

# Preparing occupational therapists to be global professionals: presenting the *Global Professional Identity Development Model* to guide curriculum reform and educator practice

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## Introduction/ Objective

Preparing occupational therapists as global citizens is required because the settings in which occupational therapists work are increasingly impacted by social, cultural and political issues. However, little is known about global citizenship in occupational therapy education and how it is embedded in curricula.

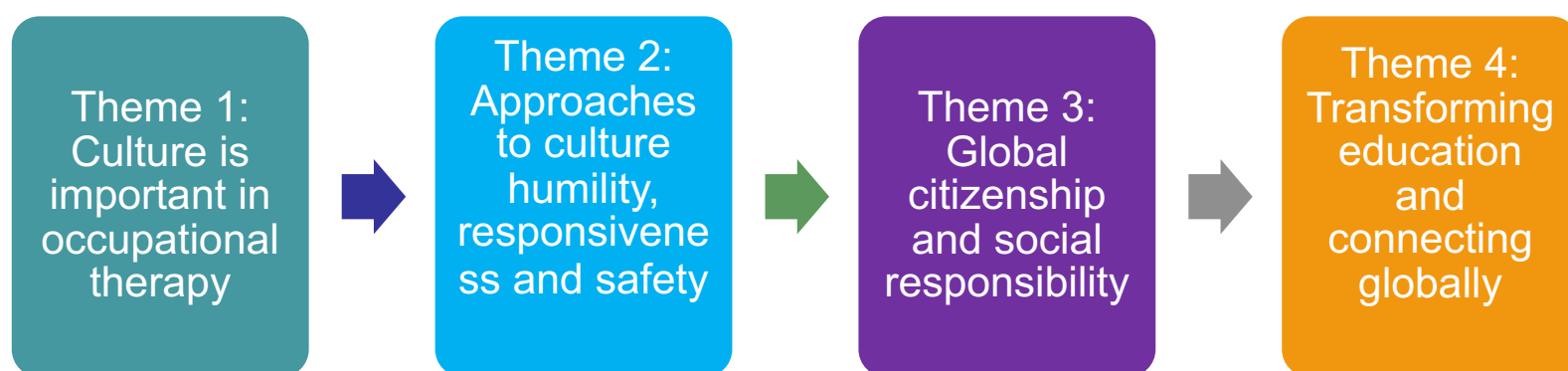
## Research Aim

This study aimed to identify how Australian occupational therapy educators prepared graduates as global citizens, equipped to work with diverse populations in local and global contexts.

**Ethics:** La Trobe Human Ethics Committee (HEC18267).

## Literature Review

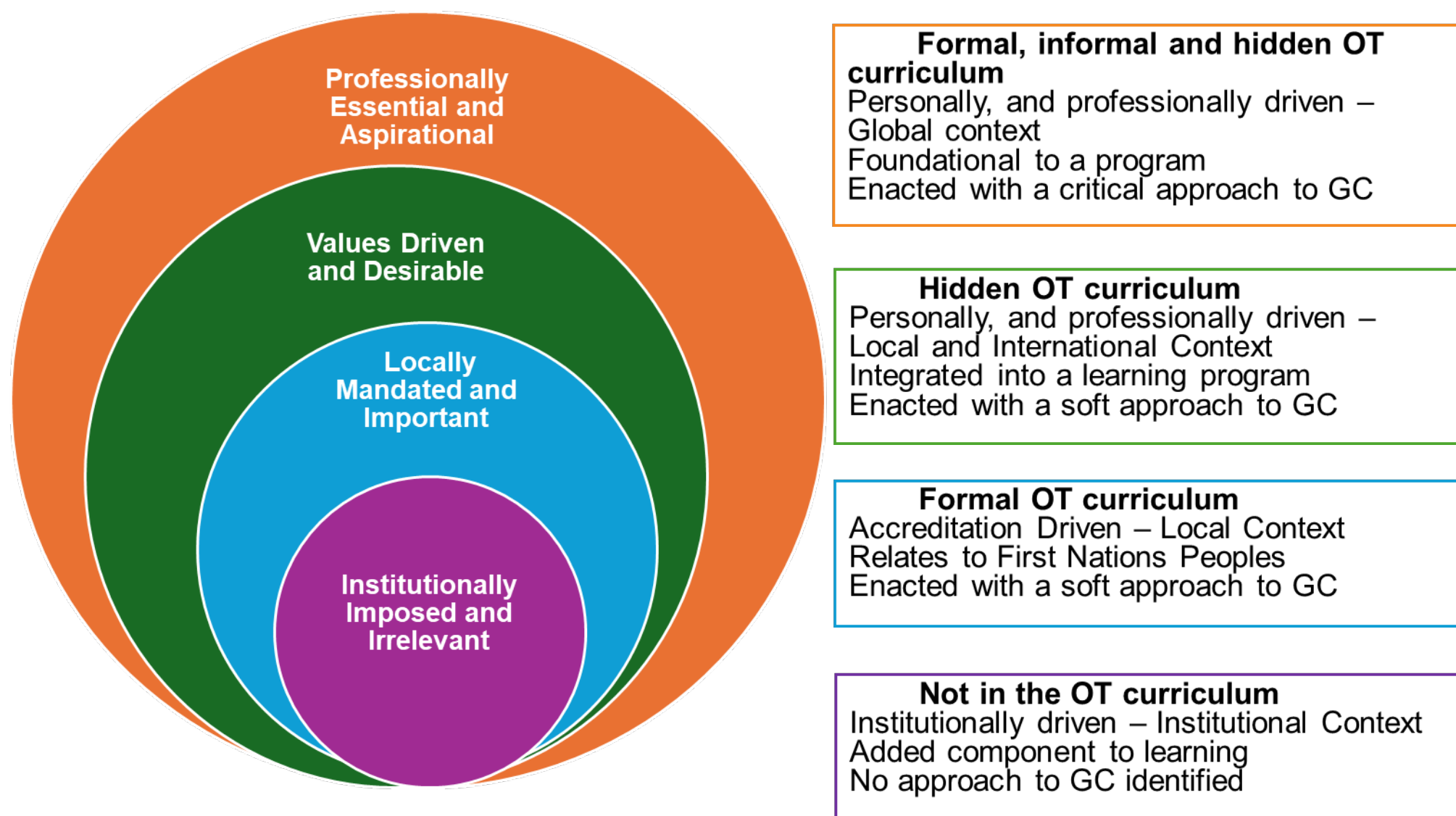
Figure 1. Culture and global citizenship in occupational therapy education



