LOOKING BACK


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This paper uses evidence collected from both written and oral history sources to present one approach to understanding the way in which educational practices evolved in occupational therapy. The paper introduces two fundamental positions regarding the nature, scope, and content of professional preparation for occupational therapists. For expediency, these viewpoints are labeled academicism and experientialism. This paper traces the interaction of these positions in the development and implementation of the War Emergency Courses. The implications for educational policy in occupational therapy arising from that program are also examined.

In professions as diverse as architecture and medicine, the process of unifying and standardizing an increasing knowledge base is common practice. The effect of that process may be seen as a division of theoretical and practical knowledge. This division often generates debate about the nature, scope, and content of educational preparation (Larson, 1977). In occupational therapy, such a debate recently took place at the 1988 Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association. The question of whether occupational therapists should provide more theory or more experience in the entry-level curriculum was put to a panel of academic and practitioner experts. As with other professionals, the occupational therapy experts were unable to agree on a single view.

The roots of differing views on entry-level preparation may be traced to occupational therapy’s first decade and, as previously noted, tracked to current debate (Colman, 1984, 1990). The period surrounding World War II created an environment for lively debate that focused on the increasing theoretical and practical knowledge evolving in the field of occupational therapy and the demands for greater numbers of trained therapists to meet the rehabilitation needs of the war. Opposing views were framed about the balance of theory and experience necessary to train competent professionals.

This paper describes the interaction of opposing viewpoints regarding entry-level education exemplified by the debate surrounding the development of the World War II Emergency Course. Information for this paper has been culled from written and oral history sources, including interviews with several occupational therapists and American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) administrators who served throughout this era. The vicissitudes and consequences of the debate germane to the profession’s entry-level education policies are also examined. For expediency, the viewpoint supporting a greater balance of theoretical, or academic, course content in entry-level preparation is referred to throughout this paper as academicism. The viewpoint supporting entry-level preparation with an emphasis on practical experience is referred to as experientialism.

Background

Two major forces outside of the profession influenced the evolution of occupational therapy entry-level education in the years 1936 to 1954. The first was AOTA’s relationship with the American Medical Association’s Council on Medical Education and Hospitals (AMA-CMEH). The second was World War II and AOTA’s relationship with the U.S. Army. AOTA’s interaction with the AMA-CMEH and with the army focused on...
educational standards and the occupational therapy register.

**Educational Standards and the Register**

In 1931, AOTA initiated an official register to classify and protect qualified therapists. This register identified occupational therapists according to their training (i.e., academic or experiential) (“National Registration,” 1931). Almost immediately, debate ensued regarding the qualifications for entry to the register. The initial conflict focused on eligibility criteria, including the process of grandfathering (Teaching Methods Committee, 1931). Specifically, AOTA faced the problem of categorizing therapists educated in various ways. Members of the Board of Management, AOTA’s governing body, decided that, for a limited time, it would accommodate World War I Emergency Course graduates and those persons with special experience. The permanent regulations required that all registrants be graduates of currently approved entry-level education programs (“National Registration,” 1931).

Beginning in the mid-1930s, the AMA-CMEH became a significant force influencing occupational therapy entry-level education. In cooperation with AOTA, that council assumed responsibility for the accreditation of occupational therapy education programs. As part of that responsibility, the AMA-CMEH undertook a review of the minimum standards for AOTA’s entry-level education. In 1935, after some debate, the AMA-CMEH and AOTA produced the first “Essentials of an Acceptable School of Occupational Therapy” (“Essentials,” 1935; “Report of the Council,” 1935). These two groups debated several issues as they developed these “Essentials” (AOTA, 1936; Colman, 1984; Report of the Registration Committee, 1935). These discussions laid the groundwork for changes in both entry-level educational standards for occupational therapy and for the relationship between the two organizations.

Occupational therapists, as yet unsure of their relationship with the AMA-CMEH, seemed unwilling to continue debating educational standards (AOTA, 1936). This concern exemplifies the confusion of the balance of power between the two groups. Because the issues of cooperative standard setting and program accreditation involved potential conflict, occupational therapists returned their focus to the register, which they believed was clearly under their control.

