Occupational Therapy in the context of social transformation: Collective effort and consciousness

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Overview

• Transformative and Critical Theory
• Social transformation and participation
• Occupation-based Social Transformation
• Paradox in diversity
• Spirituality in occupational therapy
• Conclusion
Transformative and Critical Theory

Theories of transformative:

• **Critical consciousness** which assists in analyzing, posing questions and taking actions to address issues of concern related to social, political, cultural and economic context (*Paul Freira*)

• Individual and communities develop critical consciousness through reflection and action which is referred as praxis-oriented.

• Methods of consciousness-raising include activism and safe environment, reflective journaling, dialogue and critical questioning

• **Critical reflection**: beliefs, values and assumption that we gained through our life experiences (*Mezirow, 2003*).

• Methods of critical reflection include creating communities of care that supports the discovery of self through meaningful relationships, mutual understanding, collaboration and occupations


Collective Effort in Marikana Mine

Despite having no legal protection or union support, thousands of miners continued to strike in solidarity for their common goal - a better quality life and the dignity it affords. The families of the striking miners were also in general solidarity with the protest and worked to support the movement, joining in protest action and bringing supplies when necessary.
Social Transformation and Participation

- Occupational reconstruction promotes action-oriented framework for social justice, occupational injustice, collective action, political approaches and critical theories (Frank & Muriithi, 2015)


Collective Occupations

The essence of spirituality brings the connections and binds people together.

(Fourth-year student 4, personal communication, 2016)
Occupation-based Social Transformative

- Occupational therapy profession and occupational science to embrace and acknowledge the transformative potential and become praxis-oriented as part of the social contract
- Occupational science: hope to move the discipline towards a critical, reflexive and social responsive discipline by incorporating actions
- These actions are related to social justice, humanitarianism and human rights
- Informs the occupational therapy profession to consider a turnaround strategy by focusing on occupation-based socially transformative approach

Paradox in diversity

• Spirituality in community development brings social change, shapes relationships and collective empowerment
• Holistic framework comprises social justice, economic fairness, human rights and ecological sustainability
• Humanitarian values include social justice, altruism, and benevolence, humanism, integrity, justice, respect and responsibility
• Strengthening a community’s actions may enhance community participation and promote its spirituality
• Learning-within-relationships with those from differing cultural and social backgrounds, which enables learners to realize both their interconnectedness and their interdependence

Spirituality in Occupational Therapy

• Spirituality resides in persons, is shaped by the environment and gives meaning to occupation
• The health, quality of life and well-being of individuals, groups and communities in the South African context
• To cope with any life crisis, hardships and illnesses
• Very little research about the importance of spirituality in communities
Spirituality in Communities

“I am thinking of spirituality in the sense that people have experienced it, as they always form networks. This is an asset for the community. I think without spirituality the networks will not be strong; therefore, identifying spirituality as an asset also creates that connectedness.” (Fourth-year student 10)
“The essence of spirituality brings the connections and binds people together.”

(Fourth-year student 4, personal communication, 2016)
Conclusion

- Use of the transformative theories would enhance occupational therapy and occupational science interdependence between the disciplines.
- Occupational reconstructions’ principles provide understanding of occupation-based social transformation framework.
- Embracing and acknowledgement of the paradox diversity will foster social transformation
- Spirituality is the core of meaning and purpose
Thank You

“The essence of spirituality brings the connections and binds people together.”
(Fourth-year student 4, personal communication, 2016)