60 MINUTES

Identify Indirect Stakeholders

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Activity Rationale and Aims

Aims

01.
Anticipate potential positive and negative impacts on indirect stakeholders

02.
Develop strategies to maximize benefits and minimize concerns

Rationale

Research and design projects have many impacts beyond the immediate user and collaborators. For example, while an intended intervention may be designed for teachers, their students will be impacted. Or, a program for youth may impact their families. Sometimes, though, the impacts are even more distal. Researchers and designers have the responsibility to anticipate the rippling effects of designed products so as to maximize benefits and minimize harm.

Activity Summary

Collaborators will identify 2-3 indirect stakeholders, defined as people who are affected by the research process or product, but who do not have direct interaction with it. Groups consider how the research process and products could affect indirect stakeholders and list concerns as well as benefits. Collaborators identify strategies to maximize benefits and minimize concerns.

In Person Steps

As a whole group:

1. Explain the purpose of the activity and review the discussion prompts:
    a. Identify 2-3 indirect stakeholders and draft out details regarding their demographics, interaction with the research, etc.
    b. Identify a list of concerns as well as benefits for either how the indirect stakeholder will be impacted or take up the research.

In small groups:

2. Brainstorm the pathways that the research process and products could affect indirect stakeholders. For example, a course for educators could then impact students. Students could then share the content with their parents.

As a whole group:

3. Share out identified indirect stakeholders and potential concerns and benefits.
4. Take notes on the board or on large post-its, identifying themes in three categories: indirect stakeholder, concerns, and benefits as team members share out.
5. Engage in a discussion regarding strategies to maximize benefits and minimize concerns after all members have shared.

Modifications and Virtual Adaptations

- In some instances, the indirect stakeholder may not be human, but animals or the environment. Impacts to the natural world should also be explored, if applicable.
- If conducting this activity in a virtual environment, as small groups are presenting to the whole group, keep a collective notes document that identifies themes in three categories: indirect stakeholder, concerns, and benefits. During the discussion on strategies to maximize benefits and minimize concerns, if the group is large, have collaborators write their reflections on a shared digital document.

Facilitator Preparation

MATERIALS

- Board to write on or chart paper
- Markers
- Paper and pencils

HANDOUTS

- For digital facilitation, create digital worksheets for each group and write questions 1a and 1b in the worksheet

Facilitation Tips

- Provide examples of indirect stakeholders relevant to the research as well as concerns and benefits.
- When sharing out, provide a set amount of time for each group so that all groups have similar time to share out.
- Ask each group to identify a note-taker who will keep track of the group's responses to each question.
- This tool is complementary to the tool "Anticipate Challenges and Unintended Outcomes" and could be implemented together.

Example from the field

An interdisciplinary collaboration between pediatric physician scientists, public health workers, learning scientists, and parents in the local community had the shared goal of developing preventative health interventions for young children. The team was specifically focused on developing community based learning opportunities that would support healthy growth for young children (under 5 years of age) living in food deserts. Due to a lack of community based resources, such as fresh produce and safe places to recreate, children in this community disproportionately experienced high rates of obesity.

In developing a community learning program for young children, it was imperative to focus on the learning of the parents and thus the family with the young children. While initially, it was easiest to consider the ways that this would be beneficial for the entire family, it became critical to consider the ways that the messaging around health growth and healthy lifestyle needed to be tailored based on age. For example, many families had teenagers whose challenges with health and healthy weight were distinct from those of their young siblings. Considering how the messaging oriented at young children and their parents could be taken up by older siblings helped the team to include a framing that would be supportive to the older siblings, and ultimately resulted in the development of a more nuanced and thoughtful design.

Commitments to Equity and Wellness

Intent does not equal impact. The intent of a program may have unanticipated impacts on unanticipated and indirect stakeholders. It is researchers' and designers' responsibility to imagine the downstream effects of designed programs so as to maximize benefit and minimize harm. The aims of a designed program, intervention, or research should center questions of equity and collaborators should do the work to understand their own bias, so as to anticipate where their vision may fall short. And still, there is always a risk (and probability!) of unintended consequences (both negative and positive). It is the responsibility of researchers and designers to invest time into understanding potential outcomes and ripple effects for both direct and indirect stakeholders, and consequently designing to reduce potential harm and enhance potential positive impacts.

Additional Reading

Akkerman, S., Bakker, A., & Penuel, W. R. (2021). Relevance of educational research: An ontological conceptualization. *Educational Researcher*.

Bang, M., Medin, D., Washinawatok, K., & Chapman, S. (2010). Innovations in culturally based science education through partnerships and community. In M. S. Khine & M. I. Saleh (Eds.), *New science of learning: Cognition, computers, and collaboration in education* (pp. 569-592). Springer.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409-427.