

Sense of community of native and ethnic minority students in the Utrecht Bachelor of Pharmacy programme. Validation of Rovai's Classroom Community Scale.

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Background: Feelings of social cohesion facilitate collaborative learning, and are associated with enhanced quality of learning. A previous study in the Bachelor of Pharmacy programme at Utrecht University has suggested that students of non-Dutch origin (around 40%) are less successful in year-1 of their study. We hypothesise that this may be related to differences in social cohesion between students of different ethnic origin.

Aim: Assess sense of community in ethnic minority versus native students using a Dutch translation of Rovai's Classroom Community Scale (CCS) (Rovai 2002).

Method: Students in year-1 were asked to fill in the questionnaire twice (end of semesters 1 and 2). Ethnic background was determined on basis of the country where the student, or at least one parent, was born.

Result: Factor analysis confirmed the 2-factor structure of the CCS with the dimensions 'connectedness' ($\alpha=0.843$) and 'interactive learning' ($\alpha=0.809$). Both connectedness and interactive learning were significantly lower in ethnic minority students compared to native students at the end of the first semester (scores 18.2 ± 0.8 vs 20.8 ± 0.4 , $p=0.003$; and 23.7 ± 0.9 vs 27.1 ± 0.5 , $p<0.001$, respectively). This difference was no longer detectable at the end of the second semester.

Conclusion: The Dutch translation of the CCS is a reliable tool for assessing sense of community. The lower sense of community among ethnic minority students suggests that the level of social integration may be a relevant factor for study success.

Rovai, A.P. (2002) 'Development of an instrument to measure classroom community', *Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 5, pp. 197–211.