

Inspirational session 13

Session's theme: Supporting student learning

Paper number: 29

Presenters: Vesa Korhonen, Mikko Inkinen (University of Helsinki), Auli Toom (University of Helsinki)

Presenters' Organisation: School of Education, University of Tampere; University of Helsinki

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: The student engagement in examination

Abstract:

The main objective of university studies is the development towards expertise in own scientific field. The appropriation of high-level knowledge, skills and practices is required for novice members participation into the actions of academic community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The student-centered engagement model (Korhonen, 2012; Poutanen et. al., 2012) is one way to outline this development process. According to the model, active participation into meaningful educational practices gradually produces growth towards a skillful student and self-confident expert (cf. Wenger, 1998). Our earlier qualitative study based on the same model (Poutanen et. al 2012) has shown that students engage moderately on peer groups, but weakly on teachers and really weakly on the scientific community. There seems to exist a special academic threshold for studying and expertise in the university.

For these reasons it is necessary to understand students engagement process better as well as to develop more activating, participatory and engaging learning environments to university teaching and learning (Lonka et al., 2012; Toom et al., 2012). We have developed an engagement evaluation questionnaire (EEQ) based on the theoretical work and qualitative study mentioned above. With EEQ, a pilot study data has been collected from students in educational sciences at Universities of Helsinki and Tampere (n=96). Based on the pilot study it seems that sub-scales describing identity, belongingness and academic skills are strongly connected to the strength of self-evaluated engagement. Further, based on the tentative cluster analysis, it was possible to distinguish five groups who differed in their integration into the scholarly community. In the presentation, we discuss also on the further research challenges when aiming at collecting national data from first year students in different universities with the EEQ.

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Session's theme: Supporting student learning

Paper number: 52

Presenters: Ketonen, E., Haarala-Muhonen, A., Hirsto, L., Wähälä, K., Keltikangas, K., Hänninen, J., & Lonka, K.

Presenters' Organisation: University of Helsinki

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: Importance of engagement during first-year studies

Abstract:

Introduction

When first-year students enter lecture halls and seminars, they may entertain various dispositions and beliefs in their minds. These dispositions or learning profiles may contribute to either engaging or disengaging interaction with the academic environment in question. The learning environment and the instruction trigger either positive or negative situational emotions. Research on emotions has shown that students experience a rich variety of emotions in academic settings and that academic emotions are significantly related to student motivation, learning strategies, cognitive processes, self-regulation, and academic achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002).

Aims

In the pre-study we investigated the relationships between first-year teacher students' general learning profiles and situational academic emotions in a student-activating lecture course. We examined what kinds of subgroups could be found to classify the participants according to the general exhaustion, lack of regulation, lack of interest, task avoidance, and optimism they expressed; and how these groups differed in terms of situational academic emotions, self-study time, and study success. In the current study we increased the number of participants. We are going to report results from more and less student-activating lecture courses and students from different faculties and domains in order to see how generalizable our results are.

Method

The participants in the pre-study were 107 Finnish first-year teacher students who attended an introductory course in educational psychology at the University of Helsinki. The data were collected by using a questionnaire that measured general learning profiles, situational academic emotions, and self-study time five days before the course examination. Study success was measured by using the grade obtained from the course. A step-wise cluster analysis and MANOVA test were conducted. In the current study we collected a dataset of 713 first-year students from teacher education, engineering, chemistry, theology and law. A limitation of the pre-study was that general learning profiles and situational emotions

were measured at the same time point. In our current data collection we corrected this and used a design that allowed us to measure general profiles before the beginning of the course.

Results

In the pre-study we discovered three different student groups which were labelled, according to the score means profiles, as (1) dysfunctional, (2) engaged, and (3) unstressed students. In the pre-study these general learning profiles predicted what kinds of situational emotions would be triggered in a lecture context. In addition, engaged students had spent more hours in self-study than the other two groups. Regarding study success, the three student groups did not differ from each other. Similar analyses are in progress and the results of the pre-study shall be tested with the larger dataset.

Conclusions

It seems that general learning profiles form a disposition which predicts what kinds of emotions are triggered in the lecture context. The fact that some students were not quite functional calls for further reflection: how can we better support their learning and studying? Previous research indicates that well-being during studying predicts future well-being at work (Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen, & Nurmi, 2009). We want to promote meaningful learning and positive emotions in higher education, since we believe that they are the keys for our students' well-being and future success in life.