

THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

for Higher Education Health and Social Care students in a small island community

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BACKGROUND

- Participation in Higher Education (HE) has become the focus of inclusion agendas over the last decade both nationally and internationally (Whiteford, 2017).
- Participation in HE is understood to augment social participation economically and socially and is key in modern western society (Yang, 2011).
- HE students face multiple challenges on entering and throughout their undergraduate programme.
- Health and Social Care HE students face further challenges as they develop skills to care for others, and develop coping strategies that will be carried forward into their professional role.
- Traditionally within the small island community HE provider, student support has been offered by a Nurse and a librarian

MODERN ROLE OF HE IN SMALL ISLAND COMMUNITY

- Education and retention of high standard HSC professionals is essential as financial independence and sustainability of the islands economy and healthcare infrastructure is paramount (Committee for Economic Development, 2018).
- HE is increasingly becoming a competitive market so student experience and retention is of particular interest to HE providers (Cotton et al., 2017)
- Higher social status and 50% higher earning potential for those with HE qualifications (Belfield et al., 2018).

CHALLENGES WHEN ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION

Multiple life transitions whilst adapting and adjusting to role changes

Community and peer group changes and limited access to established social networks

Emerging self-actualisation in adult domain

Balance of occupations and occupational performance

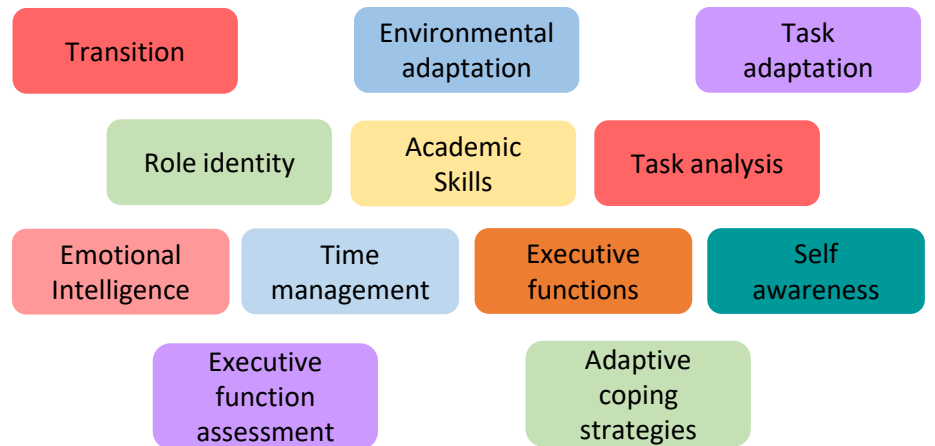
Academic pressures and independent learning

Potentially unfamiliar daily living tasks

Financial burden

Ineffective coping strategies

OT ROLE IN HE



- There is national and international literature that purports that there is a link between non-academic support and a students' success in HE (Morgan, 2012)
- Occupational Therapy has a defined role in health promotion preventive strategy to facilitate individuals control over and in improving their health and wellbeing (Söderback, 2015; Morris and Jenkins, 2018).
- Occupational Therapist's expertise in task analysis, task adaptation, environmental adaptation and so on, means that they are uniquely placed to support students at the initial stage of transition in to HE, and throughout their HE experience (Spencer et al., 2018; Schindler, 2019).
- Occupational Therapy interventions with undergraduates can develop their anticipatory skills in identifying occupational performance concerns which in turn lessens the stress in transition processes, ultimately improving quality of life (QoL) during HE and into their professional practice (Keptner, 2017).
- Comprehensive occupation focused assessment of individual students activities, both academic and social can support fulfilment of their participation potential which enhances their quality of life (Porath and Rosenblum, 2019)
- Strengths based assessment of activity analysis, occupational motivation and participation profile can be used to support academic success.

NEXT STEPS

A research project as part of Masters study will be undertaken to understand current student support services, student experience and recommendations for introduction of OT role

REFERENCES

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