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Outside in: practice as research, exploring the use of somatic approaches to address self-regulation for Wits University Master of Drama Therapy students for learning online

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Abstract

This Research Paper explores the impact online learning has on the body, and how through a Body-Mind connection (Chan, Ying Ho & Chow, 2002) impacts the cognitive state. Using this principle of the Body-Mind connection (Chan, Ying Ho & Chow, 2002), a bottom-up approach (Van der Kolk, 2014) is draw upon, where internal stress can be alleviated through supporting optimal physical functioning. The first component of this Research Paper looks at how Drama Therapy Masters students at the University of the Witwatersrand were impacted by the shift to online learning. The impact of this shift brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic was looked at both mentally and physically, using questionnaires. The findings showed a predominantly negative relationship at work both physically and mentally. The second component of this Research Paper used a practice as research approach. The researcher started by drawing on previous creative research she carried out on herself, where somatic approaches and elements of Drama Therapy was personally used for self-regulation during online learning. Drawing on this past creative research and findings, the possibility of providing a somatic based form of mental health support for South African University students was discussed. The Research Paper advocates for the use of somatic approaches as a way to address healthy forms of emotional regulation while learning online. This can be used as a way to provide support internally and mentally by creating habitual patterns that result in optimal physical engagement with online learning through a bottom-up approach (Van de Kolk, 2014) where shifts in the body create shifts in the mind.

Key Words

Somatic approaches; self-regulation; South African Universities; Wits University; Masters students; online learning; COVID-19; Laban Movement Analysis; Bartenieff Fundamentals; Embodiment; Mindfulness; Drama Therapy.