Professional Development: Clinician to Academician

(administration, education, faculty, occupational therapy)

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As the number of academic programs in occupational therapy is increasing, the ready pool of faculty members to staff these programs is insufficient (1). Curriculum directors meet this staffing need by recruiting faculty members from a) other academic programs and b) clinical settings. Alternatively, clinicians often explore academic positions as another professional option in their careers. Another variation is seen in employment of clinical instructors (2). Recent action by the Representative Assembly of the American Occupational Therapy Association in support of a Scholars in Residence Program (3) recognizes the need for programs to develop faculty. This paper provides information for academicians and clinicians concerning the roles and responsibilities of an academician. Models and concepts are drawn from literature in the areas of business, psychology, nursing, and occupational therapy. This varied literature provides a perspective that might enhance conceptualizations from our profession. Applications are made to the profession of occupational therapy.

Four Stages of Professional Careers

One model for examining performance in a professional career (4) is divided into four stages. Each stage has its own tasks or central activities, types of relationships, and psychological adjustments.

Stage 1: Apprentice

In stage 1, a young professional person must learn which activities are critical and require serious attention. The apprentice must learn how to get things done while he or she is being judged for competence and potential. The apprentice works under close supervision, often as a helper. The helper role is a positive one because it permits the individual to learn from the experience of others and tends to build a successful experience. The apprentice may, however, get bogged down with helping tasks and be unable to devote time to developing and creating more challenging tasks and ideas. Thus, he or she is caught in the catch-22 situation of carrying out helping assignments while trying to search out new, innovative, and challenging tasks.

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The way an apprentice relates to a supervisor may be a major factor in building an effective career. He or she usually learns by observation from a mentor because a mentor is a model who also instructs, guides, and helps the apprentice avoid errors. The mentor plays a significant role for any professional entering the academic work force. If an apprentice learns quickly, he or she will soon be given additional responsibilities.

One of the major psychological adjustments for an apprentice is to accept supervision and direction. This is especially true for an individual who is eager to demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills and show creativity and initiative. The apprentice has to learn to live with a never-ending stream of routine work. Dependence may be a major psychological issue, and it is important to move from dependence to independence as quickly as possible. This progression occurs when the apprentice becomes a colleague.

Stage 2: Colleague

A major theme in the colleague stage is independence. An apprentice becomes a colleague when he or she has earned the respect of peers and is able to work independently.

Peer relationships at this stage undergo a transition, the colleague relies less on the supervisor or mentor. This transition is difficult because it involves a change in attitude and behavior by both the supervisor and the new faculty member.

A move into stage 2 requires the professional to rely increasingly on his or her own ideas and standards of performance. Some help is available from peers and from professional standards, but personal judgment is necessary. This judgment must carry with it the colleague's personal confidence that the actions or planned activities will succeed.

Some individuals find this stage uncomfortable and spend little time in it. They take on supervisory responsibilities before they have established their professional competence. Moving through the stages too quickly can undermine self-confidence and the confidence of subordinates.

Specialization frequently begins in this stage because the individual develops high-level skills. The specialist tends to develop a sense of competence and self-esteem more quickly than a generalist and thus becomes more visible in the profession.

Doing well in stage 2 is important in career development. Some people remain in stage 2 all of their lives, make significant contributions to their profession, and obtain enough satisfaction. However, the individual's probability of acclaim or advancement may diminish over time if he or she does not move beyond this stage.

Stage 3: Mentor

In the third or mentor stage, an individual begins to influence, guide, direct, and develop other people. Stage 3 individuals are those who help others move through stage 1. They have broadened their interests and capabilities. They also tend to interact more with people outside their immediate organization for the benefit of others. They may write grants, secure funds, or help others secure funds. The reputation they developed during stage 2 is the key-stone to work in stage 3.

The stage 3 person plays three roles: informed mentor, idea person, and/or manager. An informed mentor is asked to do more work because of his or her capabilities and contacts and finds others to do the work he or she used to do. The informed mentor needs assistance and assistants. The idea person may be especially innovative and become a consultant, a problem solver, and an influencer. The manager role is the most usual role for a stage 3 person and is one that many people can assume comfortably.

The most significant change for persons moving into the mentor role is in their relationships with others. They move from taking care of themselves to taking care of others; they also assume some responsibility for the quality of the work of others. The mentor becomes responsible for and to a number of people, has responsibility upward and downward, and thus becomes the person in the middle.

Psychologically, the mentor must develop a sense of self-confidence in his or her ability and be able to help others do the same. He or she must direct others but still allow them the freedom to explore and test their own skills. The mentor must be willing to assume responsibility for the output of others. He or she must learn to find pleasure and satisfaction in seeing an apprentice move away, become independent, become a colleague, and perhaps find new mentors.

Some people find stage 3 satisfying and rewarding. They enjoy helping other people achieve goals. They obtain internal rewards from generating ideas that stimulate thinking or change. They engage others in research and generate energy to energize others. However,
some find it difficult to keep up with younger competitors. Others move on to supervisory roles that meet their professional and personal needs.

