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Borderland Spaces of Partnership: Encountering Emotion in Learning and Enhancing Student Wellbeing

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Introduction

Emotions are being recognized as fundamental to learning, the effective affects of learning have often been side-lined in higher education. In the context of teaching student wellbeing challenged, supporting students and their emotions in learning is increasingly significant.

Pedagogical partnerships have the potential to help students to recognize and work with their emotions in a positive manner. In this paper, we present an evidence-based model to summarise the potential effect of pedagogical partnerships in enhancing student wellbeing.

Case Study 1: Student-faculty assessment feedback dialogue (Hill & West, 2019)

Context:
- Learning student emotions and learning behaviours linked to an assessment intervention
- Second year undergraduate geography course in a large teaching-oriented British university

Feed-forward Meetings:
- Students choose an essay from a selection.
- They write a considered draft of their chosen essay.
- Students meet face-to-face to discuss the draft with the tutor.
- Tutors begin with the tutor asking students if they are ‘ready for feedback’.
- Meetings focus on positive aspects (e.g. areas where they are well to do and need further development).
- Students are given positive and encouraging collaborative co-learning and co-constructive dialogue.

Case Study Findings:

- Key was to persuade students they had capabilities that could be developed over time rather than fixed abilities that might limit their achievements.
- The meetings provided a personalised and inclusive learning experience – making the students feel cared for.
- Students reported that they altered their behaviour after the meeting, both within-task and with respect to post-assignment self-efficacy and self-regulation.

Conclusion: Presenting an evidence-based model

Initial Emotions

Positive Emotions

Negative Emotions

Anxiety

Fear

Uncertainty

Disappointment

Self-Regulation

Self-Efficacy

Enhanced Resilience

Pedagogic Partnership & The Affective Domain

Practical advice to support staff:
- Build on students in ways that are welcoming and respectful.
- Adaptable, student-centred and social pedagogical approaches.
- Feedback, group work, inquiry-based learning and authentic assessment.
- Seek training from institutional Educational Developers to work positively with the emotional capacities of learning.

We are recognizing that this state of practice may not be for everyone, but by ignoring the emotions that are intrinsic within and shape learning, we threaten to limit our students’ learning experiences and achievements. Working in collaboration to develop our students’ positive learning, learning behaviours and wellbeing, we can maximise the potential for sustainable learning and academic success.

Read the JHE Journal Paper:


Case Study 2: Student-led peer teaching during fieldwork (Marvell & Simm, 2018)

Context:
- Fieldwork is a borderland space where students engage in practical experience and identities can be destabilised (Hill et al., 2016).
- Fieldwork is fundamental to learning, the affective aspects of learning have often been side-lined in higher education.

Case Study Findings:

- Students were often in a heightened emotional state during the fieldtrip.
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Case Study 2: Student-led peer teaching during fieldwork

Pedagogical partnership and teaching during fieldwork: Encountering Emotion in Learning and Enhancing Student Wellbeing

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Glossary of key terms

Emotions: Emotions are relatively brief and context-specific responses to experiences, events, or situations. They include feelings (e.g. happiness, sadness); physiological reactions (e.g. heart rate, sweat); and overt behaviors (e.g. smiling, crying).

Wellbeing: Wellbeing is a broad concept that encompasses subjective well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and environmental well-being. It is often measured using scales such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the World Health Organization’s (WHO) well-being scale.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s ability to perform a particular action or task. It is a key predictor of behavior and is often measured using scales such as the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) and the Personal Efficacy Scale (PES).

Self-regulation: Self-regulation is the ability to control one’s own behavior, emotions, and thoughts, in ways that are appropriate to the given context or situation. It is measured using scales such as the Self-Regulation Scale (SRS) and the Self-Regulation Inventory (SRI).

Methods

We present a case study of student-faculty and student-student pedagogic partnership. The principal investigators of these projects (4 faculty members) were invited to interview the following questions in relation to the life of their partnerships:

- How have these relationships contributed to positive and negative emotions in their teaching?
- Whether the emotions evolved over time as the partnership progressed.
- Whether the emotions interacted with student learning, behaviour, and performance on the short or long term.
- Whether foregrounding emotions through partnership promoted student wellbeing.

The respondents provided written accounts to the questions. They drew on direct student testimony from 150 students, and their personal observations and reflections.

Conclusion: Presenting an evidence-based model

Pedagogic partnership in higher education offers a chance to purposefully encounter emotions and empower students to develop positive feelings, attitudes and learning behaviours, making them more resilient.

Transformation comes through the cognitive and emotional joys and struggles of learning in borderland spaces of partnership.