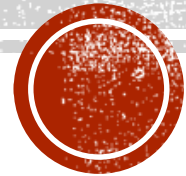# EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY PRACTICE PROJECTS CONDUCTED BY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

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BACKGROUND: OT IN SAUDI ARABIA

👐 OT is a relatively new profession in Saudi

From other countries, Educated Abroad , Hospitals.

👐 The Bachelor of OT at PNU was licensed from Monash University

👐 More than 130 licensed OTs graduated from PNU

👐 Most of them are practicing in the same locations where they did their PCP.

PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY PROJECT (PCP)

WFOT minimum educational standards Shifted from focusing on individuals to groups and populations

The aim of PCP is for the student to:

- Develop skills in project implementation using a community partnership model
- Address a population occupationally based issue.
- Apply knowledge, skills to(implement, evaluate and report) on a community orientated project.

From 2015 to 2018 a total of **40** projects were completed in partnerships with **9** agencies.

SEMESTER STUDY UNITS SUPPORTING THE (PCP)

- Foundations of health (Year 1)

- Occupational science (Year 1)

- Skills for evidence based practice (Year 2 & 3)

- Enabling occupation: individual and population health (Year 3)

- Health promotion (Year 3)

- PCP 1: Development including 2 days per week fieldwork (Year 3)

- PCP 2: Implementation including 2 days per week fieldwork (Year 4)

AIM OF THE STUDY

To evaluate the impact of PCPs on the practice of OT in the host agencies representing Saudi Arabia.

Objectives:

- To evaluate PCP projects from the perspective of students.

- To assess the experiences of host organisations and educators with the
  PCP projects.

- To understand the contribution of PCP projects in developing and
  promoting occupational therapy in Saudi Arabia.

METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods included:

- Focus groups - two groups of students (n=30)

- Interviews with 4 university staff involved with supervising PCPs

  - Fully transcribed

  - Thematic analysis

- Surveys of host organisations/agencies (n= 17)

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS: BENEFITS

Students experienced personal and professional benefits:

- Project management skills:

  - Problem-solving and decision-making.
  - time management, leadership.

- Communication skills:

  - Teamwork &increased confidence with working with others.

- Practicing evidence-based practice skills
- Serving community needs and developing the reputation of OT.
- Opportunity to have a voice in the broader community
- Opening up new services

QUOTES

Actually it generally had empowered our lives and our personality doing the PCP

One has to analyze the environment e.g. ...what is lacking? How I can help them? How can the community benefit from this practice, …..how can I utilize simple resources and bring them to the hospital so that both the patient and the unit can benefit from them.'' (paraphrased)

The projects have broader application: our projects even though it was beneficial to the specific host agency that we were working with, it also benefited other agencies or other centers.

*Oh my God, **like I gave birth - It was big like an elephant**. I developed many skills and even changed my personality.*

CHALLENGES FOR STUDENTS

☙ **Short timelines** **to do project (2 semesters only)**
We have a high expectation and it is not easy to implement these goals so we have to start rethinking about our goals…. because you have specific time

☙ **Working with others**
So I had four supervisors to supervise my project so it is something very hard for us to really explain our projects to every supervisor

☙ **Lack of agreement** **between students, host agency and university lecturers about the scope of the project**
"Oh is it that big [host]."Yes it is that big [student]. Some of them were refusing sponsorship because they were not comfortable, and she was not clear she does not want the reputation of the [organisation] to be hesitated in front of the sponsorship because she did not take us seriously.

☙ **Having to develop new skills and** **cover costs** **themselves**
Upskilling in what was needed because for my own project I was in need to design [skills] that I didn't have the skills to design it but for the project

STAFF (PNU) PERSPECTIVES BENEFITS

- Enhancing the **teacher-student relationship** that strengthening supervision, guidance, mentorship and communication

- Operationalising theory of OT into practice as students put their knowledge, skills and attitude into practice

- Staff continue to venture into **new frontiers for OT practice and working in broader teams**

- Seeing **people change their opinion about what OTs** do

- Staff had **new opportunity** & learned new things

QUOTES

"the relationship that I have had with students is mainly that of teacher …*students became more open* about their project and they accepted me to be able to supervise them which was really good, *so it helped me also to understand the students a bit more*…. than in the classroom"

".….create those *strong relationships between the lecturers and the students* so that you can be able to actually help and assist them because now *you can see* the *individual capacities*… when they are doing PCPs each one of them had a separate part that they were playing in the project."