## Research Design, Data Analysis & Findings

Using a phenomenographic methodology, 19 occupational therapy academics and 1 occupational therapy council representative participated in the study. Inclusion criteria was participants had to be registered and teaching in a WFOT approved program. Interviews were 30-60mins and audio and visually transcribed verbatim for analysis including coding and categorising based on distinct variation and hierarchy between each category.

Figure 2. Categories of descriptions representing findings



*“We need to move beyond the “very traditional parts of occupational therapy... [as] that’s not our future, that’s not where we need to be... “global occupational therapy should be the norm in curriculum” (P4)*

## Drivers

Drivers influence and impact what disciplinary knowledge is considered important.

Institutional policy makers often drive the desired graduate attributes of an institution, and accreditation bodies drive what graduate competencies are required for practice.

Thought leaders, however, are inspirational, passionate advocates, capable of challenging dominance, evoking critical thought and strongly influencing the vision and values of our profession and its commitment to improving occupational justice.

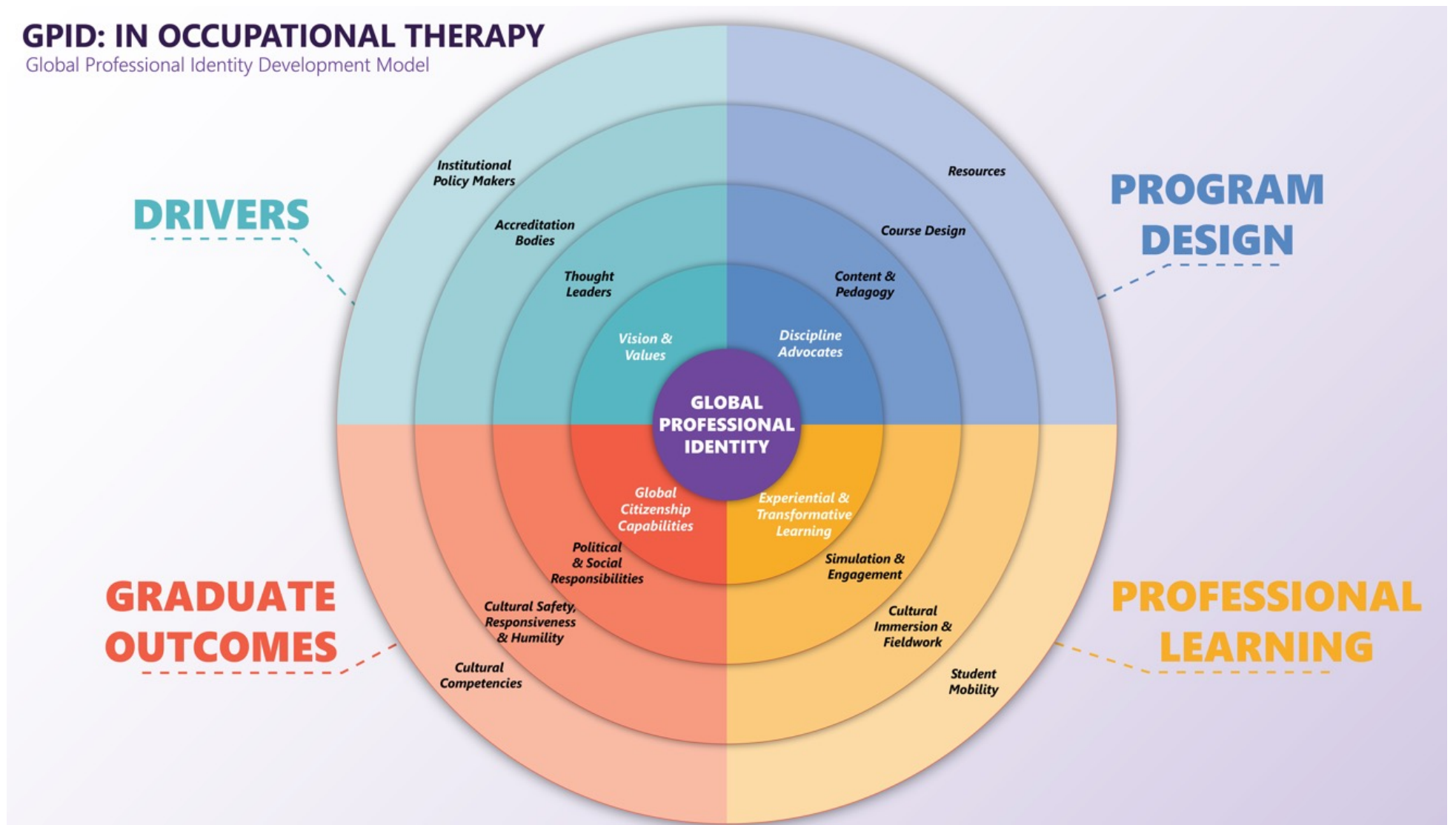
## Program Design

Program design determines the content and pedagogy used in curricula.

Resources reflect funding, grants and staff whilst course design influences how a program is structured, supports transformation and fosters communities of practice.

With a shared understanding, the content and pedagogy of a program should engender global relevance, be learner-centred and promote diverse ways of thinking and acting by graduates. Discipline advocates are seen as the champions who can enact visionary aspirations.

Figure 3. The Global Professional Identity Development Model (Borkovic, 2023)



## Graduate Outcomes

Graduate outcomes relate to the skills, capabilities and competencies required for effective professional practice with people of diverse backgrounds.

Culturally competent graduates are aware, respectful and can adapt their practice. Cultural safety and responsiveness requires the ability to critically reflect and analyse power imbalances, racism and oppression. Political and social responsibilities enable graduates to act politically and ethically to promote occupational justice and social rights for people and as global citizens, graduates will take responsibility to address power imbalance/inequity.

