

**PROFESSIONAL & EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK &
CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2008



PROFESSIONAL & EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

During the autumn, winter and spring of 2007-2008, the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of Alberta, together with students and clinicians, reviewed and revised our Departmental Vision, Mission and Values statement (see Appendix 1), and articulated the Conceptual Framework and Curriculum Philosophy (of which this is the summary) underpinning our curriculum. In a parallel effort the Department produced a Vision, Mission and Values statement for our research (see Appendix 2). This executive summary attempts to provide a synopsis of the curriculum document, along with providing copies of the two Vision, Mission and Values statements. We encourage you to review this summary and the documents and invite your feedback.

Synopsis: Conceptual Framework and Curriculum Philosophy

The curriculum document details how the components of the professional and educational conceptual framework interrelate and structure what we teach, why we teach it and how we approach our teaching. The document is based on the Vision, Mission and Values of the Occupational Therapy Department, along with the Profile of Occupational Therapy in Canada (2007) and relevant and sound educational principles.

In designing this framework and articulating our philosophy, we explored the factors that influence professional education and occupational therapy practice. These factors include changes within the higher education sector as well as evolution of the occupational therapy profession and its practice contexts. At the university, we are seeing increasing diversity in student demographics in areas such as educational background, age, cultural background, outside responsibilities and career and study goals.

We work in a context in which there is growing focus on three key areas in teaching and learning: an expectation of learner-centred vs. teacher-centred approaches, of inter-disciplinarity, and use of technology. In practice, we are seeing a call from leaders of the profession for educational approaches that foster independent thought, critical thinking, and the ability to use and develop evidence for practice. These leaders further call on educational programmes to enable students to understand that occupation is the profession's core domain.

The 2007 *Profile of Occupational Therapy in Canada* outlines seven key competencies for practice: expertise in enabling occupation, as well as competency in communicating, collaborating, managing practice, being a change agent, scholarly practice and professionalism. Given these contexts, and these expectations, curriculum designed for occupational therapy will be complex, involving collaboration between classroom and practice settings, between academic and clinical educators and students. In order to meet the challenge to design a well structured and flexible curriculum we incorporate a number of educational frameworks in our approaches to learning and learning.

Six key educational frameworks underpin our curriculum are:

- Bloom's Taxonomy (revised and adapted edition)
- Kolb's learning styles and learning cycle
- Concept of emotional intelligence
- Constructivist/Social Constructionist learning approaches
- Transformative learning
- Reflective practice.

Bloom's Taxonomy (revised and adapted edition)

Bloom's Taxonomy was first developed to reflect levels of knowledge development (Table 1). During the 1990s, Bloom's Taxonomy was updated by a group of cognitive psychologists, curriculum theorists and instructional researchers. The taxonomy's update occurred across three categories, consisting of: terminology, structure, and emphasis (Forehand, 2007).

Bloom's taxonomy: The Cognitive Process Dimension						
The Knowledge Dimension	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Factual Knowledge	List	Summarize	Classify	Order	Rank	Combine
Conceptual Knowledge	Describe	Interpret	Experiment	Explain	Assess	Plan
Procedural Knowledge	Tabulate	Predict	Calculate	Differentiate	Conclude	Compose
Meta-Cognitive Knowledge	Appropriate Use	Execute	Construct	Achieve	Action	Actualize

Table 1. Bloom's Taxonomy, Revised.

Using this new taxonomy as a means of mapping our curriculum, and following Anderson and Krathwhol's (2001, p.67-68) lead in reversing the usual taxonomy, we are able to demonstrate that at the Masters level our curriculum is designed to spend a larger proportion of time and focus on the higher levels of the taxonomy, namely analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Figure 1).

