

Using an Experience Documentation Opportunity to Certify Advanced-Level Health Education Specialists

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Abstract

The worldwide burden of diseases, environmental threats, and injuries help establish the global context and need for credentialing in health education and promotion. To ensure effective practice by certified or credentialed individuals, it is critical that the global health education and promotion workforce identify, agree on, and establish core competencies grounded in knowledge, skills, and abilities to strengthen the global capacity to improve the practice of health education at the entry and advanced levels. Dialog regarding the development of Domains of Core Competency for global capacity in health promotion has occurred. One unique process for granting certification was how a U.S. certifying organization used an Experience Documentation Opportunity to validate advanced-level professional competency. In this article, a one-time, 6-month opportunity in certifying advanced-level health education specialists is documented, and the implications of these results on the Domains of Core Competency are discussed. The authors provide valuable insight for health education professionals worldwide on establishing a process for quality assurance and accountability and alignment with the current global competency discussion. The Experience Documentation Opportunity process also may be useful in international efforts to establish certification based on core competencies.

Keywords

core competencies, experience documentation opportunity, health education, health promotion, master certified health education specialist, workforce development

An evolution of health education and promotion services occurred in part due to the worldwide burden of chronic diseases, infectious diseases, and environmental threats and injuries. The global context for health education and promotion, in which problems, issues, and concerns exceed beyond individual nations' boundaries, has helped establish a need for credentialing and quality assurance due to the expanding field and broad range of practice in the discipline (American Association for Health Education [AAHE], 2012; Brown, Cueto, & Fee, 2006). Allegrante, Barry, Auld, et al. (2009) and Barry, Allegrante, Lamarre, Auld, and Taub (2009) agreed that there is a specific body of knowledge, skills, and expertise within health education and promotion practice that needs to be obtained, and to which health education specialists should adhere to during practice. The infrastructure to improve the development and enactment of certification for global health education and promotion necessitates the establishment first of core competencies and subsequently a base to measure performance of those competencies.

The concept of establishing core competencies is a prominent discussion among health education specialists practicing

in health education and promotion worldwide (Dempsey, Battel-Kirk, & Barry, 2011). To ensure effective global health education and promotion practices, it is critical that the profession identifies and agrees to core competencies (Barry et al., 2009; Institute of Medicine, 2003). Understanding and advancing the knowledge and skills of health education specialists should be acknowledged as an essential component of developing and strengthening the global workforce capacity to improve health (Allegrante, Barry, Airhihenbuwa, et al., 2009; Barry et al., 2009; Taub, Allegrante, Barry, &

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