

PERCEPTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS OF ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE SAÚDE DO PORTO – PORTUGAL ABOUT THE PROBLEM BASED LEARNING APPROACH

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Introduction:

Problem Based Learning (PBL) introduced a new approach of teaching which ask students to acquire knowledge and skills through independent and self direct study. This approach transfers to students the responsibility for their own learning. According with the literature, this concept seems to conduct to some resistance and adverse reactions from students. Nevertheless, this approach is pointed as promoting active learning and support knowledge and skills acquisition in real life situations. These characteristics suit it very attractive as a model of teaching for an Occupational Therapy Course, reason why it was adopted at the Escola Superior de Saúde do Porto – Portugal starting in the 2008-2009 scholar year.

Aim:

The aim of this study is to understand the perceptions of 1st, 2nd and 3rd year Occupational Therapy students about the PBL approach, during the first year of implementation.

Methods:

We conduct a qualitative exploratory study, using a Corpus of 11 records of meetings, which are analyzed using Content Analyses. Adopting an a posteriori categorical system as strategy, three investigators working independently proceed to the analysis of the records in order to obtain an inter-rater agreement. Peer debriefing is used to ensure trustworthiness and confiabilityauthenticity.

Results:

Five dimensions are revealed by the analysis: PBL approach, Curriculum, Organization, Resources, and Physical Context. These dimensions are similar between students from several curricular years. The major concern is related with the lack of resources and the need of feedback revealed by students during the curricular units ongoing and evaluation moments. Also the need for a high support from the tutors is pointed by students.

Conclusion:

The resources available are sparsely and results in a higher need for support from teachers, especially from those who are tutors. Difficulties with organization, namely with feedback provided are due to lack of experience from teachers and students unsafe concerning their own competences. Students consider that PBL approach requires much hours of hard work per week. They also think it is a more difficult learning method. Even so, they refer a better acquisition of knowledge and skills and recognize the positive aspects of the approach.

keywords: problem based learning, student's perceptions.