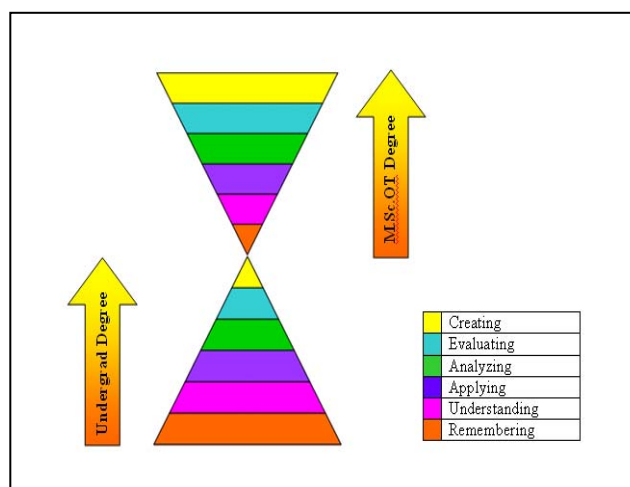


Fig. 1. Adapted Bloom's Taxonomy.

Kolb's learning styles and learning cycle.

Many theorists have written and researched the importance of understanding learning styles in order to create learning material and an effective learning environment. Theorists such as Dewey, Kolb, Gardner, Honey, and Mumford highlight how learning style can impact the way in which students understand and then apply what is being taught. It is crucial to remember that people do not have just one learning style and that most can adapt their learning style to suit the learning situation. It is important for educators to recognize how their learning style impacts how they approach curriculum development, assessment tasks, and the learning environment.

According to Kolb, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created by the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.41). Kolb created a "cycle of learning" (Figure 2) as a central principle to his experiential learning theory. This cycle outlines the relationship between action and learning, and reflections on past action to construct future learning. The process consists of four interrelated, continuous components:

Experience: or *immersing oneself in the "doing"* of a task is the first stage in the cycle. The individual, team, or organization simply carries out the task assigned. The engaged person is usually not reflecting on the task at this time, but carrying it out with intention.

Reflection: involves stepping back from task involvement and *reviewing what has been done* and experienced. The skills of attending, noticing differences, and applying terms help identify subtle events and communicate them clearly to others. One's paradigm (values, attitudes, beliefs) influences whether one can differentiate certain events. One's vocabulary is also influential, since without words it is difficult to discuss one's perceptions.

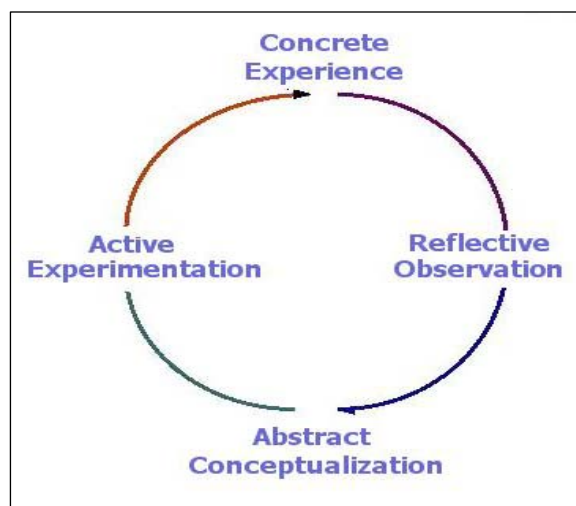


Fig. 2. Kolb's Learning Cycle

Conceptualization: involves *interpreting the events* that have been noticed and *understanding the relationships* among them. It is at this stage that theory may be particularly helpful as a template for framing and explaining events. One's paradigm again influences the interpretive range a person is willing to entertain.

Experimentation & Planning: enables taking the new understanding and translating it into *predictions* about what is likely to happen next or *what actions should be taken* to refine the way the task is handled.

Students are able to experience Kolb's learning cycle theory as they transition through the program. Fieldwork occurs early in the program (five weeks after commencing), thereby creating the opportunity for students to have immediate concrete experiences to provide a basis for observations and reflections that will be incorporated into coursework on return to the university. As the first year continues, students are able to distill these observations into abstract concepts through the theoretically-based curriculum and action-based learning activities. As students progress through the program, they experience more fieldwork and the cycle is repeated, gradually building their knowledge and skill in occupational therapy theory and practice, leading to the development of the capacity to "clinically reason".