Although registration regulations had been approved, debate now combined issues of registration qualifications and educational standards. William Rush Dunton, who at the time was the editor of the primary occupational therapy journal, *Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation*, and a supporter of academicism, used that publication to promote his views. For example, 1 month before a 1936 Board meeting at which the issue of the register was slated as an agenda priority, Dunton published an article by Humphreys (1936), a physician. In his article, Humphreys urged AOTA to consider the importance of a college education as background for professional preparation. He argued that such an education served both the individual and the profession. He contended that it provided the individual with an invaluable intellectual and emotional growth experience essential if AOTA planned a professional future. At the following Board meeting, several academicism supporters argued for a lengthy academic foundation for entry-level therapists. This group opposed admitting candidates without such a foundation to the register, thus excluding those practicing therapists who had been trained by experience only during World War I. Persons favoring experientialism argued for greater flexibility in regulating the register. They demanded continued respect for the tradition of experiential training begun during World War I. They saw this tradition as “a good will gesture to the post World War I graduates” (AOTA, 1936, p. 33). By the following year, however, the chair of the Registration Committee issued a statement of registration requirements that supported academicism (Root, 1937). The statement declared that registration “must be more and more strictly limited” (p. 179) to those who had completed a modern school program.

**World War II**

The second major force influencing education was World War II, with a consensus of AOTA participants recognizing the acute need for greater numbers of trained personnel. Debate ensued about the kinds of programs best suited to balance that need with quality educational preparation. At the time, entry-level preparation policies were dominated by academicism, and supporters pursued their campaign to raise training requirements by adding more rigorous academic content to educational programs (Herman, 1940; “History,” 1940; “Round Table Meeting,” 1939). Additionally, they maintained control of public information and gained control of several policy-setting groups within AOTA.

Debate became heated regarding educational standards resulting from the war effort. The issue of occupational therapy’s “level of professionalism” was raised by several occupational therapists who subscribed to academicism. To ensure recognition of the professional status of occupational therapy, these individuals turned to the army for support. The army demanded educational preparation that favored experientialism.
Specifically, as the United States began to mobilize for World War II, the Board appointed a Defense Committee. In a letter to all House of Delegates members (the membership representative body of AOTA), the Board declared that the committee’s goal was to “quietly and effectively muster resources within our own ranks in order to be fully prepared with statistics and information about occupational therapy when called upon” (“Letter to Delegates,” 1941). Oral histories revealed that Board members believed that the survival and integrity of the profession depended on its presentation as a strong and unified professional group.

The Board found itself faced with growing numbers of requests from colleges nationwide to begin occupational therapy programs to aid the war effort. The Board considered many of these schools ill-equipped to handle the extensive entry-level education required. Although AOTA decided to encourage these schools to develop occupational therapy programs, the Board intended to consider them “technical”-level programs whose graduates would not be eligible for registration. Several Board members also argued that this procedure would serve as an effective means of maintaining high educational standards (AOTA, 1944a). In this way, persons wishing to preserve academicism in entry-level education first handled the problem of personnel needs resulting from the war effort.

Facing this conflict brought on by the demands of the war, academicism supporters continued to argue for increasing standards for professional training. These new standards included an increase in the length of the academic portion of entry-level education. Academicism supporters noted that the future development of occupational therapy as a “specialized and scientific” (Sculin, 1943, p. 134) profession depended on quality education. They defined this education as a lengthy, theoretically oriented process.

By 1944, the last occupational therapy program housed in a hospital was transferred to a degree-granting institution (“Developmental Changes,” 1952). Encouraged by this, Board members supporting academicism acknowledged the considerable growth of professional education in occupational therapy. They argued that the field should prepare for graduate-level work. Despite this desire to advance entry-level educational requirements, the AOTA Education Committee, then consisting mostly of academicism supporters, reported that it had begun to reconsider the possibility of recommending registration for individuals with proven occupational therapy experience. Such action would increase the numbers of available personnel (“Education Committee Report,” 1943). Additionally, the Board, influenced by concerns of professional status, finally entertained the possibility of an army plan for emergency courses (AOTA, 1944a; “Proposed Plan,” 1943).

Occupational therapists were well aware of a problem with their status in the armed forces. Beginning in World War I, occupational therapy had been classified as a subprofessional group. Many members of AOTA considered this classification unacceptable. The situation was further complicated by the employment of unqualified personnel to perform occupational therapy functions (Gritzer & Arluke). The Red Cross, for example, refused to employ qualified occupational therapists and instead hired untrained personnel to use activities in their work with the war wounded (“Committee Reports,” 1943). These circumstances provided the impetus for negotiations with the army. The army had recognized the increased need for personnel to rehabilitate wounded soldiers. With a group of occupational therapists led by Winifred Kahmann, the army developed the War Emergency Courses, a “crash program for training occupational therapists” (AOTA, 1967, p. 11; Gritzer & Arluke, 1985, p. 106). Kahmann emerged as a central figure during this period. She negotiated the terms under which the Board would accept the army program. The army agreed to raise the status of occupational therapy personnel from subprofessional to professional, to subsidize tuition, and to provide a stipend for students (Kahmann, 1967). In return for this, the army demanded that graduates of the War Emergency Courses be eligible for full registration (AOTA, House of Delegates, Education Office, 1947b; “Minutes,” 1945).

