

Experimentation spaces: power of meeting, doing and the enlargement of repertory of activities

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Abstract: This article reports the lived and reflected process of the monitoring project of the occupational therapy course of UNIFESP, Campus Baixada Santista. This project chose the field of experimentation of activities and resources as a way to broaden and integrate the knowledge and contents acquired throughout academic formation. The lived dynamics was based on an active perspective of the students in the process of experimentation and together the group worked on aspects of how they were affected by the meeting and how they could work, from that resource with different subjects. The main results of this action were: the culture of the meeting between students in the Laboratory of Therapeutic Resources, the valorization of the ‘activity’ for the professional action of the occupational therapist, the appropriation of techniques and their exploitation for different purposes, the enlargement of the repertory of activities and greater integration among undergraduate students. It is concluded that the offer of spaces of experimentation creates potent conditions for the formation of students, increasing creative possibilities and of greater engagement between peers and with the course.

Keywords: *Occupational Therapy, Education, Teaching.*

Espaços de experimentação: potência do encontro, do fazer e a ampliação do repertório de atividades

Resumo: O presente artigo relata o processo vivido e refletido do projeto de monitoria do Curso de Terapia Ocupacional da UNIFESP, Campus Baixada Santista. Tal projeto elegeu o campo da experimentação das atividades e recursos como uma forma de ampliar e integrar os conhecimentos e os conteúdos adquiridos ao longo da formação acadêmica. A dinâmica vivida pautava-se em uma perspectiva ativa dos discentes no processo de experimentação, e conjuntamente ao grupo trabalhavam desde aspectos de como eram afetados pelo encontro e como poderiam trabalhar, a partir daquele recurso, com diferentes públicos. Os principais resultados em torno dessa ação foram: a cultura do encontro entre discentes no Laboratório de Recursos Terapêuticos, a valorização da ‘atividade’ para a ação profissional do terapeuta ocupacional, a apropriação de técnicas e sua exploração para diferentes fins, a ampliação do repertório de atividades e uma maior integração entre os alunos de graduação. Conclui-se que a oferta de espaços de experimentação cria condições potentes para a formação dos estudantes, ampliando possibilidades criativas e de maior engajamento entre pares e com o curso.

Palavras-chave: *Terapia Ocupacional, Formação, Ensino.*

[...] Never have so many things gone, but the experience is increasingly rare (BONDIÁ, 2002, p. 21).

1 The Experiments Place During Education

The education in occupational therapy has been the subject of debates in recent years, which has been provoking the formulation of new teaching strategies that aim at the education of a professional with knowledge consistent with the national reality, and educational, national and international policies that guide the training of the occupational therapist in Brazil (BRASIL, 2002; WORLD..., 2002).

These policies have been undergoing reformulations and changes that have led to the resizing of undergraduate courses. Since 2001, the National Curricular Guidelines for undergraduate health courses state that the training of the health professional should contemplate the health system in force in the country, comprehensive health care, and teamwork. Based on these parameters, it was necessary for the courses and universities to review their pedagogical positions and their education curricula (BRASIL, 2002).

According to Furlan et al. (2014), higher education institutions were asked to rethink their political-pedagogical projects with the challenge of evaluating teaching practices, breaking with the tradition of vertical teaching and passive transmission of knowledge.

As Occupational therapy has become a field of knowledge and intervention in health, education and social field, it faces the challenge of reformulating curricula and practices of educational process from conceptions directed to the needs of the people, with link strong for their contexts of life. As Kastrup and Sancovschi (2013) argue, this gives new challenges regarding the creation of a cognitive policy of opening attention to the complex situations of daily reality and also the invention of new procedures, new practices and new technologies of care and attention. In this sense, we have the challenge of thinking and making happen the formation of a professional directed to the teamwork in an interdisciplinary way that can analyze the complexity of the social context, to work closer to the popular cultures, to establish care networks among different sectors of social policies, to establish organic relationships between service structures and teaching/training structures.

Thus, UNIFESP occupational therapy course has the integration between the experience of doing, listening and feeling to the reasoning about the experience and its multiple senses as its axis of teaching/learning. Thus, approaching the subjects inserted in their life context and going through the daily activities made up of the multiple actions that ensure their existence, places for the student the possibility of integrating TO BE and TO DO, and dialogue with human experience continuously, articulating the theoretical-practical references in the construction of knowledge (UNIVERSIDADE..., 2015).

