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The Impact of Small-Group Interactive Academic Skills Training on Student Wellbeing

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Abstract

Student wellbeing has been a top priority in university education. It is therefore important to investigate if and how educational activities impact student wellbeing. In the Biology BSc program of the University of Groningen, a new course Basic Academic Skills (BAS) was implemented, which offers first-year students academic skills training in small groups. Through peer learning, formative assessment, and engaging activities this course aims to enhance (self-confidence about) academic skills and self-directedness. Student course evaluations and anecdotal evidence from lecturers, tutors and students suggested that the course increased engagement and motivation, and that the small-group setting enhanced social cohesion within the cohort and thereby, sense of belonging. Since these outcomes are strongly related to student wellbeing, we set out to investigate the hypothesis that student wellbeing is positively affected by this course set-up. We investigate this through surveys, interviews and focus groups with students, tutors and lecturers. Preliminary results suggest that the impact of the course on student well-being varies per student and may depend on student characteristics such as nationality and prior experience in academic skills training.

Keywords: Student Wellbeing, Academic Skills, Sense of Belonging, Small-Group Teaching