The Board debated this agreement, the first indication that some supporters of academicism willingly entertained the possibility of shortening the length of training in support of the war effort. The pressing strain of personnel needs, combined with Kahmann’s efforts, finally influenced the Board:

“...no brief analysis given here can adequately portray the true facts concerning the stupendous task which the occupational therapy profession faced when the grave, grim reality of mobilization across the nation began. (AOTA, House of Delegates, Education Office, 1947a)

Under such pressure, Board members agreed to support the shorter training course for the duration and undertook the development and deployment of the War Emergency Courses.

Due to both army and national support of civilian rehabilitation, occupational therapy programs flourished. Eight of the 16 colleges and university programs accredited by 1944 accepted the War Emergency Courses as part of a federal grant program. The courses ran nationwide for 2 years, from July 1944 through June 1946 (West, 1947). Although the reports vary on whether the courses had actually been approved by the AMA-CMEH and whether they were
actually accredited programs, the army accepted the courses and their graduates. Under this system, occupational therapists who graduated from War Emergency Course programs and who worked in army hospitals were granted full professional status.

The Conflicts: Educational Standards and the Question of Authority

Two major conflicts emerged in the debate over the development and implementation of the War Emergency Courses. The first concerned educational standards, represented by the issue of balancing academic material and practical experience. As planned, the War Emergency Course programs abbreviated the theoretical course work while maintaining requirements for practical training. Students in these courses gained all of their clinical experience in army hospitals, thereby rapidly increasing the size of the army hospital staff.

The second conflict concerned the question of authority in sanctioning occupational therapy entry-level education standards. Because the War Emergency Courses had been jointly developed by AOTA and the army, the army sought only AOTA's approval before becoming involved in the institution of the programs. Ten years after accepting the AMA-CMEH recommendation for AOTA's standard setting and accreditation body, some members of AOTA sought to bypass that authority and independently approve the new educational program. Other members objected to such action. The two conflicts were argued in terms of entry-level education policy.

Educational Standards

The development of the War Emergency Courses represented AOTA's contribution to the war effort. In an early statement recognizing the potential for ideological conflict, supporters of academicism noted the coming need for compromise relative to educational policies when they suggested that "these are days in which continuity of purpose seems overshadowed by doctrines of change" ("OT: Then and Now," 1938, p. 14). Although for the next several years they continued to lobby for increased educational standards, it became apparent that they needed to prepare for the inevitable war effort. Conflict mainly revolved around the issue of recognizing graduates of the War Emergency Courses as fully qualified occupational therapists who were eligible for registration. This rekindled the problem of registration for those whose education was balanced in favor of practical training. Due to the demands for personnel during the war emergency, supporters of experientialism began to gain favor with many who had previously espoused academicism and who were the primary decision makers in AOTA. Other academicism supporters remained unfaltering in their opposition to the registration of graduates of the War Emergency Courses as fully qualified, professional occupational therapists (AOTA, 1944a).

Specifically, the Education Committee rejected the army's pressure for a shortened training course. They perceived this change to imply compliance with a lowering of educational standards against which they had fought. In an effort to discourage the implementation of the War Emergency Courses, Dunton (1943) noted:

Short, intensive courses are never so satisfactory as the longer, less hurried ones. Knowledge, like food, needs to be imbibed without hurry unless it is to be followed by a form of mental indigestion. (p. 322)

Instead of instituting a new, shorter training program, the committee suggested using the existing "advanced-standing" course, which had been designed for therapists who already held a baccalaureate degree ("Report of the Education Committee," 1944). This suggestion mirrored the strategies used during World War I to meet the military personnel needs with highly qualified therapists (Colman, 1984, 1990). The committee reiterated their vision with the following statement:

It was the feeling of the group that rather than to expand into dozens and dozens of moderately good programs, we should control and with a pretty good means of control through the AOTA Education Committee, the encouragement of good sound programs. The best means of control is to continue to maintain high standards. (AOTA, 1944a, pp. 4-5)

The committee also suggested that the AMA-CMEH rapidly develop a special council on occupational therapy to meet the school inspection demands of the War Emergency Course programs ("Report of the Education Committee," 1944). In this way, supporters of academicism attempted to maintain the standards of education and the authority structure already established for AOTA. Nevertheless, the Board aided the organization of the War Emergency Courses, which began training in July 1944 without inspection by the AMA-CMEH (West, 1947).