Concept of emotional intelligence

The concept of “emotional intelligence” (EI/EQ) is a person’s ability to understand his or her own emotions and the emotions of others, and to act appropriately based on this understanding. Mortiboys (2005) suggests that, while the conventional view of education assumes that an educator brings two things to the classroom or clinical teaching environment, subject expertise and knowledge of teaching and learning, we need to add a third component, EQ, to explain good teaching. Without emotional intelligence in our teaching we risk diminishing subject knowledge and methods.

Goleman (1995) suggests EQ can be broken down into a number of domains: knowing and managing your own emotions, motivating yourself and others, recognizing and understanding other people’s emotions, and managing relationships.

Educators in the university setting and preceptors in the fieldwork setting need to be caring and establish an environment where students feel respected, safe, and fairly treated. Educators need to interact in a socially competent manner; they must be enthusiastic and positive about learning, and hold a generally positive view of students and the academic environment. There must be a constructive and professional relationship formed between the educator and the student. Finally, the educator needs to be reflective about their professional practice and about themselves (e.g., Stronge, 2007).

Constructivist/social constructionist learning approaches

Our educational philosophy builds on the premise of constructivist learning, which is the foundation of the learner-based educational approaches and enriching frameworks that have emerged in the last 40 years from the study of adult learners. We incorporate both developmental constructivist and social constructivist approaches in our curriculum.

Constructivism

Constructivism is an approach to teaching and learning based on the premise that learning is the result of “mental construction”. In other words, students learn by fitting new information together with what they already know. Constructivists believe that learning is influenced by the context in which an idea is taught as well as by students’ previous beliefs and attitudes.

Constructivism is:

- A process of interaction between what is known and what is to be learned. Reflection on past experiences and understanding is the foundation upon which something new is built.
- A social process of sharing and dialogue between learner peers and facilitators, with each bringing different perspectives.
- A situated process in which meaningfulness of the context and the authenticity of the activities are linked.

Constructivist learning in occupational therapy education can be evident through curriculum design and fieldwork experience that:

- facilitates students to perform just beyond limits of previous ability (scaffolding)
- enables knowledge construction not knowledge reproduction
- presents multiple perspectives and representations of concepts
- considers learner’s previous knowledge
- facilitates collaborative and cooperative learning
- provides opportunity for independent exploration to seek knowledge

Curriculum delivery and fieldwork experience where:

- educators serve in the role of facilitators
- students move through the “zone of proximal development” as the curriculum transitions from remembering and understanding to analyzing and creating
- learning activities encourage interaction, reflection, self-awareness, and problem solving
- apprenticeship style learning in authentic situations
- students play a central role in mediating their own learning
- there is interdisciplinary learning

Assessment design in fieldwork and university settings that:

- is authentic and interwoven with teaching
- has varied or negotiable formats or both
- relates to learning goals (i.e. not just for the sake of assessment)
- clearly relates to development of professional competence

