

A theory of learning-to-practice occupational therapy

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Thank you to my supervisors and participants



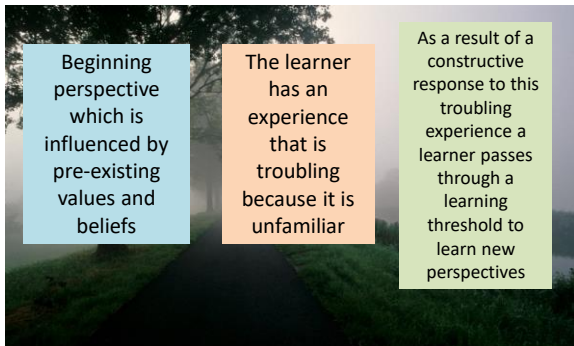
Background

Existing research about early career learning focuses on broad experience and challenges - little is known about response to those challenges and learning needs (Lee & McKenzie, 2003; Morley 2009; Toal-Sullivan, 2006)

My research was based on the theory of troublesome knowledge and threshold concepts (Meyer & Land 2003, 2006; Perkins 2006)



Learning thresholds



Methodology

- Process = *constructivist grounded theory* (Charmaz 2014)
- Aimed to develop a theory of learning to practice occupational therapy in the first four years



Research Questions

1. What aspects of knowledge and practice are troublesome for ECOTs?
2. How do ECOTs respond to these troublesome aspects of occupational therapy knowledge and practice?



Method

Recruitment – advertisement

- 3 phases – experienced OTs; ECOTs; supporters of ECOTS
- In-depth interviews (mean length = 62.25 mins; range 30 – 96 mins).

Constant comparison

- Data collection and data analysis occurring concurrently between March 2014 and June 2015
- Initial open coding then categorisation of data using concept maps
- First four years captured participants at different stages of learning

Participants = 20

Phase	Sampling	Participant group	Data collection	No
1	Purposive	Experienced OTs	March–August 2014	8
2	Purposive	Early Career OTs	Sept 2014–April 2015	10
3	Theoretical	OTs who support new graduates	June 2015	2

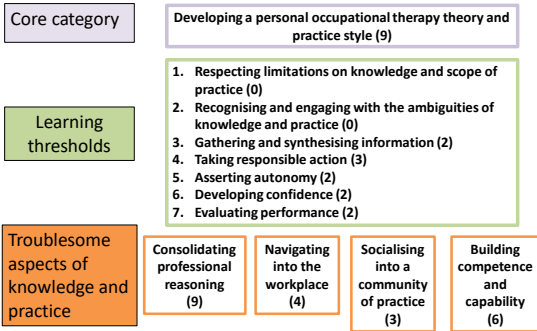
SA – 4 (all phase 1)	Vic = 1
Qld = 7	Tas = 1
NSW = 6	ACT = 1



Participants = 20

Phase	Practice Area									Work setting				
	Children	Aged care	Disability	Mental health	Voc Rehab	Neuro rehab	Acute medical	Medico-legal/ driver	Private	Hospital	Community	Education	Residential	
1	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	3	0	
2	3	2	2	2	0	1	3	0	1	5	3	0	1	
3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	
Total	7	3	4	3	1	1	3	1	2	6	8	3	1	

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Consolidating professional reasoning

1. Understanding occupation-based practice
2. Prioritising and integrating knowledge
3. Choosing a theoretical approach
4. Exposing tacit reasoning and assumptions
5. Persevering with the struggle of learning
6. Looking deeply into situational conditions
7. Thinking quickly and attuning perceptual skills
8. Analysing, grading and redefining occupations
9. Communicating and negotiating

Take a moment

Talk to the person next to you or quietly reflect:

- Do these findings resonate with your experience?
- What could you do to support a student or ECOT with **consolidating professional reasoning** in these areas?
- How can students/ ECOTs be empowered to take responsibility for their learning in these areas?



Building competence and capability

1. Being self-reliant
2. Filtering information and turning options into action
3. Feelings associated with making decisions and adverse events
4. Managing and supporting others
5. Being keen and eager and becoming stressed
6. Stepping beyond their comfort zone

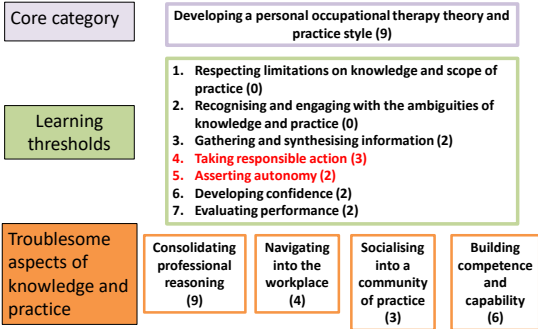
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Learning Threshold 4.
Taking responsible action (3)

1. Accepting client's rights to take risks
2. Maintaining professional boundaries and upholding ethical practice
3. Making sense of errors, incidents and injustices

"One of the things they find surprising is when they [ECOTs] clearly see a need for something and it's not going to happen... and they're just like 'what'? ... some of those things they're not quite prepared for" (Jody phase 3)

Learning Threshold 5. Asserting Autonomy (2)

- 1. Finding your voice
- 2. Talking it through

“People that...had been there for a long time and had a lot of power and they had a voice in meetings and... I think probably the younger, newer graduates would know that they didn't have much power but wouldn't know that they had a choice and could do things about it”
 (Claire, ECOT)

Key capabilities for crossing learning thresholds

- Critical thinking
- Political awareness
- Assertiveness
- Resilience
- Professional identity
- Responsibility for enabling ECOTs to cross learning thresholds is threefold: Educators, ECOTS & the profession**



Developing a personal occupational therapy theory and practice style

I've learned that I'm much more diverse than I realised ... I'm capable of doing many more things than I thought I could and I've learned that I bring a lot to the table that isn't necessarily part of my degree. It's part of who I am...which kind of surprised me and ...has helped increase my confidence. (Eliza ECOT)



“the mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled “
 Lucius Plutarch (Roman historian)



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