Soon after the institution of the War Emergency Courses, those who had supported its development publicized the new educational policy by noting the number of new schools developed under the War Manpower Program ("Training Program," 1944). They cited AOTA's support as having led to the establishment of these schools, which were designed to produce the "essential professional workers in the shortest possible time" ("Training Program," 1944, p. 282). They described how AOTA had cooperated with the army to ensure the maintenance of high educational standards for occupational therapists. They presented three rationales for this cooperation: (a)
the recognition of the need for increased personnel, (b) the adjustment of the advanced-standing course to meet the established requirements of the War Emergency Courses, and (c) the acknowledgment that the programs were at a high enough level to warrant full professional status. They suggested that if AOTA publicly doubted the status of the War Emergency Courses, then the army would have to doubt it. Conversely, they argued that if AOTA believed the programs graduated fully qualified professionals, then the army would accept these graduates as fully qualified professionals. In this way, the supporters of experientialism shifted the argument from one of maintaining educational standards to one of credibility.

Through 1945, supporters of experientialism continued to express their belief that the War Emergency Courses were planned both to uphold the standards of occupational therapy and to provide enough personnel to meet the war demands (AOTA, 1945). They held the position that the traditional high standards of education were being maintained while greater numbers of therapists were being trained.

Supporters of academicism, as members of vital AOTA committees, experienced much difficulty with the agreement to provide full professional registration to the graduates of the War Emergency Courses. For them, the symbol of the fully qualified occupational therapist was acceptance into the register, with such acceptance based on completion of a fully accredited, theoretically oriented educational program. First, members of the Education Committee attempted to overturn the decision. They argued that they had been informed of the educational decision regarding the registration of graduates of the War Emergency Courses ex post facto, when recourse was no longer possible. Next, members of the Registration Committee objected to the Board’s decision-making process. They complained of being treated as a “puppet group” and demanded the opportunity to review the Board’s planned policies and actions before they went into effect. Noting membership support, they cited the receipt of “many letters” opposing the registration of graduates of the War Emergency Courses (“Reports,” 1945, p. 38).

According to one of the oral histories, the “letters” were specifically requested by one occupational therapy curriculum director. According to this source, the curriculum director alone “created” the controversy over the registration of graduates of the War Emergency Courses, upsetting the Board and several medical groups in the process. However, because of the “clarity” in the wording of the War Emergency Course registration plan, its prior acceptance by the Board, and the subsequent “understanding” by the AMA-CMEH, the Board continued to “tolerate a lot of conversation.” In light of that “conversation,” the Board agreed to an additional “vote of confidence or reconfirmation of their original vote” (AOTA, 1944b, p. 22) regarding the registration of graduates of the War Emergency Courses. The vote once again favored full registration for those graduates. Thus, the Board twice made the same decision to accept graduates of shortened courses as fully qualified, professional personnel.

Additional support for the War Emergency Courses graduates as fully qualified personnel came from AOTA president Everett Ellwood. He suggested there would be future need for increased personnel, noting that the growing medical specialty of physical medicine was “going strong” (AOTA, 1944b, p. 44). He argued that physical medicine, although in its infancy, would continue to demand well-trained occupational therapists after the war. He believed that physical medicine would increasingly influence the health care professions. He predicted that the demand for qualified therapists would not be met readily in the next 10 years, even if War Emergency Courses graduates were included as fully qualified occupational therapists (AOTA, 1944b).

Along with an agreement to register graduates of the War Emergency Courses came discussion of the type of registration to be granted (AOTA, 1944b). Those who had supported the development of the War Emergency Courses favored a policy of unrestricted listings in the register, without reference to educational background. They hoped to avoid both a discriminatory register and one that became too complicated to decipher, thus rendering the document useless. Persons who had opposed the development of the War Emergency Courses favored specifying educational backgrounds in the register. They argued that such information would enhance the standing of all therapists and would strengthen the document. They suggested that such a register would provide employers with frank statements about therapists while not creating obstacles for any seeking employment. Their argument went unheeded. The register continued as an unembellished listing of qualified occupational therapists, a listing that now included all graduates of the War Emergency Courses.

