

Beyond the Classroom Walls: Experiential Learning as a Transformative Inquiry for the Community-University Engaged Approach

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Abstract

In higher education, experiential learning can be described as an educational approach that aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by introducing students to various opportunities to participate in an organized series of activities towards meaningful engagement in communities for societal change. In this paper, through storytelling, the student-researcher creatively and critically unpacks his lived experiences through the use of arts-based research methods such as memory-drawing, letter-writing, and object inquiry concerning experiential learning towards the community-engaged approach at a university in South Africa. Through his meaningful engagement with visual depictions, accompanied by written representations, he is encouraged to look steadily at what he can learn from his lived experiences. More importantly, the student-researcher is provoked to critically inspire and enhance the development of the community-engaged culture to other fellow students at a university in South Africa and beyond - as a community engagement practitioner. Finally, this paper, through storytelling, argues that transformative inquiry can be achieved if experiential learning can be linked to the academic classroom for each course and specialization in higher education institutions of learning. This can, therefore, serve as a trigger for the formation of mutually beneficial university-community partnerships for meaningful learning.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Academic Classroom, Transformative Inquiry, Community-University Partnerships, Engaged Approach, Storytelling