

Depth of Field: Photographs, Narrative and Reflective Learning Resource for Health Professions Educators

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Abstract : The learning landscape of higher education environment is changing, with an increased focus over the past decade on how educators might begin to cultivate reflective skills in health professions students. In addition, changing professional requirements demand that health professionals are adequately prepared to practice in today's complex Australian health care systems, including responding to changing demographics of population ageing. To counteract a widespread perception of health professions students' disinterest in caring for older persons, the authors will report on an exploratory, mixed method research study that used photographs, narrative and small group work to enhance medical and nursing students' reflective learning experience. An innovative photo-elicitation technique and reflective questioning prompts were used to increase engagement, and challenge students to consider new perspectives (around ageing) by constructing shared storylines in small groups. The qualitative themes revealed how photographs, narratives and small group work created learning spaces for reflection whereby students could safely explore their own personal and professional values, beliefs and perspectives around ageing. By providing the space for reflection, the students reported how they found connection and meaning in their own learning through a process of self-exploration that often challenged their assumptions of both older people and themselves as future health professionals. By integrating cognitive and affective elements into the learning process, this research demonstrates the importance of embedding visual methodologies that enhance reflection and transformative learning. The findings highlight the importance of integrating the arts into predominantly empirically driven health professional curricula and can be used as a catalyst for individual and/or collective reflection which can potentially enhance empathy, insight and understanding of the lived experiences of older patients. Based on these findings, the authors have developed 'Depth of Field: Exploring Ageing' an innovative, interprofessional, digital reflective learning resource that uses Prezi Inc. software (storytelling tool that presents ideas on a virtual canvas) to enhance students' reflective capacity in the higher education environment.

Keywords : narrative, photo-elicitation, reflective learning, qualitative research

Conference Title : ICHE 2016 : International Conference on Higher Education

Conference Location : Boston, United States

Conference Dates : April 25-26, 2016