The Question of Authority

Many supporters of the War Emergency Courses programs had been considered among the most influential supporters of academicism. They were highly educated, competent, and independent women. Ideologically, they supported high-level, academically oriented education for occupational therapists. This suggests that the issue of the War Emergency Courses programs and graduates symbolized something beyond a conflict regarding the nature and
scope of educational standards. Only 605 therapists graduated from the War Emergency Courses, which involved eight schools under contract with the War Department. At the time, a baccalaureate degree was not required for graduation from accredited occupational therapy programs, yet 93% of the War Emergency Courses graduates had baccalaureate degrees before entering those programs ("Master Outline," [no date]; West, 1947). The design and initiation of the War Emergency Courses represented a cooperative effort between members of AOTA and the army. Those physicians who had maintained close ties with the evolution of occupational therapy’s educational system were not included in this effort. This suggests another indication of a struggle with the AMA–CMEH for educational control.

According to the agreement between AOTA and the AMA–CMEH, any educational policy change had to be approved by the latter and reflected in the “Essentials” to be considered official. The Board did consider how much leeway the AMA–CMEH actually gave AOTA in determining educational policy, seeing it as potentially problematic (AOTA, 1944a). Before the advent of the War Emergency Courses, the Board, without counsel from the AMA–CMEH, had approved an advanced-standing course based on a flexible interpretation of the criteria established in the 1935 “Essentials.” This program provided the opportunity for women with baccalaureate degrees to receive an education in occupational therapy. The course granted a certificate, because the students already held a university degree. Graduates of these programs were eligible for registration. This type of educational policy set the precedent for running the War Emergency Courses without sanction from the AMA–CMEH (AOTA, 1945).

There is mixed evidence of the AMA–CMEH’s stand on the War Emergency Courses and AOTA’s actions. One report dismisses the problem, stating that because the AMA–CMEH did not “technically” approve of the advanced standing course, official approval for the War Emergency Courses was not indicated (AOTA, 1945). Some of the oral histories reflected the Board’s perspective, suggesting that the AMA–CMEH in fact had nothing to do with the approval of the War Emergency Courses. As told in these oral histories, the Board had a two-part rationale for its position: (a) the special courses did not meet the actual standards of the “Essentials” and therefore were not the business of the AMA–CMEH, and (b) the admission of War Emergency Courses graduates to the registry produced no conflict with the AMA–CMEH because the occupational therapy registry was not under their jurisdiction. This underscores how the registry was used as a vehicle by some occupational therapists because it was an area clearly under the profession’s sole control. The feeling of some educators was expressed in one oral history as, “They [the AMA–CMEH] just controlled the education and it’s hard to use the word control. They supported us in our educational endeavors.”

The AMA–CMEH literature tells a different story. As early as 1935, evidence in the Journal of the American Medical Association indicated the AMA–CMEH’s recognition of an advanced-standing course ("Report of the Council," 1935). The authors stated an implicit approval of occupational therapy school affiliations in colleges, universities, and medical schools and cited a plan to discourage the development of hospital-based occupational therapy entry-level programs. A decade later, another article appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association that acknowledged the accredited courses, the advanced standing courses, and the War Emergency Courses ("School for OT Technicians," 1945). The author noted that only the War Emergency Courses were not officially accredited. He encouraged occupational therapy to place an emphasis on the advanced-standing courses as an acceptable effort to supply the armed forces with sufficient numbers of therapists.

Both versions are partly true. AOTA did negotiate the terms of the War Emergency Courses independently with the army, without the official approval of the AMA–CMEH. One report from a 1944 Board meeting, however, indicated that a representative from the AMA–CMEH agreed to some looser interpretations of the “Essentials” without granting official approval for those changes (AOTA, 1944b). Kahmann (1967) herself indicated AMA–CMEH approval for the War Emergency Courses. Although the actions of AOTA seemed to be autonomous, tacit approval may have been granted by the AMA–CMEH for curricular changes. I assumed that these changes were to be effective only for the duration. In any case, the relationship between the two organizations remained unclear.

