

Occupational Therapy and the and the training of Community Health Workers

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Make today matter



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Overview

- Primary Health Care Re-engineering
- Community Health Workers
- Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC)
- The Capability Approach
- Occupational Therapy

Primary Health Care Re-engineering

- Primary Health Care (PHC) re-engineering in South Africa
 - National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 Vision
- PHC teams to improve people's health and well-being
 - Goal 7: Primary healthcare teams provide care to families and communities
 - ***“Each household must have access to a well-trained community health worker”***
- PHC teams = Ward-based outreach teams (WBOTs)
- Around 10 community health workers (CHWs) under leadership of professional nurse

Community Oriented Primary Care

- Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) is
 - primary care
 - where health- and other professionals
 - work with people and organisations
 - in defined communities
 - to identify and respond to health and health-related needs
 - in order to improve health

Marcus TS, 2013

Community Health Workers

- CHWs deliver integrated primary care in defined areas
- Roles include:
 - household registration
 - individual health status assessments
 - health promotion and education
 - disease prevention and management in households
 - psycho-social support
 - referral
- various training programmes exist



Capability Approach

Amartya Sen

- human beings are defined by **'functionings'**
- made up of **'beings'** and **'doings'** i.e. what you are and what you do
- functionings are what people value and have reason to value e.g. being nourished, literate and employed
- **'capabilities'** are the opportunities to achieve and enjoy those beings and doings
- using the opportunities that exist for being and doing, or the ability to pursue and realise goals that are valued, is **'agency'**
- the interplay of functionings, capabilities and agency determines **wellbeing**
- when this interplay is optimal, there is **freedom**

Robeyns I, 2016

Deneulin S, Shahani L, 2009



Occupational Therapy

- Occupational Therapy (OT) aims to achieve health, well-being and participation in life through engagement in occupation.
- Doing' or 'not doing' are powerful determinants of wellbeing or disease. *Wilcock A, 1999*
- The training of CHWs should be concerned with building human capabilities
 - through **investment in people**, and
- using those human capabilities optimally
 - through an **enabling framework** for growth and employment
- Occupational therapists (OTs) can thus contribute meaningfully to training CHWs.



CHW education

- Freire's concept of **critical consciousness** is key to guide those who are involved in CHW training/education.
 - *who* is teaching,
 - *who* is *being taught*, and
 - *how* they are being taught matter as much as
 - *what* is being taught
- It is through engagement in dialogue that critical thinking and hope can emerge

Walker M, 2009

Conclusion

- OT philosophy, theory and approaches are very relevant within community-oriented primary care
- OTs can and should contribute **significantly**
- Especially in the context of poverty and limited resources

- Using the capability approach in educating CHWs is liberating and helps us to value **who they are, what they do**, and what they and the community members they work with **can become**.



Thank You

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