

Acknowledgements

A CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

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Summary

KEYWORDS:

Early Childhood Intervention, curriculum development, occupational therapy process, postgraduate education, teamwork, family-centred intervention, South African ecological context.

The high incidence of children with developmental delays places a great demand on society to provide intervention services to those in need. This high incidence of children with developmental delays is caused, to a large extent, by the advanced medical procedures which results in a positive survival rate of at-risk infants. Health services in particular are being challenged to develop co-ordinated and effective strategies to prevent and minimise disabilities. It would appear that professionals experience difficulty in collaborating with one another and with families, and that multiskilling is not yet common practice in order to economise on services.

Another matter of concern is the undesirable ecological context in which a large number of children are being raised. Poverty, a high crime rate, debilitating conditions such as AIDS, and child abuse are amongst the many factors that place further strain on families and their ability to provide for their children.

A review of the literature revealed that the answer to effective early childhood intervention is considered to be the development of transdisciplinary teamwork, which includes the family as an integral part of the team. Of further importance is that the ecological context of the community for which the service is intended be kept in mind, for any measure of success in the intervention strategy. The concepts of teamwork, family-centred intervention and ecological context were explored in the study.

One way for professionals to prepare for the momentous task of providing effective early childhood intervention is through further education. At the University of Pretoria a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Intervention has been developed to specifically address the need for transdisciplinary training and specialisation in this field. Through a policy of a research-based curriculum for this degree, the need for the current study emerged. One of the modules

for the degree focuses on specific specialisation areas. The current study was undertaken to establish the training needs for specialisation in occupational therapy related to early childhood intervention.

A research survey was conducted and a questionnaire developed to ascertain the needs and skills of occupational therapists who are currently providing a service in the field of early childhood intervention. A response rate of 87% was obtained from the sample of therapists, drawn from Gauteng, North West and Northern Province. The results that were obtained indicated that therapists on the whole experienced more confidence in their clinical abilities than in their theoretical knowledge. A theoretical foundation, as well as certain aspects regarding clinical skills, was noted for further training. Aspects pertaining to family-centred intervention were also indicated as a need for training.

The research data was interpreted and discussed in relation to the preceding literature review. The current research was evaluated and suggestions for improvements to the questionnaire included the avoidance of double bound questions and a different use of rating scales. The positive aspects of the study were also indicated.

In conclusion, a framework for the occupational therapy module was formulated. Suggestions regarding mini-practicals to be included in the course and the content of the paper cases were given. The suggested educational methods and content were based on the research data that was obtained from the research. Indications for future research, including suggestions of research projects to be conducted during the course, were given. The latter pertained largely to the use of internationally standardised tests in a South African context.

Samevatting

SLEUTELWOORDE:

Vroeëkinderjare-intervensie, kurrikulumontwikkeling, arbeidsterapieproses, nagraadse opvoeding, spanwerk, gesinsgesentreerde intervensie, Suid-Afrikaanse ekologiese konteks.

Die hoë voorkoms van kinders met ontwikkelingsagterstande plaas 'n groot druk op 'n gemeenskap om intervensiedienste aan diegene wat dit nodig het, te verskaf. Hierdie hoë voorkoms van kinders met ontwikkelingsagterstande word in 'n groot mate veroorsaak deur gevorderde mediese prosedures wat 'n positiewe oorlewingskoers van hoërisiko-kinders tot gevolg het. Gesondheidsdienste in besonder word uitgedaag om gekoördineerde en effektiewe strategieë te ontwikkel om gestremdhede te verhoed en minimaliseer. Dit blyk dat professionele persone probleme ondervind om met mekaar en die familie saam te werk en die aanwending van multivaardighede word ook nie algemeen toegepas ten einde op dienste te bespaar nie.

Nog 'n kwelling is die ongewenste ekologiese konteks waarin 'n groot aantal kinders grootgemaak word. Armoede, 'n hoë misdadaadvoorkoms, verswakkende toestande soos MIV/VIGS, asook kindermishandeling, is onder die vele faktore wat verdere druk op gesinne plaas en hulle vermoë om vir hulle kinders te voorsien, belemmer.

