Public Abstract

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Title:GIVING VOICE: THE USE OF INTERACTIVE THEATRE AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO REDUCE ALIENATION OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS

This study focused on the use of Interactive Theatre as professional development in higher education to give voice to the marginalized. The researcher viewed the study through the lens of Critical Race Theory which emphasizes the power of storytelling to reduce alienation of marginalized groups who find themselves invisible and silent. The guiding question for this investigation centered on how Interactive Theatre as professional faculty development gave voice to marginalized individuals or groups in higher education.

The study population consisted of the leader of an Interactive Theatre program used for professional development, faculty and graduate teaching assistants who had participated in the program, and members of the Interactive Theatre troupe. The setting was a large Midwest university. Data collection methods included audio-recorded interviews and observations of individuals and a focus group, observation of an Interactive Theatre presentation, and document analysis.

The qualitative findings revealed the need for innovative professional development, such as Interactive Theatre, to address issues of diversity. From the data, two themes emerged which showed an awakening to issues associated with diversity and empowerment to address those issues were results of having participated in the Interactive Theatre program. There was not only an impact found on the faculty and teaching assistants but also on the members of the Interactive Theatre troupe.

Implications of this inquiry for practice in education could impact both K-12 institutions and higher education institutions as they address the issues of diversity and giving voice to the marginalized, thus creating truly inclusive campus climates.