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

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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

• Whist 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 leaning 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

“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”

“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

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

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

- Appreciating the views of other professionals
- Gives you confidence to speak up in a group situation.
- It forces you to work as a team
- Build tolerance for working in a MDT
- It gives you the skills to listen as well to what's going on and taking the information you need
- It gives you the skills to not take what other professionals say as gospel and maybe question why are you doing that?
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.
CCP

- researching the individual's case
- It really is client centred, … it will always be transferable into settings
- linking it to a person and how they're functioning
- this is the customer I'm working with, this is their condition, right how does this affect them?
- Helps you look at each case individually, it means you go into each client with a nice fresh…
- You make it more client centred and I think that's actually a better approach

Helps you look at each case individually, it means you go into each client with a nice fresh…
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 wont 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 its 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

- it's your own development, not just cases
- it is kind of embedded in you, you're using it without knowing
- you own it, you've got to find out and own it
- you really find your identity through it
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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References

• College of Occupational Therapists (2014) College of Occupational Therapists learning and development standards for pre-registration education.


