

MENTORSHIP: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUPPORTIVE MENTORSHIP IN INCREASING RESEARCH OUTPUT IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Rosemary B. Crouch

University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Research, vital to the survival of occupational therapy, has become a major priority for the profession world-wide.

After three years in a new mentoring post in the School of Therapeutic Sciences at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, mentorship and its role in motivating and supporting occupational therapists in post graduate research studies has been evaluated by the author.

This paper will firstly describe the author's particular orientation to this role, the forms of mentoring which took place and discuss the outcomes of the evaluation.

OBJECTIVES

1. The purpose of the evaluation has been to pinpoint the effectiveness of mentorship in promoting output of research short reports and dissertations/theses for post graduate degrees and in the publication of articles amongst occupational therapists.
2. The evaluation has been an important process in promoting further funding of this post for the future.
3. An important objective has also been to promote mentoring as an effective process in encouraging and supporting researchers in occupational therapy.

DESCRIPTION/REPORT

The evaluation has taken the form of a survey of occupational therapists that have been part of the mentoring process over a three year period, their productivity in this time and comparing it to the previous three years productivity.

Mentoring is a process which is distinctly different to supervision and is concerned with counselling and support.

The following numbers of occupational therapists have been mentored:

- 6 PhDs
- 6 course-work and 4 dissertation MScs
- 21 PhDs, course-work MScs and MScs by dissertation in group mentoring.

Interviews and questionnaires have been used to gain qualitative data.

CONCLUSION

Many factors impact on the success of a post-graduate student which makes it difficult to pin-point the exact effect of mentoring. However output of research has definitely increased. A survey conducted after two years indicates that mentoring is a supportive and motivating process.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRACTICE/EVIDENCE BASE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Promoting and encouraging research in occupational therapy contributes greatly to good practice and the evidence base of the profession.