

Oficina das Letras: Practical Approach to Writing in a Psychiatric Hospital

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The therapeutic workshops are proposals for social insertion in mental health services, providing a space for coexistence of the subjects. Literacy workshops help the inopportune users to stay in school, through extended hospitalizations, to practice writing and reading as a resource for the reorganization of reality and the reconstruction of autonomy. This article reports on the process of implementation of the *Oficina das Letras*, held in a psychiatric hospital, and its contribution to the therapeutic process of the participants. As a result, it was possible to observe that the implementation of the workshop contributed to the recovery of the subjectivity of inpatients from the reinforcement to the use of writing and reading, in which, it sought to promote part of the reconstruction of the identity and the autonomy of the users, collaborating with the exercise of citizenship.

Keywords: therapeutics, mental health, psychiatric, rehabilitation

Introduction

It is not enough to learn to read and write; it takes more than that to go beyond functional literacy. The person's entrance into the world of writing is through learning the full complexity of the act of reading and writing (Soares, 2003). It is necessary to practice reading and writing so that the subject becomes literate (Colaço, 2012).

The practice of reading and writing is so rooted in modern society that it is unfeasible not to interweave it in the behaviors and activities of daily life, a fact that causes change in the social place of the subject, in his way of living in the community and the insertion in the cultural context (Tfouni & Sidinger, 1997; Soares, 2003).

Writing is intended to spread ideas, and associated with reading, stimulates motor and cognitive functions—memory, attention, concentration, motivation (Tfouni, Pereira, Assiolini, Sarti, & Adorni, 2008). From meaningful words, writing has served as a function of constructing, uniting past to the present, reconstructing the history and subjectivity of the subjects (Tfouni & Sidinger, 1997). The subjects are constantly exposed to different situations of reading and writing in the interaction of the contexts in which they coexist—labels, books, advertisements, transport itinerary.

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Literacy refers to the use of language, discourse, and ways of organizing reality. The writing and the speech complement each other, are coadjutant in the complex staging of events in the institutions, constituting practices in the family, in the church, in the work, and in the society (Colaço, 2012).

Several individuals in society are excluded from literate practices, even if they know how to read and write, because they do not share knowledge for the improvement of these experiences, often due to adverse socioeconomic, educational or psychic conditions (Tfouni, et al., 2008). In these conditions, the illiterate, with learning difficulties and people with few conditions of accessibility to the educational means are excluded. Writing reorients the social structure, legitimizing the knowledge valued by schooling as a mechanism of power and ascension (Kenski, 2007).

The technology of writing interacts with thought, freeing it from the obligation of permanent memorization. It becomes a tool for the expansion of memory and communication, enabling man to expose his ideas, leaving them free to expand their capacity for reflection and apprehension of reality (Kenski, 2007).

Paulo Freire (1987) talks about how the subject learns to write his life, being the author and witness of its history, that is, biographing, existing and defending the idea of education as a liberating practice, which strengthens the breadth human, a very close context of the conceptualization of literacy.

According to Soares (2003), the concept of literacy starts from the learning of alphabet-orthographic writing, with the domain of human language, in which the symbols of writing are linguistic signifiers. And for a new dimension of entry into the world of writing, the concept of literacy designates the set of skills and knowledge involved in the use of reading and writing necessary for an active and competent participation in society.

Literacy allows the subjects to occupy new discursive places, or already erased from memory, through the (re)introduction of writing practices, reestablishing cognitive and subjective use of the word (Tfouni, et al., 2008). In this way, recognizing itself as belonging to the environment and being able to deal with discourses, reflections, and sharing, the subject perceives himself inserted in professional, social, and affective fields that excluded from the society, are at the margins of community dynamics.

Contextualizing the reflection brought by the dialogues of Kenski (2007) and Tfouni, Pereira, Assiolini, Sarti, and Adorni (2008), the reading and writing in their depths, seek to allow the subject access to various means of interaction in society, performing basic life activities and also collaborating in health demands, through formation of links, resocialization, rescue of autonomy.

According to Ministério da Saúde (2004), therapeutic workshops are activities carried out in groups and with the presence of professionals, with a view to greater social and family integration. There are several possibilities of workshops, of types: expressive—body artistic, musical activities; income generating workshops—culinary, sewing, carpentry, handicrafts in general and literacy workshops.

Therapeutic workshops are proposals for social reinsertion in mental health spaces—psychiatric hospitals, Psychosocial Attention Centers (CAPS), and other services, creating and reinventing a space of coexistence of the subjects, rebuilding the right to create, to express opinions and to relate. These enable the patient to establish ties of self-care and affectivity with the others. In the field of mental health, these therapeutic devices are seen as instruments of enrichment of the being, place of valorizing artistic expressions, discovering and expanding skills (Mendonça, 2005).

