Core Competencies of Health Education Teachers

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Introduction

Competencies for general health promotion practitioners have been developed in various countries throughout the world (1-3) and also through international collaboration (4). This research focuses on the competencies needed, specifically for health educators. Defining competencies in relation to health promotion is useful in providing a universal language for defining the tasks, skills and knowledge needed for HP (4). It is also useful in developing programmes, projects and curricula and it contributes to consolidating the discipline (5). It is likely that future education and training in health promotion will incorporate competencies (6). By defining core competencies, which are reflective of the principles and values in the Ottawa Charter, a basis for education and training that is reflective of international best practice can be fostered (6). Teachers are at the centre of an education system that is in a constant state of change. According to Kress, “the previous era had required an education for stability, the coming era requires an education for instability” (7). Because of this, teachers need strong, professional competencies (8). Health promotion effectiveness is dependent upon a workforce that is equipped with core, flexible and adaptable skills (4). The recommendation has been made that initial teacher training should focus on understanding and developing teachers’ competencies (8).

Research Objective

What are the core competencies needed for health education teachers in developing health literacy in students?

The aim of this study was to achieve consensus from health education experts as to the most important competencies needed for teachers so that they are able to better develop health literacy among their students.

Delphi Methodology & Preliminary Findings

36 competencies identified
12 most cited presented below

- Ability to collaborate with pupils
- Pedagogical health content knowledge
- Willingness to engage in whole school and community health promoting activities
- Communication skills
- Knowledge of the determinants affecting health
- Knowledge of the operational environment of a school
- Ability to collaborate with other school personnel
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- General content knowledge of health issues
- Ethical thinking skills
- A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy in teaching health issues
- Teacher as a ‘researcher’ (ability to think and reflect critically)

Work in Progress

- 2nd round of the Delphi sent to participants for rating of competencies in terms of importance
- This round will be analysed and sent back for consensus
- The final list of the most important competencies for health educators will be useful to guide pre-service and in-service teacher health education

Works Cited

- Hyndman, B. (2007) Towards the development of Canadian health promotion competencies: where we are now where we are heading. Ottawa: Health Promotion E-Bulletin Available from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2097679

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