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Learning with Peers: An Interdisciplinary Comparative Study of Learner Interaction and Satisfaction on an Instructional Design Course*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine undergraduate students' satisfaction levels through learning with peers. Specifically, students from two departments were brought into a collective group activity to understand whether they experienced different levels of satisfaction by working with peers from a different department. Data gathered from a sample of 47 Science Education (SE) and 72 Computer Education and Instructional Technology (CEIT) students during the fall 2011 semester. Students overall were highly satisfied. Students of the two departments did not significantly differ from each other in terms of satisfaction. That means they equally enjoyed the activity. There were six themes that were identified that cause satisfaction in this interprofessional work: Performing responsibilities, socialization, cohesion, work habits, learning in general, and professional development. The most prominent theme was cohesion, and it emerged out of mostly positive but also negative student opinions. The least prominent was professional development and it was mainly expressed as a positive theme. It is argued that students do not articulate the scope of the study as much as they can. It is also argued that the nature of the assigned task let them consider the social aspects more than the other aspects.

Key Words

Satisfaction, Teamwork, Interdisciplinary, Responsibility, Socialization, Cohesion.

Benefits of teamwork on students' interpersonal development and learning have been broadly accepted in the literature (Bonanno, Jones, & English, 1998). Teamwork provides opportunities for students to learn from each other (Burdett & Hastie, 2009). Teamwork allows instructors to give more complex assignments to students, which cannot be accomplished individually otherwise. It also allows students to understand the dynamics in groups and is a chance to see diverse points of views (Mello, 1993). Bringing people from different professions together complements yet another chance for students to encounter more diverse points and perspectives. This study investigates satisfaction with teamwork in interprofessional groups.

Students are believed to succeed in groups by developing an identity or by expressing themselves in the group. For a group to be successful, being supportive of the peers and therefore building trust

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