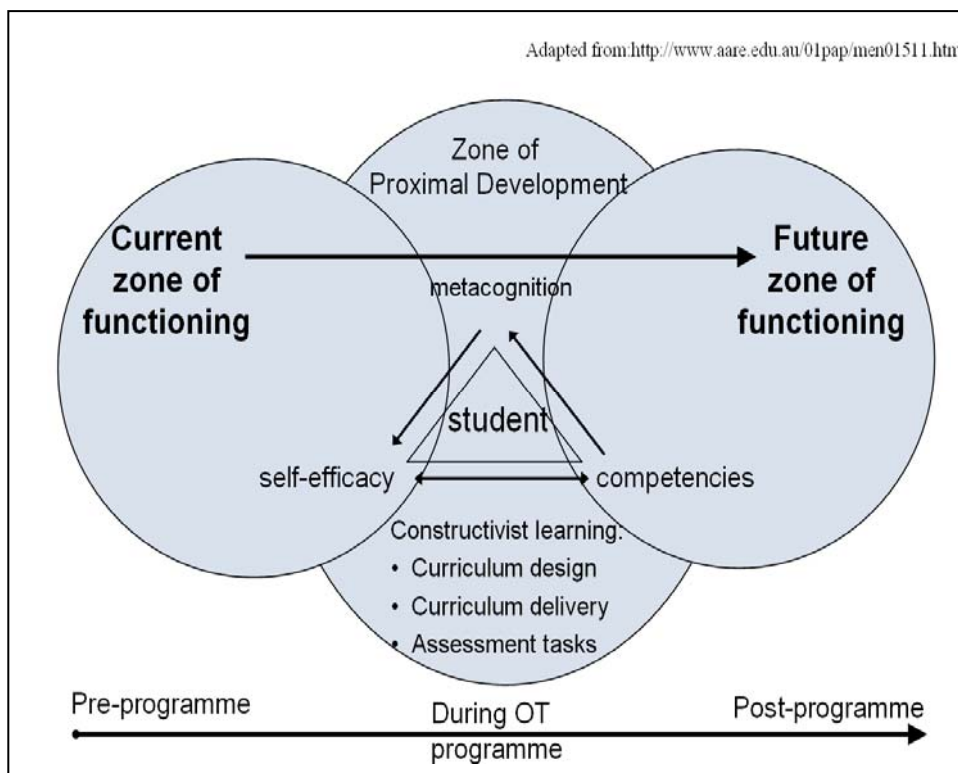


Fig. 3. A constructivist view of occupational therapy education.

Social Constructionism

Phillips (1995) identifies six major strands on constructivism, which differ in the degree to which they focus on individual versus social constructivism. A social constructivist or constructionist approach focuses on learning as socially constructed through discussion and work on jointly-owned problems and tasks. Phillips (1995) suggests constructivist approaches with more individualist orientations, such as those of Piaget and Vygotsky, are at one end of a constructivism continuum and social constructivism as one expression of feminist epistemologies is at the other. Candy (1991, p. 275), in exploring how social constructivist ideas translate into teaching adults, describes learning as a process of acquiring symbolic meaning and structures relevant to one's society (or in our educational program, both one's society and profession). Candy further notes that since knowledge is socially constructed, individual members augment or modify the general pool of knowledge.

Occupational therapy students enter and participate in an educational process to which they bring their life experiences and previous education. Within the program, they are often called upon to work in groups on shared problems and tasks designed to assist them in constructing their knowledge of occupational therapy theory and practice through interaction with academic and clinical faculty, their student colleagues, their clients, and thought leaders within the profession and society.

Transformative learning

Transformative learning involves a deep shift in consciousness that alters our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Often these changes mean that we explore our understanding of ourselves, power relations in society, concepts of race, gender, class, and social justice. As a result, we may envision a new way to interact at work, with family, and in society that expands our capacity for tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and compassion (Mezirow, 1997).

As a field of study, transformative learning has grown to include multiple and diverse areas of educational concern. As a field of practice, transformative learning ranges across a wide diversity of practice settings, including adult and continuing professional education, higher education, workplace learning, and education for social change.

Transformative learning approaches in occupational therapy education can be evident in the following ways:

- The educator's or preceptor's role is to establish an environment that builds trust and care and facilitates development of sensitive relationships among learners (Taylor 1998).
- Creation of a "community of knowers", individuals who are "united in a shared experience of trying to make meaning of their life experience" (Loughlin, 1993, pp. 320-321).
- Educators and preceptors serve as role models and demonstrate willingness to learn and change by expanding and deepening understanding of and perspectives about both subject matter and teaching approaches (Cranton, 1994).

Therefore, an educator, in the classroom or in fieldwork, who uses a transformative learning approach will:

- Be interested in the learners and the knowledge they bring
- Be a provocateur and enable discourse
- Provide a "just right challenge" in learning tasks and environments
- Be self-reflective
- Not take the role of being the font of all knowledge
- Facilitate deep learning.

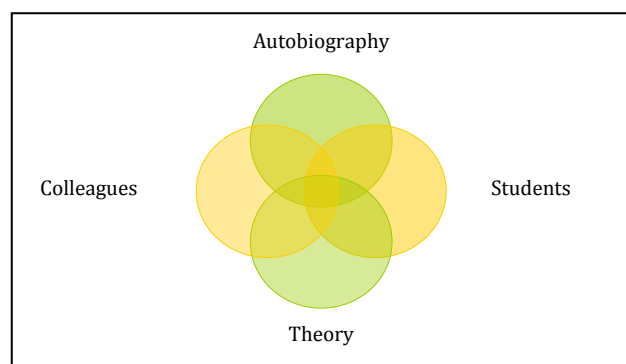
Critical reflection & reflective practice

Reflective practice is defined as a professional development strategy designed to enable professionals to change their behavior, thereby improving the quality of their performance (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Reflective practice is linked with transformative learning approaches. Brookfield's four lenses of reflection for the academic instructor (figure 4) illustrate that critical reflection is multi-faceted..

Autobiographic lens:

OT educators and supervisors need to reflect on their own practice to understand why they do what they do.

- Personal frames of reference are determined by habits of mind and points of view.
- Relying on one's own habitual ways of thinking is not enough to reach the range of students in today's student group.



Colleague lens:

- Brookfield (1995) challenges us to venture outside our comfort zone when obtaining reflective feedback.
- It's tough to question (out loud) your own efficacy or knowledge.
- Asking for the opinion of someone who teaches differently or who teaches in a different area challenges you to look outside your "comfort zone"

Fig. 4. Brookfield's four lenses of reflection for the academic instructor.

Student lens:

- Brookfield (1995) challenges the educator to reflect on their teaching and assessment through the eyes of their students.
- Through the eyes of students we can discover both positive and negative aspects of our approach to teaching.

Theory lens:

- Critically reflective teaching is a cornerstone to excellent teaching practice (Brookfield, 1995; Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Ramsden, 2003).
- Expert educators continually reflect on how they teach and improve (Biggs, 2003).
- Constructivist, transformative, reflective practice each have a strong foundation in education theory.

Teaching students to be critically reflective practitioners

Reflective practice seeks to facilitate reflection on concrete experiences as well as assumptions, beliefs, ideas, feelings, actions, and behaviors that are elicited by the experience (Kinsella, 2001). The capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning is a defining characteristic of professional practice (Schön, 1995).

Brookfield's lenses (Figure 4) highlight the various ways we can use when critically reflecting on our practice. As educators and preceptors, we need to model this behaviour. However, it is important to articulate what it is that we want to be reflecting upon through these lenses. Students need to practice

being critically reflective practitioners. Figure 5 highlights areas that students are being encouraged to reflect upon as emerging occupational therapists.