When World War II ended, supporters of academicism began to lobby for a return to academically oriented education ("Editorial," 1945). In 1946, the Board passed a resolution mandating the development of a national registration examination ("Minutes," 1946). Admission to the examination was based on the presentation of a diploma or certificate from an occupational therapy program approved by the AMA–CMEH. This decree, which seemed to settle the problem of the War Emergency Courses graduates and their registration status, occurred 1 month before the graduation of the last War Emergency Courses class ("Minutes," 1946). No evidence has surfaced to date indicating conflict in these two situations. I assumed that all graduates of the War Emergency Courses were granted full professional status by AOTA. Once the
courses were discontinued, entry-level educational policy returned to prewar standards.

Implications of the War Emergency Courses

One of the immediate implications of the War Emergency Courses was the sudden increase in entry-level training facilities. As early as 1944, the Educational Advisory Service to AOTA's educational field secretary outlined the problems that occupational therapy education might face as a result of the War Emergency Courses (Fish, 1944). Of note, the group cited (a) the need to control sudden expansion of programs; (b) the possibility of the marketplace being oversaturated with therapists; (c) the difficulty in quickly obtaining qualified faculty to coordinate and teach in these new programs, assuming they continued after the war; and (d) the increased need for clinical training centers. Another report applauded the joint efforts of the occupational therapy Educational Field Office and the AMA-CMEH in avoiding the overdevelopment of entry-level education programs. This report indicated that the 25 schools that had developed rapidly during the war movement remained and no additional programs had opened. The new schools were considered essential to the continuing development of the profession (Hurt, 1948). West (1951) observed that all of the courses developed for the war effort proved to educate “as competent occupational therapists as those graduating from regular longer courses” (p. 2), despite the concern that such shortened courses would prove ineffective.

The War Emergency Courses also provided the profession with government monies. For the first time, occupational therapy education had received support from an outside source. In this respect, the War Emergency Courses set the precedent for the obtaining and use of both federal and private foundation monies for educational pursuits (West, 1953). Educational policy supported by funding sources has continued to be a significant area of debate in occupational therapy (Colman, 1984).

Most importantly, the War Emergency Courses intensified the debate between academicism and experientialism in the determination of appropriate entry-level education. The experience of educating an already trained professional group, as occurred during World War I, repeated itself with the advent of the War Emergency Courses (Colman, 1984, 1990). One study noted that occupational therapists educated at the baccalaureate level, without the advantage of a liberal arts education and work experience prior to professional training, lacked sufficient skills to promote their development as researchers or clinicians (Goodrich, Fredman, & Ferguson, 1953). These researchers suggested that such requirements might not be fulfilled at the undergraduate level and recommended consideration of graduate entry-level education.

Another report proposed a study of occupational therapy education (“Proposal,” 1952). The anonymous report appeared to be written in response to a suggestion that occupational therapists be educated only for work in specialty areas, in order to provide a large number of therapists with a high quality of knowledge. The authors disagreed with this perspective, suggesting that such a program would not provide effective education. The authors stated that “we seek no narrow channels unless they are deep and in such wide specialties as psychiatry and orthopedics we would recommend no quick deep diving unless it be for the purpose of slight acquaintance” (p. 9). The authors promoted only those educational programs that produced students with increased knowledge, skills, and confidence.

With the advent of the Korean conflict, the army again established an accelerated course similar to the War Emergency Courses (Wachter, 1953). This course was advertised for female college graduates (“Army,” 1952). The AOTA Education Committee voiced concern over the regeneration of a shortened entry-level program (“Mid-year Meeting,” 1952). Members of the committee opposed the program and urged AOTA to develop alternative means by which to meet the excessive personnel needs without again compromising academic educational standards. One such suggestion was to provide the shortened course only to students already educated and somewhat experienced, such as the candidate sought for the advanced-standing course (“Developmental Changes,” 1952).

Influenced by the success of the War Emergency Courses and continuing pressure from supporters of experientialism, the AOTA Education Committee began to explore the possibility of shortening the degree course to 4 years (a course which at the time required 5 years) and recruiting older, more experienced students. This strategy echoed that used for the already established shortened course designed for educated and highly experienced persons (“Present Trends,” 1952). In this way, the supporters of academicism balanced the experientialism supporters’ demand for more personnel by suggesting a shift in recruitment practices.

Summary

The War Emergency Courses developed, flourished, and became extinct within 2 years. In that time, they further polarized the educational ideologies already extant in occupational therapy. Establishment of the War Emergency Courses continued a tradition of meeting personnel needs in times of emergency and
set a precedent for an official program comprised of abbreviated academic requirements. The program (a) aided public recognition of the professional status of occupational therapy, (b) provided the profession with its first opportunity to accept outside funding, and (c) prompted AOTA officers to take action independent of other health care professions.

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