'n Literatuuroorsig dui aan dat die antwoord tot effektiewe vroeëkinderjare-intervensie in die ontwikkeling van transdissiplinêre spanwerk lê, wat die gesin as 'n integrale deel van die span insluit. Van verdere belang is dat die ekologiese konteks van die gemeenskap vir wie die diens bedoel is, in gedagte gehou word vir enige mate van sukses in die intervensiestrategie. Die konsep van spanwerk, gesinsgesentreerde intervensie en ekologiese konteks is in hierdie studie ondersoek.

Een manier vir professionele persone om voor te berei vir die geweldige taak om effektiewe vroeëkinderjare-intervensie te verskaf, is deur verdere opleiding. Aan die Universiteit van Pretoria is 'n meestersgraad in vroeëkinderjare-intervensie ontwikkel met die spesifieke doel om die behoefte aan transdissiplinêre opleiding en spesialisasie op die gebied aan te spreek. Deur die beleid van 'n navorsingsgebaseerde kurrikulum vir hierdie graad, het die behoefte

aan hierdie studie na vore gekom. Een van die modules vir dié graad fokus op spesifieke spesialisingsareas. Die huidige studie is onderneem om die opleidingsbehoefte vir spesialisering in arbeidsterapie ten opsigte van vroeëkindere-intervensie vas te stel.

'n Navorsingsonderzoek is aangepak en 'n vraelys ontwikkel om die behoeftes en vaardighede van arbeidsterapeute vas te stel wat tans 'n diens op die gebied van vroeëkindere-intervensie verskaf. 'n Responskoers van 87% is verkry uit die steekproef van terapeute in Gauteng, Noordwes en Noordelike Provinsie. Die resultate wat verkry is, het aangedui dat terapeute oor die algemeen meer selfvertroue in hul kliniese vermoëns as in hulle teoretiese kennis ondervind het. 'n Teoretiese grondslag asook sekere aspekte in verband met kliniese vaardighede is vir verdere opleiding aangeteken. Aspekte ten opsigte van gesinsgesentreerde interventie is ook as 'n opleidingsbehoefte aangedui.

Die navorsingsdata is met betrekking tot die voorafgaande literatuuroorsig geïnterpreteer en bespreek. Die huidige navorsing is geëvalueer en voorstelle vir verbetering tot die vraelys het die vermyding van dubbelsinnige vrae en die gebruik van verskillende beoordelingskale ingesluit. Die sterk punte van die studie is ook aangedui.

Ten slotte is 'n raamwerk vir die arbeidsterapiemodule geformuleer. Voorstelle in verband met praktiese mini-sessies wat in die kursus ingesluit moet word en die inhoud van die gevallestudies is gegee. Die voorgestelde opvoedkundige metodes en die inhoud van die kurrikulum is gebaseer op die navorsingsdata wat van die navorsing verkry is. Aanduidings is gegee vir toekomstige navorsing, insluitend voorstelle vir navorsingsprojekte om gedurende die kursus te doen. Laasgenoemde verwys grootliks na die gebruik van internasionaal-gestandaardiseerde toetse in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Summary	ii
Samevatting	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xi
List of Appendices	xii

Chapter 1

Orientation and Problem Statement

1.1 Perspectives on Early Childhood Intervention	1
1.2 Background to the Study and Problem Statement	4
1.3 Definition of Terms	5
1.4 Organisation of the Thesis	6
1.5 Summary	7

Chapter 2

Early Childhood Intervention

2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Defining Early Childhood Intervention	8
2.3 Teamwork	10
2.3.1 The Importance of Teamwork	10
2.3.2 Types of Teamwork	11
2.3.3 Building Teams	13
2.3.4 Members of the Team	14
2.3.5 Models of Teamwork	15
2.3.6 The Role of Occupational Therapy in Teamwork	16
2.3.6.1 Definition of Occupational Therapy	16
2.3.6.2 Scope of Occupational Therapy in Early Childhood Intervention	17
2.4 Family-Centred Early Childhood Intervention	19
2.4.1 Service Delivery Models	19
2.4.2 Effectiveness of Family-Centred Early Childhood Intervention	22
2.4.3 Occupational Therapy in Family-Centred Early Childhood Intervention	23
2.5 The Ecological Context	26
2.5.1 Factors Related to the Ecological Context	27
2.5.2 National Policy on the Child	29

