Course Experiences and Learning in Undergraduate Education - a Comparison Study

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To improve student success, instructors need to understand how students feel about and evaluate their own learning, how much responsibility they take for their own learning, as this information is crucial to teach more effectively and to develop effective courses. Yet, very often, instructors in higher education focus on content learning exclusively. While summative assessment of learning in these courses is important, content learning is not the only measure of educational outcomes. In fact, many researchers note the incomplete nature of learning without affective components (Ciompi, 2003; Hall, 2005) and indicate that emotional involvement leads to stronger learning (Stewart, 2007). No previous studies examined Construction Management (CM) majors' emotional involvement as well as the success rate in class often not measured. In parallel, failures in the CM classes are carefully planned to be analyzed for the purpose of adding significance to the findings. As such, the study will use the Course Valuing Inventory (Nehari, 1978) adapted for CM classes and will evaluate cognitive-content, affective-personal and behavioral learning in students taking these classes. Furthermore, the study will examine the relationship between course valuing scores, approaches to study (ASI) and course performance. The study targets undergraduate students enrolled in 3 classes (Building Materials and Systems, Building Codes, Project Planning and Scheduling) taught by the primary investigators. These classes usually enroll a total of about ninety students representing a fairly large pool of students that would generate data to be analyzed. Students will be recruited during CM classes and will be asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of three components: a demographic component (14 questions), a short version of the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI, 17 questions) and the modified Course Valuing Inventory (CVI, 36 questions). Final grades for each class will be collected to correlate scores on the CVI and ASI with student performance. Furthermore, results in the CM classes will be compared with the results from a similar study in Human Anatomy and Physiology classes at the same University. Results will be used to evaluate whether the CVI can be adapted for use in CM classes, to understand how CM students perceive the meaning and value of their learning experiences in the CM classes and how it correlates with their approaches to study. Special attention will be carried on the cases where students have prior industry experience or special interest in the subject, before running the correlation. While there are many factors that can affect a student's performance in class, this study will only look at correlations between approaches to study, student's meaning and performance. By understanding how students feel about and evaluate their own learning, educators in CM classes can enhance students' success. In the same time they can better empower the development of effective courses.

Key Words: value-based experience, course valuing inventory, learning, pedagogy, undergraduate