dynamics of occupation, to the students. Completion of and reflection on the data collected through the OEP allowed students to increase their awareness of their own specific occupations and the dynamics of occupation. These results emulate findings of the OEP and PPR Profile use with client populations (Atler et al., 2017; Atler & Fox, 2020), suggesting it is an excellent tool to be used in classroom settings to promote awareness and understanding of occupation, as well as practice administration of an occupation-focused assessment. The incorporation of a goal setting process allowed students opportunities to assess how their occupations and occupational patterns were or were not supporting their overall health and well-being.

Limitations

Although discussion and modification of goals and strategies with members of the learning environment allowed students to recognize the dynamics of occupation, this descriptive review of a learning assignment is not without limitations. First, this assignment was implemented at one university and is indicative of only one cohort. Generalizations can, therefore, not be made. Second, the use of one type of data, the students' written work, did not allow for a more in-depth analysis. We recommend future research to include interview data which may allow for triangulation of data sources. Also, it is unclear whether or how many written reflections were indicative of students' thoughts about the assignment or whether their reflections were what they thought the primary instructor wanted to hear. Secondly, the descriptive review looked at only student perceptions during the semester-long assignment and did not look at change in perceptions during subsequent semesters in the students' education. Lastly, the structure of the learning assignment could be strengthened by ensuring the assignment was designed according to the criteria for robust assessment as discussed by Price and colleagues (2021).

Implications for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

This learning-centered, semester-long assignment intentionally applied the SCIL-OT model to develop and implement a learning assignment with occupation at its core. The assignment focused on deliberate pre-planning to ensure students understood the nature of the assignment and its relationship to occupation. Application of the SCIL-OT sheds light on the process necessary for ensuring that assignments, within an occupational therapy curriculum, focus on the occupation-centered learning as Yerxa (1998) discussed.

Use of the OEP as a time use method that draws attention to two elements of occupation: performance and experience, appeared to help students connect with and become aware of the dynamic nature of occupation. This assignment illustrates the need to continue to elucidate the meaning of the dynamics of occupation for students. Students' perspectives on their discoveries provide insights into unique elements of the nature of occupation and how educators may design learning-centered assignments in which students are actively engaged in learning about their own occupations.

Critical reflection on designing, delivering, and assessing the ability of the learning assignment to promote students' understanding of the core concept of occupation leads the authors to recommend the addition of a backward design process (Fink, 2013) to ensure that future occupational therapy assignments might also serve as more robust assessments. According to the backward design process, development of learning goals directly influences the choice and design of assessments, which then shape the actual content and teaching strategies employed (Fink, 2013). In relation to the above assignment, development, and communication of the specific objectives of the assignment with students may have helped guide development of the reflection questions. Additionally, development and communication of clear performance criteria related to the assignment objectives would move the assignment towards a stronger outcome assessment of students' learning (Price et al., 2021). Attention to the criteria of

robust assessment would be one way to ensure educators could move forward the scholarship of teaching and learning to advance evidence related to effective ways to teach occupation. There is a need for continued research that uses the SCIL-OT to guide curriculum and assignment planning so that educators may continue to move towards Yerxa's (1998) vision of an occupation-centered curriculum.

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