

Component 2

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Assessment Component 2 – Community Engagement

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Community Engagement

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Introduction

Community involvement may be roughly defined ¹⁰ as the act of working together with groups of people linked by geographic proximity, particular interest, and/or comparable circumstances to address challenges affecting those groups' well-being. Discussion of community involvement implies that its goal must be to empower individuals and community-based organisations, who can then apply appropriate practises and influence bigger policies. (Koekkoek, Van Ham, and Kleinhans, 2021)

This essay explores my experiences and insights gained during the Community Engagement module at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The module provided a unique opportunity to engage with the Canal and River Trust Community, fostering a deeper understanding of the significance of community involvement in preserving local heritage and culture.

Moreover, the essay reflects on the potential of community engagement in promoting mental health and well-being, especially among teenagers aged 13-19 in the local community. Considering the growing prevalence of mental health challenges among adolescents, the essay presents ¹¹ an action plan for a community engagement project that seeks to raise awareness, provide support, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

By employing the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, the essay aims to foster a deeper understanding of the transformative power of community engagement and its potential to empower individuals and communities alike. As we delve into the significance of promoting mental health among teenagers, we recognize the importance of inclusivity and collaboration in shaping a brighter and more resilient future for our communities.

1. Gibbs ¹reflective cycle

According to Gibbs' reflective cycle, reflection occurs after an event. It provides a framework that normally governs the reflective process. The framework includes cue questions based on essential ideas and a checklist for learners to go through, answering and pondering the cue questions as they go. The reflective cycle emphasises learning from events through the inclusion of feelings, thoughts, and recommendations for future actions. (Husebø, O'Regan and Nestel, 2015).

⁹ Reflection, as a mode of thought, is based on recall of experiences and refers to the common approach of pondering over an event or experience. (Markkanen, et al., 2020)

2. Reflection on Community Engagement module

In this reflective assignment, I¹⁷ will utilize the Gibbs Reflective Cycle to examine my experiences and insights gained during the Community Engagement module at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Throughout this module, I had the opportunity to engage with members of the Canal and River Trust Community and learn about their activities and the rich history of the canal. Additionally, I acquired knowledge about community engagement, its benefits, stakeholders, principles, planning and designing, quality standards, as well as various tools and platforms for effective community engagement.

Description:

During the module, I had the privilege of interacting with the members of the Canal and River Trust Community. They shared valuable insights into their activities and the historical significance of the canal. These interactions enabled me to appreciate the role that community engagement plays in preserving and promoting local heritage and culture. Through their stories and passion, I recognized the importance of community involvement in sustaining and revitalizing shared spaces.

Feelings:

Engaging with the Canal and River Trust Community evoked a mix of emotions within me. Firstly, I experienced a sense of awe and admiration for the dedication and commitment demonstrated by the community members in preserving the canal's history. Their passion and knowledge instilled a deep appreciation for the importance of community-led initiatives. Moreover, I felt inspired by their ability to bring people together and create a sense of belonging within the community.

Evaluation:

The Community Engagement module provided a comprehensive understanding of the concept's significance and its potential benefits. I learned that community engagement fosters active participation, inclusivity, and empowerment, allowing community members to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. By involving stakeholders, including residents, organizations, and local authorities, the outcomes of community projects can be more sustainable and impactful. This module shed light on the different principles and best practices that underpin successful community engagement, such as transparency, collaboration, and accountability.

Analysis:

Through this module, I gained insight into the planning and design processes involved in community engagement. I learned that effective engagement requires a systematic approach,

including identifying stakeholders, setting clear objectives, and utilizing appropriate tools and platforms. Moreover, understanding the quality standards for community engagement is vital to ensure ethical practices and meaningful outcomes. The module highlighted the importance of employing a range of methods, both traditional and digital, to maximize engagement and reach diverse community members.

Conclusion:

Engaging with the Canal and River Trust Community and studying the principles and practices of community engagement has been an enriching experience. The module deepened my understanding of the immense value that community engagement brings to society, particularly in preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion. I am now equipped with knowledge and skills to plan and design effective community engagement initiatives, considering the diverse needs and perspectives of stakeholders.

Action Plan:

Going forward, I intend to apply the knowledge and skills gained from this module in my future endeavours. I aim to do a project in the future that will help teenagers aged 13-19 and their mental health. By prioritizing transparency, collaboration, and inclusivity, I hope to make a positive impact in communities, empowering them to shape their own futures and preserve their unique identities. Additionally, I will continue to explore and utilize various tools and platforms for effective community engagement, staying abreast of emerging practices in the field.

3. Mental health among teenagers

The project ¹⁸ aims to promote mental health and well-being among teenagers in the local community. It involves implementing a comprehensive community engagement initiative to raise awareness, ¹¹ provide support, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health among adolescents.

The aim of the project is to address the pressing issue of mental health among teenagers and create a supportive environment that empowers young people to prioritize and take care of their mental well-being. The project seeks to provide resources, education, and platforms for open discussions about mental health, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being and resilience of adolescents in the community.

The need for this project arises from the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among teenagers. In a ¹³ self-report study, over one-third of first-year students in ⁵ 19 institutions across eight nations tested positive for at least one common DSM-IV anxiety, mood, or drug problem

(35.3% lifetime, 31.4% 12 months). The basic socio-demographic associations were minimal, indicating that the symptoms were dispersed rather than concentrated in a limited portion of the student population. (American Psychological Association, 2018)

Therefore, this project aims to meet the critical need for mental health support, education, and DE stigmatization within the community.