In the traditional psychiatric model, based on psychiatric hospitalization, the work and artistic activities are part of the set of strategies and institutional mechanisms of control, discipline, and vigilance, being a

habitual practice to offer therapeutic activities to the patients. The argument used for such activities is the therapeutic and rehabilitative potential that these provide to service users, with disturbed mind, delusions and hallucinations and attention re-enhancer effects (Amarante, 2012).

These facts, of valuing forms of expression and expanding and improving abilities, become perceptible through direct contact with the patient, both in the common spaces of living in the wings of hospitalization, and in the environments reserved for the realization of the workshops. With the ideals of resocialization, in addition to regaining patients' knowledge and skills, the workshops bring them back to culture, language, and social and political ways (Mendonça, 2005).

According to Ministério da Saúde (2004), literacy workshops help inopportune users to stay in school to practice writing and reading as a resource for rebuilding the exercise of citizenship, so the development of the Literature Workshop, based on the exposed concept of literacy, as a strategy for therapeutic activity offered to patients permeating the expressivity opportunized by this resource, is described in this paper, reporting the process of implementation of the writing and reading practices workshop for adults in a psychiatric hospital in the Federal District, and their contribution to the therapeutic process of the patients.

Methodology

Retrospective descriptive observational study reports the process of implementation of the Letter Workshop as a form of therapeutic workshop for users of the mental health service of the São Vicente de Paulo Hospital (HSVP) of the Federal District Health Department.

São Vicente de Paulo Hospital was created in 1976 as the first public psychiatric care facility in the Federal District, formerly known as the Hospital for Psychiatric Care (Santiago, 2009). The service assists mentally ill patients, with approximately 100 new hospitalizations per month, with hospitalized subjects rotating in a short period of time.

Among the forms of care for the mentally ill patient, therapeutic workshops are held, in which the professionals propose different types of activities, among them: self-care workshop, with corporal hygiene practices; artistic workshop, in which manual skills are developed; group psychotherapies; external visits and, among others, the Letter Workshop, proposing a practice of reading and writing, spontaneous adherence of the subjects hospitalized in the hospital.

The work was carried out from a descriptive approach with the report of the implementation of the Letter Workshop. The demand for the creation of a workshop that works on the reading and writing of patients was based on a local observation of patients with a deficiency in the ability to perform simple activities such as: signing the proper name and writing sentences with complete sentences, since without stimulation, many lost the sensitivity to reading and writing, in their everyday use.

This work presents the schedule of implementation of the workshop, following the steps: bibliographical survey; theoretical construction of the model of the literacy workshop; description of proposed activities; presentation of the material resources used for this purpose, therapeutic contributions to the patients offered by the workshop and demands for adaptation in the face of adversity of implementation.

The research is related to the work to complete the Multiprofessional Residency Program in Adult Mental Health, approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Foundation for Teaching and Research in Health Sciences (FEPECS).

Development

The activities carried out with the patients resumed writing as a practice of culture and communication, modifying the vision of literacy as a school practice—grammatical rules—for literacy, which refers to the historical aspects of learning writing, including communication actions in society (Tfouni & Sidinger, 1997).

The group assembled for the workshop was a spontaneous decision of each patient, in which the interns were included in the three sectors of the HSVP (emergency room, day care, and emergency room) as well as professionals (nurses, psychologists, social workers, trainees).

On average, the activity was performed with 6 to 15 patients, with 1 hour to 1h30m duration. Knowing the group, it was possible to mobilize the contents for practices that were relevant to be presented to those involved in the workshop, with the desire to re-approximate them to the literate society. Given that the participants called themselves literate, the collaborative activity reinforced that everyone has something to contribute and everyone has something to learn (Colaço, 2012).

Tfouni, Pereira, Assiolini, Sarti, and Adorni (2008) point out that the workshop is a therapeutic resource where one can open space so that the participants could write part of their own history with memories and shares. During the activities, the patients shared stories, beliefs, desires, and experiences before and during hospitalization. At these moments, it was possible to perceive the experience of schooling, health care opportunities, and interpersonal relationships.

Reinserting the patient in the literate society implies an exposition of the writing, something that the time of internment has restricted them (Tfouni & Sidinger, 1997). Many of the patients go through months of hospitalization, a fact that causes a change in the routines of work, study, leisure, and social ties, and at the time of the workshop, it was possible to reintroduce communication and writing practices.

Participants were constantly encouraged to produce and interact in groups, as these are the subjects of their own learning, using writing and reading as instruments of the manifestation of their intentions, desires, projects, and histories (Tfouni & Sidinger, 1997).

