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Community engagement scholarship within the context of nursing education

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When community engagement becomes embedded within nursing education it enables academics to partner with communities in ways that produce credible scholarship. Community-engaged scholarship holds promise for advancing both the good of communities and enabling teaching, learning and research within a nursing context. This holistic view of scholarship must be seen as a core imperative of contemporary higher education, vital not only to its civic mission, but to co-create and transmit new knowledge with communities for their good. Universities rest within an eco-system of knowledge, in which “academic knowledge interacts with and is shaped by community-based knowledge”. This alludes to the fact that knowledge is not restricted to privileged academic discourse, but is enriched through interaction with communities. This paper will highlight some of the academic practices and structures that need to be created within nursing education, to enable engagement with communities. It illuminates service learning within the curriculum as an important dimension and the need for community based research, which can only be increased through a transformation of current educational practices that support this type of engagement. Most importantly this paper will highlight how health educators and students learn within rural contexts in South Africa and how this type of engagement advances knowledge production through community based research.

Biography

Raisuyah Bhagwan is an Associate Professor in the Child and Youth Care Program, at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa. She started her career as a social worker and was deeply involved in therapeutic and developmental work with vulnerable children and youth in rural communities. She joined academe in an effort to strengthen the professional preparedness of child and youth care practitioners in South Africa. Her research interests focused on spirituality, indigenous healing and well-being. As such she developed curricula guidelines for social work which focused on how spirituality acts as a source of strength and the multiple spiritually based therapeutic interventions that can be used in social work practice. Her interest in spirituality at the interface of health grew and subsequently explored the role of spirituality in nursing care and education together with a Master's student. This led to several publications on this topic. She is currently the recipient of a Grant from the National Research Foundation on Community Engagement and have been involved in both a South African and global inquiry on community engagement in higher education. She is also involved in several international research collaborative projects.

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