Academic Group Work: Perceptions of Faculty and Students

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Perceptions of Faculty and Students

LaBeouf, Griffith, & Roberts (2015)
BOLLINGER ROSADO TEACHING AND LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS SYMPOSIUM
Group Work Format

- Introduction
- Quantitative Findings
- Purpose / Background
- Literature Review
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions/Recommendations
Introduction

• ERAU WW Faculty and Student perceptions of group work
• Su (2007) called for more studies
• 2014 Quantitative Analysis (n=1,919)
• 2015 Analysis of open area responses using qualitative tools (n=811)
Survey – 2014

Survey distributed via e-mail link
- 2,600 faculty – 12% return – n=330
- 10,659 students – 14% return – n=1,589

Likert scale – collapsed categories
- SA and A = Agree
- SD, D, and neutral = Disagree
- Quantitative - $\alpha=.05$, $\chi^2$
Quantitative Findings

Faculty – Group work (n=330)

Agreed:

◦ Has academic value (p=.000)
◦ Prepares students for future positions (p=.000*)
◦ Develops individual skills (working with groups) (p=.000*)
◦ Value to teaching outcomes (p=.000*)
◦ Would include in every class I teach (p=.075)

Disagreed: one grade for all (p=.000*)
Quantitative Findings

Students – Group work (n=1,589)

Agreed:
- Has academic value (50%, p=.92)
- Prepares students for future positions (51%, p=.257)
- Develops individual skills (working with groups) (52%, p=.092)
- One grade for all (59%, p=.000*)

Disagreed that they would take a course because it had group work (66% p=.000*)
# Quantitative Results - Faculty and Student Differences

Table 1: Summary of Questions Where Faculty and Student Perceptions Differed. (Chi Square, $\alpha=.05$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Chi Sq.</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(F) Requiring group work has academic value. (S) Participating in group research work is a good learning experience</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>99.62</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group research work is a way to prepare for future positions in the work force</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>90.01</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work allows students to develop individual skills within the confines of group requirements</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>67.40</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One grade was given for all group members regardless of contribution.</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>85.61</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The group grade reflected group and individual contributions.</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>24.12</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *The value of academic group work: An examination of faculty and student perceptions. (LaBeouf, Griffith, & Schultz, 2014, p. 37).*
Purpose

Fill void in available research
Learn from practical experiences
Significance

- Previous quantitative study shows what people feel
- Analysis of open area comments to tell us why people feel the way they do
Literature on Group Work

Value, Relevance and Benefit of Group Work

• Relevant and beneficial across academic and vocational settings (Lizzio & Wilson, 2006; Noonan, 2013).

• Fosters both educational achievement and collaborative skill building (Johnson and Johnson, 2004; Gillies & Boyle, 2010, 2011).
Literature on Group Work

Evaluation and Subjective Experience

• The research results are mixed on the topic of the subjective experience of the group process.

• Student perceptions of group work varied significantly between extremes of positive and negative evaluations (Grant, 1994).
Literature on Group Work

**Students view group work as positive when:**
Active participation and inclusion of all group members, clear division of labor and meaningful relevance of task. (Hansen, 2006)

**Disadvantages:**
More time consuming, logistically problematic and difficult to assess the relative levels of individual contribution (Quinn & Hughes, 2007).
Literature on Group Work

Disadvantages Cont.

• High levels of dissatisfaction in *online* learners
• Time and logistical barriers to collaboration
• Increased difficulty in ensuring participation of all members

(Brindley & Walti, 2009; Fletcher, Tobias & Wisher, 2007; Piezon & Ferree, 2008; Wright and Lawson, 2005).
Literature on Group Work

The Need for Group Work

“Employers complain that many college graduates are not prepared for the workplace and lack the new set of skills necessary for successful employment and continuous career development”

Literature on Group Work

The Need for Group Work

Despite the fact that a significant number of students report disliking group work, it will be a necessary and required aspect of their professional careers (Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998; Stevens & Campion, 1994).
The Need for Group Work

- Modern workplaces require workers who have developed interpersonal skills that enable them to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others to accomplish organizational goals.

- Educational intuitions must incorporate the mastering of these skills into their curriculum in order best serve the needs of the students, modern businesses and society at large.
Method

Analysis of open area comments

◦ Previous Study
  - Faculty n=330
  - Students n=1,589

◦ This Study
  - Comments n=118
  - Comments n=693

QSR NVivo 10 used to identify trends
Qualitative - Faculty
(n=118 in open comment area)

(42) Student contribution to group grade
  ◦ Difficult to assess, “social loafing”

(20) group work not beneficial

(19) Not good for online environments
  ◦ Difficult to assess, time zone issues

(15) Prepares students for “real life”
Qualitative - Students
(n=693 in open comment area)

(266) Students not contributing
  ◦ “Social loafing”

(152) Not effective in online environments

(147) Dislike group work

(135) Collaboration difficult
  ◦ Time zones and work schedules

(71) Suggestions for instructors
  ◦ Coaching
Table 2

Comparison of Top Six Comment Areas between Faculty, Graduate and Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Faculty (n=118)</th>
<th>Graduate (n=271)</th>
<th>Undergraduate (n=422)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dislike Group work</td>
<td>Dislike Group work</td>
<td>Not Effective in Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Not Effective in Online</td>
<td>Dislike Group Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Online (difficulties)</td>
<td>Time Zones</td>
<td>Time Zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preparation for Work</td>
<td>Beneficial (Collaboration)</td>
<td>Instructor Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Beneficial (Collaboration)</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Does not prepare for Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

Perception of Business/Industry preference

Individual contributions – “social loafing”

Hard for instructors to assess contributions
  ◦ Have student peer assessment

Assign groups by time zone

ERAU non traditional students/structure

66% of students felt grading was fair
Recommendations

Study group work in online settings

Differences in graduate and undergraduate perceptions

Business and Engineering vs. Social Sciences/Humanities

Impact of culture, gender and personality on group work performance/perceptions

Consider process/practices, timeline/assessment and evaluative tool and rubric.

Use Qualitative and Quantitative tools
Appendices - Considerations

A. Practices and Processes for Consideration
B. Recommended Group Process, Timeline and Assessment
C. Sample Group Evaluation Form and Rubric
Questions?

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References

College Teaching, 38(4), 128-133.


Brindley, J., & Walti, C. (2009). Creating effective collaborative learning groups in an online environment. The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 10(3).