After readings and retrieval of literacy activities, based on scientific publications, a schedule of activities and a script for the realization of the Letter Workshop were developed. This script made it possible to establish the direction, referring to the idealized practical activity and instrumentalisation of material resources to the other components of the group—among the professionals—who sometimes assisted in the accomplishment of this.

The script also allowed a preview of what was expected during the activity. Even with the attempt to maintain a controlled and scripted environment for the workshops, some episodes deviated from the activity of the proposed course, putting us to the test of reorganizing the activity halfway through. Considering also the unpredictability of driving that would lead to the conclusion of the workshop of the day, due to the subjectivity, peculiarity and individuality of those involved.

At the beginning of the planning and construction of the workshop proposal, it was made up of the patients' work, letters of the alphabet on 7 x 5 cm cardboard paper, which allowed the construction of words and short sentences in various activities, as well as providing a moment of manual construction and use of individual patient skills, interacting with other professionals and environments.

The place chosen for the workshop was the emergency room, a day in which emergency patients have the possibility to spend the daytime (8 am to 6 pm) performing therapeutic and recreational activities, as well as

encouraging autonomy and self-care in a less reclusive and more welcoming environment, even within the grids of a psychiatric hospital (Garcia, 2015). In this environment, constituted by free access rooms, tables, and chairs that had several participants, we sent the interested parties to participate in the workshop, leading them from other sectors, accompanied by professionals involved in the activities and with the description of the activities carried out.

1st Meeting: In the first edition, it made explicit to the participants of the Letter Workshop, starting from a collective base of patients, performing different reading attempts, integrating knowledge, and reinforcing the moment of interaction between them. The choice of a bar code file color skin and colored pencils, with an orientation of the first word the shapes, sizes, and colors, and in sequence, spell the full name, mirrored, backwards, scrambled letters.

This activity enabled, at first, the writing of the participant's name, reinforcing the construction of the words, cognitive retaking of previous knowledge in relation to the domain of the alphabet, knowledge of the letters and memory of the written construction of the name itself. It was possible to notice that some patients did not even remember the correct spelling of the letters of the own name, due to the distance of the practices of writing. Others, however, spoke mainly about the meaning of the name, the importance and the recognition of this for the subject and various forms of spelling as suggested in the therapeutics.

For Martins (1991), when it comes to name, a very peculiar word, it is not only a simple and Cartesian brand, but a sign, which gives rise to a representation, a level of complexity greater than a pure sign, overflowing the reference of the subject, and constituting the self.

2nd Meeting: In the activity described, a white A4 sheet with a letter of the alphabet was distributed to the participants, so that they could develop the writing of all the words they knew starting with the letter. It was important to observe the concentration of each participant so that he could contemplate the proposed objective, also succeeding in mutual help among those involved, in order to add more words that refer to the letter described.

According to Riess (2010), the group presents a degree of interdependence in which they are linked together and articulated by a mutuality of representations and support to a task that seeks a purpose, it is characterized, explicitly, by a learning. It is noteworthy that the resumption of knowledge and group sharing was fundamental to this activity.

3rd Meeting: In this moment of the Letter Workshop, the materials used for the activity were the alphabetical plaques, with the proposal that, from the letters in combination, they formed words that answered the questioning raised by the facilitator, a game known as *adedonha*.

The first question asked was "*How are you feeling today?*" And from this trigger, participants constructed signifiers that enabled a more personal and therapeutic approach, bringing a moment of sharing about the feelings and emotions experienced in that health care space. At this moment of interaction, it was possible to perceive the strengthening of links and care among patients, important also for the recovery and promotion of the health of those involved. Terms such as "joy", "luck", "happy" were perceived as patients' response.

The other questions sought to offer greater opportunities for exchange and share of information between each of the members of the group, in which they present their own desires, tastes, and desires, different from the moments of involuntary hospitalization, in which the autonomy capacity of the subject is impaired, making or misfitting the reality of daily life (Barros & Serafim, 2009).

Among the questions were: preferred food, most important person, favorite book, novel that recalled, profession and dream. The whole proposal was focused on the construction of the words and their meaning to each one, influencing the others in the story telling of important life stories of the patients and facilitators, besides the positive reinforcement to the resumption of the cognitive. One of the participants, referring to the “important person” answer, built the name of a nurse in the service, in which he explained the affectionate form of care provided to him.

4th Meeting: We carry out a collaborative activity with an affective background. After three weeks of meetings, the slightly more cohesive group already showed a greater sense of belonging and bond, which allowed to carry out a task with a higher level of solicitude. It was offered to the actors in the workshop that they wrote, A4 white sheet with pen and colored pencil, a word that showed a personal representation to the other people of the group. And in referring to that word, it was elucidated of the meaning that it sent.

