



Pre-course Contextual Scoping Study

'Introduction to Advancing Sexuality Studies: A short course on sexuality theory and research methodologies'. The short course was developed by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, *and* the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society.

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Purpose of the Pre-Course Contextual Scoping Study

The scoping study is intended to provide a *rapid* appraisal of factors that will influence the conduct of the short course and to collect course content along the way. The purpose of conducting this study as part of the pre-course planning is to ensure the short course is relevant and responsive to local concerns and circumstances and incorporates relevant locally available literature.

Objectives

The scoping study will:

- Gather local published data about sexuality, especially 'grey' literature.
- Assess pre-existing opportunities for the study of sexuality in the chosen location.
- Map current local issues in relation to sexuality.
- Locate institutional partners, course facilitators, potential participants and venue.

Timeline

About one month should be spent on this task and it should be completed a minimum of three months before the course is conducted in order to give sufficient time to adapt the curriculum.

Gather locally-published data, especially 'grey' literature

Covers socio-cultural context

A bibliography and set of readings form part of the course material. These have been put together from an international perspective and, while they are intended to have cross-cultural applicability, they are also limited to what is available to academic audiences. It is unlikely that, in any particular context, knowledge about sexuality will be confined to academic articles in international journals or books. 'Grey' literature is a shorthand term used to refer to non-academic material that has been published and is related to the issues being researched or studied. Grey literature can include reports of organisations and governments, local statistics, internet-based materials and sites, other forms of media (newspapers, films, published photographs) and the like. It is important that grey literature be authenticated as reliable and accurate as far as this can be assessed.

For example, NGOs working in the fields of HIV/AIDS or sexual and reproductive health may over time have generated reports of projects or activities that look at various aspects of sexuality. Sometimes, these are not readily or widely available (although the internet is changing this rapidly), and often the best way to obtain this information is by speaking directly with NGO program officers. Grey literature tends to date quickly. Unless a compelling reason exists to include something older, it is recommended that you limit the scoping study to collecting recent material (up to five years, no more than 10 years old).

Steps

1. Identify organisations including NGOs, government departments and research institutes that work in sexuality-related fields.
2. Using websites or general documents such as annual reports begin to identify relevant resources or publications.
3. Identify and contact relevant personnel to enquire further about programs and publications.

Assess pre-existing opportunities for the study of sexuality in the chosen location

Covers academic and broader context

A definition of the field of Critical Sexuality Studies can be found in the document 'Advancing Sexuality Studies Short Course: A Short History', provided as part of the Course Preparatory Documents folder. The information is also available on the www.sexualitystudies.net website. One of the findings of an international audit of sexuality training conducted in 2007 (also available on the website) was that researchers and other academics working in the field of Critical Sexuality Studies did not form any coherent group. They came out of various disciplinary backgrounds, worked in various academic departments, research centres or NGOs and tended not to regard themselves as sexuality researchers. Given the disparate nature of the field, it is worth developing an overview of the people, institutions and programs in a particular context that work on sexuality or related topics.

Steps

1. Begin by looking at the database on www.sexualitystudies.net to see what programs and institutions may be listed for your location. Also look at programs addressed to international audiences in which local colleagues may have participated.
2. Compile a list of local academic institutions, faculties, departments and research centres that may have a role in the study of sexuality. Include organisations such as government agencies or NGOs that conduct high quality research or develop policy.
3. Search available online databases such as Jstor using a specific country or region in the search in order to identify published articles and authors.
4. Look at the bibliography on www.sexualitystudies.net to see if there are published articles relevant to your context. Identify any gaps.
5. Compile a list of individuals working in Critical Sexuality Studies and related areas. These individuals may be found in such diverse arenas as media, training organisations, donor organisations or academia. Some of these may be local and some may be based elsewhere but conduct research locally.

Map current local issues in relation to sexuality

Covers socio-political context

The experience of conducting and participating in the short course in a particular city, country or region will be greatly enriched if the discussions and examples used in the course reflect current local issues. Begin collecting evidence about sexuality issues straight away, so that when it comes time to run the course there is a good file of material to draw upon.

Steps

1. During the month or so that the contextual scoping study is conducted collect newspaper stories about issues related to sexuality. Take a broad view initially of what to include and narrow it down later.
2. Identify relevant news websites or blogs and collect relevant articles and begin to sort these into levels of importance.
3. Whenever you identify a key informant such as an academic working in a field related to sexuality ask them what they consider to be the most important current issues and keep detailed notes on these conversations. These might be useful to include as an appendix to the scoping study. Be sure to get permission to use these individuals' names or offer anonymity.
4. As you begin to form an impression about which issues are significant, test these ideas out with informants with whom you speak. No doubt there will be many issues that arise, but the process of discussion should help to identify which few are most significant.

Locate institutional partners, course facilitators, potential participants and venue

Covers logistical context

It is recommended that the short course have at least one institutional partner and it may have a number. This is important because it will lend the enterprise legitimacy and is therefore more likely to achieve a lasting effect. It also helps if participants need to obtain permission from their employers to attend. The institutional partner

may simply lend their symbolic support or they may agree to also provide logistical support in the form of a venue, audio visual equipment etc. While it is undoubtedly more expensive to run the course face-to-face in a hired venue such as a hotel, if funding can be obtained this is also an easy option as a hotel can provide catering and accommodation. In some contexts, holding a short course on sexuality may be politically sensitive and simply hiring a venue can also avoid this issue.

It is crucial to identify course facilitators who can help to run the course. After looking at the relevant literature, you will have begun to develop a sense of who the experts are. Consider inviting local experts to facilitate particular sessions on their topics of expertise. Depending on what funding is available, consider also whether it is feasible to bring facilitators from other cities or countries. It is important to remember that one of the goals of the short course is to build a network among sexuality researchers so think strategically about how best to construct this network and who should be involved.

Thinking about the sort of network that you would like to build is also important when you start to build a list of potential participants. Remember that sexuality can be a sensitive issue and it will be important to invite participants who will be respectful. Also keep in mind that the course is postgraduate level.

Steps

1. Consider what institutional and collegial support will be needed to run the course.
2. Using the contacts found through the literature searches identify potential partner institutions and co-facilitators.
3. Identify a location where the course can be held early in the process—some venues need to be booked months in advance.
4. Begin to develop a list of potential participants who you or your informants believe would benefit from participation in the course. Consider whether you can fill the course through direct invitations or whether a broader recruitment strategy should be used.

Reporting scoping study outcomes

It is recommended that findings be assembled into a report of about 10 pages. This should include a description of the methodology used, what was found and a set of files containing resources and/or articles.

Use the headings in this document to structure the report and be sure to include a discussion of what is missing, possible difficulties or obstacles, and contact details for potential partners, teaching collaborators and participants.