PNU STAFF PERSPECTIVES - BROADENING THE SCOPE OF OT

Students expanded their understanding of OT through ingenious and creative projects.

- Students' knowledge about OT the application of theory into practice has expanded.

- Some agencies have expanded physical space, others have constructed new space for OT.

- Development of students' skills beyond the classroom.

QUOTES

"[Students] find themselves *applying many theoretical parts* of other courses in their projects…. you see for examples that one we have in enabling occupational therapy…that one in psychology…. They *incorporated most of the courses in the projects*, in the knowledge and skills and their life."

"At the interpersonal level they…. *do work together* …..as a team 3 of them or 4 of them and with other people as well having in mind that they are *representing the profession, they are representing the University* and representing themselves as *occupational therapists*."

PCP HOST PERSPECTIVES, BENEFITS

- PCPs benefit the community

- Potential to **widen the scope of OT** in Saudi Arabia

- Help in exposing issues that need attention

- Help in completing some uncompleted tasks

- Production of educational materials to be used with patients

- PCPs explored new areas of work for OTs in the Kingdom

- Raise awareness of OT in the Kingdom

PCP HOST PERSPECTIVES, CHALLENGES

- Too much work for the host agency and on the supervisors
- Lack of staff in departments resulted in too much or inadequate supervision
- Financial constraints resulted in some projects not being completed or taken aboard
- No prior consultation with university regarding PCPs

Recommendations

- University supervisor to visit more often

- Projects to address real issues

- Students to learn writing budgets reports

PROJECTS EXAMPLE

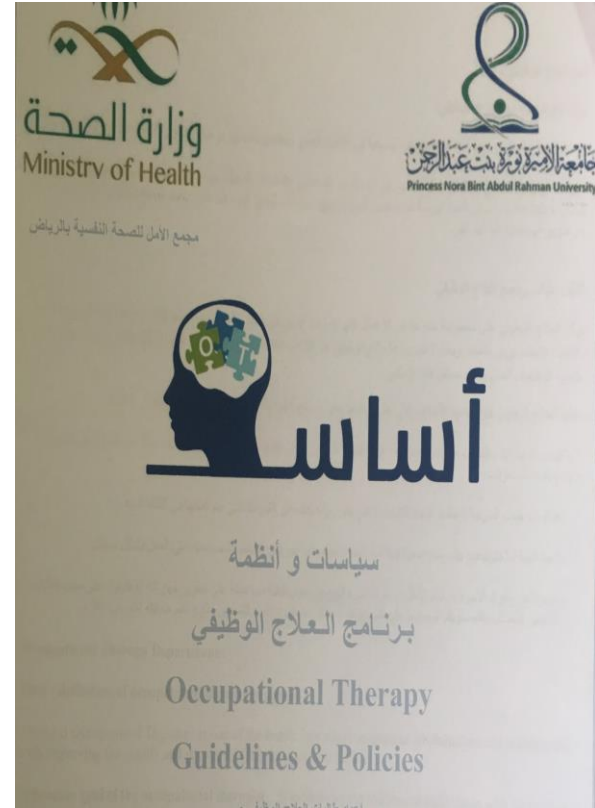Work Ergonomics & Safety for
Nursery Caregivers

PROMISING COLLABORATIONS

Ministry of Health & Ministry of Education

First time in Saudi the creation of **new OT roles**

- **Mental Health**

- **Public Schools**

CONCLUSIONS

PCPs at PNU started in 2015. While there are still challenges, demand for projects has expanded into new areas of practice - eg female prisons, mental health facilities, schools.

- Ministry for Health will be creating **24** new **OT positions** in **mental health**, an outcome of PCP findings. **12** new **OT positions** in **schools underway**

The benefits of student and the university engaging in PCPs already demonstrating advantages to students, the university, the host organisation, the community. Major benefit to the OT profession.

OT in Saudi is not yet well established. PCPs offer the opportunity for OT to increase the scope of practice, but also to address new areas of OT that address the unique health and wellbeing concerns in Saudi Arabia

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