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| **Developing effective practitioners using health promotion and youth worker competency frameworks as indicators of competence** |
| **Background** Competencies have transformed tertiary education, moving the focus from what should be taught to what a graduate should be competent to do. Increasingly competencies are defining the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for professional practice. In New Zealand health promotion (HP) and youth development (YD) competencies define HP & YD practice. This research explored the effectiveness of competency based placement papers within a tertiary setting.  **The aim of the research** to explore lecturer’s perspectives on whether student placements are an effective pedagogy in developing competence.  **Methods** A focus group was undertaken with academic staff facilitating placement papers where an inductive content approach identified themes. A five point likert–like scale provided individual feedback independent of colleagues.  **Results** Effective assessments, imbedding cultural practices and dedicated placement coordination were processes that developed competence. Lack of competency based knowledge within placement organisations challenged the development of competence.  **Discussion** Nationally agreed health promotion and youth development competency frameworks can effectively inform curriculum, assessments and consequently, student’s competence. Culturally proficient placement opportunities are particularly effective in developing cultural competence. This finding is significant for effective practice within New Zealand where Māori and Pacific communities experience poorer health and social outcomes.  However, findings also demonstrated that organisational staff supporting students on placement lacked competency based knowledge; indicating that there is an opportunity for tertiary education to work alongside organisations to develop practitioner based competence.  **Conclusion** The findings illustrate that student placement papers informed by competency frameworks can effectively develop competent students and future health promotion and youth development practitioners. Competencies are capacity development tools that aim to address health equity and reduce inequities, consequently, tertiary education has a vital role in championing competency frameworks. The opportunity for tertiary education to support students and practitioners illustrates how competency based education is key to developing empowered, lifelong learning.  **Keywords** Health promotion, competencies, equity, lifelong learning. |