Culture-neutral Instructional Material Design for Global Rehabilitation Projects

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Abstract

Background: Global educational materials are often designed from the perspective of the educator and intended for a specific audience in one country. Content, format, activities and examples designed from an ethnocentric perspective may not be suitable for global audiences or applicable to different environments. The framework and process used to create culture-neutral materials for a Rehabilitation Technician Training Program in Haiti are described.

Methods: Materials were reviewed and redesigned with the intention of use in Haiti as well as for other countries. Phase one: 1) analysis of learners, tasks and goals, 2) review by two content experts (critical objectives, level of difficulty, content consistent with Rehabilitation Technician scope of practice) and 3) revision of language for translation and low reading level. Phase two: content was reorganized to improve readability, generic rather than culture-specific examples were created, along with activities to allow localization. Phase three: formatting, editing. Challenges included agreement on content for technicians and variety of formats, content and organization in the original materials.

Outcomes: Modules are currently available for use by NGOs in Haiti. Selected modules are currently being considered for use in Bhutan.

Implications for cultural competence: Global culture-neutral design may facilitate translation, and decrease cognitive load for users. Guidelines for review and revision for a culture-neutral product included exclusion of abbreviations, culture specific graphics, technical jargon, complex explanations, and local names and examples. Key factors are elimination of local examples but activities which allow localization, simplification and consistency of language, and clear format.