Stage 4: Sponsor

Stage 4 involves a sponsor relationship. The primary task is to define the direction of the organization. This is done by negotiating and interfacing with key persons or elements in the environment or by developing new ideas that lead into new areas of activity. Stage 4 people have gained credibility through their abilities to perceive and interpret the environment and to respond effectively to it.

The sponsor may function as manager, internal entrepreneur, or generator of ideas. Sponsors formulate policy and initiate broad programs, but they usually are not involved in supervising stage 1 or stage 2 people. These people concentrate on where a group is going rather than on the state of a group at a given time.

Stage 4 people select and develop key people then groom them for leadership. They frequently do not teach or instruct, they do assessments, provide feedback, and generate opportunities. They are heavily involved in activities outside their specific organization, and they give their organization visibility through their publications.

In moving to stage 4, the sponsor learns to exert influence by means other than direct supervision, such as idea sharing, personnel selection, resource allocation, and organizational design change. The sponsor must now think beyond the immediate future and do long-range planning. Finally, the sponsor must become accustomed to having and exercising power.

Summary of the Concept of Stages

The concept of career stages provides a way of describing expectations of individuals inside an organization (5). It helps examine the relationship between the socialization of the individual into the organization and his or her power to innovate and influence the organization. The concept of stages helps a person think more clearly about what he or she should be doing and learning and to prepare for the next stage.

The concept of stages appears to delineate the precise activities, relationships, and adjustments for each stage; however, each stage may have some characteristics or features of other stages.

Adult and Career Development

Faculty members, like all adults, pass through a series of life stages that contain particular experiences and tasks. Certain books (6, 7) reflect theories of sequential processes in development. Career development models (8, 9) indicate that a career proceeds through a series of stages that present different challenges and require different responses.

Baldwin (10) proposed the following five developmental periods that correspond to five stages of an academic career: stage 1—assistant professor (in the first 3 yr of full-time college teaching); stage 2—assistant professor (with more than 3 yr of college teaching experience); stage 3—associate professor; stage 4—full professor (with more than 5 yr until retirement); and stage 5—full professor (within 5 yr of retirement). The business perspective of four stages of professional development is roughly equivalent to the five stages of an academic career. This paper focuses on stage 1 of the academic career (the new assistant professor), which corresponds to stage 1—(Apprentice) as previously described.

This stage, commonly viewed as difficult, includes preparing new courses, keeping current in the field, and conducting research. Frequently, the new faculty member still lacks confidence in his or her work. Thus, a beginning faculty member experiences a higher level of career-related stress than does an experienced faculty member. Novice professors consult more often with colleagues, graduate school contacts, personal friends, and family members than do experienced professors. They are also more likely to participate in formal faculty development activities.

A Stage 1 novice may
- feel pressure and concern about the future,
- need to adjust to new demands,
- need to learn rapidly,
- be receptive to help from others,
- be oriented to teaching, with limited research commitment,
- be concerned with improving performance in teaching and research,
- be enthusiastic about his or her career,
- have overly idealistic career ambitions, and
- need to learn about informal operations and modes of conduct in a complex university structure.

Therefore the chair, as a facilitator of adult and career development, should familiarize the faculty with the roles and responsibilities
of teaching, supervision and administration, service, and research and should provide an environment in which the novice can flourish. Career development for the novice depends on job assignments.

The Chair’s Role

How can a division or department chair help others make the transition from clinician to academic? The department chairs interviewed emphasized the following four areas (11):

- faculty orientation (the development of department faculty is considered of primary importance),
- management orientation (effective organization and efficient operation of the department to increase productivity is stressed),
- external orientation (working with external groups to obtain resources and benefits is emphasized), and
- program orientation (development of excellent education programs and production of superior graduates are the primary goals).

Of these orientations, faculty orientation is the most relevant to faculty development in the context of this paper.

To plan faculty development experiences, the following questions should be answered. Why do practitioners want to become teachers? What rewards do practitioners hope to gain? What personal situational and motivational variables influence satisfaction with a job and career mobility?

One group of researchers (12) developed an instrument, Reasons for Career Transition, to study why health professionals become educators. This study involved 12 disciplines, including occupational therapy.

The most frequently cited motives for becoming educators were idealism and altruism. Mere change was also cited frequently as a motive. The only transition motive associated with job satisfaction was the opportunity for more idealism. Before or after such a change, certain questions emerge: Were the values and beliefs of the new faculty member explored? Were any negative attitudes conveyed? Was the teaching-learning process explored? What are the roles and responsibilities of students? (13). Answers to such questions are important to the process of change and are part of the complex human experience.

The balance among research, teaching, and service is of concern to both the department chair and the young faculty member. According to one source (14), most academicians think of themselves as teachers and professionals (rather than scholars, scientists, or intellectuals), and they perform accordingly. More than one-half of all American professors have published little or nothing; the rate of current publication is higher for academics in their first two professional decades than it is thereafter. However, there is substantial variation among types of institutions. A 1977 survey (14) showed that 47% of professors spent ten or more hours per week in formal classroom instruction; 17% had four weekly hours or less of classroom content; and 30% taught 13 or more hours a week. Substantial to heavy teaching loads (9 hr or more) are common outside research universities. Thus, for most faculty members, teaching is the big claimant of time. The median number of hours put into research and scholarly writing is 4 hours per week, compared with 9 to 16 hours for both scheduled teaching and preparing for teaching. Everywhere outside the research universities, teaching-related activities dwarf those related to scholarship.

