

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A DIGITAL-BASED CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT PLAN FOR FILIPINO UPHSL OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GRADUATES AND PRACTITIONERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study identified the UPHSL occupational therapy graduates and assessed the extent of program's contribution to their personal and professional growth with the end goal of proposing a digital-based curriculum enhancement plan. Specifically, this described the profile of occupational therapy graduates in terms of age, sex, civil status, year graduated, employment status, nature of work, length of finding their first job after college, compensation and remuneration, present position or designation, length of service at work and the number of memberships in the organization. Moreover, this study also determined the extent of program's contribution to the graduates' personal and professional growth which were substantial to the preparation of digital-based curriculum enhancement plan. Further, the study involved 24 occupational therapy graduates and 10 practitioners from University of Perpetual Help System Laguna assigned and working abroad. As such the study utilized the descriptive-developmental method of research with a researcher's made questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument and was complemented with interview and focused group discussion. On the other hand, the study delimited the participation of occupational therapists who were not graduates of the University of Perpetual Help System Laguna. This study was limited only to the responses generated from the concerned occupational therapists as the target respondents. Findings of the study revealed UPHSL Occupational Therapy graduates have a promising and excellent qualification and profile. Graduates expressed strong agreement with the contribution of the UPHSL OT program to their personal and professional growth. The proposed curriculum improvement aimed calibrate academic program offerings to the global market and the needs of occupational therapists.

**Keywords:** UPHSL graduates, program's contribution, personal and professional growth

### **INTRODUCTION**

The content discusses the transition in the occupational therapy profession from bachelor's to master's degree programs and the current concerns regarding the unique curricular components of Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Doctoral (EL-OTD) programs. It emphasizes the importance of having a comprehensive curriculum that includes opportunities in clinical care, research, and leadership to benefit students, advance the profession, and serve occupational therapy clients. The curriculum of EL-OTD programs must meet ACOTE requirements and align with the institution's mission and vision. The article also highlights the importance of flexibility and variability in curricula and the necessity of designing a rigorous doctoral-level curriculum tailored to individual institution characteristics. Additionally, the discussion covers the evolution of occupational therapy education, the influence of educational trends like blended learning, and the importance of occupational therapy educators' self-efficacy in teaching in innovative formats. Moreover, the article addresses the need for curriculum evaluation in occupational therapy programs to meet the

standards set by organizations like the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) and ensure the quality and relevance of occupational therapy education. The study also includes a focus on the occupational profile of Filipino occupational therapy educators and the development of a digital-based curriculum enhancement plan for graduates to align with international standards and prepare them for the evolving healthcare landscape.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Faull et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of occupational therapists in maximizing the independence of palliative care patients. Effective communication and collaboration with other health professionals are crucial skills for newly graduated occupational therapists in this setting. Setting realistic goals using the SMART framework, collaboration with patients, and monitoring progress are key components of palliative care patient rehabilitation. Occupational therapists also play a supportive role in pain management and emotional support for both patients and caregivers. Occupational therapy education must equip students to work in new practice areas within communities and organizations, focusing on social transformation and community-centered care. As educational programs in occupational therapy incorporate online curriculum, understanding educators' self-efficacy in teaching blended courses is crucial for student success. Occupational therapy educators must develop skills to effectively teach in blended learning environments, balancing face-to-face and online instruction to enhance student learning experiences. The evolution of occupational therapy education highlights the importance of hands-on learning experiences, accreditation standards, and the impact of technology on teaching and learning. Occupational therapy educators must adapt to changes in higher education and integrate technology into the learning environment to effectively prepare students for the evolving healthcare landscape.

Modern societies are facing new challenges in terms of environmental, economic, health, and sociological issues. These changes have led governments to reconsider the curriculum in schools to better prepare students for the future. Several countries, including Estonia, Finland, Japan, Norway, and Wales, have implemented curriculum reforms to focus on skills and competencies needed in the twenty-first century. Curriculum reform involves a convergence of global and local forces, and the challenges of implementation are key in ensuring the success of these changes. The rationale for curriculum change may come from the need to update material based on changing contexts or as a response to specific difficulties within the education system.

A key aspect of curriculum reform is the vision it seeks to achieve, which outlines the expected outcomes of the educational system in terms of knowledge and skills. A properly stated vision, agreed upon by stakeholders, is crucial for successful curriculum change. The shift globally is towards a competence-based curriculum, which focuses on developing students' multidisciplinary knowledge and skills to navigate an ever-changing environment. Competencies such as self-management, creative thinking, and communication skills are emphasized to create well-rounded individuals capable of solving problems and interacting with others. This trend towards competence-based curricula has been observed in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia. International organizations like the OECD are also studying this trend and assisting education systems in determining the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed for students to succeed in the future. The shift towards competence-based curricula reflects a broader movement towards preparing students for the challenges of the twenty-first century, where adaptability and problem-solving skills are crucial. Ultimately, curriculum reform plays a significant role in

ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to thrive in an ever-changing world.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher utilized a simple random technique in order to identify the respondents of the study which were 24 graduates of occupational therapy and 10 practitioners from the University of Perpetual Help System Laguna from the year 2000 up to 2023. The primary sources of data are the profile of the occupational therapy graduates and practitioners and not only the empirical data derived from the respondents which can be treated and analyzed.

