



Figure 5-1. A concept map illustrating the bridge between entry-level occupational therapy education and the demands of clinical practice. The strategies to bridge the gap each address multiple factors contributing to the gap.

Lifelong Learning

A conscious and ongoing voluntary effort to pursue knowledge and personal or professional growth, lifelong learning promotes engagement in the professional community. Communities of practice (CoPs) are a vehicle to facilitate lifelong learning. CoPs gained popularity among professional disciplines as an avenue through which those with common interests can informally gather to support each other, learn together, and develop shared resources around a topic of interest (Wenger, 1991). Within occupational therapy, CoPs are gaining momentum as a mechanism for professional growth and development and capacity building (Barry, Kuijjer-Siebelink, Nieuwenhuis, & Scherpier-de Haan, 2017; McLoughlin, Patel, O'Callaghan, & Reeves, 2018; Roberts, 2015).

Evidence-Based Practice

Evidence-based practice is the use of the best available evidence to inform clinical decision making while considering the clinical experience of the practitioner, the unique needs of the client, and the clinical practice setting (Sackett, 1996). It can serve as a bridge between education and practice because through it effective interventions are integrated. Equipping students with the ability to synthesize research to inform practice is a natural bridge across the education-practice gap. Carroll, Herge, Johnson, and Schaaf (2017) designed and implemented a data-driven decision-making process to assist fieldwork students and supervisors in integrating evidence into daily decision making. This model significantly improved student knowledge and skill in the use of evidence in practice.

The Complexity of Interrelated Factors and Strategies of the Education-Practice Gap

Factors influencing the education-practice gap and the strategies to bridge this divide are multiple, complex, and interrelated. The concept map in Figure 5-1 illustrates how factors and strategies are interrelated and how each of the strategies serves to address multiple factors.