

**Using Photovoice as a Reflective Practice to Evaluate Preservice Teacher Professional Development**

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### **Introduction**

Teachers need to have tools to critically reflect on their teaching practices and interpret and evaluate their strategies to continually improve and meet the changing needs of students. Critical reflection is an important skill for preservice teachers to master (Horowitz, 2012). Kim and Kim (2017) posit that teaching critical reflection to preservice teachers will provide them with a skill to use in reflecting on their identities and understanding the relationships and experiences of their students. However, university students may not have the needed skills to critically reflect on events in their lives (Din, 2020).

Photovoice is a participatory research method that allows participants to take pictures of their experiences and reflect on the images to explain their version of the event in the picture. Photovoice as a research and evaluation method began in public health as a community needs assessment and participatory evaluation (Wang & Burris, 1997). The term Photovoice is defined as photos “voicing our individual and collective experience” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 381). In traditional research, words are collected. Photovoice allows both words and pictures to explain phenomena adding to the richness of the data.

In traditional photovoice work, participants take pictures of experiences in their community or surroundings, share, and process as a group, and then share with community leaders to influence change in their communities (Dahan et al., 2007). The joint reflection allows participants to dive deeper into the meaning behind why they chose to share their pictures and may lead to developed critical consciousness and a stronger sense of their identities and foundational beliefs (Horowitz, 2012).

The photovoice process has also been used with preservice teachers as a means to reflect on their experiences. Specifically, photovoice was used with preservice middle school teachers to explore literacy (Horowitz, 2012), with preservice physical education teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses of their student teaching programs (Langdon et al., 2014), and by preservice elementary teachers to explore their identities in relation to teaching social studies (Stanton & Hancock, 2021). Perhaps this process could also be used with preservice agriculture teachers as a method to critically reflect on their own professional development journey.

### **How it Works**

During a recent Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) Institute, preservice teachers were asked to take pictures of the training that would help them implement the curriculum once they began teaching in their own classrooms. At the end of the day, they were asked to submit one photo and answer some reflection questions about the photo. The

submissions were collected using a Qualtrics survey link, shared as a QR code to the training participants. They were able to access the survey on their cell phones and upload the pictures from their phone to the survey form. The reflection prompts were modified from the Horowitz (2012) PHOTO reflection questions to be more applicable for teaching content. Our questions were modified to include (1) Describe your picture. (2) What is happening in your picture? (3) Why did you take a picture of this? (4) What does this picture tell you about your role as the instructor when teaching the content to your students? (5) How can this picture help provide opportunities to increase the knowledge and understanding for your students?

### **Results to Date**

We have used this practice with 11 preservice teachers from Illinois State University and the University of Illinois who completed the CASE Animal Science (ASA) pre-service teacher training during the summer of 2023. Their CASE institute lasted seven days. Each day the students received a reminder to complete their reflection photo upload and reflection prompts; however, they did not receive any additional incentives to complete the Photovoice reflection. Six of the participants (55%) completed all seven days of prompts. The other five participants completed between three and six days of prompts.

The reflection prompts that were completed included, at maximum, a one-sentence answer for each question. Some only included a phrase. Most reflections talked about information that could be useful when the participant was teaching, while others used it as a reminder for something related to the teaching process.

### **Future Plans and Advice to Others**

We were successful in providing an opportunity for preservice teachers to reflect on their experiences during the CASE training and perhaps think more deeply about their connections between learning the lessons themselves and preparing to teach the lessons to their future students. However, we will not know if the photos were used or used in a way that helped inform the teacher's delivery of the material. We plan to follow up with the preservice teachers at the end of the next school year to determine the extent to which the photos were used.

### **Resources Needed**

Using Photovoice in today's world, in which a majority of people have access to handheld technology, requires very few resources. We asked participants to use their own cell phones to take pictures and record their responses. The reflections were collected on the Qualtrics XM © platform. Another online data collection platform could be used instead of Qualtrics, and iPads could be provided if participants do not have access to cell phones. Note that in asking participants to take pictures during their training, we were allowing students to use their cell phones throughout the day, which could be problematic. It would be impossible to control when they are using their phones for training-related purposes or for personal purposes.

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