



WFOT

World Federation of Occupational Therapists

POSITION STATEMENT: Occupational science (revised)

Introductory statement of purpose of paper

The purpose for this paper is to state the WFOT's position on occupational science. To explain this position, the paper begins with a succinct description of occupational science.

Occupational science was established by occupational therapists and a few colleagues from related disciplines, under the leadership of Dr Elizabeth Yerxa in the late 1980s, to generate knowledge about human occupation. It studies the things that people do in their everyday lives and how those occupations influence and are influenced by health, well being and their environments.

Statement of position being taken

WFOT acknowledges the value of occupational science to occupational therapy and supports its continued growth and development, and, to that end, encourages occupational science initiatives around the world.

Statement of the significance of position to occupational therapy

Occupational science is significant to occupational therapy because:

- knowledge of, and skills in, understanding and enabling human occupation are essential foundations of occupational curricula
- it provides an occupation focused theoretical framework for occupational therapy practice and research
- it underpins effective occupational therapy practice by providing a rich understanding of occupation as both the therapeutic means and ultimate goal of occupational therapy
- concepts from occupational science help occupational therapists to understand their client's subjective experiences, and unique perspectives, while also considering context.

Statement of significance of position to the society

WFOT's position on occupational science is significant to the broader society because occupational science covers a diverse range of topics, including:

- the exploration of the relationship between occupation and development, and how occupation changes over the life course
- how people organise their daily lives through occupations, and the personal and socio-cultural meanings of occupation
- the individual and societal function of occupation, the relationship between occupation and contexts, and the experience of occupational engagement
- how, when, where, and why people choose and engage in their occupations
- the relationship between occupation and health, participation and wellbeing
- the impact of economics, environmental issues and government policies on people's occupational opportunities and choices
- the effects of occupational disruption and occupational deprivation, occupational apartheid, as well as overriding issues of occupational justice.

Substantiating rationale for the position

WFOT's support of the growth and development of occupational science is critical for occupational therapy, given that occupation is the core domain of concern of occupational therapy, and its focus on occupation is what makes occupational therapy unique among the health professions.

Challenges and strategies

A challenge faced by WFOT is that occupational science is developing in diverse ways and at different rates around the world, primarily due to varying academic skills and interests among occupational scientists, but also as a result of the disparate contexts within which occupational science is developing.

The WFOT International Advisory Group: Occupational Science addresses this challenge by advising the WFOT Council in matters relating to occupational science as they relate to occupational therapy. The International Society for Occupational Science also promotes understanding of occupational therapists, worldwide about occupational science by disseminating information about education and results of research in occupational science

Conclusion

As occupation is the primary domain of concern of occupational therapy, it is the responsibility of the profession to encourage and support discovery of knowledge regarding human occupation at all levels.

Occupational science provides a way of thinking that enables an understanding of occupation, the occupational nature of humans, the relationship between occupation, health and wellbeing, and the influences that shape occupation.

By acknowledging the value of occupational science to occupational therapy and supporting its development internationally, there will be important implications for occupational therapy education and practice as theory and evidence is further generated by occupational science (Polatajko 2010, Yerxa 1967).

References

- Polatajko, HJ. (2010) The study of occupation. In: C. Christiansen and E. Townsend (eds). *Introduction to Occupation: The art and science of living*. (2nd ed, Chapter 3, pp. 57-79). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Yerxa, EJ. (1967) The American Occupational Therapy Foundation is born. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 21, 299-300.

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