

Topics for a core undergraduate South African vocational rehabilitation curriculum - results of a consensus process

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Introduction: Occupational therapists are prepared to meet the vocational rehabilitation or work practice demands at undergraduate level through education and training programs at university level. However occupational therapy graduates exit programs with differing levels of vocational rehabilitation knowledge and skills although minimum standards exist for the education of occupational therapists through the professional board. This could be attributed to diversity of curriculum contexts and university autonomy. However developing core curricular topics would serve as a foundation for curriculum revision.

Objectives: To collaboratively develop a description of the concept core curriculum. To obtain consensus on curriculum topics to be included in the core undergraduate vocational rehabilitation curriculum.

Methods: A sequential mixed methods design was employed with data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with occupational therapy lecturers as well as document analysis of curriculum documentation, university regulation guidelines and occupational therapy university websites. The Delphi Consensus Technique was used to obtain consensus on curriculum topics.

Results: The description of a core curriculum included content that was common and essential for practice. Vocational rehabilitation curriculum topics were identified.

Conclusion: The group of lecturers at the eight unique and diverse university settings, together with an expert panel, obtained consensus on topics which were built into a curricular framework for vocational rehabilitation. The core curriculum serves as a minimum education standard for each university to consider with the impact thereof to be noted in vocational rehabilitation service delivery. It allows for flexibility in curriculum development and implementation and facilitates graduate preparation for practice.