

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR WELLNESS THROUGH COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY January 2008 Bangalore, India.

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The International Conference, “Building Bridges for Wellness through Counselling and Psychotherapy” was held at the Garden City Bangalore, India in the second week of January 2008. This conference was a collaborative initiative of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education–University of Toronto, Bangalore University-India and Sampurna Montfort College–Bangalore India. The conference aimed at sharing research and practice in counseling and psychotherapy including traditional healing practices within a context of multiculturalism and diversity. The preference was to integrate the religious, spiritual and transpersonal approaches in theory and practice for the counselors and psychotherapists worldwide.

The renowned specialists in the field attended the Three-day conference from Canada, Thailand, United States, United Kingdom, Nigeria and Australia. Delegates from Iran, Jordon, Netherlands, other cities of India and local universities of Bangalore attended the conference. Pakistan was represented by Dr. Lina Shuja a Psychotherapist of PAF – Karachi Institute of Economics and Technology presented the paper.

The Conference was organized within the vicinity of Sampurna Montfort College (SMC), Bangalore India, the adornment and welcome was ideally peaceful and comforting. The organizers consisted of faculty and the students from the SMC who need to be commended to handle the whole event meticulously. A web page was designed in the portal of SMC in March 2007 to create awareness of the conference and papers were invited. All abstracts, papers, presentations and workshops were loaded directly on to the web page and instructions and constant liaison was maintained with the presenters. Five different Committees were formed to oversee the planning, finance, paper review and the secretariat. The abstracts were reviewed by a committee of editorial board and finally selected. A total of 115 participants attended this conference.

The quality of papers and researchers were of the highest standards and provided an excellent platform to develop networking and affiliations amongst the

members of academia from different countries. The most encouraging factor was the student's participation and presentations of their researches from the Indian Universities and Educational Institutions.

Dr. Niva Piran, the Associate Chair at the Department of Adult Education and Counseling Psychology at the University of Toronto–Canada presented a paper on “Social Critical Theory, Embodiment and Counseling” drew attention to the need of social critical theory which has accorded the body with a central role both in the reproduction and in the transformation of culture. Examining modern era and Western Psychotherapy from this critical perspective, she emphasized that particular political and social contexts have been more amenable to critical knowledge derived from the field of counseling. Dr. Mohan K. Issac, the Associate Chair of Population Mental Health at the University of Western Australia presented a paper on “Interventions for persons affected by conflict, violence and terrorism” arguing that methods of interventions developed in the West are not suitable in developing countries. He emphasized the need for developing pilot testing and implementing alternatives; also culturally appropriate interventions were highlighted. Dr. Sidhyartha Mukherjee, Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine, Pramukhswami Medical College, Karamsadi-Gujarat- India, presented a paper on “The Role of Community Based Lay Counsellors in Amelioration and Therapy of Common Mental Disorders - An Experience in Gujarat”. He had designed a ‘Lay Counsellors’ based program to enhance the access and coverage of mental health services to the community through Lay Counsellors in the objective to empower communities to better cope with stress and anxiety, they also received training to promote positive mental health at the household level. Dr. Richard Noll, a Clinical Psychologist at De Sales University Pennsylvania, USA presented the findings of recent publications by sociologists, psychiatrists and historians of psychology that the definition of Major Depressive Disorder has been fundamentally flawed for the past 27 years. The implications of this grand error for clinical practice and research in biological psychiatry were explored.

Other interesting themes presented were Empowering the ‘Dalit’ Youth: Challenges and Dilemmas in a Counselling Setting; Developmental Counselling - A bridge to Resilience; Acculturation Strategies and its Effect on Depressive Symptoms in the Brazilian Immigrant Community in the GTA; Growth Process in Harmony Restoration Therapy; Needs and Techniques in Counselling Adolescent Children of Alcoholics; Psychological Effects of Rural Versus Urban Environment on Adolescent's Behavior Following Pubertal Changes; Stress, Coping Strategies, Life Satisfactions and Adaptation; From Pain to Relief – Stories from Recipients of Kundalini Yoga; An Explorative Study of Therapeutic and Educational Impact of Theatre Techniques on Hospital Administration Students; Mindfulness – A Tool for Self-Awareness; Dialogue and Mediation a Healing Processes for Relationships; New Image of Man: A Study in Humanistic

Psychology; The Role of Community Based Lay Counsellors in Amelioration and Therapy of Common Mental Disorders - An Experience in Gujarat; Attitudinize Psychotherapy (A new psychotherapy of the 20th century – By Dr. Lina Shuja); Yogic Relaxation Technique as a Complementary Counselling Intervention; Effectiveness of Holistic Intervention in Cases of Peptic Ulcers; Psychotherapy and Counselling in the Military Environment: Issues and Future Challenges; Impact of Group-Counselling on Enhancing the Psycho-Social Competence of Women College Students; Management of Occupational Stress and Enhancement of Job Satisfaction among Textile Employees Using Positive Therapy; Management of Stress in Adolescents Through Positive Therapy; Building Bridges through School Counselling; Stigma and Mental Health; Non Pharmacological Healing Methods and Dreams a Tool to Integrate Personality Through Counselling.

Some Case Studies were also presented related to experiments carried out by Universities and other research Institutions. Some of the successful studies disclosed were; Building and Emotional Well Being - A Case Illustration of Children; Major Psychological Concerns of Fresh MBA Students - A Case Study from a Leading Business School in India; Encounters at the boundary: A psychotherapist's journey of learning and Counselling Children And Adolescent Students in Gulf.

The effectiveness of the counselling and Psychotherapy was apparent in the Workshop Sessions. Few to name the most appreciated by the audience were; The Transpersonal Therapist; Yogi Relaxation Techniques as a Complementary Counselling Intervention; Our Inner Powers – Awareness and Management by the Techniques of Sahaja Yoga; Wellness Through Positive Therapy and The Psychosynthesis Approach to Unconditional Love and Forgiveness.