

CO-CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE IN A PSYCHOLOGY COURSE FOR
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:
A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

by

ILZÉ GROBLER

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In the Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology
University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Professor G.J. van Schalkwyk

Co-supervisor: Dr. C. Wagner

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*For Herman and Inge,
who share my life and fill it with their light.
It is my blessing to share in theirs.*



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TO HIM BE ALL THE GLORY

Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people (Colossians 3:23)

ABSTRACT

The ever-changing demands of working life pose considerable challenges to higher education. The literature indicates that traditional forms of university instruction positioned a deficit model of teaching and learning, which is embedded in a logical positivist paradigm, as authoritative in the production of 'experts' who possess legitimate knowledge. However, in professional practice, health practitioners often deal with ill-defined problems. If health practitioners are to be prepared properly for their future careers, the development of reflective thinking should be an integral component of professional education courses. The aim of this study was to explore the public narratives on existing teaching and learning practices in higher education, orthotics/prosthetics and psychology, and to examine the authority of these narratives in the unfolding stories of students and the facilitator in a pilot applied psychology course designed for orthotist/prosthetist professionals. There is a paucity of psychological research in orthotic/prosthetic practice and further research in this domain is needed, particularly from a qualitative approach. A story map was used to integrate the methodology of personal experience methods and narrative analysis into one model that represents the voice of public and private narratives in a specific temporality of past, present and future. The analysis of public and private texts revealed the narrative themes of teaching and learning, co-constructing knowledge, reflection-on-practice, disability, community of concern and agency. A critical psychology and social constructionist approach is proposed to facilitate reflective clinical practice in a psychology module for orthotics and prosthetics. In a collaborative learning community, the lived experiences, knowledge, skills, and desires that invited orthotist/prosthetists into this helping field are honoured. In addition, they are encouraged to reflect on the value of professional interventions by using pragmatic criteria of whether an approach fits or is useful for a client, rather than relying on some abstract notion of 'truth'.

Key terms

Higher education, critical psychology, orthotics/prosthetics, health practitioners, story map, personal experience methods, narrative analysis, social constructionism, reflection-on-practice, collaborative learning community, co-constructing knowledge, agency

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