

Undergraduate Students' expectations regarding employment opportunities during the undergraduate program: de-constructing borders

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Introduction: Research has shown that the imaginary of students regarding career practices reflect the values developed by the professional education processes. This imaginary may reveal the "core producer of meanings" of the professional training and hence indicate its approximation to or detachment from the challenges of reality. In Brazil, inasmuch as the consolidation of the Health System and Occupational Therapy both require the development of innovative professional profiles, there is a need to better comprehend this matter. **Objectives:** Access the imaginary held by students in each of the four years of the Occupational Therapy undergraduate program, at the University of São Paulo, seeking to identify their expectations and prospects of their professional future. **Methods:** Focal groups, varying from 9 to 15 participants, were carried out with students from each year (1st to 4th) separately. The collected data was analyzed based on a content analysis technique. **Results:** Students are usually concerned about their entry and permanence in the labor market. They assign as problematic the lack of vacancies and the inter-professional relationships. They also question whether they have been duly trained for the professional practice. However, we were able to identify a set of specific claims, which varied according to the stage of the student in the curriculum, and, as a consequence, of the experienced academic activities. Students in higher grades appeared more self assured and prepared to face possible adversities. We also found a set of transformations characterizing a deconstruction process regarding the boundaries of professional practice, especially those related to practice areas. **Conclusions:** Rigorous delimitations as regards the location of professional practice and the groups with which one wishes to work with are substituted over time by considerations based on the perceptions of the possible interfaces between them. This seems an important factor for the inclusion of occupational therapists in interdisciplinary care practices. **Contributing to the practice:** This study contributes for promoting adequacy between the educational project and the intended professional profile, since it reveals components of the students' imaginary, seldom explored by traditional procedures of pedagogic evaluation.