

Cultural mapping and alliance building in a first year Management course

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There needs to be a place for students to learn more about cultural difference as part of their university learning experience. Research into productive diversity (Cope and Kalantzis 1997), socio-cultural learning (Bandura 1977) and intercultural competence (Byram, Nichols and Stevens 2001) all rely on this interaction space to be effective. Without the place to interact and learn about cultures, we lose an integral part of the university social learning experience. Our empirical results indicate, compared with a control group who didn't participate in cultural awareness interventions (in this case the ExceL programme), students who engage actively in cultural awareness activities in the classroom space, experience a heightened awareness of other cultures. They also report higher levels of cultural awareness, socio-cultural learning and inclusiveness. This means as they participate in group work, case study interactions and deliberate pedagogy designed to facilitate cultural awareness, they report learning more about people from other cultural backgrounds. We argue this is an important function of the modern university that is often overlooked by the desire to optimise education purely as an online learning experience. If we are to become globally minded we must first embrace cultural inclusivity. Our showcase presentation is about a programme where cultural interventions were used in a first year business course. The results indicate that students are having a positive experience learning about other cultures.