In moments of freedom of creation, patients have developed means of constructing signifiers to their own feelings and representations, having a diversity of samples of artistic productions, being offered by the autonomy of the subject. Some of the representative and valiant words to the participants were “100% love”, “autonomy”, “knowledge”, “apology”.

Paulo Freire (1987) says that it is not necessary to imprison the mechanisms of vocabulary composition, but to seek new words, not to collect them in memory, but to say and write the world, thought and history. The subject is assuming the conscience of the witness of a story that is known author, feeling reflexively more responsible for this story (Freire, 1987).

5th Meeting: The suggestion for the activity was based on the use of alphabet plates, with the construction of words that refer to the sharing of feelings, films and favorite books, a novel that recalled, type *adedonha*, recalling possibilities of self-knowledge, knowledge among peers and free space for sharing and souvenirs. For Martins (1991), human beings are symbolic, because they speak and use words to communicate, words that have meaning in all cultures, thus playing a role of communication between individuals.

6th Meeting: In the schedule of the sixth meeting, a white A4 sheet was delivered to each participant with the following writings: my name is, I was born, I like, I am. In this way, it was possible to resume the writing and the particularity of each subject, with subjectivity, life stories, and reinforcement of socialization. In this proposal, it was possible to know the desires and wishes of the participants, in which there were several constructions, some complete and longer, others objective and direct, also enabling speech stimulation and sharing of writings.

Paulo Freire, in his method of adult education, reinforces that raising the vocabulary universe of each student is fundamental to the process of exercising writing and reading, leading him to raise awareness of teaching with the understanding of the words that surround him in his daily life (Galvêas, 2000).

7th Meeting: In the seventh meeting of the activity, a word-reader was created on A4 sheet and handwriting, with terms common to the routine of hospitalized patients, so that the use of these words would provide a moment of discussion of their signifiers. The words described in the production were: pain, cure, family, love, destiny, remedy, health, illness, profession, desire, dream, suffering, faith.

These terms were commonly referred to the participants in the Letter Workshop, and the choice of each term stemmed from the intentionality of externalizing feelings, promoting sharing and enriching contact with terms widely used in the routine of these patients.

In addition, Pitta (Valladares, Lappann-botti, Mello, Kantorski, & Scatena, 2003) considers that part of the process of psychosocial rehabilitation is to facilitate the user to interact through their limitations, tending to restructure the autonomy of this front to their functions in the community. The proposal to remit the inclusion of usual terms to the inmates' reality and in psychic suffering sought to practice the reconstruction of the subjectivity of individuals in a common context of life, debating terms in which all involved would understand, collaborating with their perception and experience.

8th Meeting: With the closing moment of the *Oficina das Letras*, the group was suggested to use the alphabetical plates, so that at the first moment the name of each participant was written. After this separation of letters, we reinforced the construction of other words with the same letters of formation of each patient's name, for example: BARBARA, ARARA, BAR, BARRA.

Martins (1991) argues that the formations of several words assume that the name itself is the essence of an identifying mark; serving to designate particular things, there is no sense in translating them, otherwise it will denature its own essence.

The implementation of the workshop contributed to the recovery of the subjectivity of hospitalized patients from the use of writing, not taking into account the level of schooling of the participants, but referring to the memory and life history of each one, similar to the one described by Tfouni, in the year 2008, with psychiatric patients in a hospital in Ribeirão Preto—São Paulo/Brazil.

Conclusion

The experience of the implementation of the *Oficina das Letras* during a period of passage through the scenario of the Hospital São Vicente de Paulo reinforced the intervention process in the coexistence and resocialization of the subjects, both user and service team, since the autonomy of construction and routing of the activity and its developments—adjustments to the itinerary, dissemination among patients, positive reinforcement of the peers—contributed to the transformation of the reality of all those involved.

In the workshops, we note that the literacy experience sought to promote part of the reconstruction of identity, the autonomy of users and, collaborate with the exercise of citizenship—in access to health and education—with opportunities for questioning, discussion, and sharing, at the outset of ignorance of their health-disease processes.

Aimed at providing free expression through writing, the reconstitution of the individuality within the stigma of mental health, even inserted in a psychiatric hospitalization service, showed through the activities, the rupture with the isolation of the social practices of reading and writing, to the literate, in which they had already been approached at other times when out of hospital.

The free process of construction and development of the Letter Workshop reinforces the possibility of reproduction in the various health services, which require reading and writing activities with an educational purpose to the inopportune patients of such access, simplifying the propagation of the material resources used.

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