## Professional Learning

Professional learning of students provides the opportunities required to develop graduate outcomes.

Student mobility is often associated with developing cultural competencies however limited to only those who undertake the experience. Cultural immersion and fieldwork provide multi-cultural interactions relevant to local practice however simulation provides opportunity and access to acquire new insights on other social, cultural and political determinants. Transformative learning enables students to enact a rights-based, global citizenship approach to occupational therapy practice.

## Global Professional Identity

Graduates with a global professional identity are positioned to address the increasing complexity diversity and adversity in the world while also promoting the power of occupational therapy.

Becoming a global professional is both a process and a commitment to life-long learning and reflection. Understanding a sense of *self-in-the-world* first by continuously questioning, reflecting and learning positions global professionals to *act-in-the-world* for justice, human rights, access, education and occupational opportunities.

Global professionals are both creative and analytical and are flexible and adaptable when dealing with uncertainty and complexity. They increase global occupational therapy networks, connections and partnerships that actively prepare graduates to question problems faced by the world, challenge systemic injustice, empower communities and contribute to improving global health.

Figure 4. A global professional occupational therapist, connected across borders.



### PhD Thesis



Figure 5. A continuum of developing skills, attributes and outcomes (Borkovic, 2023)



## Practice Implications:

The model can be used in several ways by different groups of people including occupational therapy educators, program leaders, learning designers, educational developers, occupational therapists, researchers, accreditation agencies and professional associations.

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