Development of a Photovoice Project to Enhance Learning in Community Health Education

Abstract

While community health is only one of three concentrations offered within the BS in Health Education and Promotion program, students from other tracks and even other programs often opt to take HLTH 3000: Theory and Practice in Community Health Education as a part of their educational training. The goal of this course is to provide future health educators the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively work in a community setting to develop and implement health-related programs. This project will provide real-life activities that support course material and the textbook by introducing students to photovoice, an innovative technique that uses photography to assess health resources available in a community.

The development of this project will allow the applicant to integrate real-life examples that emerge from the students’ project with important concepts in community health education. Not only will students have the opportunity to apply techniques learned in this project to other courses, but they will also have a skill set and knowledge base on a strategy that is becoming increasingly necessary in the field of health education. If successful, the project design and resources developed for this project can also be applied to other undergraduate and graduate courses in the program.
Purpose/Objectives

The goal of this proposal is to develop a photovoice project to be implemented in HLTH 3000: Theory and Practice in Community Health Education. Through the utilization of photovoice and asset mapping techniques, development of such a project would allow the applicant to more effectively engage the students in discovering how new techniques can be used to assess the strengths and resources to address health issues in a community.

Photovoice is a participatory action research (PAR) strategy which engages community members by allowing them the opportunity to take pictures of the community in which they belong, engaging in dialog about the photographs, and use the photographs as a platform for policy change (Wang and Burris, 1997). This multi-step process provides cameras to individuals in the community who lack the power and voice to affect social change and charges them to take photographs of their perceived health and realities. Extensive discussions on the stories the photographs are telling are used to abstract common themes. A summary of these common themes is provided to the other community members and policymakers by displaying the photographs in the public arena. While there are several uses for photovoice, this project will focus on a concept called asset mapping. Instead of identifying the needs of the community or what the community lacks, asset mapping identifies strengths, current capacities, and abilities. This provides a foundation for the community to build upon using resources they already control.

The project would aid in achieving the following objectives of the course:

- Define concepts of community and community health
- Develop skills to act as a resource person on community health issues
• Define and describe asset mapping as it relates to community health
• Describe innovative techniques to assess available resources in a community

Acting as a resource person is a competency required by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC). This project will reinforce that responsibility, as well as introduce to the students a strategy to actively engage the community in assessing their health resources (one the primary duties of a health educator). Activities, lectures and discussion in the course will be adapted to integrate phases of the photovoice project.

Project Description

The applicant will develop a student project utilizing photovoice as an asset mapping technique for HLTH 3000: Theory and Practice in Community Health Education. Course material and activities will be altered from current materials to integrate examples of the project into course material. For example, one of the lectures focuses on evaluating the health needs of a community. Information of photovoice and other strategies will be incorporated into the presentation and activities. In addition, the pictures taken by the students as part of the photovoice project will be used to guide classroom discussion. Assignments will also be developed to accompanying the photovoice project to ensure student learning.

Need and Impact

HLTH 3000 is one of the core classes for students seeking a BS in Health Education and Promotion in the Community Health concentration. This course instructs students on community organization and administrative concepts in community health education. In addition, methods in community organization and executing community health programs are
also introduced to reinforce the basic concepts. This course is offered in the fall, spring, and summer sessions and has a capped enrollment of 30 students per section.

A core objective of Theory and Practice in Community Health is being able to identify resources in a community. This skill aids in the mobilization of a community to address specific health needs. This project will more effectively reinforce these concepts by engaging the students in a creative activity that requires critical thinking and evaluation of the concepts. In addition to aiding other topics covered in the course, such as program planning, needs assessment, and community mobilization, the instructor will have the opportunity to introduce the students to additional skills that will be useful in the workforce.

Schedule of Activities and their Proposed Deadlines

The following timeline will be used for development of the project:

May 19 – May 22: Background materials to aid in project development will be located.

May 25 – May 29: Project details, activities, and proposed course outline of materials will be developed. Approved materials for project will be.

June 1 – June 5: Development of new and altered course materials for lecture and background on project will be developed.

June 8 – June 12: Continued course material development. Course lectures will be sent to other faculty members who have experience in photovoice.

June 15 – June 19: Supplemental materials, such as activities, project guidelines, and project rubric will be developed. Evaluation materials will also be developed.

Evaluation Plan
Course materials and lectures will be reviewed by another faculty member who also has experience working with photovoice projects. To evaluate the actual project experience, students will be given an anonymous survey at the end of the semester. Questions on this survey will include:

1. Compared to projects you have done in other classes (not HLTH 3000), how would you rate this project? [5 point scale from ranging from “better than other classes” to “not as good as other classes”]

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the effectiveness of this project to reinforce the basic concepts of community health? [5 point scale from “very effective” to “not effective at all”]

3. Did you like the photovoice project? _____YES _____ NO _____ No Opinion

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, do you think the instructor was effective in integrating the project into course material? [5 point scale from “very effective” to “not effective at all”]

5. Do you believe you can apply techniques you learned from the photovoice project in this class (HLTH 3000) to the workforce when you graduate? [Same options as #3]

Students will also be given periodic assignments to assess their knowledge on the use of photovoice in community health settings and other core concepts of the course. These assignments, including a paper and presentation on their photos, group assessments of the photos, and final display project, will be used to determine if students thoroughly understand the material included in the photovoice project.
Appendix 1: Courses and Scholarly Interest

Courses I currently teach:

1. HLTH 3000: Theory and Practice in Community Health
2. HLTH 6355: Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drug Education and Prevention

I have scholarly interest in using service learning and involvement in the community to enhance classroom instruction. I currently include a service learning component in my HLTH 3000 course which requires students to become engaged in community health education through community service hours.