

Occupational therapy students' experiences of using problem-based learning on practice placement

National Association of Educators in Practice Conference

April 21st 2017

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Rationale for the project

- Practice placements make up a third of the occupational therapy students' education.
- PBL is the pedagogic approach underpinning the two occupational therapy courses here at the University of Brighton.
- A popular training method for occupational therapists and a recognised pedagogic approach by professional body (COT 2009)
- Evidence suggests enhanced communication skills, team working, clinical reasoning, problem solving, client centred practice (Salvatorri 2000, Reeves et al 2004, Spalding and Killett 2010)



Rationale for the project

- Sadlo (2014) suggests that PBL can be used effectively on placement by students and educators

However

- Whilst there is evidence for PBL in the classroom, there is a paucity of research regarding the use of PBL on practice placement.
- Roberts et al (2015), when mapping placement research, highlight specific need for research focusing on placement pedagogy as only 10% of papers reviewed focus on teaching or learning on placement.



Research Question and aims

- What are occupational therapy students' experiences of using problem-based learning on practice placement?

To develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which (if any) occupational therapy students transfer the PBL skills learnt on campus into the placement setting

To contribute to evidence base regarding problem-based learning as a pedagogic approach



Research Design

- Qualitative research project - building deeper understanding of the topic from perspective of the students
- Focus groups lasting 60-90 mins (recruited and facilitated by Lisa Hodgson)
- Sample from all four cohorts of the BSc (hons) Occupational Therapy
- Thematic data analysis



Emerging themes

- Active learning
- Team working
- Increased confidence
- Client centred / holistic practice
- Emotional preparation
- Becoming part of pedagogic being



Active learning

“its not just receiving information, you're actually dealing with the information and challenging it”

“I use the framework all the time”, “what don't I know, what do I need to know?” “I was just doing PBL all the time”

So what are my gaps, what do I need to know?

“I found that transferable, I was able to sort of look and pick out key information, if there were things I didn't know I'd just kind of highlight it, sort of from there I'd be able to fill those gaps throughout the placement”

Makes me question things that happen on placement



Increased confidence

asking questions of other professionals, before I would have found it daunting.... I just found it much easier

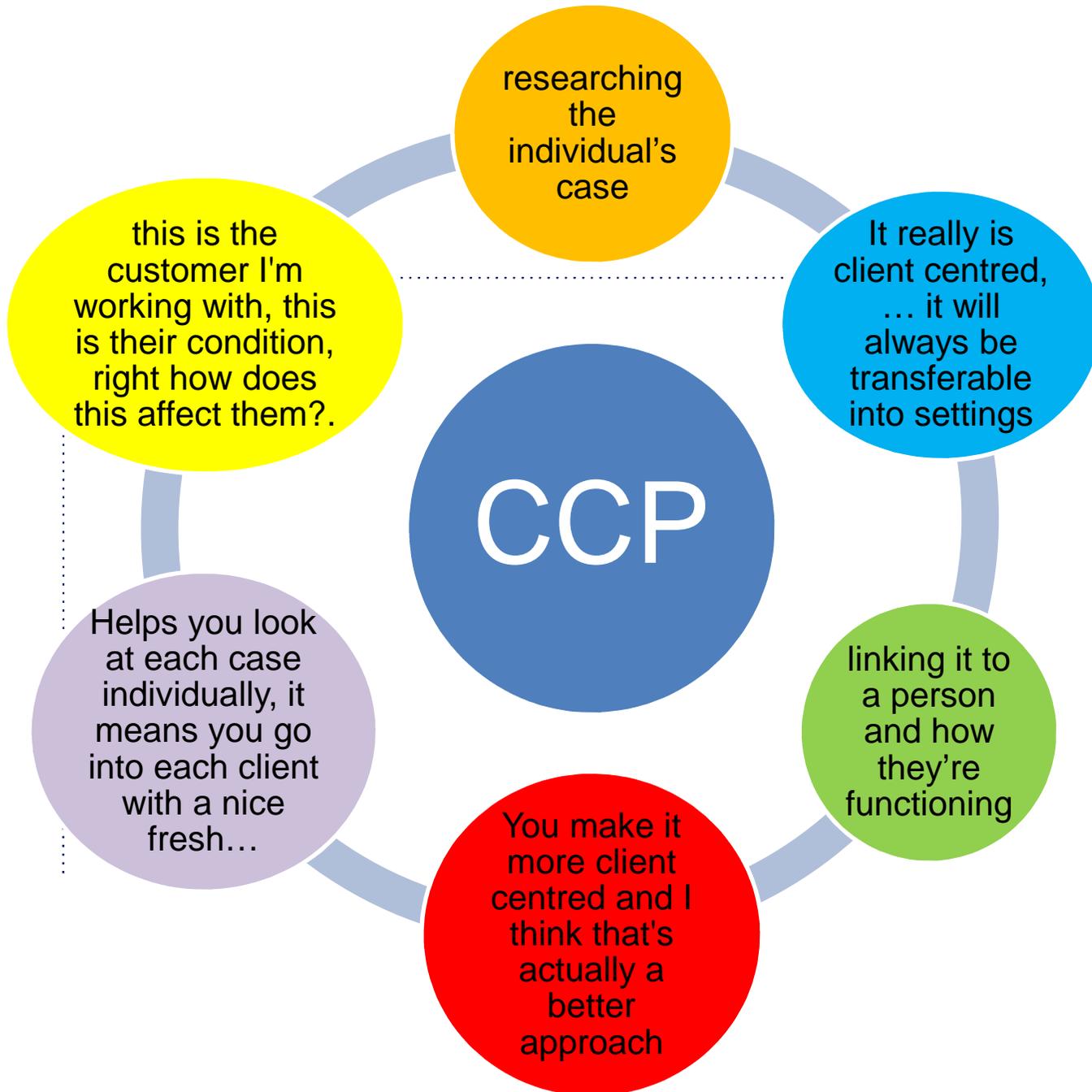
Would have been terrified at speaking in front of groups of people before the course. But now....