2.5.2.1	Strategies, Programmes, and Services	29
2.5.2.2	Problems Facing Early Childhood Intervention Strategies	32
2.5.3	Community Involvement	33
2.6	Conclusion	35
2.5	Summary	37

Chapter 3

Curriculum Development for Occupational Therapy in Early Childhood Intervention

3.1	Introduction	38
3.2	Occupational Therapy Process	38
3.2.1	Evaluation	39
3.2.2	Planning of Treatment	42
3.2.2.1	Goal of Treatment	42
3.2.2.2	Aims of Treatment	42
3.2.2.3	Objectives of Treatment	45
3.2.3	Treatment in Early Childhood Intervention	49
3.2.3.1	Theories and Approaches in Treatment	49
3.2.3.2	Application of Theory into Practice	53
3.2.3.3	Early Intervention in Various Conditions	56
3.2.4	Management	57
3.3	Curriculum Development and Training	59
3.3.1	New directions for Training in Early Childhood Intervention	59
3.3.2	Current Status of Training in Early Childhood Intervention	61
3.3.3	Curriculum Development	64
3.4	Conclusion	66
3.5	Summary	69

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1	Introduction	70
4.2	Aim and Objectives of the Study	70
4.2.1	Aim	70
4.2.2	Objectives	70
4.3	Research Design	71
4.4	Sample	72
4.4.1	Selection Criteria	72
4.4.2	Selection Procedures	73
4.4.3	Description of the Sample	75

4.5	Research Materials	76
4.5.1	Development of Questionnaire	76
4.5.2	Pilot study	80
4.5.2.1	Aim of the Pilot Study	80
4.5.2.2	Procedures of the Pilot Study	81
4.5.2.3	Results	81
4.6	Procedures	91
4.6.1	Data Collection Procedures	91
4.6.2	Data Recording Procedures	92
4.6.3	Data Analysis Procedures	92
4.7	Summary	93

Chapter 5

Results and Discussion

5.1	Introduction	95
5.2	Profile of Experience of the 87 Respondents	96
5.2.1	Years Experience in the Field of Paediatrics	96
5.2.2	Experience in Age Groups of Children	96
5.2.3	Experience in Fields of Practice	98
5.2.4	Experience in Models of Teamwork	102
5.2.5	Community Involvement in Early Childhood Intervention	104
5.3	Theoretical Framework for Early Childhood Intervention	105
5.3.1	Training Needed on Specific Theories	106
5.3.2	Training Needed on Causes of Development Delay	108
5.3.3	Training Needed on Early Childhood Development	109
5.3.4	Training Needed on Legislation for Intervention	110
5.4	Assessment in Early Childhood Intervention	111
5.4.1	Skills in Screening and Observation	112
5.4.2	Skills in Functional Assessment Procedures	112
5.4.3	Skills in Interpretation and Documentation	113
5.4.4	Use of Developmental Tests and Surveys	114
5.5	Treatment in Early Childhood Intervention	117
5.5.1	Skills in Treatment of Basic and Functional Abilities	117
5.5.2	Skills in the Application of Approaches and Techniques for Treatment	119
5.5.3	Skills in Treatment of Specific Disorders	120
5.5.4	Skills in Planning for Treatment	121
5.5.5	Skills in Application of Principles and Adaptations in Treatment	121
5.5.6	Skills in Adaptation through Assistive Technology	122
5.5.7	Skills in Establishing Therapeutic Relationships	123
5.5.8	Skills in Management	123
5.5.9	Skills in Building Resilience in the Family through Facilitation	124
5.5.10	Skills in Counselling of Sensitive Issues/Situations	124

