



## POSITION STATEMENT

# Educational Research in Occupational Therapy

### Statement of the position being taken

Evidence informed and theoretically sound education is the cornerstone of a strong and relevant profession. Contemporary education for occupational therapists relies on a robust body of evidence that responds to contextually specific educational needs and that can be judiciously exchanged across borders<sup>1</sup>.

Educational research supports the preparation of future occupational therapists, sustains the development of human resources, advances cutting-edge professional practices, and builds capacity for the profession of occupational therapy.

The rapidly changing landscape of occupational therapy demands that we reflect on existing and new educational practices, participate in knowledge generation and exchange, and design educational programs and professional development resources informed by the best available theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

This position statement aims to advance the progressive work of WFOT in occupational therapy education and research. Education research aligns with and advances the mandates of the *WFOT Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists (2016)*<sup>1</sup> and the *WFOT International Occupational Therapy Research Priorities (2016)*<sup>2</sup>.

### Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy

A concerted international effort is required to advance educational research in response to opportunities and challenges facing occupational therapy education globally. Some of these include<sup>2-4</sup>:

- 1) consideration of innovative and evolving methods of education and practice in response to periods of disruption, (e.g. pandemic), climate change, globalization, technological innovations, environmental issues, war, and political movements;
- 2) expansion of occupational therapy education programs into new geographic areas and increasing numbers of students in current programs;
- 3) calls for innovative occupation-centered curricula;
- 4) evolving conceptions of knowledge that recognize local/global and individual/social perspectives;
- 5) increasingly interdisciplinary and interprofessional health professions education, practice and research;

- 6) changes in demographics including increases in population, population specific health needs, changing migration patterns, and new forms of occupational disruption worldwide;
- 7) changing accountability mechanisms including increased regulation, greater responsibility for individual rather than organizational professional development, and the commercialization of education;
- 8) calls for anti-oppressive approaches that attend to equity and diversity, social inclusion, cultural recognition, and occupational justice.

Statement of the significance of the position to society

**Advancing the profession's educational research capacity will contribute to the quality of the societal contribution of occupational therapists to individuals, groups, communities and populations by advancing the knowledge, capabilities, attitudes and behaviors of the occupational therapy global workforce.<sup>5</sup>**

Global communities and society benefit from occupational therapists who receive high quality, impactful professional education, are reflexive and responsive in a changing and complex world, are socially responsible and capable of contributing as global citizens.

As the world becomes more connected, knowledge creation and exchange across disciplines, and borders, and with consumers and stakeholders will help the profession thrive and meet current and novel needs. Further, global citizenship will be vital to the flourishing of the occupational therapy profession and will enhance its contribution to the health and well-being of individuals and populations who benefit from what occupational therapy offers to society.

Conclusion

Advancing educational research within occupational therapy enhances and supports the development of the profession. We need to generate, synthesize, exchange, disseminate, appraise and mobilize cutting-edge theoretical frameworks and bodies of evidence, which can be translated into impactful educational practices and policies, while respecting diversity across geographical and cultural regions.

References

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