

Bridging the Divide: Mixed-Method Analysis of Student Engagement and Outcomes in Diverse Postgraduate Cohorts

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Abstract : Student diversity in postgraduate classes puts major challenges on educators seeking to encourage student engagement and desired to learn outcomes. This paper outlines the impact of a set of teaching initiatives aimed at addressing challenges associated with teaching and learning in an environment characterized by diversity in the student cohort. The study examines postgraduate students completing the core capstone unit within a specialized business degree. Although relatively small, the student cohort is highly diverse in terms of cultural backgrounds represented, prior learning and/or qualifications, as well as duration and type of work experience relevant to the degree, is completed. The wide range of cultures, existing knowledge and experience create enormous challenges with respect to students' learning needs and outcomes. Subsequently, a suite of teaching innovations has been adopted to enhance curriculum content/delivery and the design of assessments. This paper explores the impact of these specific teaching and learning practices, examining the ways they have supported students' diverse needs and enhanced students' learning outcomes. Data from surveys and focus groups are used to assess the effectiveness of these practices. The results highlight the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning, cultural competence-building, and advanced assessment options in addressing diverse student needs and enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. These findings suggest that such practices would benefit students' learning in environments marked by diversity in the student cohort. Specific recommendations are offered for other educators working with diverse classes.

Keywords : assessment design, curriculum content, curriculum delivery, student diversity

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