These figures have serious implications for occupational therapists beginning to struggle through the promotion and tenure requirements. The reward system is reasonably sturdy for good research; for good teaching it is not. Occupational therapists in academic settings must think of themselves as scholars, scientists, researchers and teachers if they are to succeed in academic life. Knowledgeable members of the profession, including department chairs and colleagues, must convey this philosophical stance to new teachers and then support it.

New faculty members find themselves in complex university structures; they are perhaps unaware of the real differences between their new setting and their previous (clinical) setting. The normative worlds of the educational setting and the hospital/clinic setting are different. Universities are oriented toward transmission of knowledge; hospitals are oriented toward health care delivery. Universities exhibit autonomy and self-directiveness; hospitals tend to be more authoritarian (15).

Reward systems provide a link between organizational goals and value orientations that serve as motivators for work. These value orientations can be extrinsic (salary and social status), self-expressive (creative), or humanitarian. Universities tend to give priority to self-expressive values. Hospital reward systems are usually based on length of service, loyalty, appreciation by patients, punctuality, and
hard work. New occupational therapy faculty members, when making a transition, tend to retain the attitudes they acquired as clinicians and do not acquire the scholarly attitude of the university. This may be because occupational therapy education programs provide insufficient opportunities for acquiring values and behaviors associated with discovery and transmission of new knowledge. Thus, a new educator enters a new world. The university is also challenged to help novice faculty members extend the initiative and industry they exhibit in patient care to systematic inquiry about such care (16). For new faculty members, this challenge must become a reality if the transition is to be a satisfying experience.

Occupational therapy faculty members have a responsibility to introduce neophytes into the profession. This is done by transmitting values and ideals; it is both a formal and informal process. This process can be planned or it can occur by observation and interaction with role models. Neophytes must be receptive to help from others.

Socialization requires adjustment to the organization, goal congruency, and an objective perception of reality (17). Organizational adjustment is achieved by defining one’s own role and how that role fits into the organization, identifying criteria for promotion and tenure, and determining the accepted balance between teaching, service, and research. Goals are made congruent by accepting the balance between teaching, service, and research and by accepting a reduced emphasis on personal clinical skills (which were of primary significance in the clinical setting). An objective perception of reality is achieved by accepting the long hours needed to prepare for courses, grade papers, counsel students, serve on committees, and engage in inquiry or research.

While the neophyte will try to meet the university’s expectations in teaching, service, and research, it is his or her teaching role that commands primary attention. It is not easy to implement the teaching role perfectly or completely during the initial years of faculty responsibilities. To achieve goals and to fulfill expectations, the neophyte must learn rapidly.

**Application to Occupational Therapy**

Our profession considers the provision of service to patients as one of its major goals in the health care delivery system. To accomplish this goal, we train students to work in the system. Training is conducted in both academic and clinical settings. Academicians often see themselves only as teachers and professionals, not as researchers, scientists, and scholars. In a previously cited study (12), educators, as a group, reported that 82% of their responsibilities were devoted to teaching, supervision, and administration, as opposed to duties related to patient care. Most respondents (71%) continued to practice their health specialties on a limited basis, either professionally or as part of their educational roles. However, in many academic settings, occupational therapists must become scholars and researchers, applying their expertise to our field. The two orientations are very different, and the resultant behavior of the occupational therapy academician is guided by his or her philosophy, the ombudsman/model/mentor, and the philosophy of the university. Combining the roles of professional and scholar is not easily or swiftly accomplished by the new occupational therapy educator or any other professionals. The novice faculty member must, however, be aware of these two roles and work toward achieving excellence in both.

Curriculum directors and faculty members play an important role in the lives of a neophyte faculty member. We need to do some well-conceptualized networking (18) to help the neophyte achieve a smooth transition. Networking involves talking with others and sharing ideas, information, and resources. Such networking can occur in an occupational therapy faculty, with other professionals, and among occupational therapy faculty members in various institutions. It can utilize the special expertise that many have channeled into a common cause and thus be fiscally sound and professionally enhancing. In our profession, networking should occur through national and regional conferences, special workshops, and telecommunication.

The neophyte can learn about academia at the local level by attending faculty meetings and in-service education workshops and even through keen observation and casual conversations. Whether this learning will be successful depends on at least three important factors: the neophyte’s need for information, the neophyte’s political acumen, and the selection of a mentor or ombudsman from the more experienced faculty members. The use of a mentor has been supported in occupational therapy and other literature (6, 19, 20).

The transition addressed here is complex and deserves careful con-
sideration and planning. It involves a mutualistic relationship (21) between the novice and the experienced faculty member and can be enhanced by strong clinical and academic relationships.

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