

The Effects of Self-Reflections on Intercultural Communication Competency: A Case Study of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith

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Abstract : The ability to communicate effectively across different cultures is a necessary skill in today's increasingly globalized world. Intercultural communication competency (ICC) is a way of being that benefits all members of a society in their living, learning, and working environments as well as in the context of mediated communications. This study examines the effects of self-reflection processes on the improvement of intercultural communication skills focusing on college students at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. A total of sixty-nine students' works were analyzed based on the data collected in the past three years (2016, 2017 and 2018). The students in the 'Culture and Communication' class, each spring, completed the Diversity Awareness Profile (DAP) survey as a pre- and post-test for the course. DAP is a self-assessment tool designed by Karen Stinson and widely used in college classes, companies, and organizations to evaluate an individual's behaviors in various intercultural settings. It can assist individuals in becoming more aware of diversity issues and also provide a foundation for developing strategies for modifying any undesirable behavior they may discover in the assessment. In addition to the DAP surveys, the students also submitted self-reflection essays that discussed their own scores. The University of Arkansas-Fort Smith is a small regional university located in the Bible Belt of the United States. White, Christian, working-class students dominate its student population. The students, whose data were collected, were predominantly seniors in college majoring in either Media Communication or International Business. Approximately, 80% of the students increased their scores, and 42% of them moved forward to a new category. The findings also indicate that the students in the underrepresented groups (i.e., women, minority, and international students) show less change in their scores and behaviors than the rest of the students (i.e., white heterosexual male students). These findings, in most part, result from the fact that the underrepresented students were already aware of diversity and intercultural issues through their personal experiences before taking the class. The white heterosexual male students demonstrated the greatest improvements, judging from their DAP scores (pre- and post-tests) and self-reflection essays. Through the class assignments and discussions, which emphasized critical thinking and self-reflection, the latter group of students not only became more aware of the meaning of their own words and behaviors, but they were also able to develop greater proficiency in intercultural communication. This e-poster presentation will analyze the findings of this research data, and also discuss the pedagogical implications of such results.

Keywords : cross-cultural communication, diversity awareness survey, self-reflection, underrepresented students

Conference Title : ICMC 2018 : International Conference on Media and Communication

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : November 08-09, 2018