Making sense of guidelines in practice- what does this mean, how does this impact in real life?

because you've had to stand up for what you think in PBL, it kinda gives you that confidence to deal with most situations

Confidence to say I don't know





Emotional preparation

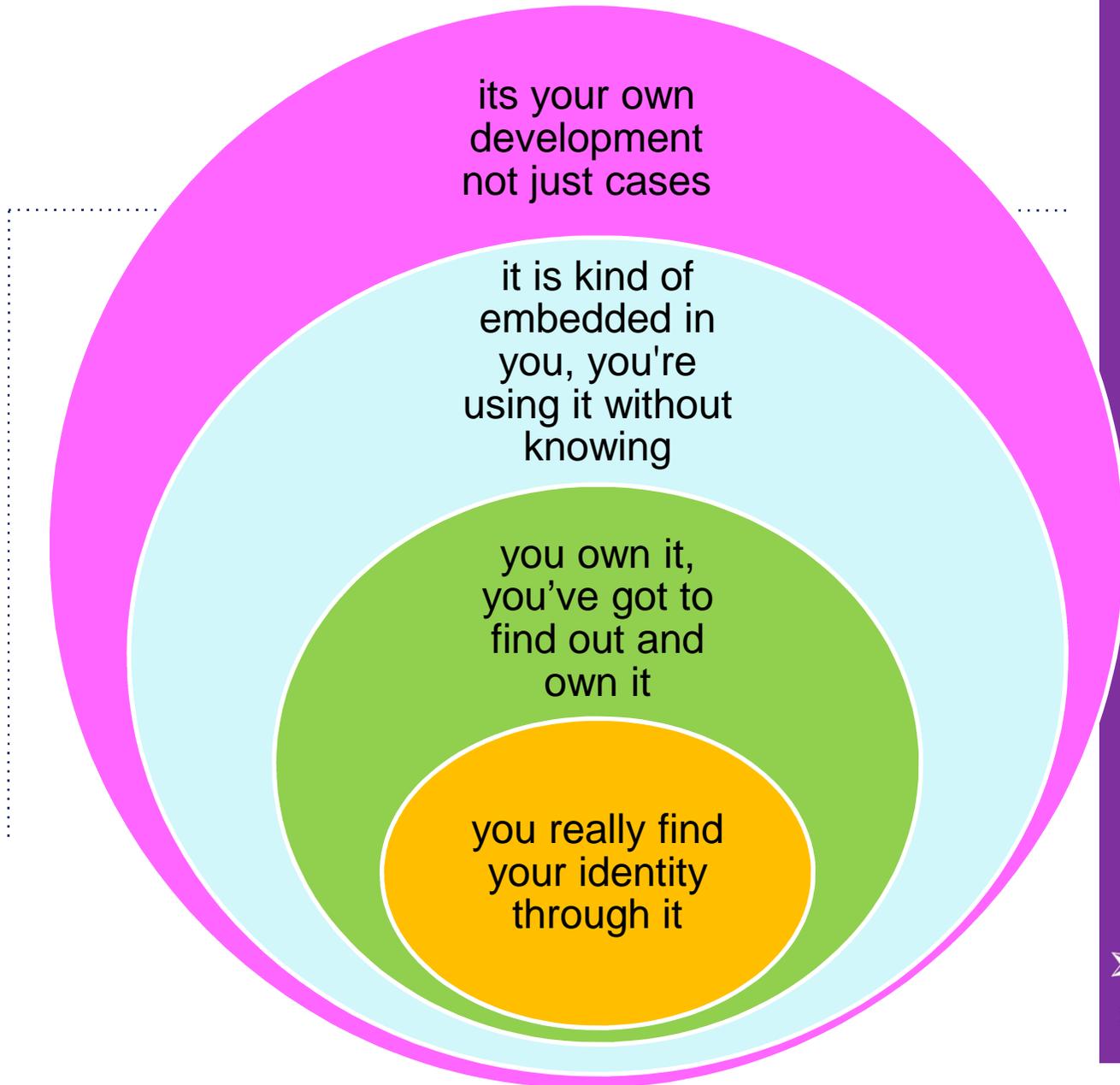
you can have all the crying and stress kind of thing, you can experience that in a safe PBL environment so that when you do come into contact with it on placement or at work you've been there, you've done that you know, you won't be so emotionally involved maybe.... You can hold yourself in

It's not scary not knowing everything because you know where you can find that information out

It's not just training you educationally it's also, they're the kind of issues you will get in practice as well so learning how to deal with that, in this environment, you can take that into work as well



Becoming part of their pedagogic being



Initial discussion

- On placement, PBL is acting as a practical 'tool for thinking' – increasing confidence with communication, reasoning, reflection, critical thinking and action in practice setting.
- Authentic PBL triggers act as provocation for students- appears to increase self –awareness, compassion and resilience for practice.
- PBL facilitates ontological development (development of self and identity as learners in the practice setting as well as what they need to know)
- Transformative learning both on campus and in practice.



Limitations

- Self-selected sample
- Mature learners – nature of part time course.
- From one PBL course.
- Only BSc students to date – need to gather data from MSc (pre-reg) course.



Thank you for listening

- Please feel free to contact us for any further information
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