Classroom Participation: A Student Perspective

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Introduction
Background

• Active participators learn more \(^{(1-3)}\)
• Required for development of critical thinking skills\(^{(1)}\)
• Only a few will actively participate\(^{(4)}\)
• “Consolidation of responsibility” pattern\(^{(4)}\)
• Common traits among participating students\(^{(5-6)}\)
Types of Participation

- Spontaneous or volunteer\(^{(4-6)}\)
- Required or graded\(^{(7)}\)
- Passive\(^{(4)}\)
- Para-participation\(^{(1-3)}\)
- Negative\(^{(8)}\)
- Compulsory\(^{(9)}\)
- Non-participation\(^{(4)}\)
Methodology

• Exploratory content analysis
• Interviews
• 11 participants – all nursing students
• 3 males and 8 females
• IRB approval obtained
Results

• Four themes emerged:
  – Faculty
  – Other students
  – Environmental
  – intrapersonal

• Themes were common to all or nearly all of the participants
Theme 1 – Faculty Influences

• Looked for visual or verbal cues
• Encouraged when instructor walked around the room
• Made decision about whether to ask questions or not
• Treatment of peers
• Developed avoidance techniques
Theme 2 – Influence from Peers

• Unwilling to risk negative feedback
• Unwelcome interruptions
• Looked to peers for verification
• Distracting behavior by peers
Theme 3 – Environmental Influences

• Physical environment is important
  – Must be able to see and hear
• Each selected a comfort zone
  – Front, back or middle
• Size and configuration of classroom
Theme 4 – Intrapersonal Influences

• Individual personality
• Ability to develop comfort with others in the room
• ESL and non-traditional students
Implications

• Students feel participation is “risky”
• Need to create an environment of safety
• More difficult to encourage the reticent student
• Very simple to discourage a willing student
Recommendations

- Establish expectation of participation
- Ask simple questions/prepared in advance
- Give them questions in advance
- Respond with encouragement
- Allow enough time
- Consider reconfiguration of class
- Move around the class
- Learn your students’ names
References


