



Fostering Social Connection in Students Through Collaborative Learning

What is this Research About?

Social connection plays an important role in the promotion of student well-being and academic success. However, implementing this in large classrooms poses challenges, especially in the commuter sciences and traditional lecture formats. Collaborative learning emerges as a strategic solution, actively engaging students in group activities to foster social bonds. This approach proves vital in overcoming barriers to social connection, ensuring a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment. In this study, the researchers investigated the relationship between collaborative learning and how it can influence student's social connection and well-being.

What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers used a mixed-methods design, surveying 209 Canadian post-secondary students in a first-year political science course, and then hosting focus groups to assess student's perceptions of collaborative learning. Focus group sessions were held subsequent to students' completion of a two-stage exam process. This process involves students initially taking an individual exam, followed by a second round where they rewrite the exam in small collaborative groups. Overall, data was collected on student's experience with social connection, wellbeing, and perceptions of loneliness and isolation at the post-secondary institution.

What did the Researchers Find?

The researchers found evidence that group activities positively affected student perceptions of social connection and well-being. Students felt that it can be difficult to make time for social life and extracurriculars, and in-class opportunities would make it easier to develop social connections. Students also agreed that group activities mitigate some course stress they experience and positively impact their overall well-being. 87% of students in the focus group agreed that in-course group activities helped to encourage social connections, and 59% agreed that collaborative learning activities positively affected their overall well-being.

SoTL

Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Collaborative learning can be a powerful tool for instructors to increase social connection and student well-being in the classroom. Forming social bonds and connections outside the classroom is an increasingly relevant challenge for students, making in-class opportunities essential for providing social connection and combatting student loneliness. Instructors are recommended to consider applying collaborative learning in their classroom. This involves structuring group discussions, project work, or interactive exercises. Establishing a supportive classroom environment through these methods not only enriches academic engagement but also addresses the growing issue of student loneliness, contributing to a more fulfilling educational experience.

➔ Citation

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➔ Keywords

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