Symposium on Educational Excellence 2024

Do the loop: aligning student training with applied research to collaboratively advance biomedical workforce development

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Keywords

Problem-Based Learning; Qualitative Research; Health Equity; Curriculum; Students; Equity-minded assessment; Workforce development

Abstract

Course evaluations and program assessments are frequently used to gauge student progress and outcomes, with resulting data often reviewed by course faculty, program directors, and assessment personnel. While it is conventionally known that data inform change, the process can sometimes feel unclear to students and unsustainable to faculty and staff since time constraints are a known barrier for any project. While quantitative data from assessments can be automated to support rapid analyses, qualitative data from these same instruments (e.g., student perspectives found in open prompts) take more time to analyze, which can potentially delay changes or their time to analysis and implementation. Our prior work developed an interprofessional course for teaching qualitative methods to health professionals (UNI 504), with two Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals that govern course projects (IRB #22187) and biomedical workforce development research (IRB #22889). Together, the interprofessional course structure offers an opportunity to align student training and applied research for iteratively improving education and curriculum improvement, while curating a set of collaborative processes for guiding ongoing work.

In this presentation, three student group projects are highlighted from the course:
1) "Equity-minded feedback loops: Using student voices to improve the MPH curriculum" (Spring 2023);

2) "Perspectives on medical bias and health inequity training among BIPOC health professionals" (Winter 2022); and

3) "Student growth in qualitative methods" (Spring 2023).

Each of these projects showcase how equity-minded assessment can be incorporated into a course structure, where the evaluative focus is on student-engaged processes to build sustainable feedback loops for improving education and training through research. Our student-engaged processes build on our prior work that shared collaborative approaches for engaging students in assessing their learning iteratively (Marriott, Mitchell, & McLemore, 2023; https://sites.google.com/view/competencyiteration).

This project builds on that prior work, demonstrating how courses can engage students by offering opportunities to apply equity-minded assessment for academic and institutional improvement. Prior students in the course report significant gains in every interprofessional competency measured ($p < 0.05$; link to data on site above), further demonstrating synergistic benefits of authentic problem-based learning to improve learning environments and health equity.

The authors represent students, faculty, and staff representing school assessment and administration who share lessons learned and considerations for iteratively building feedback loops that improve student training while advancing educational and societal goals associated with diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the session, the learner will:

1. Identify web-based resources for accessing student projects and lessons learned from the project
2. Reflect on opportunities and concerns associated with student-driven feedback loops
3. Describe sustainability considerations that influence process improvement in educational settings