

Bridging the Gap

Designing a drama therapy intervention for refugee learners transitioning between grade six and seven.

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Abstract

This research centred around the question of what drama therapy techniques are appropriate in aiding refugee young people in their transition to grade 7 government schools from a dedicated refugee school in Johannesburg. Initial exploratory interviews were conducted with professionals in the field and along with relevant literature, four areas of focus were found through a grounded theory analysis to be important when working with refugee young people: Program Realities versus Changing Needs, Education, Loss versus Meaning Making, and Story versus Silence. The overarching theme of the research was thus identified as Creating Narrative from Chaos. A further question arising from the analysis was how to incorporate story when working with refugee young people in a way that will ensure that their voices are heard and valued above that of the therapist or researcher. A short pilot intervention was then carried out with ten grade 6 learners from Three2Six School over a period of eight weeks. The sessions involved the use of the 6 Part Story Method as an assessment tool, as well as incorporating the use of story and role. Three areas of interest arose from the pilot study, which was also subjected to a grounded theory analysis: Me within the World, The Role of Drama Therapy, and The Unknown. Although further research is needed which conducts a more in-depth and long-term efficacy-based intervention, the drama therapy techniques of story and role were found to be useful tools in therapeutic work with refugee young people in this context.