

Developing socially transformative practice: Reflections from educators and students in community development practice

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Introduction:

The Occupational Therapy curriculum at the University of Cape Town (UCT) prepares students to practice community development through a scaffolded curriculum. This curriculum includes theoretical input and practice learning placements where students draw on the Occupation based Community Development Framework (ObCD). No prior research has been conducted on how this curriculum influences students' capacities to contribute to social transformative practice.

Objectives: To identify how teaching and learning practices in the UCT community development practice curriculum influences possibilities for socially transformative practice.

Method/Approach: A qualitative descriptive study was conducted. Educators and students involved with community development practice placements in 2016 and 2017 were purposively selected. Data was generated through focus group discussions between participants and through their individual reflections. Data was thematically analysed.

Results: The theme, 'Conceptual coherence' describes the congruence between the curriculum and the needs emerging in practice contexts. It highlights how participatory approaches applied in the curriculum facilitates critical perspectives and collaborative approaches to practice. It highlights how students are enabled to appreciate complexities within contexts, form authentic partnerships and work alongside communities to address challenges that compromise health and occupational well being. The ways in which this contributes to facilitating social change and addresses occupational injustice is explained.

Conclusion: Creating a curriculum that is contextually relevant creates opportunities for students to develop their abilities to apply critical perspectives and enact participatory approaches. Ways in which this is relevant across contexts and may be responsive to the social and health needs of society is discussed.