The curriculum of this course was planned in a modular design, seeking to integrate contents/units, in axes and interdisciplinary modules. In terms of teaching, priority is given to the adoption of problematizing methodologies and new information technologies are used, stimulating an active posture of the student in the construction of knowledge and its development (UNIVERSIDADE..., 2015).

In this process, it is suggested a list of contents aimed at inter-professional training, a priority of the UNIFESP Campus - Baixada Santista, but safeguarding the general recommendations of the National Curricular Guidelines of the undergraduate course in occupational therapy, suggested by CNE/CES 6, on February 19, 2002. The Political-Pedagogical Project of the Occupational Therapy course, besides stimulating the exchange and transit between professional boundaries, it also articulates teaching, research and extension/assistance, aiming at training for action in the area's health, the social sphere and education. In this context, systematized contents are developed to intervene in several scenarios, focusing on inter-professional education, enabling future professionals to integrate multi-professional teams.

The modules and axes are under the responsibility of different professors who, from most of the time, from different perspectives of knowledge, this explains the richness of the plurality of different epistemological models, expressed in a great variety of theories and techniques that the students come into contact with throughout their training.

The option by the faculty of the occupational therapy course is to expose the student to this variety, in the positive sense of discouraging the naturalization of the field and doctrinal dogmatism, but creating a vertiginous situation for the student, who is faced with a multiplicity of ideas that only find internal consistency in their own theoretical framework.

Regardless of the epistemological position adopted by the teacher, there is a consensus within the course of the use of Human Activity as the central axis of the construction of any occupational therapeutic process, regardless of the theoretical presupposition, the clientele and/or context in which the occupational therapist is involved (BRUNELLO; CASTRO; LIMA, 2001). Privileging human activity for the understanding of the individual in the world requires bringing forth the experience, doing with the other, as well as being in the world with the other. Therefore, when we speak of the education of the occupational therapist, we refer to the experiences of oneself in the world and to the experiences of being and doing with the other (FREIRE, 1987).

Based on this assumption, in addition to the results of the periodic evaluations with the students, it has become evident the need to create strategies that broaden student contact with the practical experimentation of techniques and resources, and also to facilitate the interlocution and integration of content that the student accesses throughout their training. From these aspects, we show the proposal of the monitoring project for the course of occupational therapy developed between 2011 and 2014.

The monitoring consists of an academic activity of a complementary nature, in which the student has the opportunity to develop and expand the knowledge acquired in the school through the support to the teacher in the conduction of the subjects. In UNIFESP, the monitoring project is not related to a specific subject, but to a set of subjects defined by the teachers and students that outline the proposal of the Monitoring Project. Also, a set of activities is proposed that allows the effective participation of the monitors in the integration of the academic content that the occupational therapy course offers during the four years of education.

The idea is to think of monitoring as a field of action and a space of approximation with the contents taught in the modules, allowing the experience, exploration and innovation of the different teaching strategies used, favoring the smaller distance between the teacher's specialization and the general training of the student and the possibility of increasing dialogues between the different fields of knowledge not only for the monitors, but for the whole curriculum, favoring the practical performance of the theory for the differential of the training in the Campus Baixada Santista, and for the occupational therapy course.

In this sense, the monitoring project called *Activity in focus: favoring the expansion of the repertoire of activities and interlocution with axes and modules* was

developed between 2011 and 2014. In this project, there were the subjects that involve practical and theoretical discussions on therapeutic resources, which are Activities of Daily Life: Everyday; Expressive and Non-Expressive Activities; Ludic Activities and Leisure; Assistive Technology and Group Approach. The objective of this study was to provide opportunities for experiencing, exploring and innovating the different teaching strategies used in the contents of the modules of the occupational therapy course, through active participation in activities related to teaching (planning, conducting activities and evaluation).

2 About the Experiments

The project offered activities workshops with experimentation of several resources for students of the occupational therapy course, enabling to use the space of the therapeutic resources laboratory, as well as valuing the activity for professional action, ranging from knowledge of the technique to its exploitation to the different contexts of action.

In this period, the monitors involved in the project participated in weekly supervisions to elaborate the activities proposed by the monitoring and presented to the students to explain the objectives of the monitoring project and to make a survey of the activities and resources that the students of the different years of graduation could be interested and list for the workshops. Based on the demand raised, a schedule of workshops was elaborated using different resources. In these workshops, every fortnight, there was a responsible teacher and each monitor had a rotating function: organizing the workshop, acquiring the necessary materials, supporting the workshop and recording the activity (written and imaged). Reports were made of each workshop, containing the technique used, the materials used, the workshop proponent, the number of people, perceptions observed, and critical discussions regarding the use of the resource for the different actions in occupational therapy. At the end of each workshop, the report was analyzed jointly between teachers and students to analyze the way the workshop was proposed and what emerged content would be used for professional practice.

