

TRANSPERSONAL PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL POPULAR EDUCATION WORKSHOPS – A WAY FORWARD FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICA

by

Sharon Mary Johnson, MA Psychology (Stellenbosch)

ABSTRACT

With the challenges of large-scale impoverishment and lack of adequate psychological services in widespread, high-risk communities, mental health in Africa needs a new model for the way forward in prevention intervention. Multicultural popular education workshops utilising transpersonal self-healing techniques offer a cost-effective and empowering solution.

Research carried out amongst HIV/Aids coordinator teachers in low-income, high-risk schools on the Cape Flats, Western Cape, showed that transpersonal Capacitar workshops mediated burnout. The study utilised a mixed-method approach in a pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design.

Equal priority was given to the quantitative and qualitative legs of the study. The Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) measured anxiety and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) measured three dimensions of burnout: personal, work and client burnout. After the workshops, there were significant reductions in anxiety, personal and work burnout in the post-test measures of the intervention group. There were also significant differences in personal and work burnout of teachers between the intervention and control groups.

Individual line sketches, a collage of outliers and mind maps, together with portraits of delegates, highlighted the context and experiences in the Capacitar workshops. Teachers were first able to start the process of healing themselves, and then turn to the community to share the tools offered.

Suitable for the mediation of stress, burnout and multiple types of trauma, Capacitar workshops founded by Dr Pat Cane, California, USA, are based on the principles of liberation psychologies, set against the wider backdrop of colonialism and globalisation. Through critical consciousness, alternative explanations for interpretation and maintenance of the status quo are sought. This is an empowering way forward for the furtherance of mental health in Africa.