

TRAINING REFLECTIONS - AN ECOSYSTEMIC EXPLORATION

by

MAVIS DLAMINI

submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: MR L J BALOYI



0001922331

NOVEMBER 2005

(iii)

ABSTRACT

This study is qualitative in nature. It reflects on the rich and varied experiences I encountered during training to be a psychotherapist. The content and process information around training is explored. My personal biases and prejudices towards training are made explicit. The experiences reflected upon are contextualized within the Unisa academic and the hospital clinical internship training contexts. The two contexts of training are contrasted accordingly showing their epistemological stance in their contribution to training of trainee therapists. The primary data in this research is the trainee researcher who is also the only participant subject in the study. The rest of the data is drawn from the experiences of the subject in interaction with others in different systems and subsystems. Through the creative synthesis step in the heuristic research approach the inferred theme is integrated in the analysis. Finally the research shows the limitations and implications involved.

KEY TERMS:

Training; psychotherapy; trainee; clinical setting; internship; psychotherapist; approach to theory; training context; exploration; self

(iv)

Student number:775-931-2

I declare that this dissertation, TRAINING REFLECTIONS : AN ECOSYSTEMIC EXPLORATION is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE

(Miss M Dlamini)

.....

DATE

(i)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Abba Father thank you for making me survive the ordeal of training to be a psychotherapist. Give me future courage to be with the others (clients) when they face their distress in life.
- My parents Mbuti and Celestina, my sister Pretty and niece Nolwazi, without your support, encouragement and your great expectations of me, this dream would not have been realized.
- Sabelo my beloved son, you believed and stood by me. At times I felt our roles were reversed. You are too young, yet your mindset and courage is difficult to ignore.
- Fatima, purposely God made us to journey together. I appreciate your immeasurable support, care and friendship. Thank you for being there for me in and outside training.
- Michael Hlatshwayo my friend for life in my desperate times of need you were there for me. Thank you very much for being my postmaster

(ii)

- We survive together, we die together. Lesiba our relationship completed the loop. In supervision my eyes became clearer as we explored the dynamics involved in psychotherapy training.
- My late kid brother and sister, Hudson and Angelinah. As I write this dissertation tears are drooling over my cheeks, but thank you for giving me the strength to conceal the pain from losing both of you in 2005 and rise with a deep sigh!
- My sincerest gratitude goes to Stan and the Agape context for their contribution to my life in the journey of training. My woundedness continues to find holding spaces through connections I form with others.
- The Unisa psychology department staff (Maryna, Mathlodi, Maria and Gladys), all trainers we worked well together, without your support, completing my studies would not be possible. Thank you very much.
- Mawewe, thank you for believing in me since I was a child. I took a different healing training ritual from yours, my understanding was enriched and now I have completed it.

(v)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION.....	1*
	1.1 Motivation of the study.....	1
	1.2 Aim of the study.....	2
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE OVERVIEW.....	5
	2.1 Introduction.....	5
	2.2 Describing training.....	6
	2.3 Objectivism.....	11
	2.3.1 Psychoanalysis an overview.....	15
	2.4 General systems theory.....	20
	2.4.1 A cybernetic system.....	21
	2.4.2 Holism.....	22
	2.4.3 Circularity.....	22
	2.4.4 Feedback structures.....	22
	2.4.5 Mutuality of systems.....	24
	2.5 An ecosystemic epistemology.....	26
	2.5.1 The observer-observing system.....	27
	2.5.2 The evolutionary system.....	29
	2.5.3 The autonomy of systems.....	31
	2.5.4 Language and meanings in systems.....	33
	2.6 Social constructionism.....	35
	2.7 Integrating ecosystemic epistemology and social constructionism.....	38
CHAPTER 3	CONTEXTUALIZING TRAINING.....	40
	3 Introduction.....	40
	3.1 The hospital clinical internship context.....	40
	3.2 The academic theoretical context.....	43
CHAPTER 4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	48
	4.1 Introduction.....	48
	4.2 Qualitative research method.....	49
	4.2.1 Aims of qualitative research.....	49

4.2.2 Rationale for choosing qualitative research.....	49
4.2.3 The sample in the qualitative research study.....	51
4.2.4 Contrasting qualitative research with quantitative research.....	51
4.2.5 Characteristics of qualitative research.....	52
4.3 Heuristic research.....	53
4.3.1 Definition of Heuristic research.....	53
4.3.2 Aim of Heuristic research.....	53
4.3.3 Rationale for choosing Heuristic research.....	53
4.3.4 Contrasting Heuristic research and the positivist epistemology.....	54
4.3.5 Characteristics of Heuristic research.....	54
4.3.6 Concepts and processes in Heuristic research.....	54
4.4 Research design.....	57
4.5 Data gathering.....	58
4.6 Method of data analysis.....	60
4.7 Validity in ecosystems epistemology.....	60
4.8 Validity in Heuristic research.....	61
4.9 Limitations of qualitative research.....	62
4.10 Ecosystems and qualitative research integrated.....	62
CHAPTER 5 (a) RESEARCH DATA.....	64
5.1 Introduction.....	64
5.2 THE HOSPITAL CLINICAL INTERNSHIP CONTEXT (HCIC).....	66
5.2.1 The voice of “expertness”.....	67
5.2.2 The voice in the “tower of terror”.....	70
5.2.3 The voice of “invented reality”.....	74
5.2.4 The voice of “translation”.....	76
5.2.5 The voice of “confirmation”.....	79
5.2.6 The voice of “validation”.....	82
5.2.7 The voice of “ reflection”.....	84
CHAPTER 5 (b).....	87
5.3 THE UNISA ACADEMIC CONTEXT.....	87
5.3.1The first year of training.....	88
5.3.1.1 “Group” - my path into the profession.....	89

5.3.1.2 The Agape context.....	93
5.3.2 The second year of Masters training.....	99
5.3.2.1 "Back to the child"- The one way mirror.....	100
CHAPTER 6 ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	104
6.1 Introduction.....	104
6.2 Reflection and discussion.....	105
6.2.1 Exploring the hospital clinical internship context (HCIC).....	105
6.2.2 Exploring the Unisa academic context.....	115
6.3 Integrative analysis.....	118
CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	121
7.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TRAINEE RESEARCHER.....	121
7.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	123
7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TRAINERS AND FUTURE TRAINING CONTEXTS.....	124
7.4 FINAL REMARKS.....	124
REFERENCES.....	126