

The Strategies and Barriers to Integrating the Local Context into a New Occupational Therapy Curriculum in a Country where the Profession is Emerging: A Case Study

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Introduction: The World Federation of Occupational Therapists requires educational programs to situate their curricula in the local context. Due to a lack of resources, many programs import curricula, models, and educators from other countries, which may influence the contextual relevance of the program. This study examines the strategies and barriers to situating one new, under-resourced occupational therapy program in the local context.

Objectives:

1. Examine the barriers to integrating the local context into a new, under-resourced occupational therapy educational program.
2. Identify the strategies used by one new occupational therapy education program to situate the local context into the curriculum.

Method: The researchers conducted a qualitative case study of the University of the Southern Caribbean occupational therapy program in Trinidad and Tobago, a new program intentionally situated in the local context. The researcher conducted observations, interviews, and collected curricular artifacts followed by coding and thematic analysis. Peer debriefing and member checking were completed to enhance trustworthiness.

Results: The USC occupational therapy program used feedback from local stakeholders, service learning, local examples, and students' experiences to connect theory and practice models to the local context. These strategies allowed the program to create a contextually relevant program despite the lack of resources.

Conclusion: This study revealed the strategies the USC occupational therapy program used to integrate the context of Trinidad and Tobago into the curriculum, and supports a sustainable curriculum. The study serves as a case example for integrating the local context into under-resourced occupational therapy programs.