PhotoVoice in a Prenursing Health Care Systems Course

PhotoVoice is a participatory action research method that enables participants to identify their perception and knowledge through the visual cues of photographs (Wang, 1999). Participants in PhotoVoice are encouraged to take photographs in their everyday lives and interpret those photographs (Polit & Beck, 2017). This approach has strengths in its capacity to engage young people (Drew, Duncan, & Sawyer, 2010). We designed, implemented, and evaluated a PhotoVoice group assignment for a prenursing course on the U.S. health care system in a state university.

Theory and Goals

Transformative learning theory was used to structure this project (Mezirow, 1994). This theory highlights that learning is transformed through disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, and changed meaning perspective (Kear, 2013). Our PhotoVoice assignment aimed to (a) challenge values and beliefs regarding the U.S. health care system, (b) promote self-reflections on a meaningful experience and a difficult situation, and (c) facilitate explorations of alternative points of view (e.g., new concepts, engaging peer discussions, and interactive presentation) using pictures.

Method

Prenursing students (N = 96) were divided into small groups with six to seven members. Student groups discussed the U.S. health care system and potential changes to the system in the future. Groups were assigned to pick a topic related to future health care (delivery) systems in the United States. Students were to create five photographs that portrayed their topic. Existing images or photographs were allowed to be used with a citation.

Students inserted the photographs in PowerPoint® slides and included descriptions of the photographs for each slide. Included in the slides were characteristics of the U.S. health care system, technology, and levels of care. Students were encouraged to use concepts, perspectives, and terminologies learned in the course. Groups presented their final projects in class.

At the completion of class, investigators conducted an anonymous and voluntary postassessment survey of students’ perceptions of the PhotoVoice experience. The questionnaire asked students about advantages/disadvantages and perceptions of using PhotoVoice and whether PhotoVoice was helpful for accomplishing the course objectives. The survey comments were analyzed thematically, and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

A total of 78 students completed the survey. Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: (a) achievement of course objectives, (b) empowering and engaging learning experience, and (c) challenges associated with PhotoVoice and group dynamics. An exemplary description was “I learned more in-depth information about different health care systems by using PhotoVoice.” The majority (84.3%) of students reported PhotoVoice was useful for accomplishing the course objectives.

Selected images represented fundamental components of the health care systems and health care innovation that would be beneficial to both patients and nurses. In one group, students included a picture of pills poured on top of money to display their view of the high costs in health care systems. In another group, students included a picture of a device that protects nurses from injuries while repositioning patients as an exemplar of advanced medical technology. The first author (S.G.) observed that reflective learning was evident in students’ presentations.

PhotoVoice can be viewed as a pedagogical tool in nursing education. It assists instructors in creating high-impact learning environments by allowing students to take control over the course assignment, integrating technology into their education, and promoting students’ reflexivity toward the course content.

References


Seok Hyun Gwon, PhD, RN
gwon@uw.edu
Vipavee Thongpriwan, PhD, RN
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
College of Nursing

The authors have disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.
doi:10.3928/01484834-20190103-14