In this period, the monitors were responsible for the use of the Laboratory and for the offer of theoretical material to the students who were interested in deepening knowledge regarding the resource used.

It is important to emphasize that over time, the student monitors agreed to coordinate the teachers to share their specific knowledge about certain resources and/or techniques besides to the teachers coordinating the workshops. This allowed for a more fruitful exchange among students, monitors, workshop workers, and teachers. We understand that at a time when students have the possibility to coordinate workshops, they are also experiencing the role of group coordinator, which is largely occupied by occupational therapists in their workplaces.

Throughout these years, various modalities of activities workshops were offered, such as stencil¹, massage; juggling, macrame, stop motion², t-shirts, self-portrait, kite making; dance; origami; plaster mask; felt puppet; photography, cloth dolls, clay sculpture, recyclable toys, mosaic, low cost assistive technology, magnet poetry; cuisine, among others. About 20 students participated in each workshop and they were coordinated by lecturers of the course, by the monitors, by students who had mastery of the technique, as well as artisans from the city of Santos.

The experimentation groups were approximately one and a half hours long and always took place in the late afternoon, with a space for initial conversation being reserved to enlighten the students about the proposal and group the people who were present. This is because, although all the students were from the same course, not everyone knew each other, and this initial setting could facilitate the performance of the proposal. At the end of the workshop, there was also a moment of final conversation to discuss how the content was understood by each one, understanding that in the workshops there is also the singular meeting of the student with a technique not always known by him. At that moment, the chance to meet the unknown and be able to talk about their experience is carried out.

To obtain more data about the effects of the practices to the students, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed, with open and closed questions, to be answered via the internet. In this section, there were questions about the student's perception of the material used, the proposed activity, the personal involvement, the proposer, the group communication, the individual contribution, the relevance of the resource, the possibility of using the resource, academic training, among others. Based on these answers, some notes about the impacts of the monitoring project on student education is shown.

3 Some Notes

The results of this project were based on questionnaires answered by the participants of the experimental groups and by the analysis of the group of monitors and teachers from the experiences of the workshops.

- The expansion of the repertoire of activities with the different resources and techniques experienced by the students

According to the analysis of the questionnaires, 95% of the students who participated in the activity workshops said that this experience contributed to the expansion of their repertoire of activities. Also, in the spaces of answers where the students could write, there were always words of gratitude for this question. This is something much discussed in the course, because it tends to make a minor issue the teaching of techniques in contemporary curricula, and we live with the fact that we do not want to be recognized as 'workshop workers', 'arts' and/or breeding techniques, as a professional. However, this leads us invariably to place this content in a place of minor importance, almost non-existent, creating a conflict, because when students go to the internship camps, they are questioned about their knowledge regarding their repertoire of activity and appropriation of techniques. Thus, the existence of the monitoring project made the course strengthen the centrality of the use of 'activities' and their techniques within the professional scope of the occupational therapist. Besides the repertoire, the students also pointed out the aspects that the experiments of the different resources were used in their training, which are presented in Figure 1.

These aspects are consistent with different skills and competencies desirable for an occupational therapist. Reinforcing what Castro et al. (2009) brings us about the formation in the field of activities in the contemporary, which goes through the daily construction of social and professional relationships where occupational therapists are increasingly called to act in a fundamentally transdisciplinary exercise, the above dimensions being non-specific aspects of a professionalism, but that make up our professional scope in the management of human activity.

- Appropriation of the resources laboratory and activities

This laboratory, used for teaching and extension activities, centralizes the training. There are classes of activities and therapeutic resources, but it was

