WHAT HEALTH SCIENCES STUDENTS THINK ABOUT CREATIVE TEACHING APPROACHES: RESULTS FROM A STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE PHOTOVOICE METHOD.

Questions

1. What do students learn by doing a photovoice assignment that is different from what they learn in exams or written paper-based activities?

2. What are student perceptions of the effectiveness of the photovoice assignment?

Context

Students studying health sciences are often required to take courses that focus on the role that social inequities play in impacting health. These courses aim to prepare students to understand and prioritize the social and destabilize the power dynamic between the interviewer and participants (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Qualitative material from the focus groups was analyzed using discourse analysis (Parker, 2003). This included a detailed examination of the text and issues related to student learning and experience.

Summary of Findings

1. What do students learn by doing a photovoice assignment that is different from what they learn in exams or written paper-based activities?

Students described the photovoice assignment as a positive learning experience, using terms such as, “amazing”, “incredible”, and “super interesting”. They also talked about the value of creativity in education and its importance in health settings, particularly when working with complex issues and when building empathic connections with patients:

“I think no matter what part of health sciences you go into... I don’t think you can be empathic if you have, no sort of, creativity. You have to be able to figure out the story for that person, you have to be able to figure out... what could this be like for them? And that is imagination and creativity.”

They argued that creativity enabled them to look at the topic in new ways, to really think about it on a deep and meaningful level:

“I thought about things differently than I would have trying to do a paper... you had to... think for yourself, instead of reading what other people had done.”

2. What are student perceptions of the effectiveness of the photovoice assignment?

Students stated that the resultant knowledge and skills would be long-lasting. This was something that was viewed as a valuable alternative to essays and exams where students felt that they were repeating the words of others, words that would soon be forgotten:

“We all know... that for exams you just memorize something, spit it back on the paper, and then, boom, done. And you can never remember anything from that...”

The students concluded that the photovoice assignment was more effective at enabling students to learn both content and new skills. They felt that this was due to the focus on engagement with the material in personal, social, and academic ways, as well as being challenged inside and outside of the classroom:

“I really thought that aspect of this project was a definite bonus because I didn’t have to look beyond the course material to have that struggle. So, I could internalize the knowledge... make it a part of me.”

References


