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Do Expectations and Reflection in a Master’s Level Education Course Contribute to Sense of Belonging and Learning? A Peer Review of Teaching Inquiry Project

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Do Expectations and Reflection Lead to Sense of Belonging?
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OVERVIEW

Inquiry Questions
• Does sharing the expectation that students support each other impact sense of belonging and learning?
• Is perception of learning greater in this course compared to others?

Setting: master’s students in a student affairs program in a course on assessment. The students in the class are full time students. Age estimated to be under 30, diverse in race, social class, and sexuality. Mostly white women.

Students of color and in other minoritized groups often feel marginalized in the classroom, which one would not expect from professionals with this competency (Bondi, 2012; Harris & Linder, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

• Classrooms often feel exclusionary for students of color (Bondi, 2012; Harris & Linder, 2018)
• Social justice and inclusion is a foundational competency for the profession (ACPA/NASPA, 2015)
• Schools teach students to sit and listen then demonstrate their learning; Students do not expect to support each other (Bondi, 2011)
• A component of moving toward equity is drawing attention to group dynamics (JCTI, 2011)
• Connecting to professional standards and to the impact on the learning community attended to two major cultural frames of learning (Chávez & Longerbeam, 2006)

REFLECTIONS

These statements were provided to students three times during the course.
Students responded on a 5-point scale—strongly disagree to strongly agree—and were asked to write notes about what they noticed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have discussed personal matters with students in this class</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>2.631*</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one in this class knows anything personal about me</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>-2.324*</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable asking the teacher for help if I need it</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>2.631*</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmates would study with me if I wanted</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>-1.000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could talk about what happened in class with classmates if I wanted</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>1.936</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 1: completely untrue 2: mostly untrue 3: equally true and untrue 4: mostly true 5: completely true * p < .05

RESULTS

• No difference between students’ perceptions of learning from pre- to post-
• No difference between learning in this course and others
• A statistically significant change in a few areas of sense of belonging (see table below)
• Small n limited the power of t-test analysis

DISCUSSION

Small differences noted in students’ sense of belonging.
Limitations include threats to internal validity: passage of time, students’ interactions in other courses, item measuring learning unclear

Students documented doing and noticing others doing behaviors related to sense of belonging.

Studies showed small group discussions about inclusivity led to more engagement and learning in the course (Bondi, 2011)

Future inquiries should examine
• specific benefits of behaviors
• effects of using reflections in combination with more intentional small group work on trust and community building

CONCLUSION

• Sense of belonging can be influenced through expectations and reflection.
• Learning may not increase as a result of setting expectations and reflection.

REFERENCES


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