

Outcomes for Ethnic Minorities in Team Based Learning Courses

Background: Team based learning (TBL) is a structured small-group pedagogy that focuses on the application, rather than simple regurgitation of knowledge. Specifically, approximately 80% of class time should be spent on application-oriented group projects. TBL has been found to enhance knowledge retention and comprehension, and to improve higher order learning. TBL directs instructors to create heterogeneous student groups by distributing racially/ethnically diverse students across groups. In geographic areas where diversity is limited, this results in racial and ethnic minorities being greatly outnumbered within their groups. TBL pedagogy suggests that distributing racial/ethnic minorities among groups is desirable, though literature on the academic success of minorities suggests the opposite. Specifically, minorities perform better in the classroom if they have a support group that consists of other ethnic minorities.

Consequently, the purpose of the current study is to compare ethnic minority and non-minority students' outcomes in TBL courses.

Method: IRB approval was obtained to compare classroom peer evaluation scores, overall course grades, and overall grade point average (GPA) across race for over 120 students participating in classes using TBL.

Findings: Peer evaluation scores were significantly lower for minorities compared to non-minorities; however, no differences emerged comparing overall course grades and GPA.

Discussion: Findings suggest that minority students are perceived and scored less favorably by their peers as compared to non-minority students, yet their overall academic achievement is comparable. This provides preliminary evidence that minority students must overcome racial undertones while participating in TBL. Findings suggest that instructors must be cognizant when

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using TBL and that TBL may need to be adapted in order to better serve minorities. In particular, the mechanism by which groups are constructed may need to be altered in order to better serve minorities.