If we accept that the ultimate purpose of education is to improve quality of life, then educational research should make important epistemological and ontological contributions to social improvement through theories and practices that make a real difference in the lives of people. In theory, this can be attained by integrating the core academic tasks of teaching, research and community engagement through community based research and/or service-learning. Participatory forms of community engagement seek to “break down the distinction between researchers and researched” (Gaventa, 1991, P.121-122) to enable collaborative generation of knowledge and the development of awareness as catalyst to mobilise for social change. However when tertiary researchers decide to descend from their ‘ivory towers’ to work with communities, they are often faced with challenges that hinder their attempts to engage in a collaborative manner with community partners. As Nash some twenty years ago (1993, p.54) stated:

“The fundamental dilemma is that participatory researchers who want to work with marginalised communities must demonstrate how their work is significant for the lives, needs and aspirations of... communities.”

Today, this dilemma still exists, and this special issue is inviting contributions that will expand the debate and contribute to generating knowledge in this under-theorised field. This issue is soliciting articles from researchers whose work engages with questions such as:

- What are suitable conceptions/theoretical frameworks for community engagement to promote mutual learning and sustainable change?
- What are the experiences and needs of community-university partners with regard to community engagement?
- How can the traditional power relations between researcher and community be renegotiated so that each makes a worthwhile contribution to the process and benefits from outcomes?
- What are the challenges of participatory community engagement and how could they be addressed?
- What key lessons can be learnt from accounts of successful community engagement?

References:


_Guest editors: Lesley Wood, Petrusa du Toit, Laetitia Greyling_

**Deadlines:**

Extended abstracts are due on 28 April 2014.

Suggestions for writing extended abstracts are available online at: http://www.nmmu.ac.za/helpingteachers/Suggestions%20for%20the%20extended%20abstract.pdf

Invitations will be sent to selected authors by 14 May 2014, requesting full manuscripts by 31 July 2014.


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