VCE Physical Education 2017-2021

Video transcript – applying models to critique physical activity

In this video we are going to discuss how students might critique physical activity initiatives and strategies that are aimed at increasing physical activity or reducing sedentary behaviour. The intent is to help support your students to undertake their own critical appraisal with some practical ideas.

My name is Laura Alfrey, from Monash University’s Bachelor of Education Health and Physical Education program. I will be speaking with a colleague, Justen O'Connor, about Unit 2, Area of Study 1, in the new VCE PE, critiquing physical activity initiatives.

Hi Justen, thanks for speaking with us today. Area of Study 1 challenges students to apply a social-ecological model or a youth physical activity promotion model to critique physical activity initiatives and strategies aimed at increasing physical activity or reducing sedentary behaviour for a range of populations in a variety of settings. I wondered if today you could describe the types of initiatives or strategies that teachers or learners might explore as part of this unit.

Thanks Laura. Locally, and at a state and national level, there are many initiatives and strategies that a VCE class can become practically involved in, and at the same time also undertake a structured review of that initiative or strategy. I would suggest that a useful task initially would be to ask the students to explore and identify a range of initiatives or programs such those support by VicHealth. As part of that exploratory process, students might identify who the initiative is targeted towards, what they aim to achieve, and how they aim to achieve it.

So what do we mean when we ask students to critique physical activity initiatives?

The process of critique, which is something that will be ongoing throughout the unit of work, should not only focus on who is targeted but it importantly asks the questions like who is missing, what aims are ignored and what layers of these modules are not accounted for.

So once they have identified a range of initiatives or strategies, what then?

After this initial identification phase, groups of students could be supported to become involved as participants. This could be at the local level, which would enable students to interact with others in the community and gain a deeper understanding of the initiative that they are critiquing. A program linked to the VicHealth, ‘Changing the Game’ initiative, for example, which targets female participation might be a really good place to start.

From a personal level, we might ask what skills, motives, attitude, self- confidence, financial resources and even time availability are required to engage in these particular sports. At a social level, what ages, clothing, body shapes are represented. What cultural backgrounds and rituals are present? At an environmental level, we might ask what stories, images or media are being used for promotion, and who do they relate to in these sports? Where are these sports located, who has access and by what means?

Other initiatives coming from the innovation modules might also be relevant here. There are often local events that are designed to promote participation such as ‘Come and try days’ with various sporting and recreational groups hosting. Alternatively, the VCE class could take on the organisation of a short-term initiative or strategy that mirrors a State or National one, targeting the school community and/or the wider local community, involving parents and siblings and the like. This will really connect the students to the strengths and weaknesses of health promotion approaches.

As part of this Area of Study, students are asked to engage with a social-ecological model or the youth physical activity promotion model. How would you see this playing out Justen?

With either of the approaches I mentioned earlier, students can be supported in undertaking a structured evaluation that connects with different elements of the social-ecological model or the youth physical activity promotion models. I would anticipate using these models as a sort of a framework for interrogating the initiative. This would involve the collection some data or some evidence that covers the various layers of these models and poses critical questions of the initiative and its implementation. This might involve the design of a checklist for observation and even informal interviews with the participants, organisers and facilitators. I would envisage this whole process involving students in small groups, sharing various responsibilities, to successfully complete the task.

Great! Thanks very much for your time and insights Justen.

Adopting a critical appraisal of physical activity promotion initiatives should be a hands-on and engaging area of study. The opportunity for students to consider how different initiatives impact or fail to impact members within the target audience, by being a part of these initiatives, offers a way to engage your students in this unit of work.