Reviewer's report

Title: The perceived effects of faculty presence vs. absence on small-group learning and group dynamics: a quasi-experimental study.

Version: 2 Date: 9 September 2014

Reviewer: Veena Singaram

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction:
1. The research question needs to be outlined more clearly.
2. Include a relevant theory underlying this study

Methods:
1. Line 138 – Is the assessment and plan generated by the students assessed or checked by Faculty
2. Line 140 – please clarify how many groups are being referred to.
3. Also include the duration of the small group sessions
4. Line 145 – how many groups are in there in a block and how many were assigned to the study
5. Also include in the this section if the students take on specific roles in the small group sessions i.e chairperson, scribe, etc
6. Do the students follow a particular format when analysing or discussing the cases
7. Line 154 – please clarify what is meant by pre-existing group work?
8. Line 160- Faculty members left the group for 15 minutes. What was the total duration of the group work and at what stage did the faculty step out?
9. Line 171 – what is meant by ‘faculty –required’ cases and how do these cases differ from the ones selected for the study. Do students know that cases are differentiated into these two categories.
10. In the Instrument section..please clarify how many and which questions were used from the GCQ-S and from Steele et al respectively.
11. Also describe in this section the quasi-experimental design that is included in the title but does not appear in the text.

Results:
Please clarify if students rated their entire experience of the ‘out’ group session or only the 15 minute session when the faculty is absent.
Discussion

More reference to other factors found in the literature that influence group dynamics must be included here such as cognitive and motivational that are not taken into consideration in this study.

Line 264- please clarify what is meant by heterogeneous levels of experience and comfort

Please include in this section more engagement with the relevant literature as there are only about two references made throughout the Discussion session

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. line 88 – make comma into superscript.

Conclusion

Line 281 – correct spelling

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests