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**Developing a Model for Contextual Practice: School-based
Occupational Therapy as an Illustration of Mixed Methods in Natural
Environments**

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Key concepts:

More and more research is emerging supporting what many occupational therapists have innately employed in practice – the idea of grounding occupational engagement in natural contexts in order to maximize gains (Childress, 2004; Cutchin, 2004, Humphry & Wakeford, 2006; Jackson, Carlson, Mandel, Zemke & Clark, 1998). Furthermore, many practitioners also utilize a variety of frames of reference when planning and implementing therapeutic services, which many have found yield better results (Blanche, Botticelli & Hallway, 1995; Krishnamoorthy, Hsu, Kesar, Benoit, Banala, Perumal, Sangwan, Binder-Macleod, Agrawal & Scholz, 2008; Leemrijse, Meijer, Vermeer, Ader, & Diemel, 2000). Some therapists do it instinctually, while others require support for effectively combining treatment methods in natural environments. This presentation aims to provide a theoretical model for utilizing mixed methods in practice, while also offering a systematic approach for determining which methods will most benefit the consumer.

Within the United States school system, occupational therapy is a mandated service for those students who are eligible as an individual with exceptional needs and demonstrate a need for the related services of occupational therapy in order to access and participate in their educational program. As school based occupational therapists, we realized the large number of potential clients; the opportunity to intervene within the natural environment; and how this is reflective of the profession as a whole. Therefore, school-based occupational therapy will be used as a microcosm for utilizing a variety of treatment methods in natural contexts across practice settings.

Using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) as a guide, we have constructed a theoretical model, along with a systematic tool, for identifying areas of need and support, and selecting which frames of reference best address those areas impacting occupational performance (World Health Organization).

The Decision Thread is a systematic tool for looking at the client's occupational performance and critically evaluating the Environmental Factors and Personal Factors that are impacting successful occupational performance. Within the Environmental Factors, you are considering the social, physical, temporal, and cultural factors, as well as the objects used during occupational engagement that are influencing performance. Within the Personal Factors, you are considering the client's habits/routines, performance patterns/skills, and specific client factors. Furthermore, the existing literature is reviewed which helps to guide your decision making in identifying the factors you will address through occupational therapy intervention.

Once the areas of need have been ascertained, the decision of which frames of reference and treatment models a therapist uses depends on several things, including clinical expertise, evidence, knowledge of treatment approaches, and available resources. The Cable Model for Occupational Therapy Intervention (C-MOTI) can be generalized to provide a visual model for mixing appropriate frames of reference and treatment approaches for moving a client from point A to point B, much like a cable moves a current from point A to point B.

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