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Actionable empathy: how does embodiment of narrative through roleplay increase Johannesburg primary school teachers' capacity to perceive and intervene in bullying situations?

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Actionable Empathy:

How does embodiment of narrative through roleplay increase Johannesburg primary school teachers' capacity to perceive and intervene in Bullying situations?

Abstract

Bullying is a serious problem in many South African schools, and the first place of intervention is usually the teachers. This research examined workshops with a group of thirty Johannesburg primary school teachers from one school. The workshops explored possibilities to understand and intervene in Bullying situations through the use of Applied Drama techniques of narrative through roleplay. Bullying is detrimental to everyone involved and South Africa has very little training for teachers in Bullying. Narrative offers the means of examining and understanding others' lives, and through roleplay these ideas of others can be embodied and experienced more actively. In using roleplay to rehearse intervention strategies these workshops aimed to increase empathy and activate teachers. During the workshops some overarching themes began to emerge, namely power, gender and self-efficacy. The methodology of Applied Drama was also unpacked in relation to the effectiveness of the workshops. Roleplaying created empathy and prompted possibilities for action. The facilitator and teachers were in constant dialogue regarding their ability to intervene effectively and this created a reflective and active environment for growth.

Key Words: bullying, empathy, roleplay, narrative, Applied Drama, Applied Theatre, teacher training, primary school, South Africa, Action Research, qualitative, workshop,