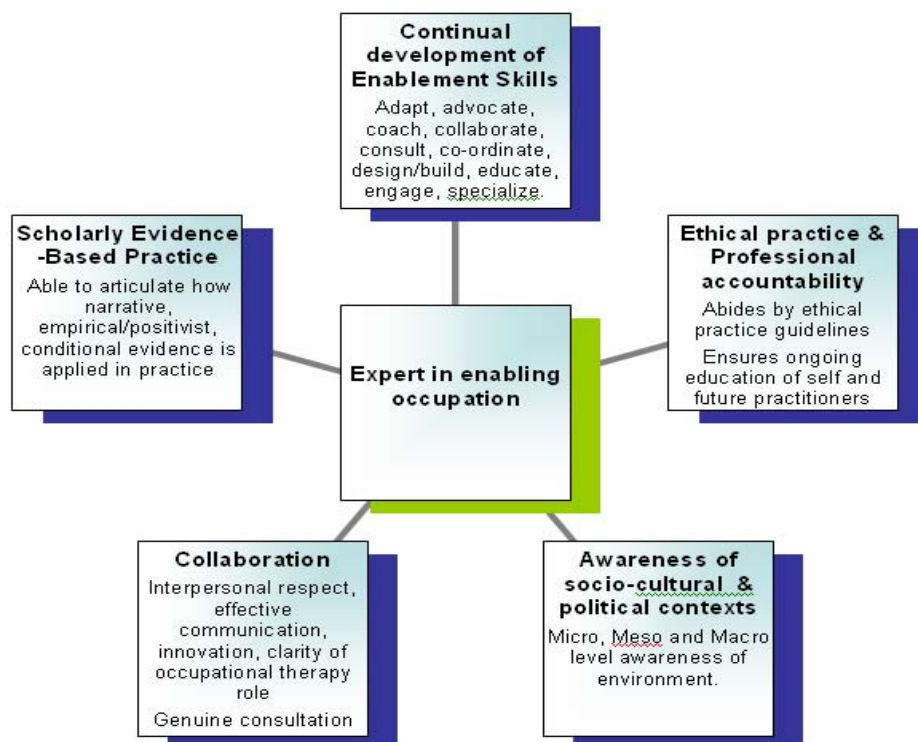


Fig. 5. Critical reflection in occupational therapy practice

Summary

The University of Alberta Department of Occupational Therapy MScOT curriculum has been designed in response to rapid changes in the higher education sector and evolution of the occupational therapy profession. Our professional and educational conceptual framework is structured to prepare students to develop the qualities described in the Profile of Occupational Therapy in Canada (CAOT, 2007), so they emerge as competent practitioners, ready to work in any current area of practice, and to contribute to the development of new areas of practice.

With this in mind, our occupational therapy program ensures that students are equipped with the necessary skills to become competent and innovative leaders in the field through:

- an emphasis on learning and facilitated learning as opposed to direct teaching
- a commitment to creating a meaningful learning experience
- early and continuing fieldwork in established and emerging practice areas
- encouraging meaningful reflection throughout the program.

The educational philosophy for our program recognizes that higher level critical reflection is needed for questioning existing paradigms, challenging assumptions and thus contributing to the objective critique of the discipline and to help the profession grow and progress (Brockbank & McGill, 2000). Therefore students must be able to:

- truly understand and be able to explain the innate and complex nature of occupational therapy
- acquire the capacity to apply and develop the principles and practice of occupational therapy in diverse domains for the most effective contribution to individuals, groups, communities, and our profession.