## RESULTS

### 1. Profile of UPHSL Occupational Therapy Graduates

**Table 1**  
**Profile of the Respondents**

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>A. Age</b>		
31-35	2	5.88
36-40	4	11.76
41-45	20	58.82
46 and above	8	23.53
<b>B. Sex</b>		
1. Male	8	23.53
2. Female	26	76.47
<b>C. Civil Status</b>		
1. Single	10	29.41
2. Married	24	70.59
<b>D. Year Graduated</b>		
2000 and below	20	58.82
2001 to 2005	4	11.76
2006 to 2010	4	11.76
2011-2015	2	5.88
2016-2020	4	11.76
<b>E. Employment Status</b>		
Employed	34	100.00
Unemployed	-	-
<b>F. Nature of Work</b>		
Medical	28	82.35
Outside Medical field	6	17.65
<b>G. Length of Finding their First Job</b>		
Within 6 months after graduation	26	76.47
Within 7-12 months after graduation	6	17.65
1 to 1.5. years	2	5.88
<b>H. Compensation and Remuneration</b>		
35,000-45,000	3	8.82
46,000-55,000	5	14.71
56,000-66,000	-	-
67,000-80,000	-	-
80,000 and above	26	76.47
<b>I. Present Position</b>		
Rank and File	16	47.06
Private Employee	12	35.29
State Government	6	17.65
<b>J. Length of Service</b>		
1-5 years	12	35.29
6-10 years	10	29.41
11-15 years	6	17.65
16-20 years	2	5.88
21-25 years	4	11.76
<b>K. Number of Membership</b>		
1-5	32	94.12
6-10	2	5.88

### 2. Extent of Program's Contribution to the Level of Performance of the Graduates

**Table 2**  
**Extent of Program's Contribution to the Level of Performance of the Graduates as to Personal Growth**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>VI</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Improves one's self- esteem towards performance of work	3.65	SA	7.5
Establishes one's love and passion towards occupational therapy-profession	3.71	SA	3
Develops positive life skills that enable to work efficiently in a situation	3.65	SA	7.5
Recognizes and reflects one's feeling and emotions in a mature and discerned manner	3.65	SA	7.5
Serves as a motivating factor which can be useful to one's future endeavors in the medical profession	3.76	SA	1
Helps building patient's character by learning various aspects of medical profession	3.65	SA	7.5
Discovers other capacities and potentials which are used in the actualization of Profession	3.71	SA	3
Serves as a merit to one's personality which can boost his/her confidence in the realization of occupational therapy practice	3.59	SA	11.5
Recognizes the importance of mastery of content knowledge and its interconnectedness	3.65	SA	7.5
Translates occupational therapy curriculum content into meaningful engagement with the patients	3.71	SA	3
Helps identify potential problems as related to the course taken	3.65	SA	7.5
Equips graduates with professional knowledge in formulating a diagnosis, prognosis and treatment plan based on a comprehensive assessment	3.53	SA	13
Helps identify and respond to opportunities for occupational therapy experiences, interests and aspirations and improving patients' overall quality of life	3.59	SA	11.5
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>SA</b>	

**Legend:** SA – Strongly Agree

**Table 3**  
**Extent of Program's Contribution to the Level of Performance of the Graduates as to Professional Growth**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>VI</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. Serves as instrument towards medical professionalism and excellence	3.65	SA	7.5
2. Contributes more occupational therapy experiences and techniques in acquiring knowledge to enhance professional growth	3.71	SA	3
3. Improves abilities led to success in diagnosis and treatment process	3.65	SA	7.5
4. Expresses one's desire to learn more and uplift the knowledge and ideas, they have learned upon finishing the master's or doctorate degree	3.65	SA	7.5
5. Provides ample understanding and information about Occupational Therapy	3.76	SA	1

6. Upholds significant experiences to enhance and develop the profession	3.65	SA	7.5
7. Takes initiatives in introducing improvements or changes	3.71	SA	3
8. Equips graduates with motivation and desire towards medical field	3.59	SA	11.5
9. Provides learning space for decision making, discernment when making suggestions and expressing thoughts on situations encountered	3.65	SA	7.5
10. Creates learning positively and actively to colleagues seeking feedback, new ideas, and methods	3.71	SA	3
11. Helps apply new experiences and skills to positively impact current position and career pursuits	3.65	SA	7.5
12. Provides acquisition of knowledge and skills that can improve efficiency at work	3.53	SA	13
13. Develops communication skills and social skills as well as the emotional well-being	3.59	SA	11.5
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>SA</b>	

