

Great Expectations? How are Unmet Course-specific Expectations Related to Learning-related Outcomes in Educational Psychology Classes?

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In addition to psychology majors, psychological courses are an important part of the curriculum in teacher education. At the beginning of a new academic term, students of both study programs hold a variety of course-specific expectations (e.g., related to the course content, the workload, or their performance). A mismatch between expectations and the course reality may negatively influence students' learning outcomes. This study examined the relationship between unmet course-specific expectations in educational psychology lectures and learning-related outcomes. We collected data from $N = 736$ university students from two study programs enrolled in an introductory lecture course in educational psychology. The overall sample included $n = 488$ teacher students from five cohorts and $n = 248$ psychology students from three cohorts. Students could participate in up to five measurement points across the term. Students rated the extent to which they anticipated gaining a general overview of educational-psychological content, learning methods, and receiving practical tips and the degree to which they had learned this content in the course. Several learning outcomes were evaluated such as test performance, perceived learning success, satisfaction, and long-term interest in the subject. Students noted discrepancies in expected versus perceived content regarding methods and practical tips, which were more evident among preservice teachers. Higher levels of unmet expectations were linked to poorer learning outcomes at the end of the term. Results suggest that a mismatch between students' expectations and actual course content is crucial in influencing learning success. Our results highlight the significance of considering prior (course-specific) expectations as instructors. Educators may benefit from assessing students' expectations early in the term and, where feasible, integrating practically relevant, applied content to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Additionally, enhancing transparency in learning goals and outlining the benefits of specific learning content may be useful in preventing disappointed expectations.

Is the first author also the speaker?

Yes

If first author is not the speaker, please indicate speaker's name here:

Please indicate up to five keywords regarding the content of your contribution

Course-specific expectations; learning success; satisfaction; academic performance

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