

Chapter 14

Contributory Factors of Students Satisfaction When Undertaking Group Work, a South Africa Higher Institution Case Study: Factors of Satisfaction When Undertaking Group Work

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ABSTRACT

This chapter assesses university's students' views on team work with a specific research aim to investigate the key contributory factors that affect the students' satisfaction when undertaking group work. The data used in this study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected via a questionnaire survey aimed at 95 undergraduate students. The data collected from the survey were analysed using descriptive statistics procedures. Findings from the study revealed that the most important contributory factors that affect students' satisfaction when undertaking group works are: setting of ground rules for the operation of the group and students having the same attitude towards work. It was also found that some students do not come to group meetings which also affects the students' satisfaction. Therefore, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the dynamics of team building and group works as it affects higher education students. Hence, preparing the students to be team players before they enter the world of work.

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INTRODUCTION

Working on a team is unavoidable in this present world, no matter your position- student, organizational communicator, movie actor and professor, amongst others (Johnson, 2011). This assertion stands on the fact that enterprises today expect employees to work well both independently and collaboratively in order to maximise their potentials and foster creativity and development of one-another (Pang, 2011); because collaboration is often so integral to success in the workplaces. Much more, this process lead to the increase in productivity and efficiency of what they have been hired to do at work. Group work or collaborative learning, has become a fundamental part of education as a mechanism to help students learn through interaction with others as well as to become accustomed to working in a group environment that imitates the work place (Freeman, 1996). Experiences from organisations using the team approach for improving performance have pointed to teamwork as an important tool in the work place. This perspective has pressed organizations to start looking for teamwork skills in their new employees (Ulloa & Adams, 2004). Although most employers provide on-the-job training, yet, they expect that their new employees to at least possess the basic understanding of why teamwork skills are important to their career. Moreover, they should have a fair understanding and senses of group work dynamics. Group work has been acknowledged as an effective learning approach because it gives students the opportunity to discuss and manipulate ideas with others and reflect upon their learning (Fraser & Deane, 1997).

Looking for ways of shortening the new employees learning experience on acquiring teamwork skills in the workplace, Ulloa and Adams (2004) stated that corporations are suggesting institutions of higher education to prepare future employees (students) to be effective team players while still in school. Hence, Thomas (2001) suggested that one way to prepare future employees

for the work environment is by having them work in groups in academic settings. Based on this tenet, education/curriculum accreditation organizations at the academic levels; for instance the South Africa Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession (SACQSP) and the South African Council for Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) among others, have required higher education institutions in South Africa to make student collaborative learning a part of student development in all courses. In response to this demand, institutions of higher education have developed approaches for introducing teamwork in their classrooms. Thus, enhancing the process of learning through the use of group-works with an understanding that in corporate environments teamwork is a key element to improving employee performance and learning (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Devine et al., 1999).

This chapter is a South Africa higher institution case study on the use of collaborative learning (group work) in the training of undergraduate construction management and quantity surveying to be industry (construction sector) ready. The general acceptance of team structures in the construction industry environment together with the common practice of including group projects/ assignments in university curricula means that undergraduate built environment (construction management and quantity surveying) students who are being prepared for the construction industry are rightly directed towards maximizing their potentials by working in groups. Undergraduate (Final year) building science students majoring in Construction Management or Quantity Surveying at the Department of Construction Management and Quantity Surveying at the University of Johannesburg, are required to work in groups throughout their study time.

Although group work is sometimes hailed as an educational panacea as research studies has overwhelmingly favor collaborative learning (group work) as the most effective form of learning (Johnson & Johnson; 1984). Another educational

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