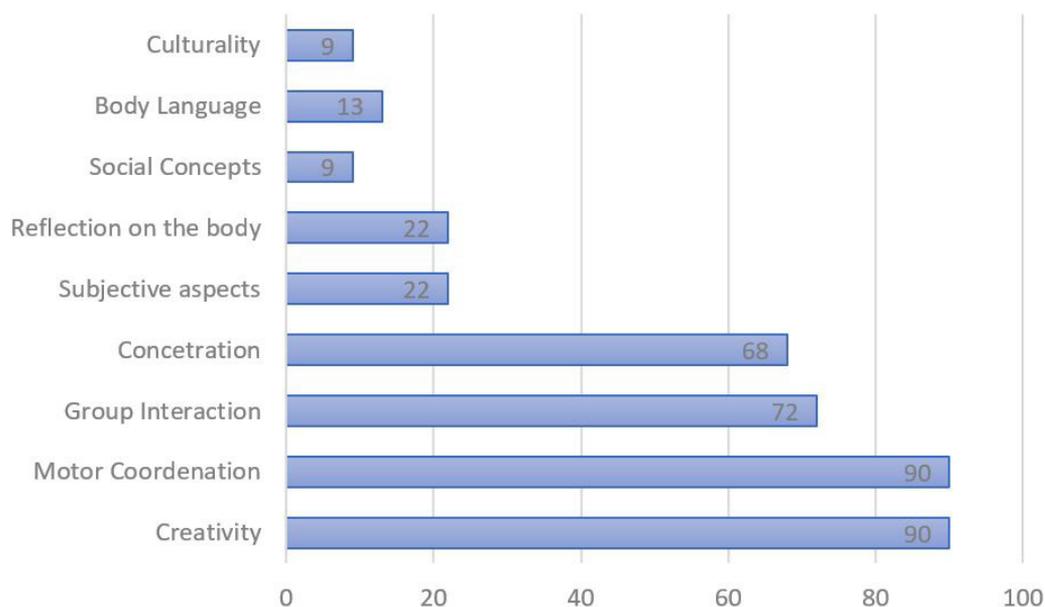


Figure 1. Dimensions worked in the Workshops. Source: Data from the Survey for Workshop Participants.

observed that, outside the class hours, this laboratory was little used by the students for experimentation, elaboration of projects or meetings outside the classroom activity. Using it for the workshops offered by the monitoring project, it enables to create a culture of use of the laboratory, even if it is in a different unit from where the classes take place.

- The greatest interlocution among students of the four different terms of the occupational therapy course

The power of this experimentation also lies in the possibility of meeting the students of the eight different terms of the occupational therapy course, remembering that because it is an interdisciplinary campus, and the last year always require more off-campus activities because they are attending the internships professionals in the services, the classes have little space to interact. Also, it was recognized beyond a space of formation, as a space of leisure and coexistence, as a student affirmed: “[...] *the experience was very important for me because the week was full of tasks and it was a moment for a pause to have fun doing something else*”.

- The constitution of a training consisting of the discussion of resources for the group of monitors, since they advised and directed the collection of information necessary for the organization of monitoring activities

According to the monitors, participation in this process enabled an appreciation of what they call ‘doing in action’. Each proposal offered to the students was carefully-cared, from its invention, its planning, the organization of materials, the creation of better strategies for conducting the group and subsequent theoretical reflection on the articulation between the resource and its possibilities of use in the contexts of life with the target audiences of occupational therapy. Besides the wealth of the process, they also highlight the positive impact on their education coming from the new place they occupied as group coordinators since occupational therapists are invariably called upon to coordinate groups and collective actions.

4 Conclusion

The project offered activities workshops with experimentation of several resources for students of the occupational therapy course, enabling to use the space of the therapeutic resources laboratory, as well as valuing the activity for professional action, ranging from knowledge of the technique to its exploitation to the different contexts of action. The power of this experimentation was the possibility of meeting the students of the four different terms of the occupational therapy course, allowing the exchange of experience, doing together, expanding the repertoire of activities and articulating the

various axes and modules, including internships and the fieldwork of our course.

Finally, organizing activities such as those proposed by the Monitoring Project is in the direction of having the existence of formative activities, paraphrasing Bondiá, that happen, occur, touch, in particular, this new generation immersed in a more virtual reality with fewer meetings.

Thus, it is increasingly necessary to invent, reinvent, not invent methods, resources and teaching techniques capable of forming more sensitive occupational therapists and affects the demands that emerge from human suffering and complex by nature and condition. We continue in the gerund, inventing.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to the design of the text. Ana Carolina, Paloma and Victor participated in the project as monitors. Patricia and Andrea were coordinators and proposed writing the text. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the text.

Funding Source

Pro-Rectorry of Graduation of the Federal University of São Paulo.

Notes

¹ The technique used to apply a drawing or illustration, by cutting or punching in paper or acetate, resulting in a board with the fill of the leaked drawing where the ink will pass. The stencil obtained is used to print images on numerous surfaces, from cement to cloth.

² The animation technique that the characters and the scene moved and photographed frame by frame. These frames are later mounted on a motion picture film, creating the impression of movement. At this stage, sound effects such as speech or music can be added.