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ACADEMIC SUCCESS COURSES IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This research project is a review of current literature that highlights the potential effectiveness of academic success courses as a requisite for increasing student academic success in higher learning institutions. Through an evaluation of previous case studies, this project focuses on the correlation between efficacy and academic performance as outcomes of success skills courses. First year college students who are academically under-prepared and who register for high-risk general education courses often experience academic frustrations and failure which puts them at a high risk of withdrawals or a decreased rate of graduation from institutions of higher learning. Institutions that have implemented support services have used success courses to equip first-year college students with skills that include time-management, note-taking and test-taking strategies, reading, writing, proper citations, student participants have self-reported an increase in efficacy as an outcome of success courses, and the theoretical foundations of the delivery, design and assessment for such courses in higher learning institutions.

RESULTS

1. Design administration

Sixteen case studies were analyzed according to the design, delivery and assessment of the success courses implemented. Design administration had seven credit-based courses and nine non-credit-based. Nine course were delivered within support departments and seven were delivered in academic departments. Participation resulted to seven courses being mandatory and nine courses were voluntary

2. Delivery methods

Sixteen case studies were analyzed to determine course delivery methods. Results indicate that four case studies (25%) of the success courses were delivered within a classroom. Two case studies (12%) were delivered within a support department center. Ten case studies (63%) used other delivery methods like conferences, summer bridge programs, and online classes.

3. Topics and curriculum domains

Within the psychological domain 59% were learning strategies, 31% were on efficacy (affect), 7% career and major choice and 3% campus orientation.

4. Psychological domain delivered

Sixteen case studies were analyzed and results showed that twenty-nine different topics were covered in these case studies within four different curriculum domains. These were analyzed and classified into psychological domains and the results showed that more than half (55%) the success courses mapped on the cognitive domain and affective domain mapped 45% of the success courses.

5. Psychological domain measured

Sixteen case studies analyzed. The result of each course assessment 38% measured an outcome of both cognitive and affective abilities. Cognitive abilities mapped 24% of the measured outcome and 36% measured affective abilities.

METHODOLOGY

1. Success courses Design, Delivery and Assessment

Design administration: These data were coded into three categories: Academic Credit (Credit based or non-credit based), Department of Administration (academic or support), Participation (Voluntary or Mandatory) Delivery Methods: They were coded as being delivered through these three methods; a classroom method, a mentoring/advising/counseling methods, or other methods including bridge programs or online programs. Assessment: These data was coded into assessment criteria and assessment tools used. Criteria used for assessment was coded as academic performance, persistence, and graduation; motivation and efficacy, while assessment tools used include surveys, grades point average, retention rate and graduation rate

2. Correlation Between Efficacy and performance

Topics: These data were collected to determine the topics delivered in a success course. The topics were classified as learning skills and strategies, career counseling and decisions about majors, student development, self-efficacy, self-regulation and motivation, and writing and communication skills. Curriculum domains: These data classified the curriculum domains of the topic offered and were coded as academic skills, career and major choice, affect, and campus orientation. Psychological domains delivered: These data were collected on the psychological domains covered by the success course curriculum. These data were coded as either cognitive or affective. Psychological domains measured: These were data collected on the measured outcome of success course. It was coded as either cognitive, affective or both cognitive and affective

Curriculum Domains in Success Courses
- Academic Skills
- Career and Major Choice
- Affect
- Campus Orientation

Psychological Domains Measured
- Cognitive
- Affective

Psychological Domains Delivered
- Cognitive: 45%
- Affective: 55%

Analysis of Students Success

Findings indicate that measuring the correlation between academic performance (cognitive) and efficacy (affective) may be dependent of other variables like the intended psychological domains measured by the curriculum, the topics and measured outcome. Case studies whose curriculum domain fall under the cognitive psychological domain seemed to measure cognitive outcomes or both cognitive and affective outcomes, while success courses whose curriculum was coded under an affective psychological domain appeared to measure affective outcomes. There were also some instances with a combination of both affective and cognitive psychological domains that measured either cognitive or affective outcomes. The findings of this study are therefore inconclusive in determining a clear correlation between efficacy and academic performance from success course.

Discussion

Based on a wide set of measurements from sixteen case studies, this study revealed the following conclusions.

A majority of credit based courses were mandatory n=9, there were more voluntary non-credit based success courses than any other type n=7. There were also non-credit based mandatory success courses n=4. There was an equal number of success courses that used support departments and academic department as the department of administration n=7. Success course curriculum included both affective abilities and cognitive abilities. Assessments of the success courses were determined by assessment criteria and the tool used. Pre-study and post-study surveys, interviews and class observations measured student increased in self-efficacy and self-confidence to tackle to demands of higher education. Records of academic performance were the most common assessment tools used to measure the outcomes of the success course. Student abilities to apply the learning strategies and skills into their university course curriculum content was measured by an increased in grade point average or increase in letter grade in a particular course.

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