Building Academic Tenacity in Students for Improved Wellbeing, Deeper Learning and Increased Success

PSYC 217 - TA Training for Student Wellbeing
Benjamin Y. Cheung, Mabel Ho, Ryan Premack, Diana Jung, Patty Hambler

Faculty lead – Ben Cheung

Ben is a Lecturer and Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator in the Dept. of Psychology, teaching a variety of courses encompassing research methods, social psychology, and cultural psychology. He is a self-described “teaching, hockey, language, culture, food, and gaming enthusiast”. Student wellbeing, both inside and outside the classroom, is a central focus of Ben’s teaching practice and scholarly research. Along with his colleagues, Ben is continuously exploring innovative, evidence-based ways to support undergraduate student learning wellbeing.

In the literature

- Graduate student teaching assistants (TAs) play an essential role in undergraduate teaching in higher education in both Canada and the US.
- There is a growing body of literature that has explored the relationship between sense of self efficacy as a teacher and student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Meadows, Olsen, Dimitrov, Dawson, 2015).
- Training programs for TA's positively impact their teaching practice, increasing their use of effective and student-centered teaching practices (Boman, 2013; Chadha, 2015; LeGros & Faez, 2012).

Our research question

This study explored the effectiveness of a series of TA Training workshops to foster and facilitate TA’s abilities to create a safe classroom environment that supports student learning and well-being.

This study was guided by the following research question: Does TA training in effective study skills, wellbeing, and pedagogy support TAs’ perception of their ability to support student learning and self-regulation? Through this training, is students’ development of academic tenacity facilitated?

Project design

Evaluation

Two sets of surveys were administered, one for undergraduate students and the other for TA’s. Surveys included items from:

- Undergraduate Experience Survey (UBC, 2018)
- Achievement Goal Questionnaire (Elliot & Murayama, 2008)
- Implicit Theories of Intelligence/Self-Theory (De Castella, & Byrne, 2015).
- Additionally, interviews were conducted in July of 2018 with TA participants regarding their experience.

Preliminary findings

This study provided important insight around the sense of social belonging and self-efficacy that undergraduate students reported experiencing in connection with their interactions and relationship with their TA's. Having a TA in different experimental groups did not have a significant impact on any of the measures of interest to this study. However, TA help was positively and strongly correlated with managing academic success ($r = .46, p < .05$) and also with students’ willingness to seek assistance for the course ($r = .51, p < .05$).

Next steps

- Strengthen learning opportunities for TAs: Develop resources for departments to use in TA training
- Develop resources to help TAs integrate self-care and wellness into their overall teaching practice.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this project provided by UBC Vancouver students via the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund. We would also like to acknowledge that this project is taking place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

References


