

Towards critical occupational therapy practice: reflections on the development of critical literacy in an occupational therapy curriculum in South Africa

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Introduction/Rationale: In a context of increasing inequalities in South Africa the role of occupational therapy (OT) education in realising social/occupational justice has taken on renewed importance. Calls for occupational therapy educators to prepare graduates as 'agents of change' have become common endorsed by an agenda that is concerned with inequalities and a desire to improve occupational outcomes for all people through a critical practice. Considerations of how education might develop competencies for critical OT practice and by association, critical literacy, thus became imperative.

Objectives: This paper will report on a project that aimed to facilitate the development of educators' ability to integrate academic literacies into an OT curriculum in South Africa. In particular, the paper will report on findings related to educators' perspectives on critical literacy and their experiences of integrating critical literacy into the curriculum.

Approach: Educators formed communities of practice, where they were involved in participatory enquiry and action-reflection-learning cycles.

Results: Thematic data analysis revealed three themes: 1) Expectations regarding critical literacy 2) Learning and teaching strategies and 3) Curriculum enabling factors. Educators have insight into critical literacies that students need to develop and implicitly build opportunities for students to develop these into the curriculum.

Conclusion: A key contribution of this project is its focus on the value of educators' scholarly inquiry into their own teaching and learning practice and in raising critical reflection on the forms of knowledge that are of value for critical occupational therapy practice in South Africa.