Literature supports the importance of promoting mental health among teenagers. Studies show that early intervention and support significantly improve mental health outcomes in adolescence and adulthood. Additionally, creating a supportive environment reduces the negative consequences of mental health issues, such as academic difficulties, social isolation, and self-harm. The project aligns with the growing recognition of the importance of mental health promotion and the integration of mental health services into the broader healthcare system. (O'Reilly, et al., 2019)

The primary participants in this project are teenagers aged 13-19 in the local community. The project aims to engage both those who may be experiencing mental health challenges and those who are interested in learning about mental well-being. Additionally, the project may involve secondary participants such as parents, educators, mental health professionals, and community organizations that play a supportive role in promoting mental health among teenagers.

The project will primarily focus on the local community where the teenagers reside. The specific location may include schools, community centres, and online platforms to ensure accessibility and reach a wide range of participants.

Collaboration and partnerships are integral to the success of the project. Potential collaborators and partners may include local schools, youth organizations, mental health professionals, community health centres, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. These stakeholders share a common interest in promoting mental health among teenagers and contribute their expertise, resources, and networks to support the project.

The project activities may include:

- Conducting needs assessments and research to identify specific mental health challenges and gaps in support within the community.
- Organizing workshops, webinars, and educational sessions to provide teenagers with information on mental health, coping strategies, and available resources.

- Establishing peer support networks and training peer leaders to ¹⁴ provide a safe space for young people to share their experiences and seek support.
- Creating interactive online platforms and social media campaigns to engage teenagers in discussions about mental health, share resources, and reduce stigma.
- Collaborating with schools to incorporate mental health education into the curriculum and provide access to counselling services.
- Facilitating community events, such as mental health awareness campaigns and fundraisers, to engage the broader community in supporting mental well-being among teenagers.

Resources are vital for the successful implementation of the project. The three categories of resources required include:

- Facilities: Access to suitable venues for workshops, meetings, and community events. This may involve partnering with schools, community centres, or securing dedicated spaces for project activities.
- Human Resources: Volunteers and professionals with expertise in mental health, project coordination, and youth engagement are essential. These individuals will contribute their time, skills, and knowledge to support the project's activities and ensure its effective implementation.
- Knowledge Resources: Access to evidence-based information, educational materials, and mental health resources is crucial. These resources will serve as the foundation for workshops, training sessions, and educational materials provided to teenagers and other participants.

Raising funds may be necessary to support the project's activities and ensure its sustainability. Fundraising efforts may include:

- Grant applications: Seeking grants from governmental and non-governmental organizations that support mental health initiatives and community engagement projects.
- Corporate sponsorships: Partnering with local businesses or corporations that have an interest in supporting youth mental health and well-being.
- Community fundraising events: Organizing events such as charity walks, bake sales, or online crowdfunding campaigns to involve the community in raising funds for the project.
- Collaboration with local organizations: Partnering with community organizations that may provide financial support or in-kind donations to support the project's activities.

To effectively coordinate this project, I will adhere to several key principles and design processes:

1. **Active Consultation:** I will actively engage with stakeholders such as teenagers, parents, educators, mental health experts, and community leaders to ensure their voices and perspectives are incorporated throughout the project. Their input will help shape the content, format, and delivery of the workshops, making them more relevant and impactful.
2. **Effective Communication:** Clear and consistent communication will be essential for engaging with stakeholders and promoting the project. I will utilize various communication channels, including social media, newsletters, and community forums, to disseminate information about the workshops and raise awareness about the importance of mental health among teenagers.
3. **Stakeholders' Participation and Inclusion:** By involving key stakeholders in the planning and implementation stages, I will foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. Engaging teenagers, parents, educators, and mental health professionals in decision-making processes will ensure that the project meets their needs and aligns with their expectations.
4. **Research and Community Mapping:** Conducting thorough research on the specific mental health challenges faced by teenagers in the local community will provide a solid foundation for the project. Community mapping exercises will help identify existing resources, support systems, and potential collaborations, enabling effective utilization of available assets.
5. **Social Engagement through Social Media Platforms:** Leveraging social media platforms will allow for broader reach and engagement with the target audience. I will create dedicated social media accounts to share educational content, facilitate discussions, and provide access to additional mental health resources. Regularly monitoring engagement metrics will provide insights into the effectiveness of communication strategies and help tailor future outreach efforts.
6. **Impact Analysis and Evaluation:** Implementing robust impact analysis and evaluation methods will allow me to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of the project. This will involve pre- and post-workshop assessments, feedback surveys, and qualitative interviews to gauge changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to mental health among participants.

Based on the principles, design processes, and standards discussed, I recommend the following strategies for planning and coordinating the community engagement project effectively:

1. Collaborate with local schools, mental health organizations, and community centres to establish partnerships and gain support for the project.
2. Develop a detailed project plan, including a timeline, resource allocation, and responsibilities to ensure smooth execution.
3. Conduct thorough research on mental health issues affecting teenagers, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to inform the workshop content and design.
4. Implement a variety of workshop formats, including group discussions, interactive activities, and guest speaker sessions, to cater to different learning styles and engage participants effectively.
5. Continuously evaluate the impact of the workshops through pre- and post-assessments, feedback surveys, and qualitative data collection methods. Use this feedback to make improvements and refine future workshops.
6. Utilize social media platforms to create a supportive online community, providing ongoing resources, information, and opportunities for engagement beyond the workshop sessions.

Conclusion

Coordinating a community engagement project focused on promoting mental health among teenagers requires careful planning, effective communication, and stakeholder involvement. By applying the principles, design processes, and standards learned in the Community Engagement module, I am confident that this project can make a positive impact on the well-being of teenagers in the local community. Regular evaluation and adaptation will ensure the project remains relevant and effective in addressing the evolving needs of teenagers and their mental health challenges.

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