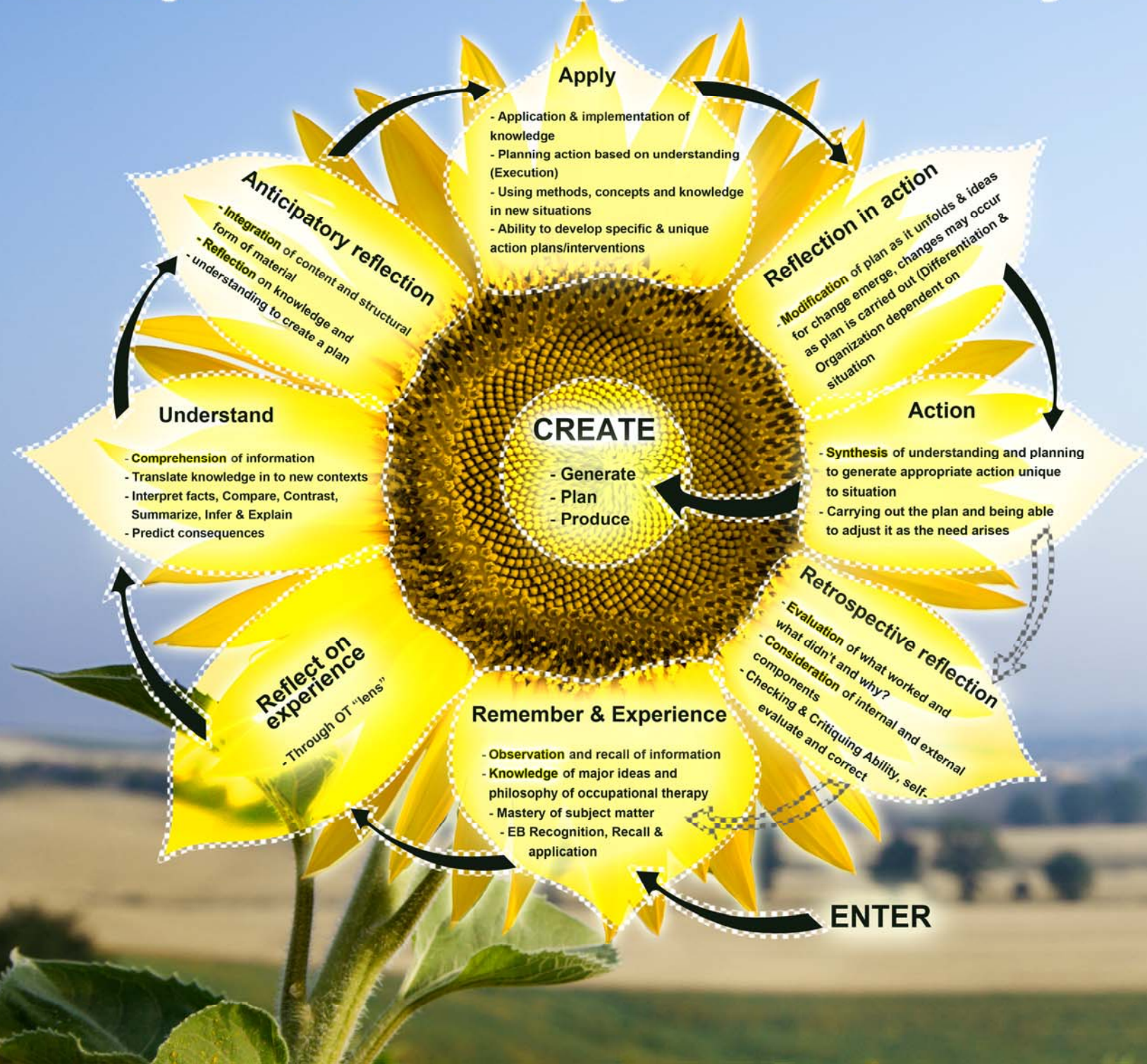
Students' learning is enhanced through the use of a variety of teaching and learning techniques. These techniques encourage reflection through the use of didactic teaching, problem and inquiry based learning experiences, as well as a variety of group and individual reflective tasks both in the classroom and in fieldwork.

Evaluation of learning reflects these same principles. We have selected a combination of knowledge-based examinations, skills-based examinations, examination of key concepts of occupational therapy practice, as well as current research incorporated throughout the program. Students prepare written papers, research proposals, and literature critiques, and learn how to create OT reports. They create in-class education sessions and team meeting style presentations, which encourage students to practice clear, objective communication skills.

This document describes our complex professional and educational conceptual framework and philosophy. It describes what we teach, why we teach it and how we approach our teaching. Throughout the document, we have depicted aspects of this framework and philosophy using a variety of visual representations to illustrate how we teach and how students learn.

One final image, the sunflower, represents our future hopes for our graduates and our program – our outcomes. Futurist Sohail Inayatullah (2005) describes the power of metaphors and symbols when exploring visions of the future – their value in “inspiring us to continue through our daily struggles, to act so as to ensure that these metaphors will remain alive and contribute to the cultural landscape of future generations” (p. 76). We describe occupational therapy as “a career you can grow with”. The sunflower represents growth, strength, boldness, fruitfulness, and resilience. It seeks the light. The flower is really a community of flowers: rays and disk florets that represent students, faculty, clinicians, and clients as partners in this venture of doing, being, belonging, and becoming an occupational therapist!

Occupational Therapy Curriculum Cycle



PROFESSIONAL & EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

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APPENDIX 1

Occupational Therapy Department Vision, Mission and Values Statement

Department of Occupational Therapy

VISION

The Department of Occupational Therapy promotes health and well-being through occupation with excellence in learning, discovery and citizenship.

