The Impact of Project-Based Learning Assignments on the Writing, Communication and Interpersonal Skills of Students in a College Success Course

Aungeto Lockhart Sigman

Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to determine the impact of project-based learning on the writing, communication and interpersonal skills of students in a college skills course. This course is required for students who are taking one or more developmental classes at the college. The purpose of this course is to equip the students with skills necessary for success during college and beyond. However, the syllabus for the course did not include any activities or assignments to improve the students’ writing, communication or interpersonal skills. As a result, the students had not been successful in completing the final class assignment that required strong writing and communication skills. Research suggests that schools should employ project-based learning for two reasons: 1). the skills students use during project-based learning are considered to be those 21st century skills that schools are being called to teach 2). project-based learning enhances students’ knowledge and critical thinking skills (Duke, 2016).

Through a convergent mixed methods action research design, the study addressed three research questions that explored the impact on writing, communication, and interpersonal skills. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from pre-and post-test writing assessments, observation checklist, interviews, final project and end of the course survey. The results indicated an improvement in the writing, communication and interpersonal skills of the students. An action plan was developed to provide training for additional faculty to increase the sections of the course to help more students be successful in college.

Keywords: project-based learning; assessment; critical thinking; writing skills; communication skills, interpersonal skills; student learning; student success