List of Figures

5.6 Conclusion	125
5.7 Indications for Future Research	128
5.8 Summary	129
Chapter 6	
Conclusion: Proposed Framework for Curriculum	
6.1 Introduction	131
6.2 Description of Prescribed Framework for the M ECI	132
6.3 Content of the Curriculum for the Specialised Module in Occupational Therapy	134
6.4 Educational Methods for the Curriculum	146
6.4.1 Background to the Educational methods	146
6.4.2 Integration of Content into the Educational Methods	147
6.4.3 Proposed Timetable for 2 Weeks Block on Site	155
6.5 Summary	156
References	158
Appendixes	165

List of Figures

List of Tables

Figure 1: Experience in Age Groups	96
Figure 2: Fields of Practice	98
Figure 3: Experience in Models of Teamwork	102
Figure 4: Community Involvement in Early Intervention	104
Figure 5: Training Needed on Specific Theories	106
Figure 6: Training Needed on Causes of Development Delays	108
Figure 7: Training Needed on Early Development	109
Figure 8: Training Needed on Legislation for Intervention	110

List of Appendices

List of Tables

Table 1:	List of Performance Areas, Components and Contexts	47
Table 2:	Theories and Approaches in Treatment	49
Table 3:	Exposition of Sample	75
Table 4:	Steps Followed in the Development of the Sample	76
Table 5:	Results of the Pilot Study: Cover Letter	82
Table 6:	Results of the Pilot Study: Exposition of the Questionnaire	83
Table 7:	Results of the Pilot Study: Summary and Number Changes	85
Table 8:	Results of the Pilot Study: Scales Employed in the Questionnaire	85
Table 9:	Results of the Pilot Study: Time taken to Complete the Questionnaire	86
Table 10:	Results of the Pilot Study: Content of the Questionnaire	87
Table 11:	Results of the Pilot Study: Summary of Number Changes and Headings	91
Table 12:	Screening for Developmental Delays	112
Table 13:	Observation Skills	112
Table 14:	Functional Assessment Procedures	113
Table 15:	Interpretation and Documentation	113
Table 16:	Tests or Surveys being used for Assessment Abilities	114
Table 17:	Treatment of Performance Components and Areas	117
Table 18:	Application of Approaches and Techniques for Treatment	119
Table 19:	Treatment of Specific Disorders	120
Table 20:	Planning for Treatment	121
Table 21:	Application of Principles and Adaptation in Treatment	121
Table 22:	Skills in Adaptation through Assistive Technology	122
Table 23:	Establishing Therapeutic Relationships	123
Table 24:	Skills in Management	123
Table 25:	Skills in Building Resilience in the Family through Facilitation	124
Table 26:	Counselling of Sensitive Issues/Situations	124
Table 27:	Content for the Curriculum: Experience in Age Groups	135
Table 28:	Content for the Curriculum: Primary Health Care Clinics	136
Table 29:	Content for the Curriculum: Children's Homes	137
Table 30:	Content for the Curriculum: Institutions for Severely Disabled Children	138
Table 31:	Content for the Curriculum: NICU	139
Table 32:	Content for the Curriculum: Home Care	140
Table 33:	Content for the Curriculum: Teamwork	141
Table 34:	Content for the Curriculum: Community Involvement	141
Table 35:	Content for the Curriculum: Theoretical Framework	142
Table 36:	Content for the Curriculum: Assessment in Early Intervention	143
Table 37:	Content for the Curriculum: Treatment in Early Childhood Intervention	144
Table 38:	Educational Methods: Case Study 1	152
Table 39:	Educational Methods: Case Study 2	153
Table 40:	Educational Methods: Case Study 3	154
Table 41:	Proposed Timetable for 2 Week Block Period	155

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Aspects in Early Childhood Intervention to be Covered in the Questionnaire	165
Appendix B: Preliminary Questionnaire	166
Appendix C: Report-back Form on the Questionnaire for the Pilot Study	174
Appendix D: Final Questionnaire	175