MISSION

The Department of Occupational Therapy discovers, shares and applies knowledge related to healthy occupation and occupational therapy practice through innovative teaching, life-long learning, research and creative activity, community involvement and imaginative collaboration with community partners in Alberta and beyond. In concert with fieldwork preceptors, we educate competent therapists to ensure they have the capacity to practice in evolving socio-political and healthcare service environments, both local and global. Recognized research programs set the standard for knowledge and discovery supporting occupational therapy practice in Canada.

VALUES

Scholarship: We embrace critical thinking, reflexivity and evidence-based practice and foster a spirit of inquiry as we discover, share and apply knowledge related to healthy occupation, occupational therapy practice and occupational therapy education.

Learner-centredness, respect and caring: Students are our current and future colleagues – we support their learning process in a respectful, collaborative and caring way as they become professionals. Our ethic of care encompasses concern about both learners and the profession. We extend respect and care as well in our work with clients, faculty/staff colleagues, clinical faculty, fieldwork preceptors and clinicians.

Integrity: In our teaching, research and community involvement we maintain high ethical standards, and expect our students to do the same.

Excellence: Faculty and students integrate research evidence and clinical reasoning with their teaching, learning and clinical experience to ensure excellence in enabling occupation.

Creativity: We model and support creativity in learning, discovery and citizenship

Partnership: We work creatively with our partners in education, research and healthcare delivery for the greater good of the community.

Life-long learning: We recognize the need for life-long learning.

Stewardship: We use our resources wisely.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- To provide supportive environments (both physical and virtual) for life-long learning and inquiry
- To create an atmosphere that promotes respect, creativity and appreciation of students, faculty/staff, clinicians and clients
- To create awareness of, and ongoing dialogue about, ethical issues from professional, academic and social perspectives
- To be national and international leaders in education and research programs related to the link between occupation and health
- To creatively and efficiently use resources to achieve our mission
- To explore, establish and maintain intra and interprofessional partnerships to advance our mission



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APPENDIX 2

Occupational Therapy Department Plan for Research

Department of Occupational Therapy

Research Mission

We achieve research relevant to enabling health and well-being through occupation through actively seeking resources in the form of collaborations, funding, and opportunities for dissemination. To provide high caliber learning and mentorship opportunities for students, professional colleagues and new faculty we endeavor to integrate components of individual research programs across the Department. Our priority setting is guided by the University's *Dare to Discover, Dare to Deliver* mandate and the resources it offers to participate in meaningful research and recruitment of world-class students.

Research Vision & Values

Vision ~ Our stakeholder communities will **identify** research from the Department of Occupational Therapy as being of high quality and worth supporting through collaborators, funding, and opportunities for dissemination in ways that **inform** best practice and demonstrate a true **impact** on occupation as a vehicle to health and well-being.

Values ~ The faculty of the Department of Occupational Therapy share core values that reflect our enthusiasm, scholarly inquisitiveness and desire to affect real change through quality work. We articulate these core values, congruent with the University of Alberta's visionary *Dare to Discover, Dare to Deliver* mandate, as follows:

***Talented People** - we value the diversity of departmental faculty, clinical colleagues and students who generate both the questions and the strategies for answering these questions. As part of this process we believe in capacity building, mentoring and recruitment of the highest quality students who will become future researchers. We also value working towards collaborative research and resource sharing activities that set aside traditional inter-professional rivalries and competition.

***Learning, Discover and Citizenship** - We value the funding support and recognition afforded by others as indicators of our position as partners in the global community of researchers and innovators. This position serves as an indicator to others that the work we carry out and the opportunities we offer to students pursuing research careers are creditable and valuable.

***Connecting communities** - We value collaborator and stakeholder partnerships both locally and internationally for the broadness of perspective and opportunity to create synergy and innovation that they offer.

***Transformative organization and support** - We value the privilege of carrying out research that is driven by the question and not by the environmental constraints. To that end we foster capacity building in methodology, application of novel and emerging research approaches and dissemination outside of the traditional routes. We see our work with students and colleagues as a vehicle to achieve a vibrant and dynamic intellectual space. We also value and recognize the need for strong co-ordination and co-ordination of the administrative elements required to achieve our mission and vision.



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