**Revision of Vona's Theory of Creative Participation**

**Seminar for Fourth Year Occupational Therapy Students UCT**

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**1. A Revision of Vona du Toit's Theory of Creative Participation**

**1.1 Discussion about Creativity in general and Creativity as applied to this Theory.**

**1.2 Basic Concepts and Definitions**

1. **Volition:** An inner drive, readiness or motivation which directs behaviour towards a goal
2. **Action:** The exertion of volition and mental and physical effort which results in a tangible or intangible product

O.H.T.1

1. **Characteristics of Volition and Action:**

~ The growth and recovery (development) of volition follows a constant sequential pattern

~ The growth and recovery (development) of action also follows a constant sequential pattern

~ The developmental stages of volition and action appear to be interdependent

~ Volition and action can thus not be separated from one another

1. **Creative Capacity (Potential) (O.H.T.2):**

The total creative possibility or creative potential possessed by a particular individual (factors such as intelligence, heredity and environmental opportunity will influence the capacity).

1. **Creative Ability:**

That area of an individual's creative capacity (potential) which he has realised and defined or manifest in himself. It is characterised by the quality of the individual's ability to form a relational contact with people, events and materials or objects, by his preparedness to function freely and with originality at his maximum level of competence, and by his ability to control the negative affects of anxiety.

1. **Creative Response:**

This is the positive attitudinal reaction which the individual displays towards opportunity. The attitude precedes action. It is a turning towards or contact seeking element.

1. **Criteria for determining the Quality of Creative Ability of an individual:**
2. The quality of the individual's ability to make appropriate contact and/or interact with materials, objects, people and within situations
3. The individual's ability to control the negative effects of anxiety
4. The degree of initiative/originality used in thought and action
5. The quality and quantity of exertion the individual is prepared to channelize into tasks and challenges in all the spheres of life

**1.3 The Developmental Stages of Volition and Action (Creative Development)**

(Stages of Psychical Recovery or Development - Du Toit 1980)

Discuss each in detail:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Stage of Volition** | **Stage of Action** |
| I | Tone | Pre-destructive Action  Destructive Action |
| II | Self Differentiation | Incidental Creative Action |
| III | Self Presentation | Explorative Action |
| IV | Participation  Passive  Imitative  Active  Competitive | Participation Action  Passive Action  Imitative Action  Originative  Product Centred |
| V | Contribution | Contributive Situation-centred Action |
| VI | Competitive Contribution | Competitive - Contributive Society- centred Action |

**1.4 Therapeutic Principles of Application**

To be discussed briefly under the following:

~ Therapist directed participation

~ Therapist/patient directed participation

~ Patient directed participation

Principles of:

~ Handling

~ Activity selection and requirements

~ Presentation and structuring of activities

~ Grading

**2. Creative Participation and its application in Occupational Therapy**

Discussion:

~ How do you think the theory of Creative Participation can be of assistance to Occupational Therapists?

~ What particular areas of Occupational Therapy do you think it most appropriate/suitable for?

**3. Creative Participation and its application to Physical Disorders**

In the case of individuals suffering from psychiatric disorders, particularly chronic disorders, the characteristics particular to each level of creative participation appear to be much easier to identify, especially those on the lower levels of development. The psychiatric patient generally has the physical ability to actualise his own volition in action but the volition itself is affected by the cognitive, connative and affective symptoms of his pathology. With the physically ill individual who has severe functional loss, the opposite occurs: while he has the volition, he is physically incapable of adequately or independently actualising this volition in action, or even if he does have some ability to carry his volition over into action, the end product may take so long to attain or may be of such an inferior quality to his expectations that a type of cyclical destruction of volition occurs, resulting in regression from higher to lower levels of creative ability. (O.H.T.3)

Thus from an Occupational Therapist's point of view, when dealing with the physically affected individual, it is imperative that:

1. We identify the level of creative participation the individual was functioning on prior to his illness or injury. (Why is this important?)
2. We assess whether the individual has already regressed to a lower level and, if so, identify which level. (Why is this important?)
3. We apply correct principles of handling, counselling, application, etc. to prevent further regression and to attempt to find ways through which the individual can actualise his volition in action. If we can do this then we can help the patient progress back to his original level and, who knows, maybe even attain a higher level?

**4. An Evaluation of the Theory**

This theory provides considerable food for thought and certainly does provide and exciting approach to looking at creative ability. However, to my mind, it still requires considerable research and application to substantiate and modify it.

**4.1 Criticism:**

1. Whilst Vona du Toit wrote many articles on her theory and presented many papers, both nationally and internationally, she quotes very few references. This makes it extremely difficult to discover the different sociological and psychological perspectives that may have influenced her theory. It appears, from the few references that she did give, that the phenomenogist Carl Rogers and philosopher Martin Buber had a fairly considerable influence on her work. One also tends to identify a fairly strong connection to Abraham Maslow's Need-Hierarchy Theory. However, as far as I can gather, she never refers to Maslow.
2. Lack of empirical evidence:

Many of Vona du Toit's followers have applied the principles of this theory to activity selection and patient treatment with apparent success. However, there is virtually no written evidence of research into this area to substantiate these assumptions. Among the few persons who have written further on this theory are people like Carole Pretorius, Elna Jooste, Dain van der Reyden and Lyn Watson. (See references at end.) No one has, however, yet done a full methodologically sound research study to demonstrate the absolute validity of this theory.

1. Difficulty in applying the theory to physical disorders:

The theory lends itself far more easily to psychiatric disorders. Whilst I am of the conviction that it applies to both areas, its application to physical disorders is somewhat different and requires more specific explanation than was made available by Vona du Toit.

1. Lack of adequate literature on the application of this theory:

Whilst she explains in considerable detail what the characteristics are of each level, Vona du Toit does not give adequate indication of how to treat the individual at each level. Dain van der Reyden, one of her followers, has paid attention to this but has not published enough on it. Her papers are mainly lecture notes given when she was Lecturer at the Pretoria College of Occupational Therapy. ( See also Carole Pretorius references.)

**Conclusion**

I hope this seminar has made you all more inquisitive about the Theory of Creative Participation. I am personally biased in its favour because I had the privilege of experiencing at first hand Vona du Toit's commitment to her theory. It is an exciting theory and it is unique to Occupational Therapy but it still needs a lot of work to develop it into a more empirically sound and practically applicable theory. Perhaps one of you might take on such a project one of these days?

**References:**

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