**Legend:** SA – Strongly Agree

## DISCUSSION

The majority of UPHSL OT graduates are aged 40-45, indicating they have been in the field for a long time and are primarily women. They completed their training before 2000, showing significant experience over two decades. They are mostly married, suggesting stability in their personal lives. All graduates are employed in medical roles, earning 80,000 and above, showing high demand for occupational therapists. They typically work in hospitals, rehab centers, and schools, collaborating with other health professionals. Graduates were hired within six months of graduating, have been in their current role for 1-5 years, and are members of 1-5 professional organizations, showing successful employment and commitment to ongoing professional development. The UPHSL OT program effectively prepares graduates for the workforce, as seen in their quick employment, job stability, and involvement in professional organizations. This highlights the value of the skills and knowledge acquired through the program in establishing successful careers in various healthcare settings.

**2.1 Personal Growth.** UPHSL's occupational therapy program emphasizes cultural competence and diversity awareness, encouraging graduates to respect cultural differences, adapt interventions to client needs, and promote openness and tolerance. The program focuses on self-reflection, lifelong learning, and professional development, equipping graduates with the skills to succeed in the field. Graduates strongly agree that the program contributes to their personal growth by providing valuable skills and experiences for their future careers in the medical field. Practical, hands-on experiences allow students to work directly with patients, fostering empathy and a holistic approach to patient care. The program also promotes reflective practice and lifelong learning, preparing students to adapt to changing healthcare trends and improve patient outcomes. Graduates develop a passion for the profession through experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and clinical placements, and gain confidence in their abilities. The program emphasizes holistic development, including technical skills, interpersonal abilities, and problem-solving, helping students navigate professional environments efficiently. Graduates are trained to identify and address potential challenges individuals may face in engaging in meaningful occupations,

such as physical limitations, environmental barriers, or psychosocial factors. By equipping graduates with professional knowledge and skills, the UPHSL OT program prepares them to excel in their roles as occupational therapists and make a positive impact on the lives of their patients.

**2.2 Professional Growth.** The Occupational Therapy (OT) program at UPHSL offers a comprehensive curriculum that covers core principles, theories, and practical skills for occupational therapists. Graduates are well-equipped with the competencies needed for success in the field, emphasizing collaboration with other healthcare professionals to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams. The program supports professional development through educational opportunities, practical experience, and ongoing support. Graduates strongly agree that the program contributes to their professional growth by providing a thorough understanding of Occupational Therapy, hands-on learning experiences, mentorship from experienced faculty members, and opportunities for research projects. The program also encourages graduates to take initiative in introducing improvements or changes within the field and fosters a collaborative learning environment. Graduates express a strong agreement that the program has helped them to enhance their professional growth by serving as a stepping stone towards medical professionalism and excellence, improving their abilities in diagnosis and treatment, and inspiring them to continue learning and uplift their knowledge. The program also provides opportunities for decision-making and expressing thoughts in a learning space, as well as applying new experiences and skills to positively impact their current positions and career pursuits. Graduates also agree that the program has equipped them with motivation towards the medical field, communication skills, social skills, and emotional well-being, preparing them for a career in healthcare. The program emphasizes effective communication, social skills, and addressing psychosocial and emotional factors to promote overall health and well-being. Lastly, graduates appreciate how the program has provided them with knowledge and skills to improve efficiency at work, focusing on interdisciplinary collaboration and teaching effective communication and teamwork with other healthcare disciplines. Overall, the OT program at UPHSL prepares graduates to be competent, compassionate, and ethical occupational therapy professionals committed to excellence and professional growth.

### **3. Proposed Digital-based Curriculum Enhancement Plan**

Proposing a curriculum for improvement in occupational therapy program is crucial for ensuring its relevance, effectiveness, and responsiveness to the changing needs of students, patients, and the healthcare industry. This plan supports student success, program accreditation, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and continued excellence in occupational therapy education and practice. The dynamic nature of the field requires constant updates to incorporate new research, techniques, and technologies, ensuring that students are exposed to the latest advances. By enhancing learning experiences through evidence-based practices and new teaching methods, students can achieve better outcomes such as higher licensing exam rates and success in clinical practice. An improved curriculum can also incorporate content on culture, diversity, and inclusion, better preparing students to work with diverse patient populations. This commitment to continuous improvement fosters innovation and excellence within the program.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

UPHSL Occupational Therapy graduates have a promising and excellent qualification and profile. Graduates expressed strong agreement with the contribution of the UPHSL OT

program to their personal and professional growth. The purpose of the proposed curriculum improvement is to calibrate academic program offerings to the global market and the needs of occupational therapists.

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